

NORTH ANDOVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Executive Session

DATE: Tuesday, May 24, 2005

PLACE: North Andover High School Guidance Office

PRESENT: Daniel Murphy, Chairman, Alfred Perry, Assistant Chairman, Charles C. Ormsby, Tim Pybus, and William Kelly

Also present: Harry K. Harutunian, Superintendent and James Xenakis, Selectman

Chairman Daniel Murphy called the meeting to order at 5:27 p.m.

Motion was made by Charles Ormsby and seconded by Al Perry to adjourn to Executive Session for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations. The vote was 5-0; Mr. Murphy, Mr. Perry, Dr. Ormsby, Mr. Pybus and Mr. Kelly voted yes.

1. NATA Negotiations:

Chairman Dan Murphy began the meeting by stating that the Superintendent, at the Committee's request, had moved the contract negotiations with the North Andover Teachers Association forward. Dr. Harutunian presented to the Committee the significant changes he was able to negotiate with the NATA negotiating team. He noted the NATA had agreed to withdraw, with prejudice, the Prohibited Practice Charge filed by the Association on February 23. Various aspects of the proposed new contract were discussed in more detail, including longevity, faculty meetings per year, tax shelters and length of day.

Changes in health insurance were discussed. It was noted that Selectmen would be considering a significantly different insurance, and in future contracts, new hires will be asked to pay 25 percent while all others would be "grandfathered in." Jim Xenakis stated that Rosemary Smedile, Chair of the Selectmen, would like to know that she has the School Committee's support in having representatives from the various bargaining units working with the Health Advisory Committee to reach consensus on reducing health insurance costs. Mr. Murphy responded that the consensus of the School Committee is that it supports the idea.

Dr. Harutunian stated that it was unusual for a school system not to have a doctorate level. Mr. Perry noted that there is no incentive to strive for a doctorate degree because step increases stop after Masters +60. Dr. Harutunian stated that the CAGS degree is a good option for North Andover.

Motion was made by Al Perry and seconded by Tim Pybus to move to adopt the contract between the North Andover School Department and the North Andover Teachers' Association as presented by Dr. Harutunian. A discussion followed.

Dr. Ormsby presented to the Committee a document entitled "Impact of Proposed Teacher's Contract" stating that it is an attempt to see how future years would look. Dr. Ormsby pointed out that the School Department's percentage share of the town meeting appropriation is declining every year and that School Department appropriations can only be expected to rise between 1.7 to 2.1 percent per year. He stated that the actual projected increase in salaries under the proposed contract is 6 percent per year. Dr. Ormsby stated that teachers will be lost at a rate of approximately 24 per year for the next three years. Dr. Ormsby also noted that not one education reform was agreed to by the teacher's union. He concluded that the contract is unaffordable and should be rejected. Contrasting the School Department with the municipal bargaining units, Mr. Xenakis stated that the net impact of 3 percent for 3 years negotiated with the NATA is in excess of 6 percent per year with step increases and 20 percent over the life of the contract. He said that the consensus of the Selectmen was that the 2.5, 2.5 and 3 percent increases being talked about on the police side was problematic because the net impact on the salary line item is in excess of 6 percent. Mr. Xenakis noted that the School Department's contracts will put pressure on municipal services as has been the trend over the last 15 years. He added that in his seven years as a Selectman, he has never entered into a contract this rich. Mr. Murphy pointed out that in the future initiatives on the health care side will provide cost savings.

The teacher evaluation system was discussed, and Dr. Harutunian stated that he would move aggressively to get a new evaluation system in place. Mr. Perry commented that the Committee was powerless without an effective evaluation tool. Dr. Harutunian stated the new Assistant Superintendent will be in charge of the evaluation team.

Mr. Xenakis stated that the selectmen will be very grateful that health insurance is considered a priority by the School Committee.

Dr. Ormsby requested that Dr. Harutunian comment on the layoffs before a vote was taken on the new NATA contract. Dr. Harutunian responded that the going rate is between 2 and 4 percent and North Andover teachers are at the lower end. With taxes going up at the rate of 2.5 percent and the cost of living at 3.5 percent, Dr. Harutunian stated that teachers would be giving money back. Mr. Kelly noted that unless health insurance was opened up for discussion, nobody can deny there will be fewer teachers. He added that North Andover cannot afford anyone who is less than competent.

A vote was taken on the motion made by Al Perry and seconded by Tim Pybus to move to adopt the contract between the North Andover School Department and the North Andover Teachers' Association. The vote was 4-2; Mr. Murphy, Mr. Perry, Mr. Pybus and Mr. Kelly voted yes; Charles Ormsby and Jim Xenakis voted no.

Dr. Ormsby requested that his presentation be made a part of the minutes.

Mr. Murphy told the Committee that six other contracts were coming up for renewal, and he stated that negotiation teams comprised of members of the School Committee could be put together or Dr. Harutunian could act on the School Committee's behalf. Dr. Harutunian asked that he be allowed to negotiate with the six remaining bargaining units up to 3 percent.

Motion was made by Al Perry and seconded by Tim Pybus to authorize Superintendent Harry Harutunian to negotiate a contract with the 6 remaining bargaining units for up to a 3 percent increase and the bring it back to the School Committee for final approval.

Charles Ormsby made a motion to amend the upper limit to 2.5 percent. Bill Kelly seconded the motion. The vote was 2 to 4; Dr. Ormsby and Mr. Kelly voted yes; Mr. Murphy, Mr. Perry, Mr. Pybus and Mr. Xenakis voted no.

Dr. Harutunian told the Committee that unless he had an agreed upon amount by a majority of the Committee, his maximum would be 3 percent. Mr. Xenakis asked if 3 percent translates to 6 percent in the next group of contracts. Dr. Harutunian replied that because there are a minimum number of steps for the remaining 6 groups and lower comp. time than teachers, the rate would be more like 3.5 to 4 percent.

A vote was taken on the motion made by Al Perry and seconded by Tim Pybus to authorize Superintendent Harry Harutunian to negotiate a contract with the 6 remaining bargaining units for up to a 3 percent increase and to bring it back to the School Committee for final approval. The vote was 4 to 1 with 1 abstention. Jim Xenakis abstained; Mr. Murphy, Mr. Perry, Mr. Pybus and Mr. Kelly voted yes; Dr. Ormsby voted no.

On motion made by Al Perry and seconded by Charles Ormsby, it was voted to adjourn at 6:24 p.m. The vote was 5-0; Mr. Murphy, Mr. Perry, Dr. Ormsby, Mr. Pybus and Mr. Kelly voted yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Harry K. Harutunian, Ph.D. Superintendent
Secretary, North Andover School Committee