

## Offensive performance

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Union out of touch

The Neshaminy teachers union fails to recognize today's economic realities.

The performance of Neshaminy teachers union President Louise Boyd at Tuesday's school board meeting was worthy of some sort of Oscar or perhaps a Tony, given the live audience. Highly educated and holding an impressive leadership position, Boyd gave a convincing performance as clueless and out of touch.

Boyd seemed befuddled and insulted that negotiators hadn't met since January to work out a new contract. She acted like the ball is in the school board's court - which it isn't.

"I haven't been hiding for the last two years," Boyd said, referring the teachers expired contract. "I'm ready to go."

From our perspective, the board has been both clear and upfront with its offer: annual 3 percent salary increases, including steps, and contributions of 15, 16 and 17 percent over three years toward health care premiums.

The union's counteroffer remains a secret of sorts; at least Boyd won't say what it is. She has denied the board's characterization that the union won't budge from its demand that teachers continue receiving free health benefits - apparently, the big sticking point. The union countered with a cheaper health insurance plan but, according to the board, remains opposed to teachers contributing to its cost.

If so, the union's position is unacceptable despite its unconfirmed offer to accept a Chevy- vs. Cadillac-style health care plan. And it is unacceptable for a few reasons, chiefly because it's grossly out of step with economic reality and also because it's grossly unfair to taxpayers.

As we've pointed out many times before, these are hard times for a lot of people. The economic meltdown of 18 months ago put a lot of people out of work. And many of those who still have jobs suffered wage freezes or salary cuts. Additionally, private sector workers have been contributing to employer-provided health insurance for decades. Typically, workers now foot between 25 and 35 percent of the cost of health insurance.

Considering real-world economics, the board's offer is generous - maybe too generous.

Yet Boyd called the board's lack of negotiations "offensive."

Taxpayers doubtless understand what it's like to be offended. They hear that a union representing people who work 10 months out of the year, some of whom earn six-figure salaries, is clinging to a selfish belief that they shouldn't have to pay a penny toward their own health insurance.

Now, that's offensive!

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