

TEACHER CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS
GRAND FORKS SCHOOL BOARD TEACHER CONTRACT BARGAINING COMMITTEE
AND GRAND FORKS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
MEETING MINUTES
June 3, 2025

The Grand Forks School Board Teacher Contract Bargaining Committee (Board Team) and the Grand Forks Education Association (Association Team) met on Tuesday, June 3, 2025, at the Mark Sanford Education Center with Board Team Leader Amber Flynn as chairperson.

Board Team Members Present: Amber Flynn, Joel Larson, and Jeff Manley.

Board Team Members Absent: Dave Berger.

Association Team Members Present: Melissa Buchhop, Kala Christensen, and Joseph Drumm.

Association Team Members Absent: None.

Resource Team Present: Brandon Baumbach, Business Manager; and Griffin Gillespie, Human Resources Director (per Ground Rules).

Others Present: Cindy Johnson, Executive Secretary.

Call to Order.

The meeting was called to order at 5:02 p.m.

Approval of Minutes.

It was moved by Larson and seconded by Christensen to approve the May 20, 2025, minutes as written. Upon voice vote, the motion carried unanimously. Absent: Berger.

Discussion of Proposals and Counterproposals.

Buchhop reported that the Association Team was fine with the special education MOU becoming an administrative committee, but still handed out a proposed MOU for signing by both teams' lead negotiators so there would be something in writing on record.

Buchhop also reintroduced the Association Team's proposal to pay Community High School classroom teachers a payment of 1/8 of their current salary, in addition to the contracted salary amount as determined from the applicable salary schedule.

While the Association Team did not state that

they rejected the Board Team's May 20, 2025, basic salary proposal, Buchhop handed out the Association Team's counterproposal for basic salary as follows: *All salary proposals are made assuming that steps for experience and lane changes for credits earned will be honored.*

- 1) *In the 2025-2026 school year, the district will add \$1,150 to each cell and advance teachers' steps for their experience and lane changes for credits earned. (The base salary in 2025-2026 would be \$50,627.)*
- 2) *In the 2026-2027 school year, the district will add \$1,200 to each cell and advance teachers' steps for their experience and lane changes for credits earned. (The base salary in 2026-2027 would be \$51,827.)*

Drumm reported the Association Team's rationale, which included, according to their calculations, a history of the Board Team overestimating proposal costs by approximately 20% and an amount less than what the Board had suggested was available.

The Board Team requested to caucus.

It was moved by Larson and seconded by Manley to convene into executive session (caucus) to discuss negotiating strategy or provide negotiating instructions regarding contracts that are currently being negotiated or for which negotiation is reasonably likely to occur in the immediate future as allowed by North Dakota Century Code §§ 15.1-16-22, 44-04-19.1(9), 44-04-19.2. Upon voice vote, the motion carried unanimously. Absent: Berger.

Following the caucus (executive session), the Board Team returned to the meeting room, and the contract negotiations open meeting reconvened at 6:05 p.m.

Discussion of Proposals and Counterproposals (continued).

Flynn reported that the Board Team rejected the Association Team's proposed written special education MOU because, if signed by the Board Team, it would trigger the requirements of the open meeting laws. Instead, she suggested the Association Team could provide it to the superintendent for information as he proceeds with the administrative committee's work.

Flynn reported that the Board Team wanted to impact as many teachers as possible and reported they rejected the proposal to pay Community High School classroom teachers 1/8 of their current salary and the Association Team's counterproposal for \$1,150/\$1,200 to each cell in years one and two, respectively. She then reported the Board Team's counteroffer as follows:

1. *In the 2025-2026 school year, the district will add \$750 to each cell.*
2. *In the 2026-2027 school year, the district will add \$750 to each cell.*

During a discussion, the Association Team explained their assertion of the Board Team's history of overestimating proposal costs by 20%. Baumbach disputed the assertion and explained that the savings from the discontinued early retirement program for teachers were worked into previous raises.

