FILED
December 12, 2024
State of Nevada
E.M.R.B.

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STATE OF NEVADA

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE-MANAGEMENT

RELATIONS BOARD

CLARK COUNTY DEFENDERS UNION, Case No. 2024-014

Complainant,

v.

CLARK COUNTY,

Respondent.

respondent

CLARK COUNTY,

Counter-Claimant,

v.

CLARK COUNTY DEFENDERS UNION,

Counter-Respondent.

NOTICE OF ENTRY OF ORDER

PANEL A

ITEM NO. 904

TO: Complainant/Counter-Respondent Clark County Defenders Union and their attorneys, Adam Levine, Esq. and the Law Office of Daniel Marks;

TO: Respondent/Counter-Claimant Clark County and its attorneys, Scott Davis, Deputy District Attorney and the Clark County Deputy District Attorney's Office.

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the **DECISION**, **FINDINGS OF FACT AND**

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW was entered in the above-entitled matter on December 12, 2024.

A copy of said order is attached hereto.

DATED this 12th day of December 2024.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS BOARD

By: MARISU ROMUALDEZ ABELLAR Executive Assistant

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING I hereby certify that I am an employee of the Government Employee-Management Relations Board, and that on the 12th day of December 2024, I served a copy of the foregoing NOTICE OF **ENTRY OF ORDER** by mailing a copy thereof, postage prepaid to: Law Office of Daniel Marks Daniel Marks, Esq. Adam Levine, Esq. 610 South Ninth Street Las Vegas, NV 89101 Scott R. Davis, Deputy District Attorney Clark County District Attorney's Office Civil Division 500 S. Grand Central Parkway Las Vegas, NV 89155 **Executive Assistant**

FILED December 12, 2024 State of Nevada E.M.R.B.

STATE OF NEVADA

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS BOARD

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Case No. 2024-014

7 CLARK COUNTY DEFENDERS UNION,

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Complainant,

DECISION, FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

PANEL A

CLARK COUNTY.

v.

Respondent.

CLARK COUNTY,

Counterclaimant,

V.

CLARK COUNTY DEFENDERS UNION,

Counter-Respondent

ITEM NO. 904

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I. BACKGROUND

On November 6 - 7, 2024 and on December 9, 2024, this matter came before the State of Nevada, Government Employee-Management Relations Board ("Board") for consideration and decision pursuant to the provision of the Employee-Management Relations Act (the Act), NRS Chapter 288, and NAC Chapter 288. At issue was Clark County Defender's Union ("Complainant" or "CCDU") Amended Prohibited Practice Complaint and Clark County's ("Respondent" or "Clark County") Counterclaim for Bad Faith Bargaining and Premature Declaration of Impasse. The Board conducted a hearing on the matter on November 6 and 7,

2024. The Board began deliberations on November 7, 2024, but was unable to reach a decision on the matter and tabled the final decision until December 9, 2024.

II. DISCUSSION

A. CCDU's Prohibited Practice Complaint - Failure to Bargain in Good Faith under NRS 288.270(1)(e).

Under NRS 288.270(1)(e) and (2)(b), it is a prohibited practice for either a local government employer, or a designated employee representative, to willfully refuse to bargain in good faith as required under NRS 288.150. The requirement to bargain in good faith includes the entire bargaining process, including mediation, and fact finding. NRS 288.270(1)(e) and (2)(b).

A party's conduct at the bargaining table must show a sincere desire to come to an agreement. The determination of whether there has been such sincerity is made by drawing inferences from the conduct of the parties as a whole. *City of Reno v. Int'l Ass'n of Firefighters, Local 731*, Item No. 253-A (EMRB, Feb. 8, 1991), quoting *NLRB v. Ins. Agent's Int'l Union*, 361 U.S. 488 (1970).

Moreover, "[i]n order to show 'bad faith,' a complainant must present 'substantial evidence of fraud, deceitful action or dishonest conduct." *Juvenile Justice Supr. Ass'n v. County of Clark*, p.5, Case No. 2017-20, Item No. 834 (EMRB, Dec 13, 2018) (Citations omitted). Adamant insistence on a bargaining position or "hard bargaining" is not enough to show bad faith bargaining. *Reno Municipal Employees Ass'n v. City of Reno*, Item No. 93 (EMRB, Jan. 11, 1980); *City of Reno v. Reno Police Protective Ass'n*, Case No. A1-046096, Item No. 790 (EMRB, Nov. 27, 2013) (bad faith bargaining does not turn on a single isolated incident; but rather the Board looks at the totality of conduct throughout negotiations to determine whether a party's conduct at the bargaining table evidences a real desire to come into agreement), citing *Int'l Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 1245 v. City of Fallon*, Case No. A1-045485, Item No. 269 (EMRB, July 25, 1991). Furthermore, as noted in *Washoe County School District v. Washoe School Principals Association*, Consolidated Case Nos.

