

MEA Bargaining 2023-2024
Session #4

Wednesday, September 6, 2023

Those present: Rick Bailey, Pat Barber, Cory Bernaert, Willie Clark, Silvana Ianinska, Derek Jensen, Helen King, Brian Kirchberg, Rob Lyons, Gina Malinak, Melanie Newhall, Bruce Proud, Joe Ranaldi, Rachel Sellers, Jon Syre, Bill Vogel and Dawn Walker.

Caucus began at 4:50 p.m. Meeting began at 5:50 p.m.

Agenda

Welcome and Opening Remarks • Status of Remaining Items • Health Insurance Proposal •
MEA Proposal • Caucus • Board Response and Proposal • Discussion •

Vogel – We survived another hurricane, weather event. Biggest storm surge. Shelters were busy. Now we're back together. OK, pulled together agenda. We have a health insurance (HI) proposal. Know you probably have a proposal for us. In caucus you can look at our proposal, and we can respond to your proposal. If that sounds alright, we'll move forward.

Proud – Minutes for last 2 meetings?

Vogel – We did review minutes. Thought minutes were fine. Thank you.

Vogel – Management handout. Board and MEA proposal update 8/28/23. Not in agreement of raising base on all salary levels. Still not comfortable being able to do anything across the board without following guidelines for highly effective (HE). We talked to some of our sources and they talked about having to walk that back if we would've done that. Best to do is COLA. \$414 COLA. Last year was \$150.

Proud – Going to give this back. Our proposal is not in violation with any law. You haven't shown us anything. I already read what is in law. You have people who don't understand what's in the law. Maybe they need to read it. Heard a million speeches about flexibility from governor himself and others. I'm offended by that. Fix it or don't give it. I'm not going to accept that proposal is our proposal. You don't have the right to change our proposal. I see your proposal. I hope you see ours.

Vogel – The only change was requirement to change percentage on base salary.

Proud – Where is that in law? Show me.

Vogel – That was crossed out. I'll be happy to provide that to you.

Proud – Didn't provide additional language?

Vogel - No they didn't. (Vogel read information provided by management's source). That was the only thing that was removed.

Proud – That's someone's opinion.

Vogel – That's what was taken out. Last year we had 3/4/5 model. That's the information that I received; that's what we have to go by. Trying to accommodate. We are in agreement on increasing performance. Effective (E) to 4 levels. HE to 5. Grandfathered (GF) – 4 levels. Increase masters to \$2000. We're apart on supplements. Good news – not trying to be difficult and make it a point of contention – pleased to continue retention supplement. Got a favorable ok from our board. Want to continue longevity/retention. Change language to retention. Willing to go ahead with that. Will benefit teachers. Agree to your suggestion to address compression on para schedule. Agree to para 1 step increase. Will talk about how to address people at top. Not sure we have any. Don't want to get into problem with schedule. After last session signed off on referendum in almost record time. This is where we are. Any questions? I know on item 1 we are not in agreement.

Proud – Want to produce something that reflects our proposal. I will collect the rest of them and give them back to you because I don't want them out there. I believe it is legal and will communicate that. You still haven't produced a document to support your position. Who produced it? You? The School Board Association? The Superintendent's Association? Show me the statute.

Vogel – That was crossed out. If you have the statute, I'd like to see it.

Proud – OK.

Handout retrieved and returned to Vogel.

Vogel – Want to give HI proposal. Master contract section 12 item 4 states that the health insurance committee (HIC) shall be empowered to make recommendations to bargaining team regarding HI issues. On 5/2/23 HIC after working diligently made recommendation to increase HI rates. Recommendation is to follow recommendation of HIC. Rate increases 1/1/24. Range from \$96 to \$2472/per employee depending on the plan and options chosen. Option during open enrollment to make changes. These are annual premium increases. Talked about solvency and conditions of HI plan. Rachel going to talk about latest update.

