



SHERIFF: FIREFIGHTER RAISES NOT A RESPONSIBLE MOVE - SHERIFF LAMBERTI WILL CONTEST MEDIATOR'S RECOMMENDATION

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Author: *Brittany Wallman Sun Sentinel*

Broward Sheriff Al Lamberti blasted a mediator's ruling that said he should give his firefighters raises, saying it's not responsible given the budget woes the county faces.

Hundreds of employees at Broward Sheriff's Office had no raises this year and instead suffered unpaid furloughs. Deputies at the jails are facing layoffs or demotion to "technician," and layoffs, and had no raises this year. Only the deputies got raises.

The sheriff was proposing no salary increase for the firefighters. The International Association of Fire fighters union declared an impasse in January. The two sides went to mediation, and the sheriff proposed 5 percent pay cuts.

The special magistrate issued his opinion this week, recommending the firefighters get 3 percent raises next April.

"First, we're disappointed he would recommend nearly \$5 million in pay and benefits at a time BSO is trying to meet the public safety needs, number one, and needs to cut \$60 million," Lamberti said Friday.

He said he expects the ruling to be contested.

"The County Commission may need to impose terms that are more realistic and fiscally responsible," he said.

Lamberti was critical of the special magistrate, who he said was not local, didn't know that "ALS" stands for "Advanced Life Support," and lives in Wisconsin.

"He's not familiar with the community, the financial issues, the fire service. ... He flies into town carrying a briefcase, listens to this and puts out this recommendation for a 3 percent pay raise. He's since returned home to Wisconsin. He doesn't have to worry about this, or be held accountable to the grave consequences."

Pay and benefits are a mixed bag at BSO. Though about 900 employees who weren't in unions had unpaid furloughs, the deputies in the Police Benevolent Association got raises.

Meanwhile, the deputies in the jails didn't get the raises, and are facing demotions and layoffs.

Lamberti said his hands are tied because of union contracts. If not, he said, he'd impose unpaid furloughs on all of his employees.

Brittany Wallman can be reached at bwallman@sunsentinel.com or 954-356-4541.

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