

NESHAMINY

No new teachers contract yet

No-cost health care premiums remain one of the major issues, according to officials.

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After another recent negotiation session, Neshaminy teachers still don't have a new contract, officials said.

Representatives of the Neshaminy school board and the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers met in the middle of last week to continue bargaining under state-appointed mediator Jill Leeds-Rivera, sources said. But despite almost a dozen conferences, officials still are describing the bargaining sessions as slow.

The biggest issue, according to board member Ritchie Webb, is health care. The board wants the teachers to start contributing a percentage toward their health care premiums, while the teachers have so far proposed no change to the current package.

"That needs to be settled and hopefully everything else will fall in line," he said. "We're working together to gather information on insurance. I think it's positive that there's not a lot of animosity between the sides."

Although the teachers do not pay any percentage of their health care premiums, they do pay \$15 for co-pays and \$5 and \$20 for generic and brand-name drugs, respectively, through Personal Choice, as reported by the district's human resources department.

In June, neither side formally accepted a fact-finder's recommended three-year teacher labor deal that called for a 3 percent salary increase but no change to the health care package, administrators said.

Almost three months later, the teachers continue to work under the contract that expired at the end of June without any salary increases, said Louise Boyd, president of the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers.

"The teachers are going on [73] days ... without a contract," she said. "Health care has been the big issue, but that's really the only issue that the board has been willing to discuss. Numerous issues need to be resolved before we'll have a contract."

Both sides are scheduled to talk again Sept. 24, officials said.
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