Sellers – District is required to maintain plan solvency and 2 months claims for state law. District fund balance at 6/30 had dropped to \$0. Bills came in in June. Needed to look at solvency and needed to make transfer from the general fund. It's reported in the annual financial statement. Full transfer of \$15M to that fund. Not planning on proposing passing on cost to employees. Had \$2.5M in claims in June; \$4M in July. Want to be solvent for rest of 2023. Also went ahead and addressed reserve balance that state requires to maintain. Additional \$5.3 to get to \$15M reserve. Take that information equated that for amount of employees we did have at district. 5700 district employees. \$9.7 solvency, reserve \$10M. Per employee cost comes to \$1,691 for solvency. \$1744 per employee. MEA employees have 2556 taking HI. That cost for board for MEA group alone - \$3.3M contribution to plan. \$4.5 for reserve for MEA employees. We do have a summary to let you look at that information. Feel that this is a benefit employees are receiving. Board needs to have solvency and a plan

approved by the state. Still need to address premium increase for 2024 so we're not in same position again. Management HI handout. Board is paying more than 70% of premiums. Cost increase is affecting employees and also the board.

Proud – What's the \$4,996,226.18?

Sellers - That's the sum of the board column.

Proud – On an annual basis?

Sellers – Yes.

Proud – But that won't be this fiscal year.

Sellers – The first 6 months is still left.

Proud – Yeah, but I don't know how to calculate how many paychecks.

Sellers – Take that in half.

Proud – That's my question. It will be in 11 payrolls?

Sellers – Yes.

Proud - OK. No other questions. Is that the only proposal you have?

Vogel – Yes. That's all we have right now at this point.

Proud – MEA handout. Maintenance – it's a different number than you have. You included \$150 cola from last year. That was not included in TSIA. That was general fund. Deducted from TSIA carryover. Not part of TSIA in proposals as I recall. Continuing to separate base rate from non-base schedule increase. Still believe you have flexibility to do that. Will continue to give whatever I can find specifically written in legislative terms about legislative flexibility. Believe it still exists. 4/5/4 model. \$1000. Master's supplement. \$500 increase there as well. Appreciate agreement with performance pay and master's degree. Adjusted supplement differential. Included supplements that were not included this year. Reduced to \$150,000. Includes supplemental positions for additional duties. And guidance, media and ag supplements. Will skip retention issues for now. Paras - 1 step. Reduced to \$0.75. Modified from 5 cents to 10 cents. Will give rationale in a moment. MEA handout. Retention language. This proposal attempts to change language from longevity to retention. Based on being retained for a number of years. Notice in middle we added another layer of someone who has been retained for 10 years at \$1000. All conversation about TSIA has been focused on bringing up the base. There are a lot above the base that aren't happy because they have been ignored. They hear this is the year to do something other than increase the base. It's an opportunity to do something for people who have been here over time. I understand it is expensive. Quick calculation of 933 people. Includes those receiving 16 and 25 supplements because they obviously have 10. Those between 10 and 16 and those new to 10th year. Expensive item this year. Next year would be newly eligible like those we talk about for 16 and 25. No scientific reason for 10. Know we have 433

currently receiving the 16 or 25 receiving longevity. 80 some people new to those criteria. Added 20 new to 16. Those who are new and finishing 10 and 16 based on date of hire and data we have. $433 + 500 = 500$ people between 10 and 16 just based on hire date and looking at where they are on salary schedule to confirm time in district. Other questions?

Vogel – I have some concerns. First, on teacher retention – your last proposal was \$219,000 and that basically I assume was same group of teachers. Now up over \$1M.

Proud – That was addition of 10+ retention.

Vogel – Concerned that we're headed in wrong direction when you come up with an increase like that and change in concept. Especially when we without hesitation essentially agreed to your proposal that you made last time.

Proud – That's a legitimate concern. Notice we changed from \$1500 to \$1000. Took that in consideration and hear your concern. Looking at a way of compensating people who have been here over time and understand your concern.

Vogel – Big concern. Went through a lot together to resolve this issue. Also, not sure what you're talking about on paras. Looked like we were in agreement on proposal last time. I haven't seen what you're giving me. Seems you're moving in a different direction also.

