Bargaining Minutes_PESPA & PCSB
Administrative Building
October 21,2026
Present: Scott Barnum, Dena Collins, Michael Vigue, David Richmond, Carly Spicer, Gary Jeppesen, Val Smith, Scott Barnum, Brandi Hartung, Michelle Owens, Adam Shils, Erin Duff, Walesha Batish, Amy King

Meeting starts at 4:00 pm

Welcome and Bargaining Status Update

Mr. Vigue, representing the District, welcomed both teams back to the bargaining table. Ms. Smith, representing the Union, provided an update regarding the status of bargaining and the impasse process. She explained that the impasse process can delay a final resolution for several months. In an effort to avoid a lengthy delay, confirmation was provided that the declaration of impasse had been submitted to PERC. Both parties mutually agreed to waive mediation. It was noted that the use of a Special Magistrate would require significant time and financial resources. Pursuant to statute, the parties may waive the Special Magistrate process and proceed directly to a hearing before the School Board.

The Union previously presented a proposal that was rejected by the District. Mr. Vigue stated that the District's available funding remains unchanged from previous discussions. The District has $1.553 million available, which supports a 2.5% salary increase in addition to the referendum increase, resulting in an average increase of approximately 4.65% for all PESPA bargaining unit members.

The District's current offer also continues to include the previously discussed bereavement leave language, extending the applicable period to 30 days. The compensation package remains available as originally presented.

Mr. Vigue further explained that the District has the option of allocating the same total dollar amount to create a salary schedule for PESPA employees. Such an approach could result in some employee groups receiving larger increases than others, depending on how the funds are distributed.

The Union stated that it has been seeking creative solutions throughout negotiations. A primary concern remains ensuring that employee take-home pay does not decrease. The Union estimated that approximately 10% of bargaining unit members could experience a reduction in net pay due to increased healthcare costs.

To illustrate the concern, the Union provided an example of a PESPA member holding an MBA degree who has worked for the District for ten years and supports a family of four. In this example, Pinellas County Schools is the family's primary employer. The Union noted that access to health benefits has historically been a strong factor in retaining employees in similar situations. Under the proposed healthcare changes, this family could be forced to consider plan options that may compromise their healthcare utilization. The Union argued that, for employees in similar circumstances, a 2.5% salary increase would effectively result in a net loss in take-home pay.

The Union emphasized that it has repeatedly returned to the bargaining table seeking solutions to this issue and suggested that alternative compensation structures, such as a flat hourly increase distributed across employees, may help mitigate the impact. Additionally, the Union was agreeable to Mr. Vigue’s offer of going back with his team to revisit the dollar amount provided by the district and offer alternative options. These options, however, may impact some employees more than others to provide for increase that could cover the cost of the health care difference for those families that have spouse or family coverage.

Mr. Vigue acknowledged the impact of healthcare cost increases and stated that the District remains financially challenged even with the proposed changes. He noted that the District could have chosen to allocate available funds exclusively to healthcare costs and provide no employee raises. Instead, the District elected to bring forward salary increases using the funds available while continuing to address growing healthcare expenditures. He emphasized that the District is still not breaking even financially.

The Union asked whether employees working seven hours per day would receive the full referendum amount. The District confirmed that employees working seven or more hours receive the full referendum allocation, while employees working fewer than seven hours receive a prorated amount.

The Union further questioned why the known referendum increase could not be distributed immediately. Mr. Vigue explained that when the District initially projected referendum funding, an estimated average increase was applied effective July 1. At that time, the District did not yet know the final referendum amount or the exact number of eligible employees among whom the funds would be distributed. Therefore, the District's intent was to retain a portion of the funding until accurate calculations could be completed.

The Union asked how active bargaining unit members would be identified when calculating increases. The Union further questioned whether the referendum increase could be processed separately as a fixed amount.

The District responded that current payroll and programming limitations do not allow for separate processing of retroactive salary increases and referendum increases. The District characterized this as a technical limitation within the system.

The Union proposed the possibility of providing a one-time, non-recurring payment during the current year as a temporary measure to help offset employee healthcare cost increases.

The District declined the request. Mr. Vigue explained that the District has already transferred money from fund balance reserves and other unbudgeted sources into the healthcare program to help restore the fund to a break-even position. He stated that the District continues to face fund balance challenges and anticipates directing any additional available funds into healthcare reserves.

Mr. Vigue also explained that strategic financial planning requires spending available funds to address long-term healthcare obligations. One of the primary methods being used to control costs is reducing employee positions through attrition and staffing adjustments.

The District further explained that TSIA funding was specifically designated for teachers meeting certain eligibility requirements, while other compensation increases were funded from the District's operating budget. Mr. Vigue stated that the District previously maintained approximately $9 million in healthcare reserves but failed to maintain that reserve level. As a result, reserves were depleted, and the healthcare fund was approximately $20 million below Consequently, any raises funded through operating dollars ultimately require reductions elsewhere, including position reductions. Staffing decisions continue to be based on student enrollment and service needs.

The Union asked whether employee work hours had been reduced. The District responded that employee hours had not been reduced.

The Union also referenced the approximately 12% compensation increase provided during the previous year. The District responded that the negotiated salary increase was 1% on employees' hourly rates. The District further noted that referendum dollars are included as part of employees' compensation, count toward retirement calculations, and therefore should be considered part of total employee compensation.

The Union raised concerns regarding compensation and job responsibilities for MBAs, specifically relating to bus-riding duties.

The District clarified that not every MBA is assigned bus-riding responsibilities; however, such assignments may be required as part of job expectations. Employees who are assigned bus-riding duties receive additional compensation.

The District explained that employees assigned to ride both morning and afternoon bus routes receive a daily supplement of $7.50, along with payment at their regular hourly rate for all time worked. Compensation begins at the time the MBA meets the bus driver, and the employee's hourly pay begins when the driver picks up the MBA.

The meeting was adjourned at **5:00 p.m.** and the next meeting was scheduled.