



# City of Stockton

## Legislation Text

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**File #: 25-1201, Version: 1**

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### **ADOPT A RESOLUTION TO EXECUTE A FIVE-YEAR AGREEMENT WITH LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE TO SERVE AS CHIEF NEGOTIATORS FOR LABOR NEGOTIATIONS**

#### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council adopt a resolution to:

1. Approve findings pursuant to Stockton Municipal Code section 3.68.070 in support of an exception to the competitive bidding process.
2. Authorize a budget amendment to appropriate \$1,500,000 from the General Fund Known Contingency Reserves to the Human Resources General Fund Legal Services Account.
3. Authorize the City Manager, or designee, to execute a (5) five-year agreement with the option to extend for two (2) additional (1) one-year terms with Liebert Cassidy Whitmore (LCW) to serve as Chief Negotiators for Labor Negotiations. The five-year contract amount will not exceed \$1,500,000 for the term of the agreement.

It is also recommended that the City Manager be authorized to take appropriate and necessary actions to carry out the purpose and intent of this resolution.

#### Summary

The Human Resources (HR) Department is seeking Council approval to enter into an agreement with LCW to serve as the City's Chief Negotiators for labor negotiations and binding arbitration with recognized employee organizations of the City of Stockton (Exhibit 1 to the Resolution). The proposed agreement is for a five (5) year term, with an option to extend for two (2) additional one-year terms. HR is estimating the total cost of the contract not to exceed \$1,500,000 to cover negotiations, binding arbitration, and any additional bargaining sessions and negotiation support that may occur throughout the term of the contract.

On October 9, 2025, the City issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for Chief Negotiator services and received three (3) submissions: Jackson Lewis, Renne Public Law Group, and LCW. Following a comprehensive evaluation process, LCW received the highest overall score and was selected through the City's formal procurement process. LCW has supported public agencies in California for more than 20 years in all areas of employment law and labor relations. They bring extensive experience in labor negotiations services including mediation, fact-finding, and arbitration. With more than 20 years of experience serving public agencies across California, LCW is a recognized leader in the industry, representing 81% of counties and 79% of Cities in their last fiscal year.

## DISCUSSION

### Background

The City engages in collective bargaining with multiple employee associations and labor groups to negotiate successor Memoranda of Understanding (MOU). These negotiations require the expertise of an experienced chief negotiator to ensure fair, consistent, and legally compliant labor agreements.

The City previously contracted with Sloan, Sakai Yeung and Wong, LLP (“Sloan Sakai”) law firm to serve as Chief Negotiators and represented the City’s interests at the bargaining table, provided strategic guidance, and assisted with contract language development.

Most recently, Sloan Sakai assisted with negotiations resulting in contracts approved by the Council on August 26, 2025, for the following safety bargaining groups:

- Stockton Police Management Association (SPMA);
- Stockton Firefighters’ Local 456 Unit; and
- Stockton Firefighters’ Local 456 Fire Management.

### Present Situation

The City has eight (8) bargaining units with contracts expiring on June 30, 2026, and requires LCW’s support to negotiate successor MOUs. These units include:

- Stockton City Employees’ Association (SCEA);
- Mid-Management / Supervisory Level (B&C);
- Operations and Maintenance (O&M)
- Trades and Maintenance (T&M);
- Water Supervisory Unit;
- Stockton Police Management Association (SPMA);
- Stockton Firefighters’ Local 456 Unit; and
- Stockton Firefighters’ Local 456 Fire Management.

In addition, the contract for the Stockton Police Officers’ Association (SPOA) has expired, and the parties have not reached agreement on a successor MOU as of the date of this report. LCW will also represent the City throughout the binding arbitration process with SPOA.

LCW will work collaboratively with HR, the City Attorney’s Office, the City Manager, the Budget Office, and other relevant stakeholders to develop and execute effective bargaining strategies, ensure legal compliance, and foster constructive labor relations.

### Findings

Pursuant to Stockton Municipal Code (SMC) Section 3.68.070, Council may approve findings which support an exception to the competitive bidding process. These findings include:

1. The City negotiated a contract following solicitation of competitive proposals in accordance with SMC section 3.68.070.A.3.

2. Use of the RFP process is appropriate for this agreement because, in addition to cost, it relies on the evaluation of professional qualifications and performance for the selection of Chief Negotiators.
3. Selection based on cost alone does not consider public sector experience or the ability to provide consistent quality claims administration.
4. Services such as contract negotiations require experienced professionals who have handled such services for other public entities.
5. The RFP process allows the vendors to specify what services they can provide to the City rather than the City bidding on specific services.

### FINANCIAL SUMMARY

With the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$1,500,000 from the General Fund Known Contingency Reserves to the Human Resources General Fund Legal Services Account, there will be sufficient funding to award a five-year contract to Liebert Cassidy Whitmore for chief negotiator services.