

Negotiations Response

The Cliffside Park Board of Education and the Cliffside Park Education Association have been unable to reach a contract after more than a year of negotiations and after exhausting mediation efforts with a State-appointed mediator. The Association's contract expired on June 30, 2018. However, the employees continue to receive all of the benefits of the expired contract, including their salaries, health benefits, and the scheduled increments and longevity increases for last year and this year. These salary increases have resulted in competitive increases for all teachers moving throughout the salary guide over the last two years.

The Board has offered a 4-year contract with highly competitive salary increases, inclusive of increment and longevity. When taking into consideration the increments that have already been paid in the past two years, the Board's offer of an additional \$750 in year one and \$500 in Year 2 to those employees at the top of the salary guide, amounts to an overall increase of 2.95% in Year 1, 2.85% in Year 2, and annual increases of 2.9% in Years 3 and 4. These increases are, without question, in line with other Bergen County settlements.

The Board has also agreed to increase stipends for certain co-curricular and coaching positions, including a new eighth grade Assistant Track Coach. The Board has agreed to additional increases for full-time Guidance Counselors, ESL Coordinators, After School Coordinators, and Child Study Team members, as well as to restructure the number of days Guidance Counselors are to work following the last teacher work day of the school year. The Board will also be paying nurses \$450 per day to report 2 days prior to the start of the school year.

In turn, the Association had demanded a 3-year contract with salary increases of 3.5% in each year, which is well above county average settlements, and for the Board to pay a portion of the employees' mandated health insurance contributions for two pay periods, at an annual cost of \$128,494. This will drive the cost of the union's proposed settlement well above 4%. The Board simply cannot agree to a settlement that is not sustainable and that will adversely impact current programs and staffing levels.

The State-appointed Fact-finder has scheduled a formal hearing for March 4 2020, at which time the Board and the Association will submit their last best offers. The Fact-finder has the authority to recommend the terms of a settlement to the parties.

Until then, the Board remains willing to meet with the Association at any time in an effort to settle this contract dispute.