

Acton-Boxborough Transitional School Committee meeting

3/20/14

Statement read by Chairperson Maria Neyland, on behalf of the Committee

At the School Committee meeting on March 6th, 2014, members of the Acton Education Association (AEA) addressed the School Committee (SC) regarding the ongoing teacher contract negotiations. Up to that point, both the AEA and the School Committee had respected their mutual agreement that the contract negotiations would be done in executive session and that the nature of these discussions about employee compensation and benefits would remain confidential.

The AEA stated that they have been working without a contract since September 2013. The most recent contract did expire on June 30, 2013. However, under state law, the terms of that contract remain in effect until a new contract is agreed upon. In fact, teachers continue to receive step and lane salary increases, as well as longevity despite the fact that the contract has expired. With respect to the negotiations, three members of the SC and the 14 AEA representatives began negotiating the new contract for the current school year in October 2012. It was our hope that we would have a contract signed by July 1, 2013. Unfortunately after more than 25 meetings, including mediation and small sub groups, we still remain far apart on key issues. It should be noted that the SC was able to settle contracts with the other two unions in the district within 4-5 meetings.

We value the positive working relationships that exist between teachers, administrators, and the School Committee. We have supported the teachers in coordinated efforts before. We respectfully stood with the AEA and worked with the Acton Board of Selectmen to create a framework for Health Care Plan redesign in lieu of invoking chapter 69, which would have forced changes to the teachers' Health Care without negotiations. We took votes and sent letters to our elected representatives and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in an effort to curtail unfunded, untested educational mandates that are forced upon our district by the State and Federal Government. School Committee members have been respectful throughout this contract negotiation process. Unfortunately, wearing buttons in classrooms, marching, and picketing are only serving to make this process more adversarial and difficult. We now ask that the union work with us, instead of against us, to bring a speedy and successful conclusion to these negotiations.

SC members have a total of 21 children in the Acton Boxborough school system, ranging from early elementary to seniors in High School. We respect our teachers and all that they do for the children in this district. We all have wonderful personal experiences with teachers at many levels and have a vested interest in bringing these negotiations to a favorable conclusion, for both sides, as soon as possible.

Thank you.