Proud – not completely moving in a different direction. Moved from \$1.00 to \$0.75. The amount of money is less than what was proposed previously. So, we were looking at ways to make it as equitable as we can. Make headway and need to make more over time and figure out how compression works.

Vogel – Don't disagree with concept but do have a concern when we worked through items. We worked to try to meet what you want, and yeah, we were in agreement and now we're not. Same concern on this one.

Proud – Didn't agree totally with para proposal. You have a right to make a proposal. We have made considerable movement. We are attempting to move toward an agreement.

Vogel – I don't see it. Doesn't look that way to me.

Proud – I understand your concern.

Vogel – Anything else?

Proud – No, that's all for today.

Vogel – We will take a look at it.

Proud – And we will review health insurance.

Caucus at 6:31 p.m. Reconvened at 8:18 p.m.

Vogel – Want to talk a little bit about the HI proposal?

Proud – Sure. We don't like it. Realize it's a recommendation of the committee. Realize health insurance is important. Committee spent time looking at different ways. Hopefully satisfied need for the year. Beginning in January, so 2024. Hope that you would calculate what the employees' contribution is here. You calculated district as \$4.996M. We calculated it's \$1.82M coming out of employees' pockets. Diminishing their contribution from what they're getting in their paycheck. Paycheck in January will be a harsh reality for those taking \$2400 out of their paycheck when they are not making that much more. Would expect when people see they will make hard decision about who they are covering. Some may go without healthcare. That's not appealing to any of us. Appreciate district commitment to the plan. At this point no counter proposal. But having known that was considered in our proposal, that we anticipated health insurance. Need to evaluate whole proposal in total. So, hope you have some movement.

Vogel – We're never going to reach agreement on interpretations this evening. We are willing to make some movement with COLA or whatever you feel you want to term it. Management handout. Proposing move from \$414 to \$624. Understand COLA can be half of grandfathered teachers increase which is \$1248. Would be added to every step. Looked at information and have different interpretation.

Proud - Not an interpretation – it is taken directly from statute.

Vogel - If that is statute then why didn't they take language out?

Proud - Want to give you flexibility.

Vogel - That's where we cannot come together on that. Like I said I double checked. Unable to do anymore than that. Feel I did do whatever we can do. Just can't do that.

Vogel - On teacher retention – again, disappointed in that. Isn't any movement that I have on teacher retention. I am fine. Proposal would be to change current contract language (CCL) from longevity to retention. Would be helpful to add language about not adding to base teacher pay. On paras, feel like we have worked father apart on that also, the way the modification would be. First compress then add \$0.25 on our proposal. \$15.25 starting salary. Then add those steps which you recommended. We're keeping our proposal same on paras. In terms of overall settlement may be more we can do on paras. Not willing to make any other movement right now. One thing I can do also is realize HI is something people have to deal with. Set aside ESSR money. Since you seem willing to do something on HI we are willing to provide \$1000 bonus to help offset health insurance. Management handout. This would be a \$1000 one-time retention bonus. Conditions would be individuals would have to be employed full time 3/1/23 – 9/30/23. Looked at amount of raises, increases. Teachers in 10-year range. What we've basically come up with is a teacher with 10 years when you include referendum received with \$1000 bonus more than \$3643 dollar raise then add bonus on top of that. That is an amount they would be able to receive. If they have a masters that's another \$500 on top of that. If they're HE that would be another \$312 on top of that. Tried to put best foot forward as far as salary increases and in terms of health insurance increases. In terms of overall settlement, we have possibilities to work with you on paras and possibilities to work on supplements. Not ready to work on that now unless you're ready to reach agreement. We value

working relationship with MEA. Think we've worked together through difficult situations – HIC, retention/longevity supplements. Feel like we put best foot forward. Open to further discussion to come to see if we can come to agreement this evening.

Proud – How do you think we could move closer together? Same proposal as last time in terms of compensation for teacher and paras. No movement on paras, no movement other than COLA on teachers from last time.

Vogel – We agreed with most proposals last time including longevity and masters.

Proud – You could have rejected longevity but we had to go to arbitration last year.

Vogel- Think package is strong.

