

Minutes for March 25, 2024 Negotiations Meeting (District Team)

Conference Room A at District Offices

Meeting began at 3:32 pm and ended at 5:53 pm

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

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

The teams discussed the intention of previous proposals and the issue of meeting in the middle.

The teams agreed that they are both committed to finding a solution that works for everyone.

The WEA mentioned the idea of providing retirement incentives for Teachers. The District mentioned the teacher shortage and also recalls retired Teachers feeling like they were being pressured out. The WEA said that some of the Teachers were happy about the retirement incentives.

The teams discussed the concerns regarding using OPEB funds for retirement incentives.

The District said that they would go back and pull past information about OPEB funds being used for post-retirement.

The WEA asked about cost savings and paying down debt.

The District stated that this has been covered numerous times with the state of the district update and repeated reviews of financials. The District said if we continue this dialogue they are unsure if we will ever reach an agreement.

The teams discussed the intentions of previous proposals and agreed that they need to be mindful to not insult the other side.

The District asked the WEA what kind of contract they want to focus on (2 years or 4 years). The District stated that they think a 2 and 2 contract would guarantee a positive outcome on salaries but that numbers are easier to run for a single 2 year contract.

The teams agreed that their dilemma is that the District has such limited funds and that they are trying not to get more in debt.

The teams agreed to move forward and focus on a 2 and 2 year contract.

The WEA told the District that they will give them a list of the most important items. The initial items stated were salary, insurance and the 403(b) retirement plan. The WEA said that they will look at the Teacher survey.

The District said that it would help for them to know what the most important items are and that the shorter the list, the better. They stated that if the list gets too long, it's harder to move things around and make a noticeable difference.

Both teams caucused at 4:15 pm.

The WEA listed the most important items over the next 4 years. They were salary, insurance, career increment (already a TA for years 1 and 2) and putting some money toward the 403(b) for the 2nd contract.

The District stated that when looking at insurance, the comparables show that they are already paying more than other districts and that it doesn't make sense to keep putting money toward insurance when we hear that teachers want higher salaries.

The WEA stated that employees experienced an increase last year and they will again this year and that they don't know what the next two years will look like.

The District said that putting more money toward insurance will take up so much of what they are able to give and asked the WEA if they would then lower their salary proposals.

The WEA stated that because there was a reduction in FTE, the insurance is funded by attrition.

The District reminded the WEA that when the FTE was reduced, any savings was already accounted for and put toward paying down debt. The District stated that the WEA is able to put the recalculated money after reducing costing models from 287 to 259 toward the settlement but that they need to get out of debt or the teams are going to be in this spot again.

The WEA shared their rationale about the savings of reducing the FTE from 287 to 259.

The District stated that Auditors from the outside of the District look at the financial reports and that they don't show that they're sitting on supposed money.

The WEA stated that they're trying to understand the costing sheet that has been given to them and that it hasn't been explained to them in detail.

The District interjected and stated that the District has walked through the costing models in detail multiple times with several variations. They stated that the 259 FTE is meant to show what their base is and that the costing sheet, a snapshot in a point of time, compared apples to apples. If they continue to make changes to it, it shows what the District has to pay.

The teams discussed how many Teachers are enrolled in insurance.

The District stated that the most straightforward items to cost are career increments and 403(b) increases, and that putting more money toward insurance will impact wage increases.

The WEA said that they'd like the District to look into the insurance enrollment and costs.

The District stated that they will need to cost out these items after the meeting.

The WEA stated that they will need 3% the first year and .5% the second year on the salary schedule. The teams agreed that this will need to be run through a costing model.

Both teams caucused at 4:56 pm.

The District confirmed that there will need to be official costing done instead of ballparking figures. The WEA asked if the previous person who was doing the costing is still doing it and the District confirmed that he is no longer doing so.

The District stated that the health insurance is going to be difficult as it is a very expensive item and we are already contributing higher than average amounts compared to our comparable but that the 403(b) increase is probably something they can do. They reiterated that the District is already contributing more than their comparables but that they can continue to have dialogue about being creative to find money.

The WEA stated that it is hard to hear that an insurance increase is a dilemma for the District and asked if the District had time to look into health insurance enrollment. The District said that they will look into that.

The District stated that costing models and budgets are not the same thing. When negotiations started, the teams agreed at the FTEs. The WEA disagreed with that statement.

The teams discussed what happens in the costing model when things like life insurance, disability, taxes and the 403(b) drop.

The District asked the WEA if they have dates that would work for another meeting.

The WEA said that they will send the District an email about dates.

The District stated what weeks work for them and confirmed that another meeting will be scheduled over email.

Homework from the March 25, 2024 Meeting:

The teams will email about scheduling another meeting.

The District will review insurance enrollment and costs.

Scheduled Meetings:

The next meeting will likely take place in April.