

Chariho School Committee Meeting
Executive Session Minutes – October 26, 2021
NEA ESP Negotiation Update – Minutes sealed until an agreement is reached.
Minutes unsealed December 13, 2022

Committee Members Attendance: Chair Linda Lyall, Ryan Callahan, Donna Chambers, William Day, Gary Liguori and Linda McAllister. Absent: George Abbott, Vice Chair Catherine Giusti and Lisa Macaruso. Recused: Craig Louzon. Resigned: Sheila Grover and David Stall.

Administrators and Others Attendance: Superintendent Gina Picard, Assistant Superintendent Michael Comella, Director of Administration and Finance Ned Draper, Attorney for the School Committee Jon Anderson (virtual) and District Clerk Donna Sieczkiewicz.

II-1. NEA ESP Negotiation Update (to include discussion/action on a potential MOA Between the Chariho Regional School District and NEA ESP pertaining to custodial overtime) – NEA ESP Negotiation Subcommittee Chair Ryan Callahan noted that the Subcommittee met on October 18th. Prior to this meeting he had an informal conversation with Tom Pirnie who informed Ryan that the Union only wants to focus on compensation and added “be prepared for sticker shock.” The Subcommittee discussed how they wanted to proceed. It was decided that Ryan would go back to Tom and Jon would go to NEARI Representative Leslie Florio and ask what they are looking for. The discussion then centered on overtime issues. The District is facing a challenge in filling custodial vacancies and we are not getting enough people to sign up for overtime. The Subcommittee discussed increasing the multiplier for overtime and was in favor of entering into an Agreement with NEA ESP through the end of the school year. Jon noted that he and Leslie did not get into the issue of overtime. She was not surprised that the Subcommittee was looking for a number; she agreed it made more sense to start there. She was, however, surprised that Tom did not want legal counsel involved in the negotiations. She stated that she could not comment on this until she spoke with Tom. Ryan noted it was very clear that Tom was pitching the idea to him; this did not originate from any previous conversations they have had. Ryan informed Tom that the Subcommittee wants legal counsel involved so he feels this is a closed door. Jon reminded the Committee that they are subject to a 4% cap which means the total budget cannot go up more than this. If you go up 4% in salaries, you will have to cut somewhere else and you have no control over health and dental insurance increases. Ryan confirmed that they will be holding until they get their numbers. Jon will let Leslie know this. Chair Lyall noted a concern. The Subcommittee decided to just focus on salary but there was some talk about giving the Superintendent more flexibility. Ryan explained that his take on negotiations with salary being the main issue is that this will be a ‘give and take’ position. We will need to recover a salary increase somewhere else. He considers the entire contract open as part of his response. Jon suggested that if any School Committee member has language concerns, he/she should get them to the Superintendent so that she can analyze them and bring them to the full Committee. Discussion returned to the issue of custodial overtime. Superintendent Picard stated that the Subcommittee approved raising the overtime rate 2x and relaxing overtime sign-up. Tom had wanted 2.5x the rate for overtime but this would not keep us within budget. Ryan made a motion, which was seconded by Gary, to approve raising the custodial overtime rate of pay 2x and relaxing the sign-up rules for the overtime list through the end of this fiscal year. Bill noted that he is opposed to this as he feels it is setting a bad precedent; federal overtime is 1.5x. He doesn’t think taxpayers want to hear we are paying 2x. We should work on getting more outside vendors. We need to show that we are running this school district. Gary noted that outside vendors will cost more. He doesn’t disagree with some of what Bill stated; he does worry that it will be hard to take it back next year. A private company can do what they want as far as overtime goes. Donna also noted a concern – how do they go back to 1.5x after giving 2x. Any opportunity that they can be given time off; accrue some time and pay them 1.5x for overtime? Gina replied that this would result in more people being off and we need them to work. There were three vendors we were working with. Two were unsuccessful and one was OK but their rate is higher than the 2x overtime rate. Ned added that he expects to get one temporary worker this week but we are running a deficit of five people. We can flex because

maintenance can step into a position but we cannot do this long term. Gina noted that our salary for custodians is very low. Ryan felt this could be worked out in the next contract. We will look at adjusting it to be more competitive. Outside vendors, in the past, have provided inadequate service and/or end up costing us more money. We can stay within the taxpayer budget at 2x the overtime rate. Bill, addressing the low salary, did not feel the present union is impacted by that. They seem only interested in getting top step people paid; they do not seem interested with new hires. Maybe we could work out a bonus at the end of the year for every hour worked over their normal schedule. They work overtime and we give them a bonus. Gina asked Jon how bonuses could play into this. Jon responded that bonuses cannot be tied into hours per the Fair Labors Act. Employees get paid for the hours worked. This would need to be structured around this Act. Gina felt it was a good idea to consider. Ryan commented that he is struggling with this. The modifier is not a budget concern and a bonus sounds interesting. The problem is when people sign up for overtime, they are not looking down the road for payment. By relaxing the rules, we may get more people signing up as we are offering an incentive to do so. These two changes start to address the needs of the District so he is in favor of the motion. Being five people down puts us in an awkward position as we need to cover 10,000 hours. Be transparent; they are not signing up indefinitely. Donna agreed that they need to be very clear. If they get a salary increase, it will be only for the remainder of this fiscal year. We will then go back to 1.5x. Ryan stated that this will be made very clear.

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Gary Liguori and it was

VOTED: To approve raising the custodial overtime rate of pay 2x and relaxing the sign-up rules for the overtime list through the end of this fiscal year. In favor: Callahan, Chambers, Liguori, Lyall and McAllister.

Opposed: Day. The motion carried by a vote of 5 in favor with 1 opposed.

Jon stated either Gina or Ryan will need to convey this to Tom Pirnie and if he is agreeable, an MOA will be drafted. Gina noted that she will contact Tom and Jon could reach out to Leslie.

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Gary Liguori and it was

VOTED: To close executive session at 6:52 PM and return to open session. In favor: Unanimous.

Donna Sieczkiewicz, District Clerk