2023-024 and 2023-031, Item No. 895 (EMRB, March 29, 2024), evidence of bad faith may 1 2 include one or more of the following: • Refusing to bargain on mandatory subjects of bargaining; 3 • Cancellation of bargaining sessions; 4 • Delays/Extended periods of unavailability for bargaining; • Imposing conditions on bargaining; 5 • *Insufficient authority to bargain*; 6 • *Refusal to provide information;* • Refusal to meet and unreasonable meeting times and sites; 7 • Boulwarism (take it or leave it type offers); • Surface bargaining; 8 • *Direct dealing*; 9 • Regressive bargaining; • *Unilateral changes*: 10 • Withdrawal of accepted offers; and 11 • Refusal to sign a written agreement. 12 In this case, Complainant argues that Respondent Clark County failed to negotiate in 13 good faith by: (a) engaging in surface bargaining and regressive bargaining; (b) failing to 14 provide information; and (c) failing to bargain in a timely manner. 15 16 a. Surface Bargaining. 17 18

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1. Surface Bargaining and Regressive Bargaining.

Surface bargaining is a strategy by which one of the parties merely goes through the motions, with no intention of reaching an agreement. Washoe County, supra. In this regard, it is a form of bad faith bargaining. City of Reno v. Int'l Ass'n of Firefighters, Local 731, Item No. 253-A (EMRB, Feb. 8, 1991). Distinguishing surface bargaining from good faith bargaining depends on the facts supporting the claim. See Washoe County.

In this case, Complainant suggests that Respondent was only going through the motions and had no intention of reaching any agreement with Complainant. However, Respondent did submit numerous articles throughout the course of the negotiations between the parties. Furthermore, Respondent did provide responses to most of the proposals submitted by Complainant aside from those from the final negotiating session where impasse was declared that is discussed in more detail below in Section B(2). In sum, the Board does not find that Respondent engaged in surface bargaining.

b. Regressive Bargaining.

Regressive bargaining is not defined in the NRS nor NAC, nor has the Board ever had occasion to do so. Thus, the Board finds that it is necessary to turn to NLRB decisions on this topic. A regressive bargaining proposal is defined, logically, as a change from a prior more favorable proposal. *Mid-Continent Concrete*, 336 NLRB 258, 260 (2001). Such proposals include a party making an initial contract proposal that is less favorable to employees than the status quo. Regressive proposals are not per se unlawful; they may be justified by changes in the economy of the industry and the relative strengths of the participants. *Rescar, Inc.*, 274 NLRB 1, 2 (1985). However, regressive proposals are indicative of bad faith if left unexplained or if the explanation appears dubious. *Mid-Continent Concrete* at 260. "What is important is whether they are 'so illogical' as to warrant the conclusion that the Respondent by offering them demonstrated an intent to frustrate the bargaining process and thereby preclude the reaching of any agreement." *Barry-Wehmiller Co.*, 271 NLRB 471, 473 (1984), quoting *Hickinbotham Bros. Ltd.*, 254 NLRB 96, 103 (1981). The Board adopts the paragraph above for the purposes of defining regressive bargaining and how to apply the doctrine to cases.

There is no dispute that Respondent's first proposals were regressive in nature. The question was whether the proposals were intended to frustrate the bargaining process. The Board does not find the Respondent's proposals were meant to frustrate the bargaining process. Rather, the Board finds that the proposals reflected the relative strength of the parties and were primarily meant to help establish Respondent's bargaining position.

2. Failure to Provide Information.

Under NRS 288.270(2)(d), it is a prohibited practice for an employee organization to fail to provide documents related to mandatory subjects of bargaining as provided under NRS 288.180(2) which states:

2. Following the notification provided for in subsection 1, the employee organization or the local government employer may request reasonable information concerning any subject matter included in the scope of mandatory bargaining which it deems necessary for and relevant to the negotiations. The information requested must be furnished without

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unnecessary delay. The information must be accurate, and must be presented in a form responsive to the request and in the format in which the records containing it are ordinarily kept. If the employee organization requests financial information concerning a metropolitan police department, the local government employers which form that department shall furnish the information to the employee organization.

