

Contract Deal Would Give Sanitation Workers 17% Raise Over 54 Months

By STEVEN GREENHOUSE

The city's sanitation workers would receive raises totaling 17 percent as part of a tentative four-and-a-half-year contract announced yesterday by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg.

The deal also gives the city's 6,600 sanitation workers an additional holiday, Martin Luther King's Birthday, making them the first uniformed union to be given that day off.

Harry Nespoli, the president of the Uniformed Sanitationmen's Association, said that making that day a holiday for his workers was fitting because the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in 1968 when he was in Memphis to back a sanitation workers' strike.

In the final year of the tentative 54-month contract, the maximum sala-

ry for the city's sanitation workers would rise to \$67,141, up from the current \$57,392.

The settlement also calls for immediately raising the starting salary to \$30,000, up 11 percent from the current \$27,000. In its previous contract, which expired on March 2, the union agreed to a lower starting salary, following a pattern set by an arbitration ruling for the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association.

"This is a fair contract that provides a decent wage increase for sanitation workers already on the job without penalizing the unborn," Mr. Nespoli said.

The police union continues to have a low starting salary, \$25,100, because it has been unable to reach a new agreement with Mr. Bloomberg since its last contract expired three

A paid holiday is awarded for Martin Luther King's Birthday.

years ago.

The sanitation union reached its new contract four months after the old one expired, a very short lag by city standards. In its old contract, the union got a raise larger than expected, in return for an important productivity breakthrough, the one-person garbage truck.

Under the new settlement, sanitation workers would receive a 4

percent raise retroactive to March 2, 2007, a 4 percent raise on March 2, 2008, a 4 percent raise on Aug. 21, 2009, and another 4 percent on Aug. 21, 2010. Compounded, those raises total 17 percent. The contract expires Sept. 20, 2011. The union's full membership is scheduled to vote on the contract over the next few weeks.

Mr. Nespoli said his union did not have to make concessions on benefits for new workers, like fewer sick days, as several other unions have done to secure higher starting salaries. Instead, to finance those raises and various benefits, Mr. Nespoli agreed to stretch out the contract by an extra six months and 19 days without a raise during that period.

"What this does is make a solid bloc in the union," Mr. Nespoli said. "I refused to give up benefits that

other union people fought for."

As part of the deal, the city agreed to increase its contributions to the employees' annuity fund and to their welfare fund for prescriptions and eyeglasses. The city also agreed to contribute \$2 million to a new supplemental annuity fund that would increase the workers' retirement earnings.

"This is a solid contract because it covers the new man, the middle man and the guys that are finishing up," Mr. Nespoli said.

The city said that if wages and benefits are figured together, the settlement means a nearly 20 percent increase.

"The agreement is a testament to the collaborative and cooperative process of collective bargaining," Mr. Bloomberg said.