

BOARD NEGOTIATION COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 2021
REMOTE PARTICIPATION VIA GOOGLE MEET

BNC members present: Sue Hamlyn-Prescott, Chasity Fagnant, Katie Orost, Bernard Barnes, Mark Nielsen

Teachers present: James Chartrand, Katlin Bartell, Gail Whitten, Carol-Lynn Willean, Patrick LaClair, Eric Hutchins, Allen Cook, Paul Legris

Others present: Charleen McFarlane, Deb Clark, Cat Gallagher

S. Hamlyn-Prescott called the meeting to order at 5:32.

B. Barnes moved to go into executive session to discuss teacher contract negotiations because premature general public knowledge would clearly place the school board at a substantial disadvantage, inviting D. Clark, C. McFarlane, C. Gallagher and D. Griffiths to remain, K. Orost seconded, the motion was passed and the BNC entered executive session at 5:32. The BNC consented out of executive session at 6:00.

The BNC was joined by the teachers at 6:02.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said the BNC looked at the association's salary proposal. The BNC wants assurance that the entire teacher association group is in agreement with the proposal.

P. LaClair said the negotiating team is in agreement and the team represents their respective schools. He said under the association's proposal people on the higher end of the scale get the lowest increase, especially in year 2. Those are employees who are already getting higher compensation than others. It is a necessary tradeoff that they get a lower increase.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said in the last few negotiation cycles we have really been trying to raise the base. It has been reported to us that we are not attracting people because our base is low. The BNC would like an explanation of how the association sees its current proposal strategy moving us forward in terms of attracting people and starting salaries.

P. LaClair said attempts to raise the base are necessary. The past several agreements have been able to raise the base. Keeping that in mind the association is focusing on different things this time. There has been great progress on increasing the base but some of that progress has come at the expense of step progression for current employees. After what he believes was a necessary shift from an index to an increment scale many employees in the middle of the scale didn't feel they were making progress. They wanted to be recognized for their years of service. It is challenging with 26 steps. The association proposal puts them closer to the maximum salary and provides them step movement. They would have loved a proposal with a substantial increase to the base as well but they were cognizant of the bottom line.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott asked how the association sees these current proposals attracting people. P. LaClair said not every teacher who is going to apply is going to be a brand new teacher at B1. The most significant gaps in our scale compared to other scales are not at the base but in the range of step 5 to step 20. There is a difference of \$10K or more compared to other districts. It is because we

have 26 steps so the steps increase over a more gradual slope than many other districts. Most comparable districts have 16 to 22 steps. They felt attracting and retaining people in the step 5 to step 20 range was something they needed to attend to immediately. It comes down to retention as well as hiring new teachers.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said the association proposal for year 1 is more than the \$400K the BNC gave as its bottom line. We have a counter proposal for year 1 to get it to that range. The counter proposal is to increase the value of a step by \$45 and to increase the value of the base by \$250. If we can come to agreement on year 1 then the BNC would like go back into executive session to discuss year 2. Year 1 impacts year 2 so it is difficult to talk about year 2 until there is agreement on year 1.

P. LaClair said for the association it is important to see the whole package together. He understands that year 1 impacts year 2 but for them it would be nice to look at them simultaneously and understand the relationship between them. They appreciate the BNC's candor in putting forward the \$400K number. They earnestly tried to stick to it and they thought they came very close but when working with D. Clark on the spreadsheet they found they were not quite as close as they thought. Their proposal for year 2 was very tight. They wanted to make it as affordable as possible, which is why they did not propose an increase to the base. The increment amounts were carefully calculated so at the end people would be as close as possible to the maximum salary.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said the BNC would like to caucus. She asked the association to look at the BNC's counter proposal for year 1, knowing that we want to get to \$400K. If the association wants to look at a different way to get to that amount, feel free to come back with a different suggestion.

The groups agreed to caucus for about 20 minutes and come back at 6:40.

K. Orost moved to go into executive session to discuss teacher contract negotiations because premature general public knowledge would clearly place the school board at a substantial disadvantage, inviting D. Clark, C. McFarlane, C. Gallagher and D. Griffiths to remain, C. Fagnant seconded, the motion was passed and the BNC entered executive session at 6:18. M. Nielsen had recently joined the meeting and was included in the executive session. The BNC consented out of executive session at 6:40.

Teachers rejoined the BNC at 6:41.

P. LaClair said the teachers have all read the statement that was made at Monday's school board meeting and they are really appreciative of it. The board recognized the hard work of teaching during this moment in time.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said for the second year the BNC proposes one step, no change to the base, elimination of steps 23 and 24, a \$110 increase to the step value and \$500 for those who fall off the grid.

P. LaClair said that proposal won't meet the association's minimum requirements.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said the association's proposal didn't address what would be done in the second year for those who fall off the top. She said the association proposal for the second year costs \$491,158, a 3.85% increase.

P. LaClair said that is what they believe they need to be aiming for to be able to shape their salary scale to something that is competitive at the base and all the way through. It is less than 1% higher than the number the BNC put out for year 1. It is about \$80K higher than year 1 but that is less than a 1% increase over year 1. They believe it is reasonable. They think the sum of these 2 years is very doable. They purposefully tried to put forth a reasonable second year that met their objectives but could get the board to yes.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said at the last meeting the BNC said we would entertain something comparable to the first year. This association proposal is not what we are looking to see for the second year.

