

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Franklin Lakes Board of Education

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The Franklin Lakes Board of Education (the “Board”) and the Franklin Lakes Education Association (the “Union”) have been unable to agree on the terms of a new contract. Recently, tensions between the parties have increased, and the Board would like to provide the Franklin Lakes community with a brief recap of the process to-date and an update on the current status of negotiations.

The Board is committed to reaching an agreement that recognizes the value of our excellent staff while being prudent and financially sustainable for the district. Throughout the process, the Board has repeatedly expressed – and demonstrated – its willingness to compromise and negotiate in good faith.

## History

- The parties met three times in the spring of 2017 in anticipation of the contract expiration. At the fourth meeting, the Union unilaterally declared an impasse. That declaration ended face-to-face discussions and triggered the appointment of a state mediator.
- The teachers’ contract expired on June 30, 2017. Teachers and staff continue to receive salaries and benefits under the terms of the expired contract and will continue to do so until a new agreement is in place.
- The Board met with the Union and a state-appointed mediator on September 25, 2017 and on April 26, 2018. After hours of mediation with no progress, the mediator moved the process to the next stage of collective bargaining, known as “factfinding”.
- The formal factfinding hearing was scheduled for September 26, 2018. The Union asked, and the Board agreed, to instead use that meeting as an additional mediation session in the hope that a negotiated settlement would avoid the delays of the factfinding process. After over 5 hours, the mediation session was adjourned without agreement. The Union was unwilling to negotiate any contract terms unless the Board first agreed to permanently reduce staff contributions to health insurance premiums.
- At the formal factfinding hearing on December 13, 2018, the Board’s and Union’s representatives presented their respective positions to the factfinder over several hours of testimony. The parties subsequently (in February 2019) delivered written briefs to the factfinder and are now awaiting his **non-binding** settlement recommendation.

## Recent Events

- In an effort to move the process forward while awaiting the factfinder’s report, on January 22, 2019 the Board invited the Union leadership to meet for face-to-face negotiations. The parties met on February 13, 2019 and the Board presented an updated offer incorporating information from recent settlements. The Board opened the February 13 meeting with a

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statement that it was committed to reaching a settlement, ready to compromise, and that it considered its proposal a starting point for a constructive give-and-take. The Union president responded that any discussion of additional time was a non-starter.

- On February 26, 2019, the Union’s negotiating team rejected the Board’s offer, without providing any substantive feedback or a counteroffer.
- On March 12, 2019, the Board asked the Union to clarify its response and suggested additional meetings to attempt to negotiate a settlement. As of April 1, the Union had not responded to the Board’s email.

### **The Board’s Latest Proposal** (delivered on February 13, 2019)

1. A 5-year contract covering July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2022
2. Retroactive salary guide advancement
3. Salary increases each year
4. Three forms of “Chapter 78” relief to reduce teachers’ insurance contributions:
  - a) For the current school year, a one-month contribution “holiday”, representing an approximately 10% reduction in health insurance contributions for **every** staff member in the health insurance plan; and
  - b) Going forward (for the remainder of the agreement), a rollback to Chapter 78’s Tier 3 contribution rates – representing a 25% reduction in staff contributions – for **every** staff member choosing a lower-cost health insurance plan known as “Direct 0”; and
  - c) Going forward, for staff members who do not choose the “Direct 0” plan, a pool of funds to provide relief for those contributing at the highest rates.
5. Discontinuation of longevity payments, allowing the district to redirect those funds to broad-based improvement of the salary guide. This prospective change would not impact anyone currently in the district.
6. Requests for some time concessions, including, for example, additional time for faculty meetings and professional development.

THE BOARD IS NOT ABLE TO SETTLE THE CONTRACT ALONE. We respectfully submit that if the Union really wants to settle the contract, they must come back to the negotiating table prepared for good faith negotiations and a constructive give-and-take.

Previous updates by the Board may be found on the district website under “BOE/negotiations”.

Please direct any questions or comments to the Franklin Lakes Board of Education at:

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