

HEA/HPS Interest Based Bargaining Notes

February 23, 2022

The HEA/HSD bargaining team met on Wednesday, February 23, 2022 from 4:00-5:30 pm at the Lincoln Center Board Room. All members were in attendance with the exception of Trustee McKee. Max Hallfrisch from the Department of Labor and Industry is serving as our facilitator.

During the meeting we produced the following document “The Story”. This document covers the issue(s) that we are bargaining for, the story that describes why we are bargaining this issue, the needs, desires, and concerns around the issue, and the options. All of these parts of the document may be added to at future meetings, and the options portion is just a very rough beginning. We outlined what documents we needed to share with the group so that everyone is ready to talk about them at the next meeting.

The comments that are italicized were made by the facilitator.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 16 at 4:00 pm at the Lincoln Center Board Room. This meeting will be posted on the school district website with a TEAMS link for observation use by interested persons.

Please continue to monitor this website for further updates!

Team: Rex Wertz, Jane Shawn, Janelle Mickelson, Stacy Collette, Josh McKay, Brett Zanto, Dave Thennis, Wynn Randall, Terry Beaver, Anna Alger, Adam Clinch, Joanne Didriksen, Kelly Elder, Bob Korizek, Erika McMillin, Paul Phillips, Jonna Schwartz, Jake Warner

- Roll call, forum reached (Trustee McKee absent)
- Ground rules from previous meeting approved

The Issue:

Wages for one year

The Story:

Cost of living and teachers being able to keep with buying power. Figures for inflation and for what social security COLAs were. In September/October, all social security recipients got 5.9%. Right now, inflation is at 7.5%. Previously, we adjusted to a system with some members on PCAP or on a steps and lanes system. Combating inflation and maintaining the standard we set last year is important. Housing prices in Helena are up

HEA/HPS Interest Based Bargaining Notes

February 23, 2022

26% and appraisal values are rising. Used cars prices re: supply and demand are high. An increase in job responsibilities due to COVID--different initiatives for staff, staff cleaning, supporting students in additional ways.

History of PCAP and Steps and Lanes offered and clarified. Employees with 20 years of seniority are permitted to stay. Those with 10-20 years of service have two years to move (this is year one). Everyone lower than step 10 immediately moved to steps and lanes or was frozen.

As a district, market comparisons were completed, particularly with AA districts. A comparable matrix was created. As an organization we want to treat people fairly and adopted a market based approach.

The added stress and strain of teaching during COVID--digital components, students who aren't in person. The SEL components and the issues in the classroom are exponentially greater than before.

The need for a second job is greater now and a change in the balance.

Bargaining for 630 educators, which is an increase of 40+ teachers in the last few years.

Affordability of housing market in Helena for new teachers. If we don't maintain this pay scale, we won't be able to hire because no one can afford to live here. We are also challenged with other jobs/salaries coming close to beginning teacher pay. Some teachers, those in their mid-40s, are topped out in terms of pay, living on a fixed income. The top of our scale has been stagnant--in spring of 2017, if you were at 77k, you're still making 77k. Using the bureau's inflation calculator, 77k is actually diluted to 70k, meaning that folks are moving backwards. Many of these people came into the district when, comparatively, AA pay was one of the lowest in the state.

PCAP was instituted in Fall of 2004.

Morale and teacher burnout, nationally, is an issue. As teachers' plates become fuller and fuller, having no adjustment, and then adjusting by taking second jobs, is hard for morale, hard for staff, and ultimately, hard for kids.

We struggled in the last round of negotiations. Teachers had a hard time with PCAP's limited sustainability. We begrudgingly left the old system. We talked about the value of a teacher who maybe doesn't have a master's but is a master teacher and has dedicated their professional life to instruction. We heard the district's message and adjusted.

The state is increasing the district's budget by 1.5%. If inflation is 7.5%, where does the money come from?