P. LaClair said he would hope that one of the benefits of a multi-year contract is that perhaps this difference could be budgeted for in year 2.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott asked if the association wants to discuss the BNC's proposal. P. LaClair said he thinks based on their discussions it is not something they can work with.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott asked if the association wanted to go on to other proposals and P. LaClair agreed.

P. LaClair said the association got the BNC's parent-teacher conference counter proposal. They appreciate the move towards simplicity. They want to be able to go back to the people in their schools and discuss impacts before moving ahead. They think the counter proposal is interesting but haven't been able to come to consensus on how to approach it yet.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott gave some explanatory information about the BNC's parent-teacher conference proposal. Administrators felt the language made it clear that there would be an early release day in the fall and one in the spring for parent-teacher conferences and if conferences could not happen that day they would happen at another time in fall and in spring. In that case, teachers would have the early release day off. Exchanging a professional development day is not in the BNC's proposal. This proposal makes practices consistent across schools. P. LaClair asked if that insight from administrators is in a document that can be passed to the association. S. Hamlyn-Prescott said she will have to get back to him on that.

P. LaClair said the association's proposal for prep time was based on the work of the group put together after the previous contract negotiations. It included all elementary administrators and teachers and special educators from a variety of schools in the district. They came to consensus on tenets, not contract language. They focused almost entirely on elementary educators as they felt they had the largest disparity between schools. They agreed that a prep time amount of 375 minutes per week should be established. To make that feasible, they agreed that time outside the student day would be counted towards that total. The group said teacher prep time should occur in no less than 20 minute increments. They suggested language be included in the contract that clearly states the nature, purpose and intent of prep time. They said language should be included ensuring sufficient time is allocated for teachers to work independently. Possible uses of prep time include teaming

with other teachers in the same grade level, intervention teams, etc. It is important to make sure that in addition to that team work teachers have time for individual classroom prep activities.

P. LaClair said he doesn't think the teachers have seen a counter proposal to their prep time proposal. S. Hamlyn-Prescott said the BNC does have a counter proposal. She asked Charleen to send it to the association.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott asked if the association has a counter proposal for parent-teacher conferences. P. LaClair said no; they will need to spend more time reaching out to colleagues about it and seeing what the implications are.

The groups separated to caucus at about 7:00, agreeing to come back at 7:15.

The BNC consented into executive session at 6:59. The BNC consented out of executive session at 7:20 and were rejoined by teachers.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said this is the BNC's final proposal. In year 1 steps 25 and 26 will be eliminated, the base goes up by \$250, and the value of a step goes up by \$45. The total cost is \$400,419. In year 2 steps 23 and 24 will be eliminated. There will be a step increase for teachers each year. In year 2 there will be no increase to the base and there will be a \$129 increase to the value of a step. This offer includes all language changes that have been presented by the BNC. That is our final proposal and this is not precedent setting. We are looking at the percentages over a 2-year contract period. In future negotiations we will be looking at the base. The BNC has the association's assurance that they have spoken to all their members and they are aware of the implications of the salary strategies the teacher negotiations group put forward.

The teachers left to caucus and came back at 7:37.

P. LaClair said the salary proposal the BNC put forward is acceptable to the association but it cannot be contingent on language items. They can't say yes to those proposals as they stand on the table. They just saw the counter proposal for prep time. They can discuss that and compromise on it. They need to work and think on the parent-teacher conference proposal.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said the proposal is a package and it is off the table if we can't come to agreement.

P. LaClair said the teachers will caucus. He feels like there is ground to compromise on the language items. They are things that were worked hard on by administrators and teachers in the prep time work group and things they want to make sure they get right. The idea that they are tied up in this offer to him seems really unfortunate. They will caucus but it would be very encouraging if the BNC also thought about the implications of that.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said the BNC came up with this proposal in the interest of everyone's time and not going back and forth on salary schedule. It is a final proposal. In 2 years everything is back on the table.

The teachers left to caucus.

The BNC consented into executive session at 7:41. The BNC consented out of executive session and joined teachers at 8:02.

P. LaClair said the parent-teacher conference considerations are complex issues. Changing one aspect may have impacts somewhere else. In seeking consensus with the administrators elementary educators made a large number of compromises to try to make incremental progress feasible. What that landed us with is a very narrow change from what we had. He thinks it was substantial in language but when it came to impact on the work day it was limited because of the compromises they made. With the changes they have just seen tonight in the counter proposal, regarding prep time in particular, the very incremental gains elementary educators were seeing are called into question in ways he doesn't think they fully understand. A lot of elementary educators now get 30 minutes of prep time and this proposal doesn't include that. Currently prep time is only considered student contact time and this does away with that. And that comes out to a net loss for teachers. They were looking at incremental gains and this is looking like a loss, not necessarily in terms of quantity of time but in where it occurs and the increment. Twenty minutes is not a substantial enough amount of time. With the parent-teacher conference piece, because schools all do it differently they are unsure of the impact of the BNC counter proposal. It is hard for them to be able to say yes to those proposals. The only way forward they can see is to drop those proposals until 2 years from now. They cannot say yes to them but they can wait to reconsider them in 2 years time.

P. LaClair agreed with S. Hamlyn-Prescott that the sections relating to prep time and parent-teacher conferences will remain as they currently are in the contract with no changes.

The association and the BNC agreed on the salary proposal presented by the BNC.

K. Orost moved to adjourn at 8:09, B. Barnes seconded and the motion was passed.

Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths