

Frequently Asked Questions

Below are questions related to issues of the strike, that have been asked frequently by members of the public or the Assembly, and answers to each. The Borough will add to this list as necessary.

Staff will strive to answer questions in a timely manner, but there will be delays in response. The Borough is making every reasonable effort to provide necessary public services. However, this is a strike and there will likely be suspended and reduced services.

We invite the public to listen to the recordings of the June 8 and June 20, 2017 Assembly meetings (links provided below). We realize the meetings are long and will take time to listen, but it clarifies many questions regarding the strike situation.

Q: Is the Borough advertising to replace the striking employee positions?

A: No, the Borough is only advertising temporary positions within the departments where employees are striking in order to continue to provide services to the community.

Q: How many temporary positions have been hired?

A: Since the strike began on June 22, 2017, only one temporary employee has been hired in the sanitation department. This will allow the public to haul their garbage to the dump for disposal and shipping.

Q: Why is the Borough refusing to bargain?

A: Borough management did not refuse to bargain. The last proposal the Borough received from the IBEW was on June 8th, and was the proposal that the IBEW presented to the Assembly at the June 8th Special meeting for that sole purpose. After considering the offer, the Assembly approved two of the three proposed provisions, and directed management to return to bargaining over the last provision, the amount of the hourly wage rate increase. On June 9, 2017, as directed by the Assembly, the Borough made a counter offer to the Union. The Union rejected that offer and advised it would not make any further offers to the Borough. The Union advised that it would vote to either accept the Borough's last offer or strike.

Q: Can I listen to the presentation by the Union to the Assembly?

A: Yes, the link to the meeting on June 8, 2017, is <http://www.wrangell.com/administration/audio-recordings-assembly-meetings> .

Q: How could the Assembly approve the Union contract?

A: The Union declared an impasse, allowing them to present their last offer to the Assembly per a court Settlement Agreement from December of 2016. The union again stated an impasse had been reached at the June 8, 2017 meeting, during their presentation. After that meeting, the Borough made a counter offer on the one provision that had been rejected by the Assembly, but on which they directed staff to return to the bargaining table regarding the amount of the hourly wage-rate increase. The Borough made a counter offer the next day, which was rejected by the union and then voted down by the union members, in favor of a strike. As the union had stated there was impasse, and rejected the Borough's offer with no counter offer, the Assembly could decide to implement the Borough's offer of June 9. The June 20, 2017 meeting when the Assembly voted to implement a new employee Contract is available for listening at <http://www.wrangell.com/administration/audio-recordings-assembly-meetings> .

Q: Why can't the parties go back to negotiating?

A: The Borough Assembly voted to implement the Borough's last offer of June 9, 2017 effective July 1, 2017 after no further counter offers were submitted by the union and the Borough's last offer was rejected. The Agreement is in effect for the next three years. As of Wednesday June 21, 2017, the Union filed an unfair labor practice (ULP) claim against the Borough that will take time to resolve through the Alaska Labor Relations Agency. The Borough did not receive the claim until June 23, and the Union has not specified the basis of the claim. The Borough will respond to the claim after the Union specifies the basis and the Alaska Labor Relations Agency requests a response from the Borough.

Q: Have Borough employees received wage increases?

A: Yes. The Borough has established wage-rate tables. Annually, during the month of a permanent employee's anniversary start date, supervisors conduct performance evaluations, and if a satisfactory performance evaluation is received, the employee will move to the next step in the wage-rate table, which is a 2-3% wage-rate increase.

Q: What are the employee wage and benefit amounts?

A: There is a table in the FY18 approved budget that lists all Borough positions, the wage, and benefits received. It is page 59 in the current online version (which is not the final print version available next month) found at <http://www.wrangell.com/finance/financial-reports-budget-and-audit>.

Q: When was the Borough notified of the Strike?

A: The Borough was first informally advised of a potential strike Friday evening June 9, 2017 after Union members told Assembly members that the union members had voted to strike that day. The Borough was not officially notified of the Strike until the morning of the strike date, June 22, 2017. Notification was sent by fax to the Police Department and City Hall, shortly after

8:00am and the formal strike announcement was made to the union members within their respective departments, by their shop stewards.

