



Summary of Bargaining Status

March 27, 2017

The Burlington School Board's goals in the current negotiations are to:

- 1) Improve the operational elements of the contract to better meet student needs.
- 2) Ensure fiscal sustainability
- 3) Increase transparency for the public
- 4) Ensure negotiations do not interfere with student learning by dragging on into the next school year.

The following reflects the status of bargaining between the Burlington School Board and Burlington Education Association (BEA) as of March 27, 2017:

RESOLVED ITEMS

Tentative agreements have been reached on issues related to:

- 1) Commencing future bargaining in October rather than December.
- 2) Clarifying language related to extra-curricular and co-curricular compensation.
- 3) Allowing for electronic (rather than paper) distribution of the final collective bargaining agreement.
- 4) Allowing for electronic (rather than paper) job postings.
- 5) Updated the process for providing written notice to both parties.
- 6) Eliminating an inoperable contract appendix.

OPEN ITEMS

Operational Items:

1. **Increased Operational Efficiency:** The School Board has made a series of proposals intended to increasing its flexibility and operational efficiency. These proposals are related to assignment of duties, building assignments, maximizing time with students, and eliminating "traditional Fridays" (whereby teachers leave work early on Fridays) etc. The BEA has not accepted any of these proposals.
2. **Reduced Teaching and Duty Time:** The BEA has made a series of proposals that would prohibit teachers from being assigned to perform various supervisory duties, such as providing student supervision during recess or during student arrival and departure

times. The School Board has questioned the wisdom, and significant cost, of implementing these proposals. Through negotiations, it appeared that an agreement in concept had been reached to conduct a pilot project that would model how some relief could be found for those teachers with the greatest number of duty assignments. At the last bargaining session, however, the BEA appeared to be reconsidering this approach in favor of its original proposals.

3. Archaic and Complicated Contract Language: Both parties appear to agree that the current contract contains confusing, convoluted, and difficult-to-implement language in the areas of reduction in force, filling vacancies, voluntary and involuntary transfers, etc. The parties have mutually committed to each draft improved language, but have yet to exchange such language. The Board believes that revising these contract provisions can improve the implementation of these sections, enhance employee understanding of their rights, and preserve employee protections.

Financial Items:

1. Salary-related Items: The BEA is proposing a 7.74% increase in salary-related payments. This increase is a combination of a 5.74% base salary increase plus an additional 2% salary increase in the form of a new 403(b) retirement plan (in addition to the current teacher pension plan). The Board is currently proposing a 0.5% salary increase to be distributed equally to all teachers. The Board has made public its willingness to make salary concessions, but has also indicated that the BEA's request is neither sustainable nor justified in light of low levels of inflation and Burlington's position as one of the highest paying districts in the state.
2. Additional Monetary Items: The BEA is also proposing that the Board add a new long term disability program to existing sick leave and sick leave bank benefits, further restrict class sizes, and count certain students such as English Learners and students with disabilities as more than one person for class size maximum purposes. The Board believes these proposals are not in the best interest of students, nor are they affordable.
3. Health Insurance: Both parties have made proposals to address the forthcoming changes to the current health insurance plans (an issue for all school districts in Vermont). The Board's proposal would result in significant savings that could be redirected to other district needs, such as student programming. The BEA's proposals would further increase health insurance costs. Differences between these positions are related to premium sharing, administrative costs, out-of-pocket costs, and the creation, administration, and contribution towards an HSA or HRA.

NEXT STEPS

The parties have agreed to mediation on April 11. The BEA continues to oppose the Board's suggestion for a combined mediation/factfinding process that would save time and money. Additionally, the BEA has declined to use the free federal mediation service and requested a paid mediator (Mr. Michael Ryan, Esq. of Maine). The Board has agreed to this request despite the additional cost to the District.

CONCLUSION

The combined impact of the BEA's wage proposals and other proposals pushes the estimated cost of the BEA position into the millions of dollars. (OR in excess of 10% of total new money.) The Board's team has made it clear that no settlement at this level is within the realm of possibility.