

For immediate Release

The negotiating teams for the Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union school districts, the Southwest Vermont Regional Technical School District and Southwest Vermont Teachers Association met for three hours on October 5, 2011 in an effort to resolve their pending contract differences. Board negotiators were willing and prepared to commence negotiations for a new contract with a commencement date of July 1, 2011 and asked that the meeting be used to develop negotiating ground rules.

The Association's negotiators insisted that the negotiations be conducted as a continuation of the negotiations begun in January 2010 for a new contract with a commencement date of July 1, 2010. Board negotiators rejected this request pointing out that the prior negotiations had progressed through mediation, fact-finding and imposition of contract terms for the period July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011. For this reason, it was unwilling to re-open negotiations for 2010-2011. At the same time, since the imposed contract terms remain in effect until a new contract is concluded, Board negotiators made clear their willingness to negotiate the imposed terms during negotiations for a contract for 2011-2012 and later years.

Both negotiating teams recognized the significance of the contract term to be negotiated. Since the Association has not agreed to work under the imposed contract terms it has the right at this time to engage in job actions such as picketing and striking. An Association decision to commence a new negotiation process for a contract with a commencement date of July 1, 2011 would constitute acceptance of the imposed contract terms and terminate the Association's existing right to engage in job actions challenging those terms.

In an effort to allow negotiations to occur that could address the imposed contract terms while preserving the Association's right to engage in job actions should they prove unsuccessful, both teams were willing to hold one additional day-long negotiation session in October or early November with the assistance of a neutral facilitator.

To ensure that this session would, if nothing else, bring about closure on the 2010-2011 contract year, Board negotiators asked that the session be open to the public. During the session, the public would be allowed to observe but not speak. This would provide the public an opportunity hear the specific proposals exchanged by the parties and better understand the related issues and concerns. The Board team also asked that if the negotiation session did not result in a new contract, the Association would agree to commence negotiation of a contract for

2011-2012 and later years promptly or, should it so vote, commence a strike to challenge the imposed contract terms.

The Association held a brief caucus to consider the Board team's requests. It then responded that requested conditions were unacceptable and it would not agree to participate in a further negotiation session on such terms. Board negotiators explained the importance of the terms but the Association did not change its position.

As the session concluded, Board negotiators reaffirmed their willingness to participate in a session in the next several weeks on the terms outlined above or commence new negotiations for a contract commencing on July 1, 2011. The Association did not state what it intended to do. At this time, no further meetings between the Association and the Board team are scheduled. If the Board team receives a request from the Association to meet on the terms discussed above, it will willingly and promptly do so.

Dated October 6, 2011

Negotiation team for the Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union
school districts and the Southwest Vermont Regional Technical
School District

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