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Township, police command union reach voluntary contract agreement

BY SARAH WOJCIK

swojcik@candgnews.com

SHELBY TOWNSHIP — Thirteen months after the Shelby Township Police Department command union's contract expired on Dec. 31, 2014, the union reached

a voluntary contract agreement with the township Feb. 16.

The ratified contract spans four years — Jan. 1, 2015, to Dec. 31, 2018 — and offers victories and concessions on both sides.

Lt. Scott Trumbo, the command union representative, and township labor attorney

Craig Lange both agreed that not having to rely on a third-party arbitrator to solve their differences was the biggest gain.

Arbitration is binding, expensive for both parties and sometimes unpredictable. Trumbo said the last two command contract negotiations ended in arbitration, and the

second-to-last time, the command union was denied all nine of its requests.

Trumbo added that he believes it had been six years since command officers received a wage increase.

"The negotiations were definitely

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Contract

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long and arduous and lasted 13 months, but the last few months were instrumental in forging an agreement," Trumbo said. "We had a long period of tension between the Police Department and the township board, and that's really behind us now. Everything is moving in a really good direction, and this agreement moves us forward very positively."

Trumbo said the command contract had previously been tied to the patrol contract, so when the patrol union received a wage increase, the command union did too. However, as a result of arbitration in 2013, he said there was a wage freeze in place until Jan. 1, 2015.

When the freeze lifted, Trumbo said, the command union received a 4 percent wage increase because it had missed out on the last two 2 percent wage increases that the patrol union had received.

"It was difficult for the command staff too, because the cost of living increased, health care went up and their pay did not, so there was a little bit of belt-tightening," Trumbo said.

The ratified contract allows for a 1 percent wage increase in 2016 to mirror the patrol union, as well as 2 percent increases in 2017 and 2018, independent of what happens with the patrol contract.

Another big gain for the command union, Trumbo said, was the restoration of an 84-hour pay period. Due to arbitration in the last contract, he said the command union's pay period had been decreased to 80 hours — an overall 5 percent pay decrease.

All command officers also received a \$900 signing bonus.

"With the contract being ratified on both sides, it was like, 'Here's \$900; thank you for avoiding arbitration,'" Trumbo said.

Going forward, Lange said he is most pleased that all patrol officers promoted to command positions will receive a 401(k)-type of retirement plan. Previously, a patrol officer without a pension promoted to a command position

would get a pension, despite the township's new-hire switch from pension to defined contribution plans.

Lange added that command officers hired after April 1, 2014, will begin using retiree health savings accounts, which, along with the elimination of all new pension plans, will save the township a lot of money.

Under the contract, the township capped funding for higher education related to the command officers' jobs to \$3,500 per person per year. Previously, the township had paid for unlimited schooling.

"I think the contract is fair to both sides," Lange said. "The

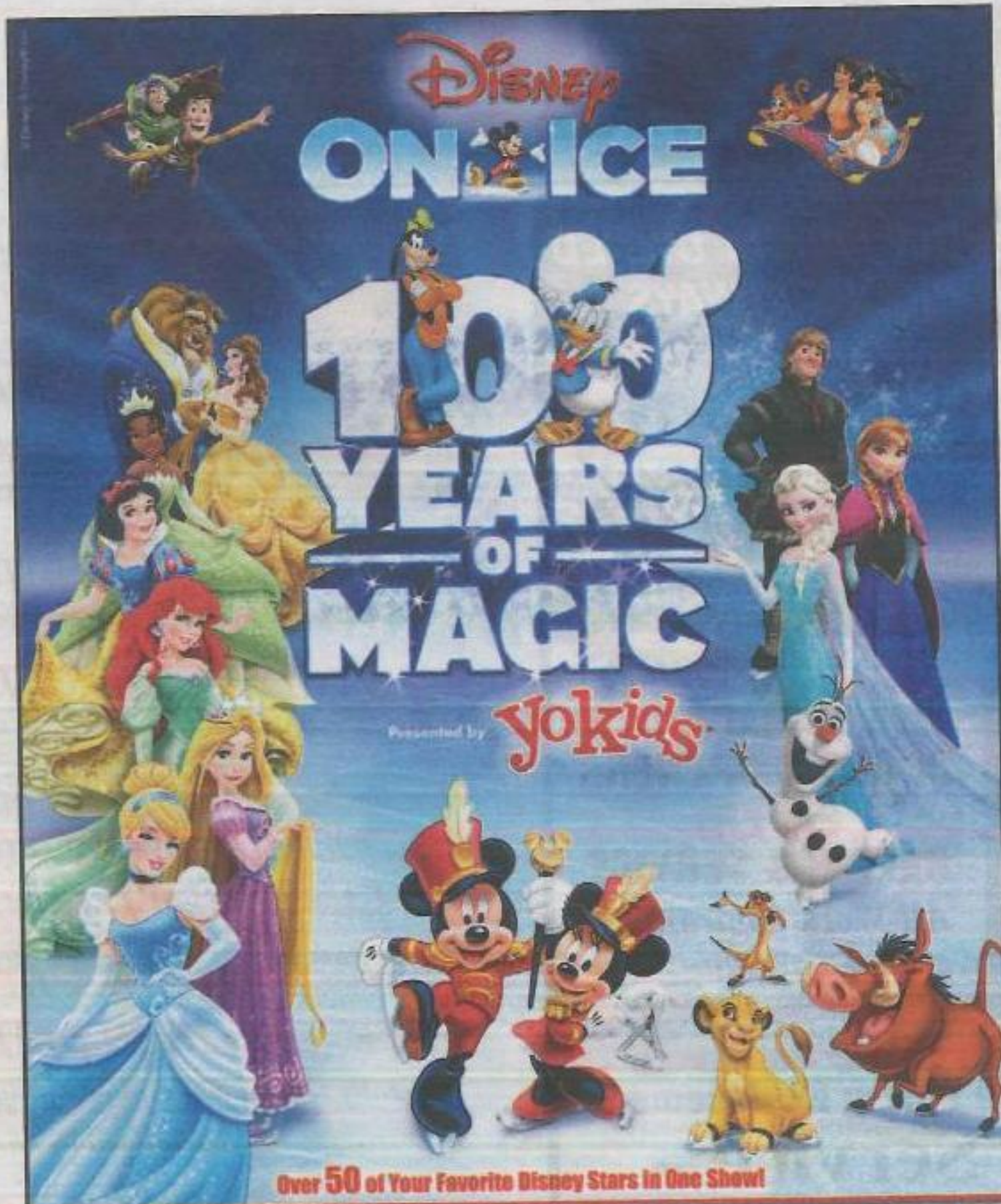
wage increase was minor, and they had gone with no salary increase at all."

Lange said he was glad both parties were able to sit down and work out their differences and that future negotiations look sunnier.

"Now we have stability and labor harmony — 'stability' meaning people don't have to think about contracts for several years," Trumbo said.

The Police Department includes the chief, which is a non-union position, and 63 sworn police officers, including 16 command officers.

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