

Press Release – January 16, 2018

The Ramapo Indian Hills Regional High School District Board of Education received a letter from the Ramapo Indian Hills Education Association late Friday afternoon in which it expressed dissatisfaction with the Board's participation in the current contract negotiations that are now in the hands of a state-appointed fact finder. The formal fact-finding hearing took place on November 28, 2017. The Association did not finalize their submission until December 21, 2017.

For the past two years the Board has set as an annual goal the completion of negotiations for a new contract with the Union. Toward that end, the Board has made negotiations its priority and has been fully engaged and well prepared for every phase of this process.

The Union has been unwavering in their desire to transfer part of the health insurance costs of the highest paid employees back to the taxpayers. While the Board has attempted to find other ways to give direct financial relief to all of its employees in a manner similar to that of other districts, its unwillingness to restructure the employee contributions formula has been met with resistance from the very first meeting. That resistance then became a demand for impasse and then, fact finding, instead of face to face negotiations. The Board has bargained in good faith throughout this process looking for compromise in its desire to provide a fair wage and benefit package to its employees that does not unfairly burden the taxpayers of Franklin Lakes, Oakland and Wyckoff. This has included offers to provide direct financial relief to all employees who are contributing to their health care premiums.

The Board's proposal to the fact finder included a 3-year salary increase for teachers of 8.88% and 8.34% for the educational support staff. This was originally offered and rejected by the Union on September 12, 2017. The offer to the teachers is above the 3- year average percentage increase in teachers' salaries for Bergen County. The Board proposed a salary guide structure that would increase starting salaries and provide a fair distribution of increases to all teachers by leveling out longevity and including the savings in the increases given to all teachers on the salary guide. The Board also proposed increased reimbursement for continuing education for teachers, a compassionate care day bank to provide for the needs of family members and recognition of additional clubs and stipends that the Board wanted changed from volunteer status. A statement from the Board on the status of negotiations is posted on the District website www.rih.org and is also included below.

The Board shares the sentiments of the community members it represents in that we are proud of our schools and we respect the talented and dedicated

teachers and educational support staff who contribute greatly to making our District a success. We have and will continue to diligently pursue this process to achieve an agreement that is fair and reasonable for Union and the taxpayers.