

Minutes for April 15, 2024 Negotiations Meeting (District Team)

Conference Room A at District Offices

Meeting began at 3:32 pm and ended at 8:00 pm

WEA Team Members Present: Mark Bullis, Molly Oscarson, Karla Hormann, Wendy Grundhofer, Roxanne Kuerschner, Wayne Trapp, Peter Brown, David Aeling

District Team Members Present: Enid Schonewise, Lisa Olson, Dana Geller, Kelly Amott, Mick Waldspurger.

The District came prepared to follow up on the homework. They addressed the early retirement and using OPEB funds questions. The School District lawyer explained that they cannot use OPEB funds. He also shared a legislative study stating that is not recommended. He also explained that last time it did not save the expected amount and that the District wants to retain our experienced teachers.

The District shared the costing sheets in response to questions from the last meeting. They stated that the total cost when using the 259 FTE and actual numbers over time didn't result in actual savings that can be tapped into.

The District explained that the interim person who did the costing and that he came up with the same numbers as the prior person. The WEA asked if this person used the same program as the previous person and the District concurred.

The WEA inquired about how the interim person who is doing costing got this role. The District responded.

The District shared their final proposal from February 8, 2024 that was presented following the second day of mediation. They also projected a PowerPoint presentation to the group which included information related to previous reports posted on the District's website and more information about their financial position and comparable districts. It also included that they believed it was a fair offer and that years 3 & 4 of the contract would be the largest pay increase the WEA would have ever received.

The WEA stated their frustration that the District presented the same proposal as last time. They anticipated seeing movement on some items and questioned the District's use for comparables.

The teams had discussion about this round vs previous rounds of negotiations and costing models.

Both teams caucused at 5:52 pm. The District emailed the PowerPoint presentation and proposal to the WEA during the caucus.

[District's Final Proposal - Presented April 15, 2024](#)

[District's April 15 Presentation Slide Deck](#)

The WEA stated that they walked out of the last meeting feeling encouraged about the first two years of the next contract.

The District said that though the WEA proposed 3% and .5%, they need more of a .5% and 3% for it to be more workable due to compounding. They stated that this works with the parameters that have been set by the school board.

The teams discussed what higher percentage increases in years one and two will do for years three and four.

The WEA said that in order to entertain .5% and 3% in years one and two, there would have to be money put toward insurance.

The District asked the WEA if, in order to let members have input about what the District believes is a fair offer given the financial situation, they would be willing to take the final proposal of (1%-1%) & (3%-5%) to their members for a vote without submarining or supporting it when they present it.

The WEA stated that they already took this proposal to their members.

The District asked the WEA if they had their members vote and the WEA replied, "No."

The WEA stated that they can't survive on 1% and 1% and that they didn't create the financial issues.

The District reiterated that it has limited funds and that we are still in line with comparable districts.

The teams had a brief discussion about the reasons for teacher turnover over the previous year.

The WEA clarified from the last proposal that there was not a TA for a Preschool Teacher increase of 8% and 1% in years one and two.

The District said that it doesn't feel like we are meeting in the middle but instead, the WEA is coming down to the District's parameters.

The District stated that their meet in the middle is that they're willing to relocate/shift funds around based on the WEA's priorities as long as it stays within School Board parameters and keeps the District on track to be out of debt in four years. The District said that the District is in debt and that the parameters have been set and have stayed the same and that we need to be within them. The District does not have money and they don't know what else the WEA expects them to do.

The WEA stated that they too want the District to get out of SOD. They also responded that the District could reexamine the SOD plan.

The District reminded the WEA that we have had this discussion, that the plan has been submitted, and that we made painful reductions to get us out.

The teams had a passionate discussion about differences in employee group contracts, insurance plans and financial plans, and comparable districts.

The WEA asked about taking the athletics and activities schedule out of the contract. The District said that they are open to that and that they had brought it up at the last round, but that by removing them there would not be significant savings.

The WEA brought up the idea of reviewing additional benefits brokers. The District explained that the role of a broker is to go out and get bids, and they did not believe that a change would result in any significant savings. Rather, looking at plan design changes would result in savings. There was also a discussion regarding the cost of insurance and the WEA choosing not to allow their members access to the most affordable VEBA plan.

Both teams caucused at 6:57 pm.

The WEA stated that they don't have anything else to add and asked the District if they have anything else to add.

The District stated that there's only so much money in the wallet and that's where we're at. It's a matter of we have what we have and we're open to hearing where the WEA wants to put the money in their contract, as long as it stays within the parameters.

The WEA stated that the District isn't meeting in the middle and that they gave their best offer from the beginning.

The District stated that they did not give their best offer at the beginning but that they gave it at mediation because they thought they were at the end of the road so there was no reason for them to hold back. That is when they offered the (1%-1%) & (3%-5%), which would make the fourth year the biggest raise the WEA has ever received.

The WEA stated that the District has proposed 1% and 1% in years one and two since the beginning.

The District said that they don't have the money to give the higher increases in years 3 and 4 if they do more than 1% in years one and two.

Board Chair Dana Geller asked to speak. She said the following: The board worked very hard to come up with those numbers. "I can appreciate you saying look at the SOD plan again, we have

again and again and again. I can promise you that we've done everything we can for your group. I love the teachers, all of the board does. I can 100% guarantee you that we don't want to be here in this situation, now or in the future. We want to take care of a technical problem from the past. We are entirely sorry that we can't do more. We have looked at it again and again and again. We're not sitting on money and saying we don't want to give it out. We have given everything we can for this contract. And that's something we can't do anymore. You're asking why we gave that proposal out. We know it's not great. It's the top end of what we can do. We can't go higher. We came up with the creative idea of 2 back-to-back contracts. We know the 1% and 1% won't be enough. The board came to a conclusion as a group - this is the top end of what we can offer. We went as far as we can possibly go.

The District reiterated that if we do 3% and .5% in years one and two, we will be back here again talking about making budget cuts. You need to have more money to offer in order to give some of the larger increases that other Districts are giving.

The teams agreed that both teams want the school district to get out of debt and that arguing isn't going to get anywhere.

Both teams caucused at 7:28 pm.

The District mentioned again that they're open to reallocating funds as long as they stay within the parameters. They asked the WEA if they wanted them to cost out 3% and .5%.

The teams agreed to commit to moving things forward and email ideas and "what ifs" between meetings in order to keep things moving.

The District asked the WEA to email their suggestions to the District and we'll talk about the ideas and costing openly to see if they would fit in the parameters. The teams discussed a few scenarios briefly.

The District said that they will work to get those things costed and try to send an email to the WEA. They continued that they hope to hear back from the WEA about ways they'd like to reallocate things.

The WEA asked if the District would be willing to consider looking at other benefits brokers if WEA does the legwork. The District said that the WEA could send the information to the District and that our current contract goes until next year.

The meeting ended at 8:00 p.m.

Homework from the April 15, 2024 Meeting:

The District will aim to email scenarios to the WEA before the April 29th meeting.

The WEA will give the District information about the benefits broker mentioned during this meeting.

Scheduled Meetings:

Monday, April 29, 2024 at 3:45 pm