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Met postpones vote on sweetened pensions and pay

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In the wake of a public outcry, the **Metropolitan Water District of Southern California** has postponed Tuesday's vote on employee pension and pay hikes until October.

The proposed contracts - referred to below as **MOUs,** or *memorandums of understanding*with Met's unions - would hike pensions **25 percent**, and raise pay up to **23 percent** over the next **five years**. The sweetened pensions would cost about **$70 million** over their life, at a time when Met's pension investments are already down some **$400 million**.

In an email Sunday to Met's board of directors, Chairman **Timothy F. Brick** of Pasadena wrote, "I have heard from a number of directors that they do not feel they have an adequate understanding of the MOUs and their provisions. I have also heard confusion expressed about what information is appropriate to share with directors' home agencies because much of the information was discussed in closed session over the course of the negotiations.

"Action on these MOUs is a significant matter with long-term ramifications for Metropolitan regardless of how the Board ultimately decides. It is essential that the directors and the member agencies have all the facts to make a careful, fully informed decision on this matter. Accordingly, I have decided to postpone a vote on the MOUs from the September to the October meeting. "

There will be at least three more meetings concerning the new contracts:

- The board's Legal and Claims Committee will still discuss the proposals Tuesday.
- They will be addressed at the upcoming member agencies managers' meeting.

- And Brick plans to schedule a workshop on Tuesday, Sept. 22 for a detailed discussion and review of the proposal, his email says.

"It is important that we carefully consider and understand all the facts on this matter in an open and transparent manner before reaching any decision and if that requires taking a little more time, we should do that," Brick wrote. "I thank you for your patience and I look forward to the discussion."

For background on the controversy, see our stories here. To vote in our poll on whether the new contracts should be approved, click here.

Here is Met's official statement on the postponement, dated today:

The discussion and vote on a proposed labor agreement that was scheduled for the Board's monthly meeting on Tuesday, September 15, has been postponed. Because the agreement proposes fundamental changes in Metropolitan's employee benefit structure, it was felt that a special meeting be convened prior to a final vote to ensure that the complete package is fully understood and that all relevant concerns are addressed prior to a board vote. This is in keeping with the transparent and open negotiating process between Metropolitan and its bargaining units that produced this proposal. Metropolitan will continue its efforts to make sure that all facts regarding this proposal are fully understood by the board of directors and the public prior to any vote.

Therefore, a Board workshop will be scheduled to discuss the proposal. At that time, complete information will be presented to the Board and to the public. No vote will be taken at the workshop. The meeting will be open to the public. The date and time of the workshop will be announced at the September 15 Board meeting.