The Association Team requested to caucus.

Larson reported on behalf of the Board Team that the percentage of increase received by the District as a per-pupil payment was 2.5%. The Board Team's salary proposal of \$750 and \$750 increases the cost to the District by 2.6% and 2.57%, so on paper, the District was spending more money than it received on a teacher basis.

It was moved by Manley and seconded by Larson to convene into executive session (caucus) to discuss negotiating strategy or provide negotiating instructions regarding contracts that are currently being negotiated or for which negotiation is reasonably likely to occur in the immediate future as allowed by North Dakota Century Code §§ 15.1-16-22, 44-04-19.1(9), 44-04-19.2. Upon voice vote, the motion carried unanimously. Absent: Berger.

Following the caucus (executive session), the Board Team returned to the meeting room, and the contract negotiations open meeting reconvened at 6:39 p.m.

While the Association Team did not state that they rejected the Board Team's counteroffer for basic salary, Buchhop handed out the Association Team's counterproposal for basic salary as follows: *All salary proposals are made assuming that steps for experience and lane changes for credits earned will be honored.*

- 3) *In the 2025-2026 school year, the district will add \$1,000 to each cell and advance teachers' steps for their experience and lane changes for credits earned. (The base salary in 2025-2026 would be \$50,477.)*
- 4) *In the 2026-2027 school year, the district will add \$1,000 to each cell and advance teachers' steps for their experience and lane changes for credits earned. (The base salary in 2026-2027 would be \$51,477.)*

Buchhop explained that the Association Team believed it would be hard to ratify the Board Team's counteroffer of \$750/\$750 because the teachers know how much the health insurance increase will eat up.

The Board Team requested to caucus.

It was moved by Larson and seconded by Manley to convene into executive session (caucus) to discuss negotiating strategy or provide negotiating instructions regarding contracts that are currently being negotiated or for which negotiation is reasonably likely to occur in the immediate future as allowed by North Dakota Century Code §§ 15.1-16-22, 44-04-19.1(9), 44-04-19.2. Upon voice vote, the motion carried unanimously. Absent: Berger.

Following the caucus (executive session), the Board Team returned to the meeting room, and the contract negotiations open meeting reconvened at 7:08 p.m.

While the Board Team did not state that they rejected the Association Team’s counterproposal of \$1,000/\$1,000 for basic salary, Flynn reported the Board Team had a counteroffer with two options. Still, they may have a hard time getting the Board to agree. The options will put the Board into deficit spending that could result in cuts to the budget and personnel. The counteroffer options are:

1. *In the 2025-2026 school year, the district will add \$750 to each cell.*
2. *In the 2026-2027 school year, the district will add \$1,000 to each cell.*

OR

1. *In the 2025-2026 school year, the district will add \$850 to each cell.*
2. *In the 2026-2027 school year, the district will add \$850 to each cell.*

Flynn reported that the Board Team would go to impasse if neither option were agreed upon.

The Association Team requested to caucus.

The Board Team recessed from 7:11 p.m. to 7:22 p.m.

Following the caucus, the Board Team returned to the meeting room, and the contract negotiations meeting reconvened at 7:23 p.m.

Buchhop reported that the Association Team rejected the Board Team’s counteroffer with two options and that their counterproposal for salary to *add \$1,000 to each cell and advance teachers’ steps for their experience and lane changes for credits earned in 2025-2026 and to add \$1,000 to each cell and advance teachers’ steps for their experience and lane changes for credits earned in 2026-2027 was their bottom line.*

Flynn reported on behalf of the Board Team that they were at impasse.

Buchhop reported on behalf of the Association Team that they were at impasse.

Schedule.

It was determined that the next meeting on Tuesday, June 10, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. was unnecessary.

Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

APPROVED: _____
(Date)

Signed: _____
Melissa Buchhop, Team Leader
Association Team

Signed: _____
Amber Flynn, Team Leader
Board Team