

CONTRACT NEGOTIATION UPDATE

Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union
and

Southwest Vermont Regional Technical School District

While active negotiations occurred on several days last week, progress on substantive issues was hampered by the Association's failure to provide a specific list of contract sections in dispute. The Association, claiming that the contract imposed by the Boards in June largely erased terms negotiated over the past 25 years, insisted that it would only discuss amendments to the 2008-2010 Agreement that expired on June 30, 2010. To understand why this caused delay, it is important to understand the changes made by the contract provisions imposed in June.

The 2008-2010 Agreement contains 199 separate sections and 4 appendices. The contract imposed on June 20, 2011 contains 198 sections and 4 appendices. The imposed terms affected 43 sections of the 2008-2010 Agreement. Specifically, a total of 40 sections were amended and 3 sections were deleted, with the Association agreeing to the deletions. The Association had agreed at some point prior to fact-finding or during fact-finding to 18 of the amendments. Indeed, the Association had requested some of these amendments. Of the 22 remaining amendments, one involves the duration of the agreement. This leaves 21 amendments to which the Association has not agreed. Importantly, with the exception of the one amendment regarding salary, the terms imposed by the Board team incorporated all fact-finder recommendations. It is surprising that the Association has stated publically that the fact-finder's report favored its positions while at the bargaining table it has not accepted any of the fact-finder's recommendations. Finally, the Association had agreed to the addition of the 2 new sections added in the imposed contract.

In summary, of the 198 sections in the imposed contract, 176 are unchanged from the 2008-2010 Agreement or contain changes agreed to by the Association. One section involves the duration of the imposed contract. Only 21 sections involve changes that the Association has not agreed to.

Throughout negotiations with the Association since imposition of the contract terms, Board negotiators have attempted to engage the Association in discussions to address the specific changes it seeks to the 21 disputed sections. During the extended discussions in August, the Board team believed it had reached agreement or, at least a basis for agreement, on all of these sections. When the Association rejected the contract

terms that the Board team developed with the Association team, Board negotiators were led to believe that the rejection was based on health insurance, hours of work at the middle school, high school and technical center, and salary. These issues are addressed in 7 specific contract sections.

With this understanding, the Board team attempted to resume negotiations after the Association vote to address these 7 contract sections. For this reason Board negotiators were stunned when the Association insisted that the starting point for discussions had to be the expired 2008-2010 Contract. By insisting on this, the Association withdrew its approval of 23 changes to the 2008-2010 Contract prior to the Boards' imposition and 14 changes not involving health insurance, working conditions or salary in August.

When negotiations resumed on October 18th, the Association continued its insistence that the 2008-2010 Contract remain the starting point. Consequently, as negotiations progressed, the Board team was informed by the Association that issues it thought were resolved were, in fact, still in dispute. Late Friday afternoon, October 21st, at a face-to-face meeting of the negotiating teams, the Association agreed that its lead negotiator would meet with a Board team representative today, October 24th, to develop a list of contract sections in dispute. That meeting did occur today and the teams will resume negotiations on Tuesday, October 25th to address the issues on the list. The Board team will make this list available upon receiving confirmation from the Association that it is complete and accurate.

Issued by the Negotiation team for the Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union school districts and the Southwest Vermont Regional Technical School District on October 24, 2011:

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