

Board, teachers resume contract talks

22 Jul 2009 — Bucks County Courier Times

Neshaminy

After several months of silence, the Neshaminy school board and teachers union are back to the negotiating table and talking.

Board members recently obliged the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers' request for a formal written invitation, resulting in a meeting last week, said board President Ritchie Webb.

While not much has changed in the contract talks, both sides agreed to meet again in August or September. A date is pending due to scheduled vacations, Webb said.

The newspaper was unsuccessful in reaching union President Louise Boyd for comment.

To clarify where it stood, the board presented a consolidated proposal of its offers on salary, benefits and other issues, according to a posting on the district's Web site.

"We reiterated how far we've gotten," said Webb. "But there are no changes to the board's position."

That position has been an annual 3 percent salary increase, including steps, and a requirement that employees pay 15 percent, 16 percent and 17 percent toward health care premiums over three years. Although the union rejected that offer, the district's administrators in March accepted a deal for themselves that mirrored that contract, officials said.

In May, the board also withdrew its previous proposal of including retroactive salary and step increases for the 2008-09 school year, Webb said. The teachers are working under a contract that expired in June 2008.

Boyd has denied the district's claim that the union counter-offered a total 6 percent annual salary increase, including steps, and a requirement for no change to the medical insurance package. However, she hasn't revealed the union's offer.

The district Web site says the union proposed a Personal Choice PC20 package with a plan that would cost educators \$10 for generic drugs and \$25 for brand name prescriptions, and zero premium contributions. The board offered a Personal Choice PC20/30/70 package with a plan that would cost teachers \$5 for generics and \$30 for brand name drugs, administrators said.

Webb said officials hope to have a mediator at the next meeting.

"The mere fact that we're talking, I see as encouraging," he said. "Nothing can happen unless we do that, so it's positive."

Rachel Canelli can be reached at 215-949-4191 or rcanelli@phillyBurbs.com.

"Board, teachers resume contract talks" Bucks County Courier Times 22 Jul 2009: B2