

NESHAMINY

Administrators OK offer rejected by teachers

The teachers union president maintains that their counter-offer is not being reported accurately, but would not discuss details.

By RACHEL CANELLI
STAFF WRITER

Rachel Canelli can be reached at 215-949-4191 or .

Neshaminy's almost three dozen administrators Tuesday afternoon ratified a new three-year agreement proposed by the district that the teachers rejected, officials said during Tuesday night's board meeting.

The 30-plus members of the Neshaminy School District Administrators Association unanimously approved the deal that will replace the one that expires June 30, according to that group's President Paul Minotti.

Mirroring the contract that the educators union turned down, the offer, which still has to be approved by the board in April, includes a 3 percent annual salary increase and a requirement that employees pay 15, 16 and 17 percent toward health care premiums over three years.

"This new agreement is, in my opinion, an extremely responsible one that goes a long way toward helping the students of Neshaminy by controlling future costs," board President Ritchie Webb read from a statement. "If other bargaining groups in the district follow this example, it would go a long way to resolving our financial crisis, saving jobs and preventing program cuts. It's my hope that the (Neshaminy Federation of Teachers) will follow the administrators' lead so we can reach an agreement with them."

Union President Louise Boyd, who was at the meeting, said only that the district's claim that the teachers counteroffered a 6 percent annual salary increase, including steps, and a requirement for no change to the medical insurance package is inaccurate. Boyd would not reveal the union's offer and declined to comment further.

While slight changes were made to the board's proposal to the administrators, officials did not disclose what those were.

The board's offer suggested changing the medical plan from Blue Cross PC15 to a less expensive PC 20/30/70 and the drug plan from Rx 5/20 to a cheaper Rx 5/30. But administrators still would have the option of a Keystone HMO, according to the board's statement.

The district's proposal recommended removing the full benefits package and a \$27,000 incentive upon retirement, as well as the single source item, which allows employees to pay a \$5 generic fee for \$20 brand name drugs when generics aren't available, the same as proposed to the teachers union. The board's deal also called for reducing opt-out sharing from 37 percent to 25 percent; that's the amount of the premiums the district pays to employees who use their spouse's insurance, said Webb.

And, finally, the contract asked to eliminate any future annual, long-term service bonuses, which are \$1,750 for employees with 20 to 24 years, \$2,150 for 25 to 29 years, \$2,550 for 30 to 34 years and \$3,000 for 35 years or more, officials said.

Administrators' salaries, excluding cabinet members, can range from about \$100,000 to \$124,000, officials said.

Although Middletown resident and businessman Larry Pastor admitted the board's agreement with administrators was significant progress, he also said he and many other taxpayers still have concerns about the overall budget. He encouraged the educators and the 500-member support staff to make reasonable offers, including concessions to ease the burden on homeowners.

Steve Rodos, a retired attorney and Langhorne resident, though, said bashing teachers isn't productive and doesn't recognize the staff's efforts. He asked why the non-salary part of the

budget, such as special education and transportation, can increase unquestioned. Rodos also urged the union to adopt the same contract as the administrators.