



# GENERAL TEAMSTERS LOCAL 251

*Affiliated with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Washington, D.C.*

July 6, 2023

Ms. Denise deMedeiros  
President, Tiverton Town Council  
343 Highland Road  
Tiverton, RI 02878

To Ms. deMedeiros and Members of the Tiverton Town Council:

Teamsters Local 251 represents thousands of workers in Rhode Island and Eastern Massachusetts, including the eight workers employed by the Town of Tiverton's Department of Public Works (DPW). They are dedicated professionals who are integral to the daily lives of the members of this community.

On behalf of these workers, I am writing today to express my frustration with the town regarding ongoing contract negotiations. Local 251 has been negotiating, in good faith, a contract with the town since July 2022. Fed up with the process, several DPW workers have left – creating additional duties for those remaining, with no wage increase to match the increase in workload – and the town has made no attempt to replace them.

The town has demanded that DPW Teamsters change their health insurance provider or else they will not be eligible for a raise for the next three years. DPW is already one of the lowest-paying departments in Tiverton and offering no raise at all is unfair and unacceptable in this economy. Our members chose the Teamster Health and Welfare plan because that is what is best for them and their families. It is deeply unjust that the municipality would force its workers off of their preferred health insurance plan.

Matthew Taibi  
*Secretary-Treasurer  
Principal Officer*

Paul Santos  
*President  
Business Agent*

Matthew Maini  
*Business Agent*

Thomas Salvatore  
*Business Agent*

Antonio Suazo  
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*General Teamsters in the entire state of Rhode Island and Southern Massachusetts including but not limited to the towns of Assonet, Fall River, Rehoboth, Seekonk, Somerset, Swansea and Westport.*

The Teamsters Health Fund had a surplus for fiscal year 2023. The fund voted to give the surplus back to the members, but the municipality chose not to sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that would have put money in the pockets of the DPW employees. With negotiations at an impasse, Local 251 decided to offer the cost savings (MOA) to the municipality. The savings Tiverton would have accrued was around \$27,000. In return, the DPW employees asked for a three percent raise for three years. The municipality has since rejected this offer.

The municipality has taken the position that the difference between the cost of the two health plans justifies not giving DPW a raise at the same rate as other departments. What the Town of Tiverton is failing to acknowledge is that the cost increase of the workers' insurance has been absorbed by the previous contracts over the years, which took the increases into account by offering lower raises. The municipality has also readily acknowledged it does not know what its proposed plan would cost in the coming years. The workers' plan has a flat, competitive increase – unlike the Town of Tiverton's proposal, which could change dramatically from year to year. Furthermore, under the union's proposal, costs for this year would be nearly identical to the inferior plan the municipality wants to force on DPW Teamsters. The only health care costs that should affect this current contract are the increases the plan has and will implement over the duration of the agreement.

The municipality has claimed there is a lack of funding. DPW is down to only eight workers, no attempts have been made to fill the two open positions. Given that DPW has only eight employees, a three percent raise – which has been given to the other department heads – is not unreasonable. This would cost roughly \$12,000 per year, far less than any other departments. Considering the two open positions have yet to be filled, the wages saved will cover the raises for the next three years. The Town of Tiverton has also retained a law firm notorious for union-busting, Whelan, Corrente, Kinder & Siket, LLP. If the municipality can afford the high cost of anti-union outside counsel, it can afford to give better raises to eight people.

This month marks two years since Teamsters working for the Town of Tiverton received their last raise. They work hard and the treatment they have faced is nothing short of frustrating. On behalf of these hardworking men and women, Local 251 is urging you, the members of the Tiverton Town Council, to negotiate with us in good faith. Workers want to be treated with dignity and respect while also being compensated fairly for the important work they do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Taibi', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Matthew Taibi

Secretary-Treasurer

Teamsters Local 251

MT/am