



Teachers union blames district for lack of contract

By Jessica Brown • jlbrown@enquirer.com • August 9, 2010

CORRYVILLE - The president of Cincinnati Public Schools' teachers union, Julie Sellers, told the school board Monday that despite rumors of impasse, the union remains open to reaching an agreement in the long-stalled contract negotiations.

But she made it clear that the union thinks the district is to blame for holding up progress.

It's been eight months since the previous contract expired for the district's 2,300 teachers and 300 clerical workers who are represented by the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers.

Monday night's school board meeting is the last before school starts Aug. 18. Both sides earlier agreed not to declare an impasse before Aug. 16. Sellers told The Enquirer after the meeting that if there is some "good movement" in talks this week, the union will continue negotiations.

If either side declares an impasse, the contract details will be decided by an outside party - something both sides say they want to avoid.

At issue is education reform. The district wants more flexibility to move good teachers to low-performing schools and make other building-level changes to improve students' academics. The union says it wants reform too, but wants teachers to have more of a say in those changes. It also takes issue with district-proposed changes that it says would gut teacher evaluation and training programs.

Sellers said the union has been flexible, but "we can't accept proposals that will take Cincinnati

Public Schools backwards or that actually jeopardize the education of our children and that have no evidence or track record on improving instruction for children," she said.

"The board and its negotiating team cannot simply dictate the terms of an agreement," she said. "This is a recipe for impasse and ultimate failure."

School Board President Eileen Cooper Reed said while she disagreed with Sellers' characterization of the district's position, the board also wants a resolution.

"We have to do this," she said. "We want to stay at the table, we can do this we just have to develop the will to do it and know that our children come first."

Monday, the school board approved proposed or tentative three-year agreements with three of the six unions that represent CPS workers - the 200-member Cincinnati Association of Administrators, the 10-member Building Trades Union and the 66-member International Union of Operating Engineers Local 20. Those unions agreed to pay freezes and to pay more for health-care costs.

An agreement with the fourth union, the 1,800-

Advertisement

USA TODAY
AutoPilot ✈️

The new travel app for iPhone® and iPod touch®

Presented by: Hampton

SEE HOW IT WORKS »

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™



member American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, is close, according to the district.

The contracts for all the unions except the administrators' expired in January. Both sides extended the former contract during negotiations.

A handful of people, including Hamilton County Coroner O'dell Owens implored the board and the teachers union to finish discussions for the sake of the district's nearly 35,000 students.

Owens stressed that the when graduation rates go up, homicide rates go down, so he wants a contract that improves education.

"We simply want you to keep talking," he said. "Impasse cannot happen. Impasse is failure. We are a great group of teachers and a great administration. Why can't you come together?"

Owens is part of a newly formed coalition of community leaders called Stand for Kids, which urges "common-sense reform," according to flyers handed out at the meeting.

Negotiations continue Thursday and throughout the weekend.

Also Monday, the board:

Approved \$2.36 million in construction contracts for Walnut Hills High School's renovation project.

Accepted a \$1.5 million foreign language grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The competitive three-year grant will expand programs for the teaching of Russian, Japanese and Chinese - languages that the department considers critical to national security. The money will be spent on programs at the Academy of World Languages and Withrow International High School

Asked the administration to gather more information about lengthening the lunch period

in response to several speakers at Monday's meeting.

Bus service, summer school trimmed

The school board Monday night passed a \$467 million budget that includes cuts to bus service, extracurricular activities, teacher stipends and crossing guards.

The budget is \$223,000 more than last year's budget, but is \$21 million less than what the district originally said it needed to maintain the same level of operations.

District officials attributed the increase in the original budget request mainly to inflation and increases in expenses for mandatory programs.

The budget passed 6-1. Board member Catherine Ingram opposed it because "I just wasn't comfortable with what I saw."

Among notable changes this year:

Students who live closest to their schools no longer will get bus service.

Summer school will be offered at only two locations instead of 16.

Crossing guards will be cut. That may mean they will staff only the busier or more dangerous intersections.

Fewer stipends will be given for "lead teachers," those who do extra tasks and train or evaluate their peers. The teachers union is fighting this move.

Advertisement

Mom Dilemma #36:
Your daughter insists on wearing her princess costume to the grocery store. Allow it or not?

YES, at least she's dressed!

NO, I have some rules!

momslike.me
© 2010 momslike.me

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™