The language in NRS 288.180(2) makes it clear that both parties can make requests for records, and that the requests must be reasonable and related to mandatory subjects of bargaining. *Id., see also International Association of Fire Fighters, Local 5046,* Case No. 2019-011, Item No. 847-A (EMRB, July 8, 2020); *Law Vegas Fire Fighters Local 1285, International Association of Fire Fighters v. City of Las Vegas,* Case No. A1-046074, Item No. 786 (EMRB, May 21, 2013). Furthermore, once such a request is made, the information must be furnished without unnecessary delay. *Id.* Finally, the Board utilizes the "significant relationship" test when analyzing the negotiability of a topic. *Truckee Meadows v. International Association of Fire Fighters, Local 2487,* Case No. A1-045400, Item No. 196 (EMRB, Sept. 21, 1987). The significant relationship test can be described as whether or not, from the facts presented, the subject matter involved is directly and significantly related to any one of the subjects specifically enumerated in NRS 288.150(2). *Id.*

The evidence in this case shows that CCDU submitted a request for the financial impact of a 1% cost of living ("COLA") adjustment on January 3, 2024. This information is clearly related to a mandatory subject of bargaining under NRS 288.150(2) and was reasonable. There was also credible evidence presented that the request was routine and that responding to the request was a relatively simple task that should have only required a week at most to comply with. However, Respondent did not provide the requested information until May 1, 2024, i.e., almost 4 months after the request was made.

The Board finds that Respondent failed to furnish the requested information without unnecessary delay. In fact, Respondent failed to provide any credible evidence indicating that the delay was excusable in any way. Clark County as a whole is responsible for ensuring that information requests are provided in a timely manner and no reasonable excuse for the delay was provided. The Board therefore finds that Respondent engaged in bad faith bargaining by failing to provide the requested information within a reasonable period of time.

3. Failure to Bargain in a Timely Manner, Including After Declaration of Impasse.

Complainant argued that Respondent failed to negotiate in a timely manner, including delaying the scheduling of the mediation. The timeline for events in this matter follows:

- January 3, 2024 Notice of Intent to Negotiate delivered to Respondent.
- February 27, 2024 1st negotiating session where Complainant submitted proposed changes to Article 1 (agreement effective date) and Article 10 (grievance procedures).
- March 6, 2024 2nd negotiating session held. County attempted to discuss ground rules. Article 1 proposal was signed by Respondent.
- March 13, 2024 3rd negotiating session held. Respondent introduced proposed changes to Article 7 (management rights) and Article 36 (terms of the agreement to create a 3-year contract term). Complainant submitted counterproposal to Article 36 (asking for an annual reopener provision).
- March 20, 2024 4th negotiating session held.
- April 3, 2024 5th negotiating session held. Respondent provided a
 preliminary tentative budget for FY25 and offered to provide a budget
 presentation. Complainant introduced 3 new Articles for consideration:
 Article 37 (bail reform); Article 31 (compensation); and Article 22
 (longevity pay).
- April 17, 2024 6th negotiating session held where Complainant introduced new financial proposals. Complainant declared impasse at this meeting. The financial proposals Complainant provided were:
 - i. Article 37 bail reform pay;
 - ii. Article 38 parity compensation with prosecutors;
 - iii. Article 12 salary increases for evaluations;
 - iv. Article 9 vacation sell back; and
 - v. A new Article 10 (version #3) regarding grievances procedures.

The parties discussed Article 7 and Respondent indicated they would withdraw their proposal. Respondent introduced four new proposals:

- i. Article 19 (vacation);
- ii. Article 20 (sick leave); and
- iii. Article 27 (severance pay).
- May 9, 2024 Respondent requested the parties engage in mediation and indicated that Respondent would "reach out to FMCS for some dates." If the Complainant was amenable to mediation. See Exhibit 20 at p. 00069.
- May 14, 2024 Complainant agreed to participate in mediation.
- June 13, 2024 Complainant wrote to Respondent and stated that more than one month had passed and mediation still had not yet been scheduled.
 See Exhibit 21.
- June 17, 2024 Mediator was finally selected.
- August 1, 2024 Mediation session held between the parties.