Question about legislative inflationary increases impacting the district--

2022: 1.5%

2023: 2.57%

HEA/HPS Interest Based Bargaining Notes

February 23, 2022

Wanting to find a balance/a marriage from both sides. We want to know that the matrix will be maintained, will keep up, and be sustainable, allowing us to combat inflation.

Desire to recruit good hires.

Don't want to repeat the experience of last year. Find good ways to move forward that aren't traditionally based.

Past experiences include interest-based bargaining. The way of bargaining seemed to change--less unified. Important that we maintain a collective, team approach. Less of "us vs. them." Feelings that those further along on PCAP were abandoned/left behind.

We will explore all avenues. Open process. All inputs. You can pitch an idea without fear of being stuck with it.

Interests: Needs, Desires, Concerns

1. Increase salaries: Recognition of work you're doing in the marketplace you're in; increased job responsibilities; interest in the job; lifetime earnings/retirement abilities; maintain standard of living
2. Prevent freezing of salaries.
3. We're all here because we are committed to the district. We want to recruit and retain the best in the state and the nation. Salaries and morale play into this. We want to attract because of pay and because of our collaborative relationships in the district.
4. Where will the money come from? The horizon doesn't look any better.
5. Improve communication and collaboration.
6. Don't want to work each year for less and less, continue to improve, etc., and have to get a second job when that time could be spent differently.
7. Life is getting harder, teaching harder than ever before, and pay seems to be getting worse.
8. Teachers in ghost cells still are taken care of in terms of inflation. They need to maintain their standard of living as well.
9. Teachers are working more hours, more days, whether or not we are contracted to. What teachers now have to do to just get their jobs done--what you take home, required and recommended PD. Not just harder but longer--personal time, weekends, summer--that sometimes goes unnoticed.
10. Concern re: the divide among teachers, particularly the two pay scales.

HEA/HPS Interest Based Bargaining Notes

February 23, 2022

11. Openness and communication. The ability for all staff to be heard throughout the process. Importance of offering opportunities to be heard, importance of staff recognizing those opportunities. Making sure that people know how to be part of the process.

12. Admin. salaries added to the sense of divide.

Clear that we care about the district and about the kids.

13. In 20 years, kids' needs have grown. The district has stepped up, but how do we meet student needs?

14. Sustainability is a fear. As we look at student needs and staffing needs—we've increased graduation requirements, but sustainability wasn't a piece—needs keep growing, enrollment is declining in the high school, and money doesn't keep up. HPS was 8,000 students, approx., will ultimately be 7,600. District has forecasted. Mental health needs are increasing—how do we make that work, in addition to other groups?

15. Recruiting and retaining are good for kids; fewer transitions. Staff turnover is a concern.

16. Staff are concerned about inflation and their ability to keep up. Feeling that teachers are already capped, have to worry about ability to raise a family in Helena.

17. Former negotiations process called collective gaining. Time consuming, met once a week for several hours, for whole year. Collective gaining led to massive dialogue, not just communication. Personal dialogue results in understanding. Understanding leads to satisfaction. We're never going to be satisfied with our salaries. Working on things that are dichotomous: recruit and retain our best teachers but offer an incentive to retire—why? Fiscal responsibility.

18. Retirement incentive—why? Ability to hire new teachers in a shortage. District trying to reward professionalism, while moving forward and staying sustainable. Helena hasn't felt the true struggle to recruit/retain, but could be.

Options

- What can the district do to increase morale besides money? (PLC time)
- Have we shared information? Market data from other AAs with stipends has been shared.

Next Meeting

- Bring data to next meeting. Know the documents. Next meeting will start with listing options.
- Shared Teacher Placement Cost Out File—placement data will be reviewed and confirmed before next meeting.
- Budget projections, rationale.

HEA/HPS Interest Based Bargaining Notes
February 23, 2022

- Student projections and staffing projections: Update student numbers in data presented to board at budget meeting.