

NEWS

Stark District Library board approves raises for union staff

Robert Wang, The Repository

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CANTON – The Stark County District Library board has approved a three-year contract that will give 104 of its union employees raises.

Stephanie Cargill, the district library's director of communications, said the raises, which will cost about \$500,000 for the first year, will average 17% for the first year, 3.5% the second year and 3% the third year.

She said the hikes are meant to get salary levels for certain positions in line with average salaries offered by other Northeast Ohio library districts, according to a 2021 library compensation survey.

More: New North Branch library reopens after 5 months of renovations

She said some job classifications got raises of \$3-per-hour. Drivers of the bookmobile got raises that acknowledge their commercial driver's licenses.

Cargill said most of the library employees are members of Service Employees International Union District 1199, which ratified the contract on March 18.

Voters in May 2019 approved an 8-year 2-mill levy for the Stark County District Library that increased its revenue by more than \$3 million a year.

The Stark County District Library includes the part of Stark County not in the Massillon, Minerva, Louisville, Alliance, Marlinton, North Canton and Northwest school districts.

Pay increases

Those currently employed would receive raises of 3.5% in April 2023 and 3% in April 2024. Any hires after April 1 of 2022 or 2023 would receive a 2% raise the following April 1.

The costs of the raises in 2023 and 2024 are about \$115,000 a year for a total of about \$730,000 over the life of the contract, according to an email from the library district.

The roughly 104 union employees collective earned about \$3.2 million during the third year of the current contract, which expires March 31. The new contract that replaces it runs from April to March 2025.

The contract increases pay scale minimums for nine job classifications. For example, a Maintenance I employee would see their minimum wage salary increase from \$10.26 an hour this year to \$10.53 an hour on April 1 and up to \$10.84 on April 1, 2024. A system analyst at the highest pay scale would go from a minimum \$21.16 an hour this year to a minimum \$23.27 on April 1 to \$23.97 on April 1, 2024.

The contract language also establishes pay increases that require employees who started at various times to get a percentage of their pay grade or a percent salary increase, whichever is higher effective April 1.

In addition, employees moved up to a higher vacation accrual rate after two years of service rather than five years of service under the past contract, Cargill said.

Juneteenth on June 19 becomes an additional paid holiday. Library branches will also be closed on that day starting this year. And employees can get paid bereavement leave if other family members die other than the other types of family members previously listed in the prior contract.

SEIU District 1199 Administrative Organizer Mike Wood declined to release the ratification vote counts. But he said the union members, who met for the vote at the library district's North Branch in Canton, approved the agreement by a large margin. Wood said negotiations began Feb. 4 and the two sides reached a tentative agreement on March 11.

Wood said the library district had "been historically underpaying library workers" and the new contract got the wages more in line with what was appropriate.

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