Proud – Think it's what's available from state. Don't see a whole lot coming out of the general fund (GF) in terms of teacher increases at all. Bonus that comes out of ESSR. Level and COLA that comes out of what used to be called TSIA. Specific categorical. Don't see anything else coming from district. What you proposed for paras I'll calculate. Doesn't seem to be great satisfaction. Other thing is referendum that people voted on. That's based on a particular year. Could go up, could go down any year. Seems like you're holding a lot into referendum and other funds that don't come out of GF. Granted you had to put a lot into HI. Have to do some more study about what it means and why. Don't see other things coming for teacher or para salaries. Relatively small percentage of an increase. Not sure there's much room. You refused to look at it in a broader scope of what law may permit. Makes it restrictive of what we can do. Other districts have done it. Do some more research and prepare for impasse. Will have conversation about what's available. Seem dead set against alternatives.

Vogel - I object. You have your sources I have mine.

Proud - I have what's in the bill. It's completely different than what was said previously. District willing to ignore language because of someone's interpretation. Didn't come from House or Senate. We know they will say so. We know they say things to prevent teachers from getting pay raises.

Vogel - Why didn't they say that?

Proud - That's why we didn't call it a COLA. It's an adjustment to the schedule. We want to create a schedule that's different.

Vogel – That's the sticking point. I can vary from that. That was the amount of money we are authorized to put in the pot. That's the amount of money we have to increase the schedule through the COLA.

Proud – What's attributable to the GF? My calculation doesn't show a whole lot coming out of GF? Tell me you don't have . . . you have a lot of money in reserves. How do I justify going to folks saying you don't have any money? Which leads back to a hearing. That will be the main focus – what are the available dollars. Trying to avoid that. Not a fun process for anybody. Don't want to do an arbitration either.

Vogel – Big problem is definition of what your interpretation is and what information I've been given. That's why we're not going to be able to agree on that. Tried to do our best.

Proud – Hope you will be able to produce those people in a hearing I guess. You haven't really moved much since last time other than COLA and ESSR money. Nothing for paras. No movement.

Vogel – Have room to move on paras.

Proud – Would have been good to propose at this point. Don't know what you've given to AFSCME already.

Vogel – What I'm concerned is where we agreed and you changed your proposal. Not going to get into that because we have never bargained like that before. Once we agreed we have been in agreement. Disappointed.

Proud – So disappointed you are going to punish paras?

Vogel – If willing to sign off on health insurance we can talk about paras.

Proud – Would rather look at as whole package than piecemeal. Think whole package is less and we agreed to several things. I get that we shifted but it is less in overall dollars to budget than how it was. Wasn't same amount as a quarter. I could have stayed at \$1.00. Could have stayed at nickel. But we moved. That quarter is more expensive than modifying levels to make it easier in the future. We'll talk about your proposal again. You have our proposal.

Vogel – Ok, we'll take a caucus.

Proud – We will as well.

Caucus at 8:48 p.m. Reconvened at 9:11 p.m.

Proud – Discussed your proposals. MOU – need to work on revisions. 1 – 6 don't apply to this bargaining unit. Need to discuss a little bit more. Non renewed hired before beginning of this year typically look at as continuing employees. Our definition of full time is anyone eligible for benefits. Could be 20 hours in a bargaining unit (BU). Are they part time or full time under this? Need to use our definition of employees. Don't have any 12 month that I'm aware of. Charters are not part of BU.

Vogel – That's fine. We understand.

Proud – I thought I made it clear we were in agreement with HI but I do want to make sure it shows how much employees will pay. It will include \$1.8M as a deduction that will come out of employees pockets. Don't know how I've done it any different way in any bargaining. If going to include employer should include employees out of pocket. I will figure out document that says both. Retention – we're willing to remove extra proposal. MEA handout. Continue to look for ways to compensate those who have been with the district over time. Believe this was a good way to look at people who were experienced. That's why we proposed it. Doesn't have anything to do with any law. So right now, this proposal doesn't include it. And that will be communicated

again. Feel free to read it over time. Don't know it's exception to add anything or take anything out other than the 10 years. That's all we have.

