|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Agenda Item No.:** | 5 | **Date:** | Sept. 9, 2015 |
| **Proposed No.:** | 2015-0341 | **Prepared by:** | Nick Wagner |

SUBJECT

Approval of a collective bargaining agreement with the Washington State Council of County and City Employees, Council 2, Local 2084-SC, covering compensation and benefits for Attorneys and Specialists in Superior Court’s Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Program.

SUMMARY

Proposed Ordinance 2015-0341 (Att. 1) would approve a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) between King County and the Washington State Council of County and City Employees, Council 2, Local 2084-SC. The CBA (Att. 1-A) covers compensation and benefits for about 14 county employees who work as Attorneys and Specialists in King County Superior Court’s Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Program.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The new CBA is a two-year continuation, or “rollover,” of the previous CBA, as modified by a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the King County Coalition of Unions that the Council approved in November 2014, as described below, and the addition of two new classifications to the bargaining unit. The new CBA covers the period from January 1, 2015, through December 31, 2016.

Background

The Superior Court’s CASA program, called the Dependency CASA Program,[[2]](#footnote-2) serves children who have allegedly been abused or neglected. The program focuses on the best interests of the child and tries to reunite a family if conditions at home improve sufficiently.

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a trained volunteer who represents the best interests of children as they are taken through the legal process. The work of the CASA volunteer includes:

* Investigating the case and reporting to the court;
* Helping to identify resources to address a child's special needs; and
* Recommending temporary and permanent plans for the child.

As described in the Executive’s transmittal letter (Att. 5):

* The CASA attorneys represent volunteer advocates at court hearings, trials and depositions; provide legal training and consultation; and provide case-specific legal advice for program staff.
* The CASA specialists work closely with the CASA volunteers to train, supervise and monitor the volunteers in managing their cases; and they prepare the volunteers for hearings and trials.

Analysis

The substantive changes in the new CBA are listed below.

1. COLAs

Section 5.3 of the CBA (Att. 1-A, p. 3) provides for cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) of 2.00 percent for 2015 and 2.25 percent for 2016 pursuant to a 2014 memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the King County Coalition of Unions, which the Council approved on November 10, 2014, by Ordinance 17916.

1. Additional classifications

Addendum A to the CBA (Att. 1-A, following p. 17) adds two new classifications to the bargaining unit:

* Staff Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) Specialist – at Pay Range 50 (the same as the existing classification called “CASA Specialist”); and
* Program Attorney/ Attorney Guardian Ad Litem – at Pay Range 58 (the same as the existing classification called “CASA Attorney”).

According to Superior Court staff, the new classifications will allow the Court to meet the need for GALs and GAL Attorneys when no volunteers are available: “There are many more dependency children needing a GAL than we have volunteers for. Having GALs on staff means the CASA program can react quickly when the court orders immediate action on a dependency case that either has no CASA volunteer assigned to it, or the volunteer cannot/does not wish act on it.”

Court staff has provided a summary of the duties of each classification, which is contained in Attachment 3 to this staff report.

According to Superior Court staff, the addition of the new classifications to the bargaining unit will have no fiscal impact, since the new positions in those classifications are taking the place of CASA Specialist and CASA Attorney positions that were vacant and there is no difference in the Pay Range.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

The proposed new CBA would have no fiscal impact beyond that of the MOA that the Council approved by Ordinance 17916 in November 2014. The amounts listed in the Fiscal Note (Att. 6) are the COLAs and lump sum payments attributable to that MOA.

**INVITED**

1. Gerry Topping, Labor Relations Manager, Office of Labor Relations
2. Mary Louis, Union Representative, Washington State Council of County and City Employees, Council 2

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Proposed Ordinance 2015-0341

Att. A (Collective Bargaining Agreement)

1. “Four CASA Programs in King County”
2. Classification Descriptions
3. Checklist and Summary of Changes
4. Transmittal letter
5. Fiscal Note

1. Working conditions for these employees (other than compensation and benefits) are negotiated by the Superior Court, not by the County Executive, and are not subject to review and approval by the Council. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. There is a separate, private, non-profit program called Family Law CASA of King County. The difference between that program and Superior Court’s Dependency CASA Program is described in Attachment 2, which is a document entitled “Four CASA Programs in King County,” which Family Law CASA has posted on its website: http://www.familylawcasa.org/difference-between-casa-prog/. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)