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# Hemet city workers agree to pay, benefit cuts to help budget

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**By MICHAEL PERRAULT**
**The Press-Enterprise**

HEMET - Police management, as well as city administrators, accountants, engineers and other Hemet employees, have agreed to cuts in pay and benefits, trimming their workweeks and taking other cost-cutting measures to help the city ride out tough economic times.

The Hemet City Council on Tuesday approved agreements with several employee bargaining units that will enable the city to slash hundreds of thousands of dollars in expenses for its fiscal 2009-10 budget.

"They didn't have to talk to us about such agreements; they could have continued on," Councilman Jerry Franchville said. "But they understood the problems the city is facing. They agreed to take salary and benefit cuts to help the citizens of Hemet, and we have to say we're much appreciative."

In recent weeks, Hemet has been working with employee groups to slash about $1.6 million for the fiscal year that began July 1, said Len Wood, interim city manager.

The Hemet Police Management Association inked a memorandum of understanding that calls for police sergeants, lieutenants and other management to take 60 furlough hours each without pay, eliminate "early start shift" overtime for sergeants, waive uniform allowances and accept a 6.7 percent cut in overall benefits through June 30, 2010.

City administrative staff will shorten their workweeks to 38 hours, meaning buildings such as City Hall and the James Simpson Memorial Center will close every Friday.

Nonsworn members of the Service Employees International Union, Local 721 -- which includes accountants, office personnel, building inspectors, code enforcement officers and engineers -- also have agreed to cut their workweeks to 38 hours.

So the Covell Building, which houses engineering, fire administration and other personnel, also will close every Friday.

The employee agreements came after department heads and Wood agreed to a 6.7 percent cut in benefits, and council members cut their stipends by 10 percent.

City officials are still working with bargaining units representing Fire Department personnel, police officers, dispatchers and record clerks to achieve similar pay and benefits cuts, Wood said.

"What a blessing it is -- when you see everyone else in California, the federal government and other cities fighting, back and forth, a tug of war -- to see our city working together toward a common goal to get the job done," Councilman Robert Youssef said.

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