

City Officials Call For 'Open And Transparent' Negotiating Processes

■ By **AMY DEMPSEY**
Staff Writer

If Gov. Jerry Brown calls a special election in June, Long Beach voters may have the opportunity to approve a charter amendment that would allow the public to comment on ongoing city labor negotiations.

On January 18, the Long Beach City Council voted 7-0 to send the proposed "sunshine" requirements to the charter amendment committee for approval to be placed on the potential June ballot. The requirements are similar to the negotiating process within the Long Beach Unified School District said 5th District Councilmember Gerrie Schipske, who co-authored the agenda item with 3rd District Councilmember Gary DeLong.

"Any time we can provide information to the public, it takes away some of the rumors, I think, and the fodder that gets sent out there about what goes on in bargaining and what in fact the public employees are requesting in their contracts," Schipske said.

Kristen Duellum, representative from the International Association of Machinists (IAM), said that IAM is ready to work with Schipske to implement the requirements, but she expressed concern about allowing the public to comment on labor negotiations. "We feel it negates the process because councilmembers have the authority to decide on our contracts, and to be influenced by the general public, who are not part of those proposals and who are not part of the discussion . . . I don't think that would be appropriate whatsoever at this time," she said.

Schipske is working with City Attorney Robert Shannon to create a draft for the charter committee. Although a date has not been scheduled for the charter committee to consider the proposal, it must be approved by March 21 if there is a special election in June, she said. If a statewide special election is not scheduled, the city will not hold its own special election. If that is the case, Schipske is also working on an ordinance version of the proposal so the council may still implement the requirements.

Also required by the proposal, but does not require a charter amendment, is that all salaries for city positions be listed in the annual budget listing, which is already required by the state controller, Schipske said.

"We get a listing of all positions, and then total amount for salary or all the positions and a total amount for benefits, but they are never attached," she said. "You wouldn't know what a particular director makes in total compensation. We need to have that. We need to have that information when we're looking at salaries and benefits during negotiations." ■