

East Greenwich School Committee Public Statement

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“After 11 months of good faith negotiation sessions between the East Greenwich School Committee and the East Greenwich Education Association in an effort to reach a new 3-year agreement with the District’s certified staff, including 8 mediation sessions with a state-appointed mediator, the parties have reached an impasse in this process. Although many positive tentative agreements were reached during this lengthy process that will serve to enhance the educational programs, delivery of instruction and teaching environment for the teachers and students of this district, the Committee is unable to meet the financial demands of the Association. Instead, the Committee has offered what it and the Mediator consider to be a reasonable financial package that rewards the teachers for their service and dedication to this District, while attempting to be fiscally responsible to the budget constraints under which the District must operate in order to maintain all of the current educational and extracurricular programs. For example, the committee has offered a 2% wage increase to all bargaining unit members for year two and three of the contract term and a 2% wage increase to all top step teachers (comprising approximately 80% of the entire bargaining unit) for year one of the contract term, despite the fact that the district will be paying significantly more for special education services beyond budget projections, mandatory increases in employer-paid pension contributions and escalating health care premiums. The Committee has also agreed to increase the summer hourly stipend, and offered a Health Savings Account plan to the members to be implemented over the course of the 3-year contract in an effort to provide quality health care while attempting to control those escalating costs.

While the Committee is disappointed that the Association members rejected this proposal, the Committee has put together its best offer given the current economic climate. The Committee is also mindful of the sacrifices that the citizens of this Town make in directly funding 93% of the district’s budget. East Greenwich receives the lowest percentage of state aid under the education funding formula, thereby placing the vast majority of the fiscal burden on the residents of this Town.

At this time, and in light of this impasse, the parties are obligated to proceed to statutory interest arbitration. Under this statute, any monetary award that may be issued from the panel is merely advisory and not binding on the Committee. The Committee remains hopeful that the Association will reconsider the Committee’s last offer in order to avoid what will inevitably result in time-consuming, wasteful and expensive litigation.”