

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the special Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, October 27, 2009 at 5:30 p.m. in the library at Reed Intermediate School.

Present:	E. McClure, Chair	J. Robinson
	L. Bittman, Vice Chair	D. Raymo
	K. Fetchick, Secretary	J. Libby
	D. Nanavaty	5 Public
	R. Gaines	1 Press
	W. Hart	

Item 1 – Call to Order

Mrs. McClure called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Item 2 – Discussion and Possible Vote on Newtown Federation of Teachers' Contract

Floyd Dugas, Board of Education Attorney, spoke about the contract negotiations. The first year there is no general wage increase or cost for step movement. We are restoring three furlough days that were taken away for a salary cost of \$488,187. The second year the combined general wage increase and step cost will be \$824,502. The step movement will take place mid-year. The third year will also have a mid-year step movement for a total \$1,081,446 for salary increase and step movement.

Regarding health insurance the existing PPO and POE plans are being replaced with a POS plan which has a savings to the Board of \$90,000 to \$100,000. We also agreed to a health savings account which has a high deductible and is funded 50% by the Board. We are introducing an HSA as an option which is a less expensive plan. Life insurance increased from \$75,000 to \$100,000. The hourly rate for work such as homebound tutoring and curriculum writing increased to \$30, \$32.50 and \$35.

Non-economic changes includes a full year leave of absence in non-shortage area positions providing there is six months notice given with other leaves at the discretion of the Superintendent. Direct deposit is required for all teachers. Vacancies are to be posted on the website rather than bulletin boards, teachers are required to maintain a website and lastly teachers are required to return emails and phone calls promptly.

Mrs. Fetchick asked about the cumulative effect of the increases over the years and how we came to the 3.45%.

Mr. Dugas said if you have the step movement in the middle of the year you begin the year at 2% and then increase the middle of the year. When you build your budget for the next year you start with the 2% again.

Mary Griffin of TR Paul spoke about the health insurance. The majority of teachers took the more expensive health plan. This year they wanted to have a plan to replace the POS plan that is HMO based with an out of network option. She suggested a plan that has a national network which is the one they chose. The deductible goes from July 1 through June 30. The pricing is significantly lower than the POS plan.

Mrs. Bittman asked how that plan works if someone was, for example, in California and needed medical attention.

Mrs. Griffin said in an emergency situation there would be coverage anywhere. Follow-up care would be at home. If a child is in college out of state you can get a guest membership with Blue Cross during that time.

Mrs. Fetchick asked about the language for insurance for retired teachers staying in the PPO.

Mr. Dugas said retired teachers can participate in the plan. The network for POS is much smaller than the POE plan. Our solution was the HSA option which wasn't acceptable. They asked if we could keep a PPO for retirees as long as one was available. They would have access to the national network. Once we decide not to provide the PPO then it would not be available for them either.

Mrs. Griffin said the HSA plan can be used for people over 65 with Medicare but they cannot contribute to the savings plan. When they retire they move to the state supplemental plan. TR Paul administers the plan for the retirees which is totally paid by them.

Mrs. McClure thanked Mr. Portnoy and Mr. Capeci for their help and Mrs. Llodra when Mr. Capeci could not attend.

Mr. Nanavaty joined the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Mrs. Fetchick said there is an increase in teachers required to teach an additional class for all schools except the elementary schools.

Mr. Dugas said this is what the teachers asked for.

Dr. Robinson said this issue comes up at the high school. Often we either need to run another section of a class or a teacher has to fill in for a teacher who is out for while. This is just increasing the pay for that extra class. There is one person this year at the middle school who is teaching an advanced class.

Mrs. Bittman said if they don't have a teacher stepping up to teach then you have students who can't take the class.

Mrs. Fetchick said the big concern is the removal of the option to furlough teachers.

Mr. Dugas said the option is still there but it was agreed that their work year would not drop below 187 days through the last year of the contract.

Mr. Nanavaty said the only alternative is laying off teachers.

Mr. Dugas said that furloughs are a compromise to layoffs.

Mrs. Fetchick said we are facing a real problem financially for next year. She is concerned with the salaries.

Mr. Nanavaty said if we have another tough budget year next year we are only adding three days.

Mr. Dugas said this was a compromise with the teachers.

Mrs. Bittman said in the face of layoffs we could reopen the contract to choose furloughs for one year instead of having layoffs.

Mr. Nanavaty said the teachers wanted an understanding that they could bank on a work year and salary for those days. Teachers didn't want to agree to a contract that didn't provide a fixed work year and know their salary. That's where the 187 days came in. They also understood that if fiscally we could not agree to that, our alternative would be layoffs. We haven't given up anything. For these three years we agreed to a 187 day work year.

Mr. Dugas said the average teacher work year around the state is 187 days.

Mr. Dugas said that if we went into binding arbitration the teachers have other issues on the table and that is at risk if we go to arbitration. The money would come in pretty close to what we have agreed on. He thinks this contract is what an arbitrator would agree to.

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved to approve the contract between the Newtown Federation of Teachers and the Board of Education for years 2010 to 2013.
Mrs. Bittman seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved to adjourn. Mr. Hart seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Item 3 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Kathryn Fetchick
Secretary