Vogel – Proposal to hopefully get closer to finish line. As far as paras, I see you moved to 75 cents an hour. Split the difference for 50 cents an hour increase. Appreciate you making movement on retention. Same position on 5 cents an hour compression. That would bring starting up to \$15.50. Proposal is to move every step up 50 cents. That would split difference on paras.

Proud – I think I understand your proposal.

Vogel – One more proposal in an effort to wrap up. Will split difference on supplement increase. Will move from 3 to 4%. New supplements to propose for equity purposes. Girls' varsity lacrosse and girls' varsity wrestling.

Proud – Is there an expectation that it would be the same as boys?

Vogel – Yes, it is. Want to make sure girls have that opportunity also.

Proud – Are these figures the salary without the increase? The current salary?

Vogel – I believe so. Is that correct, Willie?

Sellers – That's current.

Vogel – We would have to add 4%.

Proud – Challenges of doing 2 new supplements and everyone who thinks they should get a supplement as well. Just trying to think what you've done to evaluate.

Clark – Have been expanding number of girls participating in Title 9 over the years.

Vogel – Doesn't have to be a proposal. Just thought we were adding them. Going to add them.

Proud – You were going to add without bargaining? That would be an unfair labor practice (ULP). Are you saying there's something you have control over without bargaining? You only looked at as perspective of title 9?

Clark – Looking to increase the number of females participating.

Vogel – We bargain everything.

Proud – Anything else?

Vogel – That's it.

Proud – Are you looking for us to caucus or another date?

Vogel – looking for you to caucus. Only one thing. Think we're at a point where we've got enough there to reach agreement. We put our best foot forward. Want to take a little break and settle tonight.

Proud – You're a little optimistic. You think meeting in the middle is sufficient?

Vogel – We've agreed to most of your items.

Proud – Need for both sides to be satisfied and that we have an agreement that can get ratified.

Caucus at 9:33 p.m. Reconvened at 9:49 p.m.

Proud – Reviewed your proposals. Had a conversation. At a point we will agree to COLA at \$624. Disappointed district is overly compliant to not consider opportunity other districts will take advantage of all around us with flexibility that is in the law. In agreement with compression at 5 cents. Proposing 65 cent per hour increase on paras in hopes it would help fill the nearly 100 vacancies that currently exist in the bargaining unit. As far as supplements see no reason to change from 5%. Those people work hard. Not such a large amount especially since you're adding positions that would have cost same amount. Clearly you have the money. Believe fair and reasonable place to start and end. That's it.

Vogel – So what you're saying is those 2 items – we'll go back and talk about those 2 items.

Caucus at 9:52 p.m. Reconvened at 10:47 p.m.

Vogel – Thank you for your proposals. We will accept 5% for supplements and differential pay. That leaves us with paras. Not in agreement on paras. We are at 50 cents and you're at 75 cents. We would like to make another proposal, but we can't do it tonight. Maxed out. But would like to meet tomorrow. Able to give proposal tomorrow that will be able to be in agreement on all items. Just need to be able to do more work. That being said looks like we are in agreement on all items, and I don't want to be presumptuous. If you are available tomorrow and you said you were, we want to go though what we want to do tomorrow. Think you are going to go ahead and revise ESSR MOU.

Proud – Right

Vogel – Retention language. According to Silvana still using JDE data.

Proud – That's fine. Just thought you would want to use district data. Whatever you use is ok with me.

Ianinska - It's an actual field.

Proud – It's ok with me.

Vogel – Because we're using different numbers as far as how we're going to tentatively agree (TA). Health insurance can TA. Want to make a list of remaining items? Your numbers might not match up with ours.

Proud – Ok. Want me to bring something, you bring something and we will match it up.

Vogel – Tomorrow. Need to have copy of contract extension. I think that was all we needed for tomorrow except for proposal for paras. Will propose increase to what we proposed today. So, is it the same time? Shouldn't be a long session.

Proud – Yes.

Vogel – We will meet again tomorrow.

Meeting adjourned at 10:53 p.m.

Next Session September 7, 2023