

TEA Negotiations Committee Meeting – November 18, 2009

TEA Present: Mike Wooby (Chair), Bonnie Mendralla, Scott Sipos, Patti Annonsen, Mary Yakimec, Pat Ciak and Denise representing the NJEA.

Board: Mike Stefkovich (Chair) Brian Nelson and Laurence Molloy – (Absent)Kerry Morris

It was our understanding that this meeting would be a follow up to our meeting held on March 23, 2009, that the Board negotiating team scheduled. The purpose of that meeting was to mutually determine ways to change the negotiating process to avoid the pattern of contracts expiring prior to the new settlement, as this has been the outcome of the last three negotiations.

At the March 23rd meeting the Board expressed the belief that transparency was the most important element to changing the process. In addition both teams expressed a belief that outside representatives may impact the tenor of the negotiations and we should go back to the time when the Board and the TEA negotiated the contract themselves.

The TEA was not open to negotiations that were to be conducted in public but one of their members suggested a joint posting of the positions, offers and facts conveyed by each team at the conclusion of each meeting - to avoid misrepresentations and rumors. For our next meeting both teams agreed to consider new approaches by looking for ways the process can be more transparent and efficient.

On November 18th at 6:45pm, we held our next meeting, called by the TEA, and were presented with standard collective bargaining ground rules by the TEA. Upon reading them the Board promptly advised the TEA that we could not agree to them because they called for confidentiality. In addition, the Board expressed concern about the TEA's change of stance on transparency, considering new approaches and their addition of a NJEA representative at the negotiating table.

The TEA responded that the new members of the negotiating team did not believe it was in their best interest to be transparent, and that we should continue to negotiate the way it has been done for the last forty-one years. As for the NJEA rep they responded that we have access to our Board attorney at anytime so they didn't see the problem with their rep being in the room or in the hallway available for caucuses.

The Board suggested that if the TEA was not interested in becoming more transparent, then perhaps one way was to form an advisory board of key community stakeholders and experts. This advisory board would be tasked with identifying ways to recruit, retain and reward excellent educators. When asked who would comprise the advisory group, the Board suggested a teacher (retired or working), a town council member (former or past), individuals with expertise in education and finance and perhaps representatives of the PTA and TEF. The TEA asked to set a date for the next meeting, and the Board suggested that we get back to them once we discuss the advisory board with the full Board. The meeting adjourned at 8:15pm

