

Board rejects report on contract

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Neshaminy

Many support union members expressed frustration and disappointment that the board rejected the fact-finder's report.

Just in case anyone thought they would change their minds, Neshaminy school board members Wednesday night voted 8-0 to formally reject the fact-finder's report in negotiations with the support staff. Board member Kim Koutsouradis was not present for the vote.

While the Neshaminy Educational Support Professional Association approved the recommended contract, including outsourcing busing, the school board didn't respond within 10 days of the report being issued, which counts as a rejection, officials said.

The four-year deal would have given union members no salary increase the first year and three percent increases each year for the remaining three years. The contract also would have required the support staff to contribute 10 percent towards health care premiums, according to the report.

In a statement, board President Ritchie Webb said the suggested deal would only save the district \$535,815, or \$3 million over the next three years. And since the board is still trying to fill a \$5.6 million for the 2010-11 school year, Neshaminy must explore other options, or cut programs. The board has scheduled talks with the support union May 27, and June 4 and 9, said Webb.

But dozens of the 270 full-time and 282 part-time support union members, whose jobs range from bus drivers to janitors to food service workers, expressed their disappointment and frustration that the board said no to the fact-finder's report. They've been working under an expired contract since July.

Many who spoke were not only graduates, but also parents and longtime residents and taxpayers of the district. They asked the board to reconsider outsourcing and also asked the teachers and administrators to help by giving back.

Although other residents agreed with the board that there's no money and taxpayers can't afford a bill increase, several parents and former and current students pleaded with the board not to cut the family and consumer science program, which serves roughly 750 kids. They said the kids are being put in the middle of a financial debate.

On that note, a couple of parents claimed they've heard the teachers will be working to rule citing examples of educators switching a Sandburg Middle School seventh grade trip from Dorney Park to the Camden aquarium and possibly not attending an academic achievement dinner.

Louise Boyd, president of the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers, declined to comment via e-mail earlier this week on the situation saying she only discusses union issues with members. Webb said the board is in the process of setting up a bargaining session with the teachers union.

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