



Press Release

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Impasse has been declared in the contract negotiations between the Rutland City Public Schools (RCPS) and the Rutland Education Association (REA) which represents all teachers and other licensed staff, but not administrators. The two parties have been in negotiations since January 12, 2017, when they signed the ground rules for negotiations. Negotiation teams have met eight times during this process, but have not made sufficient progress toward reaching an agreement, especially on the main economic issues before them. The RPS Negotiations Committee has been negotiating in good faith to arrive at a fair and reasonable agreement for both sides. Unfortunately, the REA has not even provided a proposal on salaries yet, even though the current contract expires on July 1, 2017. As a result of the status of negotiations, the School Board declared an impasse at its meeting on May 23, 2017.

The School Board's declaration of impasse shifts the effort from the negotiation phase to mediation and, if necessary, fact-finding steps, which can assist the parties in reaching a final agreement in a timely fashion.

Significant differences exist between the RCPS proposal and REA proposal on several key economic and contract provision items.

Salaries

RCPS proposed to increase teachers' salaries by an average of 4.76% of new money in each of the next four years. RCPS recognizes that teachers and other professional salaries are lower in the District's schools compared to some other school districts in Rutland County, so that some catching up is warranted. While doing so, RCPS also proposed increasing the number of work days for these professionals from 185 to 190.

The REA has objected to the additional days and has made no response to the salary increase.

Health Insurance

RCPS proposed to pay 87% of the premiums for health insurance, as it is currently doing, while giving teachers a choice among four insurance plans. The employee would pay the other 13% of the premium. Meanwhile, RCPS would create and partially fund Health Savings Accounts (“HSAs”) to cover out-of-pocket costs.

The REA has proposed that teachers should pay only 10% of the premiums with RCPS paying 90% of the premiums, and wants the creation of Health Reimbursement Accounts (“HRAs”) to cover 100% of out-of-pocket expenses.

Context

The RCPS negotiations committee is committed to continuing to work in good faith to come to terms on an agreement that is fair to teachers, serves students well, is good for the community as a whole, and is fair to taxpayers. RCPS has worked hard to negotiate with the REA throughout this process. However, at this date there are many contract provision disputes and still no counter proposal from the REA on salary. The financial positions of RCPS and the REA seem far apart, which means that progress toward a full and fair resolution of the financial aspects of this contract cannot occur without outside help. The School Board is declaring that these negotiations are at an impasse in order to move forward toward a contract sometime before school starts in the fall.

RCPS will continue to seek a fair resolution through the outside assistance of mediation and the fact-finding process.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

The Rutland City Public Schools Negotiations Committee is composed of Rob Kurchena, Alison Notte and Erin Shimp.