Unionization of Kodiak City Employees May be Put Before Voters

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Erik Wander/KMXT

The question of union representation for Kodiak city employees, including the Kodiak Police Department, may be left up to voters to decide. That is if proponents can gather enough signatures by the upcoming deadline. KMXT's Erik Wander has more.

The Alaska Public Safety Employees Association, or PSEA, is the union that represents public safety groups across the state. Kodiak City Manager Aimee Kniaziowski said some members of the Kodiak Police Department previously expressed interest in representation through PSEA. Representatives from the group made a presentation to the Kodiak City Council earlier this year. However, the council took no action. Kniaziowski said that in the 1970s, the city of Kodiak, like many communities in the state, opted out of the Public Employee Relations Act, or PERA, which determined employees' rights.

-- (Kniaziowski 1 20 sec. "As an employer, the city ... opted out of PERA.")

Kniaziowski said efforts are currently underway to change the way the city engages in communication and conflict resolution with its employees. She said many but not all police departments in the state are represented by PSEA, and that the current efforts to gain representation were most likely rooted in police efforts to unionize.

-- (Kniaziowski 2 33 sec. "PSEA actively recruits in ... if it gets on the ballot.")

The petition Kniaziowski referred to is sponsored in part by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, with which PSEA is directly affiliated. If successful, it would put the unionization issue on the fall general election ballot. She said 13 petition packets are currently circulating among public employees, who are being approached for support. She said that from her perspective, the most interest continues to be expressed by the police department, but she doesn't have a good feel for general support or lack thereof.

-- (Kniaziowski 3 24 sec. "I don't think that at this ... petition circulation date.")

According to Kniaziowski, all 13 petition packets are to be submitted together to the City Clerk with a total of 225 signatures by July 21st. If certified, the issue will go on the fall ballot. The city council will hold a special meeting and executive session on July 20th to discuss the matter.

I'm Erik Wander.

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