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COLLECTIVE BARGAINING NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN EL PASO COUNTY AND THE SHERIFF'S ASSOCIATION COME TO A HALT

On Thursday September 20, 2007, members of the "County Collective Bargaining Team" met with representatives from the El Paso County Sheriff's Association to negotiate terms for the new contract for uniformed members of the El Paso County Sheriff's Office. The contract is estimated to be worth more than a quarter of a billion dollars over the next 5 years.

Today's meeting was convened after representatives of the El Paso County Sheriff's Association appeared before Commissioner's Court on Monday September 10, 2007 requesting that Commissioner's Court eliminate any language concerning 207k* from the contract. The 207k provision in Section 1 of Article 8 of the current contract defines the method of calculating the payment of overtime and provides the County with the ability to potentially save taxpayers millions of dollars, by reducing overtime payments over the life of the contract by approximately \$16.2 million.

Based upon the union's statements to commissioner court, the "County Collective Bargaining Team" today proposed to eliminate the changes to the overtime provision from its proposal, in return for the union dropping all of their other requests for additional increases over and above the significant increases the current contract already provides for. If the union were to drop its request for the additional increases in exchange for the County eliminating the 207k provision, the county would only be able to eliminate \$2.2 million from the anticipated \$37.4 million increase the new contract would cost taxpayers over the next five years.

The union at that point stated that there was no point in continuing the negotiations because they would not consider dropping their other requests in exchange for the county dropping the "207k Overtime" provision.

The union said they intended to present their proposal directly to commissioners' court next Monday.

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For more information call Assistant County Attorney Holly Lytle at 546-2081.

*** About Section 207k:** Section 207k of the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act allows employers of police and firefighters to use an alternative method of scheduling working hours to reduce overtime as opposed to the traditional 40-hour workweek. Under 207k employers of law enforcement personnel may set a work schedule of up to 171 hours in a 28 day work period before payment of time and one/half is required to be made.