

Negotiations Update: July 27, 2015

To promote transparency, community awareness, accountability and open communication, the Governing Board of the Sweetwater Union High School District (Board) has directed that its team provide regular and factual updates soon after each session with the Sweetwater Education Association (SEA). This is the District's first Update about its negotiations with SEA.

July 27, 2015 Session

Today, the District and SEA met for their first substantive negotiations session. These are reopener negotiations limited to total compensation (salary and benefits) for the 2015-16 school year.

Team Members

The District's team members are:

Jennifer Carbuccia, General Counsel
Sandra Huezco, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources
Karen Michel, Chief Financial Officer
Pam Tipp, Labor Relations Specialist
Mary Wager, Human Resources Operations Manager
Jonathan Pearl, Attorney

SEA's team members are:

Ben Cassel, Teacher, SUH
Sandra Finkelberg, Bargaining Chair, Teacher, HTH
Ola Hadi, Teacher, OLH
Leo Hsu, Teacher, RDM
Lauren McLennan, Teacher, MVH
Jennifer Young, Teacher, HTM
Lian Shoemake, Executive Director, South County Teachers United

District's 2015-16 Proposal

The District team proposed a three percent (3%) salary schedule increase for all SEA unit members, effective July 1, 2015. Based on the Board's LCAP and current budget, the District team explained that the 3% proposal would require significant budget adjustments, but that the Board was prepared to do so. The District team also offered to address rising health and welfare benefits costs as part of its total compensation proposal.

Board's Interest in Sustainability

The District team shared the Board's concern regarding deficit spending, rising employee costs and its strong interest in reaching agreement on a sustainable and responsible total compensation package. Deficit spending is not in the best interest of students, employees or the community because spending too much in one year would likely require cuts and dismantling unsustainable increases the following year.

The three-percent proposal would add to a string of recently negotiated total compensation increases. For 2013-14 and 2014-15, employee salary schedules increased by more than five percent (5%), which does not account for step and column increases or unprecedented increases in the District's required contribution to teachers' pension costs (as required by applicable law and the State Teacher Retirement System). Plus, the District's maximum contribution to employee health and welfare benefits increased from \$7,792 to \$13,130.

In addition to the 3% proposal, the District team pointed out that this year's LCAP makes significant investments in new positions and position enhancements for certificated employees.

In response to the District's proposal, the Association proposed a total compensation increase (salary, health and welfare benefits and retiree benefits) many times more expensive than the District's proposal.

Next Session

The teams will resume negotiations on August 21, 2015.