

CSEA contracts with city go up for vote by union membership

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By PATRICK H. DONGES, The Saratogian

SARATOGA SPRINGS — Local union membership voted on a proposed contract between the city and its two units of the Civil Service Employees Union Tuesday afternoon in City Hall.

The results of that vote were not immediately available.

Contracts with the city's two CSEA units — the Department of Public Works unit and City Hall unit — expired Dec. 31, 2008, and negotiations between union officials and Mayor Scott Johnson have been ongoing since.

In a Saratogian interview with Johnson in December 2010, health insurance was identified as a sticking point.

"Typically, it's going to be two things on any type of contract that's reached; it's wage issues — wage increases and benefits. And benefits today really mean health care," he said.

Last April, Johnson attempted to enact a plan that would have consolidated the city's four health insurance providers — MVP, CDPHP, Blue Shield and Empire — and instead offer two coverage options from MVP.

After a judge issued a temporary restraining order preventing the changes from taking effect before their implementation, both the city's Public Safety unions and both CSEA units filed grievances against the plan.

Johnson and union officials have since met with state arbitrators to reach a decision on the matter; a resolution is still pending.

An informational meeting for union members has been set for 5 p.m. Thursday in the council chamber of City Hall. The intention of the meeting is to answer members' questions about the proposed contract.