The Board finds the above schedule was reasonable up to the point where impasse was declared and mediation was requested by Respondent on May 9th and agreed upon by Complainant on May 14th. However, after a period of almost 3 months elapsed between the time that Respondent requested mediation and when mediation actually occurred. The entirety of NRS Chapter 288 makes it clear that time is of the essence in terms of participating in negotiations, mediation and fact-finding. NRS 288.190 which governs mediation is no exception to the rule that time is of the essence. Furthermore, NRS 288.200 makes it clear that once mediation has been chosen as an option, that process must be concluded prior to submitting the dispute to fact finding. To bolster this point, under NRS 288.200(1)(b) a mediator may also be a fact-finder in the same matter. Thus, the Board finds that there is no obligation on the part of any party to begin the fact-finding process until after mediation has concluded. However, to counter this finding, the Board reiterates that once mediation is chosen as an option, the parties must diligently work to begin mediation as soon as is feasible. In this case the Board finds that based on the evidence presented Respondent significantly delayed the

mediation process without good cause and contrary to the duty to act in good faith.

B. Respondent Clark County Counterclaims - Failure to Bargain in Good Faith Under NRS 288.270(2)(b).

As noted in Section A(1) above, NRS 288.270(2)(b) states that it is a prohibited practice for either a local government employer or a designated employee representative to willfully refuse to bargain in good faith as required under NRS 288.150. The requirement to bargain includes the entire bargaining process, including mediation, and fact finding. *Id.* Respondent has asserted that Complainant engaged in surface bargaining and rushed to declare impasse.

1. Surface Bargaining.

Surface bargaining is a strategy by which one of the parties merely goes through the motions, with no intention of reaching an agreement. In this regard, it is a form of bad faith bargaining. *City of Reno v. Int'l Ass'n of Firefighters, Local 731, Item No. 253-A* (EMRB, Feb. 8, 1991). Distinguishing surface bargaining from good faith bargaining depends on the facts supporting the claim.

In this instance, both parties presented substantive proposals and, aside from the proposals submitted by Complainant at the final meeting, most were considered and some were even adopted. The Board finds that given the facts and circumstances presented to the Board, there was no surface bargaining undertaken by either party. Again, the Board would note that the lack of ground rules may have been a contributing factor to both parties feeling that there may have been surface bargaining.

2. Rush to Impasse.

In Washoe County, supra, the Board adopted the following standards to determine what constitutes an impasse. First, an impasse is the point in which the parties are warranted in assuming that bargaining would be futile. Id. Second, both parties must believe they are "at the end of their rope." Id. Third, Impasse in negotiations is synonymous with a deadlock; the parties have discussed a subject, or subjects, in good faith, and, despite their best efforts to achieve agreement with respect to such, neither party is willing to move from its respective position. Id. Fourth, the bargaining history, the good faith of the parties in negotiations, the

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length of the negotiations, the importance of the issue or issues as to which there is disagreement, the contemporaneous understanding of the parties as to the state of negotiations are all relevant factors [the trier of fact should consider] in deciding whether an impasse exists and was proper. Fifth, in analyzing these factors, the Board looks at the totality of the circumstances and one or two factors alone may be sufficient to demonstrate the absence of impasse. *Id.*

In this case, a significant number of articles presented by both parties remained unresolved at the final meeting where impasse was declared. Complainant introduced five new financial proposals at the final negotiating session where impasse was declared and Respondent introduced three. See Section A(3) above. Thus, the evidence does not suggest that the parties were "at the end of their rope," rather it seems like the negotiations were just warming up. Furthermore, there was credible evidence that Respondent was open to negotiating all of the pending Articles, other than those that had been previously rejected. Respondent went further and even suggested holding an additional negotiating session in early May which would include counterproposals to those that had been submitted by Complainant. The Board also finds that it is not unreasonable that both Complainant and Respondent would need a bit more time to consider the flurry of proposals from the last two sessions since it was likely the new proposals would require internal discussions and detailed financial evaluation before definitive responses could be provided. The Board also examined the history of negotiations between the parties and finds that Complainant had an inclination to rush to impasse. Finally, the Board notes that there was an alarming lack of futility that would warrant a declaration of impasse. Thus, the Board finds that Complainant declared impasse in bad faith.

C. Failure to Discuss Ground Rules.

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Under NRS 280.180(3), the parties are required to at least broach the subject of ground rules at their first meeting. The Board understands that most parties establish bargaining ground rules and that such guidelines serve as a helpful device to streamline the negotiations process and to avoid petty disputes and unfair surprises. *City of Reno v. International Ass'n of Firefighters, Local 731*, Case No. A1-045472, Item No. 253-A (EMRB, Feb. 8, 1991).

