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Lawyer: Hotel Union Close to New Contract

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SAN FRANCISCO – An attorney representing 11 upscale hotels said negotiators reached a tentative agreement that could lead to a new contract for several thousand union workers.

Attorney Stuart Korshak said the verbal understanding that came early Monday morning covers major issues raised on both sides as contracts began to expire Aug. 14 and discussions bogged down. He said a written version is scheduled to be reviewed on Friday but declined to provide details.

Mike Casey, president of Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union, Local 2, was also reluctant to discuss the proposal before seeing a written offer. "Things start to unravel when that happens," he explained, but added that if the deal goes through, "I will be elated."

Local 2, which represent 8,000 workers at 55 hotels and motels is negotiating with the 11 hotels including the St. Francis, Sheraton Palace, the Fairmont, Argent and Hyatt Regency. Hotel workers – cooks, dishwashers, housekeepers, food and beverage servers and switchboard operators – have been without a contract since Aug. 14. No strike date has been set.

Among the areas of dispute are workload for room cleaners and job security for union workers should a hotel change hands, as well as increases in wages and improved pension and medical benefits.

The agreement could go before union members as early as next week, Casey said.