

MEA Contract Bargaining for the School Year 2011-2012

Session #7

Tuesday, August 23, 2011

Meeting began at 4:36 PM

In attendance from Management: Forrest Branscomb, Willie Clark, Chuck Fradley, Jim Drake, Nancy Goux, Scott Martin, Mike Pendley, Alan Ramos, Sharon Scarbrough and Joe Stokes.

In attendance from MEA: Pat Barber, Kara Carney, Helen King, Maureen Marhold, Melanie Newhall, Bruce Proud and Dawn Walker.

Scott began with Terminal Pay Statement. 50 column. That rate should be a percentage. That can be done. Can it be generated at retirement? Upon request. Vacation – needs to be reference to days taken. This can be done. Is there anyone in the MEA bargaining units who get vacation pay?

Bruce – No.

Scott – Management wants to make it applicable for everyone. Given that, it appears everything in proposed language is doable. Only counter is language should reflect not supplying the statement but giving access to it. Annually generated, electronically accessible. Wants to change “receive” to “be provided access to.” If we can agree to that minor change we can TA that.

Bruce – ok.

Scott – Ruminates on that. Updated language regarding life insurance. Underline & strike-through are changes from last bargaining. Scott handed out proposed language.

Bruce – Remaining issue. What happens between now & April 1? What happens to those employees?

Language doesn't say anything about retaining 2x for current employees. Seems like it needs to have current language remain to bridge the gap.

Scott – That makes sense. We can add that, but otherwise the position is clear?

Bruce – yes.

Scott – Still awaiting recommendation from Health Insurance Committee (HIC). Scott passed out language. In interests of moving things along management proposing Mercer's 2nd year numbers. Intent is to have a starting point. All subject to what comes out of HIC.

Bruce – Are you sure you want to do this?

Scott – We're not looking to interrupt HIC, but no bright line has been drawn. This ensures we have an opening position, something on table so if something doesn't come out we have something to work with. How do you see this derailing what HIC has done?

Bruce – We're trying hard to work collaboratively in committee. This is not how to work through a process. If you don't have an answer quickly we're going to give you one.

Scott – We don't know how long it is going to go. There is going to be a recommendation, but that doesn't mean that it will be agreed to here.

Bruce – So when the paper reports that the district plans to raise blue care premiums 636% that doesn't bother you?

Forrest – I'm concerned about blue care and blue choice plan premium. I feel the committee has made headway. Having been in those meetings we've looked at lots of reports in 6-7 meetings. There have been good discussions about other ways to recover the deficit. This is one. But I think there are some issues that were raised that are some alternatives. The process has been good, and we've gotten lots of help from the actuary & consultants. Looking forward to meeting on 8/30 to hopefully continue discussions.

Scott – thinks discussions should continue & should in no way stop things from his vantage point.

Scott – One-to-one aides. Acknowledging them is fine. Adding "supervisor" along with "principal" is fine. Provision addressing transfers – management's position is that one-to-one aides don't have fixed geographical assignment. Language MEA put is that they are district-wide employees. Duty is assigned to a particular student as opposed to a site.

Bruce – how is it not necessary? What happens when student is not in school?

Scott – Their assignment is to the ESE dept. They would be directed to service the needs of students one-to-one.

Bruce – So, the expectation is that if a student moves from elementary to middle and middle to high the aide would not be assigned to another student?

Scott – It would not be in interest of the student or the district to break the relationship of the aide and the one-to-one student they serve.

Scott - Virtual education. Confirmed with Verdya Bradley that 98% of the language is acceptable. The district won't supply the computer, internet connection, or phone. Also, anecdotally – none of participants have indicated they intend to use. The equipment is unnecessary.

Bruce – This is direct dealing on a bargaining issue. Bradley had spoken with them. No one has requested that the district provide a computer. Requested list of all employees hired in that position as of today and as they are hired. We need to know who they are.

Scott – No problem. I believe that's all we have from our side. Because we haven't reached agreement on budget we don't have a salary schedule.

Bruce distributed health insurance premium MEA unit employee share increase. This is the current impact on MEA employees by tier and plan and cost for fiscal year in premiums based on board imposed premiums with overall 32% increase to employees ranging from \$0 to \$1658/month. It's part of reason why the Mercer plan is so flawed. It's based on who's in the plan. Data from health insurance plan is that the BlueChoice plan is the one that is underfunded the most. Yet, the school board is proposing 0% increase. The board's proposal is offensive and ridiculous with no data whatsoever to back it up. BlueCare has the lowest paid employees subsidizing Choice plan. Creating premiums higher for Care than BlueOptions is another flaw. Mercer didn't have all the data. They made assumptions based on criteria given to them by the superintendent. This shifts cost to employees and away from the board.

Scott – I believe the intent was to set the total family premium around \$600 similar to other districts.

Specifically what assumptions were incorrect?

Bruce – They didn't ask for or receive information about discounts. The plans have different discounts. This is a big issue. This is a big flaw. The committee has done weeks & months of work with consultants and actuary in the room and you want to rely on a report from last year.

Scott – That's because that's what we have. This is our opening, not final, position. And have these types of discussions been had at the committee?

Bruce –Yes. This is old information and found to be of little value to the committee. Apparently, it's still relevant to the superintendent, the board, the chief negotiator and management's team. This is further evidence of the board having no understanding of collaboration. Collaboration is allowing the committee to make recommendation.

