How Did This Decision Become Mine?

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Abstract
Heidi, an MBA student who is only a couple of weeks into her new job as City Treasurer, was asked to be on the city’s negotiation team that would negotiate the new contract with the local firefighters’ union. She accepted the assignment with the understanding that her role would mainly be one of observation. She soon realized, however, that her responsibility as the City Treasurer put her in the role of primary decision maker with regard to what the city could afford to offer the firefighters in terms of increased wages, insurance benefits, and the possibility of certificate pay. The conflict within her arose due to her desire to fulfill her duties as treasurer by taking care that the monies collected in property taxes were spent wisely, thereby keeping the citizens of Milmore in the decision equation, pleasing her new boss, the Mayor, and not alienating many of her friends and colleagues from the fire department.

Learning Outcomes
In completing this case, students should be able to:
1. Identify the key components, as well as the benefits and risks, of negotiator goal-setting and pre-negotiation meetings.
2. Describe the primary elements of negotiation protocol and evaluate how the failure to follow protocol can affect the outcome of a negotiation.
3. Analyze how perception distortion and emotions can influence and hinder negotiations.
4. Evaluate the role of fiduciary responsibility in negotiations.

Application
This case is appropriate for upper-level undergraduate and graduate courses and workshops in negotiation, managerial decision making, and organizational behavior. The case is particularly applicable to masters of business administration and masters of public administration courses.

Key Words
Negotiation; conflict management; managerial decision-making

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