



DEPTFORD TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION

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March 20, 2017

Dear Members of the Community,

This announcement is to serve as an update for the community on the status of negotiations with the Deptford Education Association. First, the Deptford Board of Education wants to commend and recognize the hardworking teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, secretaries, administrators and all staff members working in our schools.

Since April 2016, members of the Deptford Board of Education and the Association have regularly met to negotiate a successor agreement to the parties' 2013-2016 Collective Bargaining Agreement. On September 28, 2016 Deptford Board of Education received a comprehensive financial position from the DEA. In between September 28, 2016 and October 20, 2016, the DEA cancelled the meeting that had been previously set for October 13th, 2016. The BOE Negotiations Team met several times to review the financial position presented by the DEA in order to develop a response. It took the DEA less than fifteen minutes to review the response of the BOE's team, at which time the Association responded by presenting the Board's Team with a typewritten notice of impasse, which appeared to have been prepared ahead of time instead of continuing negotiations. The BOE was more than willing to continue to negotiate and try to develop a fair settlement.

There have been many incorrect statements made in the town insinuating that the open contract negotiations suggest some level of disrespect for our teachers and staff. The assertion that the Board is to blame for not thinking about the hard-working individuals within our schools is not only completely inaccurate, but detrimental to the moral and smooth operations of this school district. This is not a position the Deptford Board of Education has taken.

The Association position prior to mediation was:

- 3.5% salary increase demand (which would cost the district approximately 1.2 million in year 1, approximately 1.32 million in year 2, approximately 1.36 million in year 3 of the contract)

*"Building Spartan Pride through the Educational Process
to Develop a Spartan Proud Community"*

- Reduction in healthcare contribution from Tier 4 levels to 1.5% of salary (which would cost the district approximately 1.6 million in year 1, approximately 1.65 million in year 2, approximately 3.0 million in year 3)
- Stipend increases of 2.0% (which would cost the district approximately 1.3 million dollars)
- Insurance waivers of approximately \$372,000 to \$1.1 million every year for three years dependent upon coverage category based on current non-participation figures.
- Increasing Dental plan at a cost of approximately \$15,770
- Retirement supplemental compensation payment increases of approximately \$81,330
- Changing 10 month employee to 12 month employee at a cost of approximately \$26,148 not including movement on the guide.

If the BOE was to accept the DEA's entire current contract offer it would cost the taxpayers of Deptford Township up to an additional \$14.9 million dollars over 3 years. The district's ability to receive additional funds from the community is capped at 2% each year (over 3 years that equates to only \$2.42 million dollars). Historically state aid increases have been zero to minimal. These constraints limit the district's ability to finance any additional instructional program costs, increases in health benefit costs, liability costs, energy and other operational expenditures.

Previously in negotiations, the BOE Negotiations Team made the school district's health benefits brokers available to the DEA in an attempt to discuss moving away from the high cost health plan to something that will lower employee contributions and free up district funds. The DEA has shown no interest in entertaining this idea. Health benefits are forecasted to increase approximately 10% each year, a factor which is not accounted for in the overall cost out of the Association's financial position.

As a Board of Education we are trying to negotiate and bring this matter to a quick resolution in a formal setting. We have to deal with the harsh realities that our budget is capped at 2% and State Aid has been the same for the past five years. Deptford taxpayers are dealing with the same constraints that we are faced with.

The Board eagerly wants to put closure to this process. This closure cannot be done without considering the long term and short term effects that a successor contract can have on the educational process in the Deptford Schools. We have to balance the successor contracts impact on increased class sizes, reductions in staff, and loss of programs due to a shortfall in funding. The Board eagerly wants to get back to the table in a formal setting in April to resolve this issue.

With Spartan Pride

Susan Kryszczak
Board President