Scott – When the committee brings a recommendation it will change the conversation. This is not . . . there has been an opening position established.

Joe – Asked a question about Bruce's figures.

Bruce – No, this is what they're going to be paying now. Bruce distributed MEA bargaining unit employee impact district proposals 11-12 negotiations with FRS 3% contribution, board salary proposal impact, board benefit proposals impact. Will update to reflect board's health insurance proposal. The board's proposal is for \$9 million of employee money not to be able to be spent in community. This is money that will not be able to be spent in the community, for food, gas, haircuts, dry cleaning, whatever businesses employees may require. Health insurance – monthly increase should say annual from \$0 to \$1658.16. It doesn't include \$9 million for positions not yet filled or that were reduced. We don't know when individuals that were hired in recent board agenda were already provided to us or not. Paras were not listed – don't know if there were any hired. Most hired at step 0. Sooner or later it makes sense for board and superintendent to advocate for funding for public education. The board's legislative platform just advocates for MTI. This isn't cutting fat – this is cutting money from people. This is not in the board's legislative agenda.

Scott – The board doesn't like cutting anyone's salary. It's distasteful to them.

Bruce – It's not distasteful enough for them to say we have to do something about it in the legislature.

Scott – Is there anything else you want to share with us?

Bruce – We're going to need a caucus. ~½ hour.

Caucus at 5:13. Reconvened at 6:05.

Scott – Anything post caucus?

Bruce – Yes, a number of things. MEA will have a counterproposal to your HI proposal in our next meeting. Not sure of your exact position. What you do and what you don't want. We don't have anything that really responds to our proposals: We don't believe anyone would consider the technology . . . We don't believe management can reassign an employee from one end of the county to another. We would find this objectionable without bargaining. One-to-one aides – wait until we complete bargaining on this issue. We are not inclined to change our position. We have gotten nothing in writing.

Scott – We will bring proposed contract language.

Bruce - We will respond to life insurance language. Bruce distributed transfer language. Management's proposals seem to be taking a hard and fast stance. We haven't even received documents. It's hard to see that the district is interested in reaching an agreement.

Scott – We laid out offered salary schedule weeks ago. Scott says he can supply that.

Bruce - Virtual schools, one on one aides, obviously are issues that ought to be talked about. Talking about and implementing decisions . . .

Scott – We are not implementing anything. I thought we articulated that.

Bruce - Did you as a condition of employment require technology for employees to be hired for virtual school?

Scott – The information I received was anecdotal. I'm not suggesting we dictated that. What other documentation do you find lacking?

Bruce - Board received budget document. We asked for document we haven't seen it. Do you have a tentative budget?

Scott – Yes.

Bruce - Board has it but I didn't get one. I'm not sure your team has gotten one. We can't have meaningful conversation without having the same information. You can go by what's tentative. You've done it every year in bargaining. Mr. Drake told us last time nothing would be available until 9/2. That's what Mr. Drake said in the last meeting.

Scott asked Jim what management can supply.

Jim – The tentative document has been out on website since budget hearing. The full final budget is thick . . .

Scott agreed and Jim said that he could supply the budget document tomorrow.

Bruce - I thought we were given a chance to see and explain.

Scott asked if the link was sufficient. If it's not . . . Bruce said he could make his own conclusions.

Scott said that Jim would be at the next bargaining session to answer questions.

Bruce distributed transfer language from last year. The changes reflect those that are required in 736 related to prior year evaluations. Red language was tentatively agreed to (TA'd) last year.

Scott – Is struck though part of TA from last year?

Bruce – Yes.

Joe – Bruce, are you adding the three phrases that are underlined?

Bruce – Yes, bold underlined language.

Scott – We will take this under advisement in terms of 736.

Bruce – Race to the Top (RT3). MEA wrote letter detailing impacts. MEA hasn't heard anything from management about year 2 issues. District said that they would provide information. MEA is assuming things haven't changed since management hasn't brought them up. The only issue we've addressed is the teacher assessment system. There are a number of other issues (STEM, lead teacher, teacher supervising interns, mentors, compensation, assignments and transfers we provided to YOU although not related to RT3). We don't know if there has been any implementation. We are reiterating our expectation of bargaining over this and district does not have unilateral right. Otherwise, we'll grieve. i.e. if there are mentors we expect them to be paid as per the Contract. Any other changes – we're not waiving our right to negotiate. If we find out we

will consider ULP.

Scott – Met with RT3 coordinator this week. He is getting up to speed in his new position as assistant superintendent. Any items that need to be bargained will.

Bruce – That's what we're prepared to do.

Scott – Looks like it's in line with 736.

Bruce – Do we want to set another meeting?

Scott – yes, we can do that. Look at mid-sept or after HI meeting on 8/30? Board talking about workshop on 9/15 on HI.

Bruce – Not sure that's appropriate for board to hear health insurance committee's recommendation. Will they be suggesting changes to HIC's recommendation? Are they going to negotiate with the committee? They do a lot of that in workshops and try to reach consensus on whether they like things.

Scott – I can't predict future. I only mention that by way of selecting a future bargaining date.

Bruce – How about 9/13?

Scott – That's fine. Tuesday, 9/13 at 4:30. Can we choose a second date – an additional? How about 9/20?

Bruce – I don't hear any objections.

Adjourned at 6:28 p.m.