Q: How can the City afford to raise the Borough Manager's salary 47%?

A: This issue has no bearing on anything related to the IBEW, the negotiation process, the unfair labor practices claim against the Borough, or the strike. But because the issue continues to surface, for information purposes, the Manager's compensation package has not increased by 47%, it has increased 37.6% since 2004, or an average of 2.5% per year. Please keep in mind also, that the Borough Manager has a specific contract with the Assembly and is considered an "exempt" position, serving at the pleasure of the Assembly, and the Borough Manager can be terminated at will. Former Borough Manager Jabusch's total compensation in 2015 and 2016 was just over 2% higher than Borough Manager Rooney's total compensation as of 2012, and 8.4% higher than Borough Manager Prunella's total compensation as of 2009. Borough Manager Jabusch received no retirement or health insurance benefits, whereas usually Borough Managers do.

Borough Manager Compensation 2004 to Present								
Manager	As of	Annual Salary	Retirement	Health insurance	FICA & Medicare	Total Wages & Benefits	Car provided?	Years of service
Bob Prunella	07/31/04	80,000	6,400	14,648	6,120	107,168	Yes	4
Bob Prunella	07/31/05	83,480	6,400	17,306	6,386	113,572	Yes	5
Bob Prunella	07/31/06	84,456	6,756	18,281	6,461	115,954	Yes	6
Bob Prunella	07/31/07	86,988	6,959	17,736	6,655	118,338	Yes	7
Bob Prunella	05/31/08	89,604	7,168	17,736	6,855	121,363	Yes	8
Bob Prunella	12/31/08	91,392	7,311	20,513	6,991	126,207	Yes	8
Bob Prunella	07/31/09	91,392	16,329	15,830	6,991	130,542	Yes	9
Tim Rooney	09/30/09	105,000	16,500	6,417	8,033	135,950	Yes	0
Tim Rooney	07/31/10	105,000	16,500	6,417	8,033	135,950	Yes	1
Tim Rooney	07/31/11	105,630	16,500	6,388	8,081	136,598	Yes	2
Tim Rooney	09/30/12	112,044	16,500	7,223	8,571	144,339	Yes	3
Jeff Jabusch	11/30/13	112,044	-	7,788	8,571	128,403	No	35
Jeff Jabusch	01/31/14	142,000	-	-	10,863	152,863	No	36
Jeff Jabusch	06/30/14	142,000	-	-	10,863	152,863	No	36
Jeff Jabusch	6/30/2015	136,992	-	-	10,479	147,471	No	37
Jeff Jabusch	6/30/2016	136,992	-	-	10,479	147,471	No	38
Jeff Jabusch	3/31/2017	136,992	-	-	10,479	147,471	No	39

Q: Where can I find updated information about affected Borough-provided services?

A: The Borough is currently providing updated service information on <http://www.wrangell.com/community/ibew-union-members-strike-updates> . The exact webpage may change, but a link to updates will always be available on the home page www.Wrangell.com.

Q: Why did the garbage updates change so much?

A: Staff is evaluating the coordination of services daily. Information will change as we address issues that surface. Staff will provide those updates on the Borough's facebook page and website and on KSTK radio as quickly as possible. The Borough is asking residents and business to check back frequently for any updates.

Q: Who is managing the water plant?

A: The Borough has contracted with a firm, Northern Utility Services LLC, a water treatment consulting firm who also operates, maintains and manages multiple water treatment facility systems in Alaska. Their water treatment operators have the certifications required by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation to operate Wrangell's treatment plant. While in Wrangell, they have also offered to provide review and consultation on a variety of ongoing issues within the water treatment plant and distribution systems.

Q: Are we going to have to pay the monthly garbage fee on our utility bill?

A: The Borough anticipates providing a discounted rate for garbage charges depending on the duration of the strike. What the exact discount will be is still being formulated as it depends on the duration of the strike. Trash collection is only part of the cost associated with the monthly sanitation charge on your utility bill. The August bill will be prorated to reflect the loss of the collection portion of the bill, but the charges for the shipping and transfer station maintenance will remain on the bill.