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However, disputes over the interpretation of these guidelines should not be allowed to interfere with negotiations regarding mandatory subjects of bargaining. *Id.* If negotiations were allowed to breakdown over mere threshold issues, those who wish to impede the collective bargaining process would have a tool of avoidance to wield at the expense of those willing to bargain in good faith. *Id.*, *citing* to *NLRB v. Bartlett-Collins Co.*, 639 F.2d 652 (10th Cir. 1981), *cert denied 252 U.S. 961 (1981)*. Also, ground rules cannot be implemented except by mutual agreement which means that a party cannot unilaterally impose a ground rule as a precondition to bargaining. *Id.* Most importantly, ground rules are not mandatory subjects of bargaining under NRS 288.150.

There is no dispute that ground rules were discussed during the first meeting between the parties on February 27, 2024. It is also clear from the evidence presented that Complainant informed Respondent they did not want to discuss ground rules and believed the rules were not needed. However, the law is clear that ground rules are not a mandatory subject of bargaining and once a party unequivocally indicates they do not wish to discuss ground rules, there can be no finding of bad faith if a party rejects any proposed ground rules. However, the Board also finds that the lack of ground rules in this case most likely contributed to the lack of progress by the parties and hastened the declaration of impasse which was unnecessary given the sophistication of the parties and the issues involved.

III. FINDINGS OF FACT

- 1. The above discussion is incorporated herein to the extent it sets out findings of fact.
- 2. There was insufficient evidence to sustain a surface bargaining allegation against Respondent. *See* Section II(A)(1)(a) above.
- 3. There was insufficient evidence to sustain a regressive bargaining allegation against Respondent. *See* Section II(A)(1)(b) above.
- 4. Substantial evidence was presented showing that Respondent engaged in bad faith by significantly and unreasonably delaying the provision of information to Complainant as discussed in Section II(A)(2) above.

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- 5. Substantial evidence was presented which indicated that Respondent failed to bargain in a timely manner regarding setting up the mediation session. *See* Section II(A)(3) above.
- 6. There was insufficient evidence to sustain a surface binding allegation against Complainant. *See* Section II(B)(1) above.
- 7. There was insufficient information in support of a Substantial evidence was presented showing that Complainant engaged in bad faith negotiations by rushing to declare impasse as discussed in Section II(B)(2) above.
- 8. Any finding of fact above construed to constitute a conclusion of law is adopted as such to the same extent as if originally so denominated.

IV. CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

- 1. The above discussion is incorporated herein to that it sets out conclusions of law.
- 2. All findings of fact are based on the finding that there was a preponderance of evidence in support of all such findings.
- 3. There is an ongoing duty to act in good faith that extends from the negotiating period throughout the duration of the CBA. *See e.g.*, NRS 288.270(1)(e) and (2)(b) and NRS 288.032. *See* Discussion in Section II(A) above.
- 4. A party's conduct at the bargaining table must show a sincere desire to come to an agreement. The determination of whether there has been such sincerity is made by drawing inferences from the conduct of the parties as a whole. *City of Reno v. Int'l Ass'n of Firefighters, Local 731*, Item No. 253-A (EMRB, Feb. 8, 1991), quoting *NLRB v. Ins. Agent's Int'l Union*, 361 U.S. 488 (1970).
- 5. As noted in *Washoe County*, *supra*, evidence of bad faith may include one or more of the following:
 - Refusing to bargain on mandatory subjects of bargaining;
 - Cancellation of bargaining sessions;
 - Delays/Extended periods of unavailability for bargaining;
 - Imposing conditions on bargaining;
 - Insufficient authority to bargain;
 - Refusal to provide information;

• Refusal to meet and unreasonable meeting times and sites;

• Boulwarism (take it or leave it type offers);

Surface bargaining;

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- 6. CCDU will provide a copy of this Decision to each of its current members within ten (10) days from the date of this Decision and provide proof of such to Commissioner Snyder.
- 7. Both parties are hereby Ordered to refrain from engaging in the prohibited conduct described herein.
- 8. All other requested relief is hereby denied.

Dated this 12th day of December 2024.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS BOARD

BRENT ECKERSLEY, ESQ.
Presiding Officer

By:
SANDRA MASTERS, Board Member

By: <u>Jammara M. Williams</u> TAMMARA M. WILLIAMS, Board

TAMMARA M. WILLIAMS, Board Member