

HERRICKS TEACHER NEGOTIATIONS

BOARD STATEMENT ON 12/13/18

The District and the Herricks Teachers' Association have been engaged in collective bargaining for some time. Unfortunately, this effort has not yet produced settlement of the demands of the Association and the proposals made by the District.

The Taylor Law of the State of New York which governs collective bargaining for school districts provides various resolution assistance steps in the event that the parties are unable to reach settlement through negotiations. Upon the determination that an "impasse" in bargaining exists, the New York State Public Employment Relations Board will appoint an outside mediator. The District and the Herricks Teachers Association have reached that point of impasse. A mediator has been appointed by the Public Employment Relations Board; several mediation sessions have already been held starting this past Summer and continuing into this Fall. The mediation process will continue during January of 2019.

Some assertions have recently been made public by the Herricks Teachers Association that merit comment and factual clarification.

1. THE ASSOCIATION'S SUGGESTION THAT THE TEACHERS ARE WORKING WITHOUT A CONTRACT IS UNTRUE.

The labor contract with the Herricks Teachers Association expired on June 30, 2018. However, a provision of the New York State law that governs labor negotiations in the public sector (known as the Triborough Amendment) requires the School District to continue all the terms of an expired agreement until new terms and conditions of employment are negotiated. The New York State Court of Appeals has determined that this law requires the continuation of the expired agreement in its entirety. In fact, court cases require the School District to grant "step increment" even AFTER contract expiration, which the District did this past September. This automatic wage increase amounts to approximately \$2,000 to \$3,000 salary increases for nearly 60% of the teachers

in our District.

All other contract provisions remain in effect, including but not limited to health insurance, dental insurance, sick leave, personal leave, family leave, workday limitations, and all other provisions of the contract except for the salary percentage increases that were already granted during the term of the expired contract.

What remains unresolved is new monetary demands of the Association to increase wages by an “across the board” percentage increase, among other demands made by the Association and District.

2. WHY ARE THE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE DISTRICT AND THE HERRICKS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION UNRESOLVED?

Two labor contracts ago – just prior to the “Great Recession” – the salary increases agreed upon became unsustainable. District operating costs continued to escalate following this agreement, including substantial increases in retirement contributions and sharp spikes in health insurance premiums, all within the environment of a 2 percent tax cap. Within two years, many teachers were laid off, and as a result, programs were cut and class sizes were increased. The settlement catapulted the wages paid to our teachers to the top teacher salaries among Nassau County School Districts. The subsequent labor settlement, while providing much reduced wage increases, did not stem the tide. Herricks teacher salaries remain among the highest in Nassau County, at some levels they are even the highest paid. While these salaries might be seen as laudable, when step increment is added, they are simply unsustainable by our District and its residents.

The Board has the duty to bargain with the Association in good faith, which it has been doing during the many negotiation and mediation sessions, which began in January of 2018. However, the Board is NOT required to agree to Association compensation proposals that are not in the best interests of the residents of the District.

In closing, the District remains ready, willing and able to negotiate a fair and reasonable settlement with the Teachers Association.