

FROM THE TABLE

A MBUTA NEGOTIATIONS BULLETIN TO TEACHERS

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Thursday, November 7, 2013

MBUTA opened talks with the District to renegotiate some of the terms in the current contract. On September 25, 2013 we exchanged the first proposals. The District's only proposal sought to correct two mistakes that it believes were made in the 2013-2014 school calendar (Appendix C of the contract). In addition, the District proposed to change the calendar by extending the school year one day—stating this was necessary to make up for the aforementioned “mistakes”.

Our proposal included changes to Articles 3, 7, 16, and 17. Your Bargaining Team proposed an increase of 6% to the certificated salary schedule effective July 1, 2013 while maintaining our current 80/20 split on healthcare benefits. In addition, we proposed an increase in the extra duty rate to \$45 per hour and a significant adjustment to both extra duty and coaching stipends (ranging from 3-11% of step 15 column 6) recognizing the extraordinary contributions many of you make beyond the contractual hours.

MBUTA proposed that the presidential release time (20%) be paid for by the District in its entirety instead of the current 50/50 split. This proposal would allow for MBUTA's President to be released for one period a day consistent with surrounding districts, including Redondo Beach Unified School District. For long-term effectiveness, MBUTA must have release time for its president.

Additionally, MBUTA proposed that existing planning time for elementary teachers be augmented by an additional 3 hours per month. In our site visits, we have heard about the great need for more planning time within the workday and it is the Bargaining Team's intent to improve the working conditions for all of our members.

Lastly, MBUTA proposed that the District offer 5 voluntary professional development days during the current 2013-2014 school year for the implementation of Common Core. We proposed that this work be paid at each member's professional daily rate. This last item is of course related to the calendar (Appendix C) and was reopened by the District. Any change to the calendar would require a ratification vote. Beyond the exchange of these proposals no progress was made at the table in September.

On October 4, 2013, PERB, the Public Employment Relations Board, issued a Complaint against the District. In the Complaint, PERB declared that the District was found to be operating in bad faith. See your site reps and visit www.MBUTANow.org for more information regarding this charge.

On October 8, 2013 the District returned to the table with no counter offer to our initial proposal. No progress was made. They stated that they would have a response to our proposal at the next meeting on October 14, 2013.

On Sunday, October 13, 2013 at 1:05 pm the District cancelled the October 14, 2013 session.

On November 4, 2013 the District returned to the table with their first counter offer. The proposal mainly addressed the salary and benefits package and ***ABSOLUTELY DISMISSED*** long-standing ***elementary teacher concerns*** about planning time and equity. In the same fashion, it also ***DISMISSED*** the ***extra duty and coaching stipends*** as well as the extra duty hourly rate and the presidential release time.

While in large part, the salary proposal was built on a concept introduced by MBUTA last year, however, the timing of it, and allocation of dollars to our salary schedule, appears to be designed to divide us rather than to address the issue of salary schedule structure. The District wants to raise some cells by considerably less than others.

The District salary proposal brought only half the increase in money from the state to the table and allocates substantially less to those who began their career in the last 15 years. It also presents a misleading long-term outcome by projecting a 2.7% average increase as a 3.7% average (one-time) increase onto the permanent salary schedule. MBUTA leadership recognizes the need to address the degradation in compensation for our most experienced teachers. The Bargaining Team seeks a more equitable and more permanent distribution schema. This can happen provided the District use the increase in state funding as intended with a larger share going to educate today's students as opposed to hoarding it away in reserve accounts. We are also concerned that the District may blow through these funds on technology that is fleeting and has outcomes that are unknown at this time. The greatest resource for students is a highly trained, highly qualified teacher. Perhaps most important to understand about the District's salary proposal is that it is predicated upon capping the benefits package at today's rates. As proposed, their meager increase would soon be eaten up by the rising cost of healthcare premiums. *This is unacceptable.*

Insurance premiums typically increase in the long-run, while our recent history shows that our salaries do not advance at a similar rate. Calculating the impact of the hard cap proposed by the District on our entire membership in a single statement would be difficult and have little significance as individual circumstances vary greatly. However, for a point of comparison, between 2007 and 2012 a member earning \$65656.00 on the salary schedule providing insurance for her entire family (3+) would have seen 11.1% of her income eaten up by insurance premium increases under the hard cap proposed by the District. Under the current 80/20 split, this impact is mitigated to 2.2%; still a loss, but clearly our members fair better under the current agreement.

As a corollary, the most adversely impacted members would be low on both step and column with a family plan, and the least effected would be high on the salary schedule in both step and column with a single plan. Others would fall somewhere in the middle. The current 80/20 split serves the greatest benefit for the greatest number of people. Looking over a 10-year period, continuing the current benefit provides a measure of income security for our members.

Also at the November 4 meeting, MBUTA fleshed out its calendar proposal, identifying which days we would like to see scheduled for the voluntary professional development. We proposed that these days be paid at our professional daily rate.

In negotiations, tone is as important as substance. For the last two years, we have been met with contempt and a refusal to meaningfully provide information and bargain in good faith. This isn't just our opinion, it is the finding of the State agency empowered to determine this, PERB.

However, during the latter stages of the last session, the District, for the first time, seemed willing to actually discuss and share interests rather than simply push paper at us or offer no response at all. We hope to be able to build on this and become the final district in our area to reach a fair and equitable contract settlement. We'll need your support to secure such a settlement.

Stay connected with your site reps as information will be transmitted through them. Also, be sure that our Organizing Team led by Alan Zeoli and Barbara Umanoff has your email and other contact information. Email them at: zeoli.alan@gmail.com and aumanoff@aol.com.

In Solidarity,

Your MBUTA Bargaining Team