



Hazel Park Community Schools

1620 E. Elza, Hazel Park, MI 48030-1594
Superintendent: Victor C. Mayo, Ed.D.

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Deputy Superintendent: James D. Meisinger

August 23, 2010

Dear Parents and Community Members,

The purpose of this letter is to update you, the School District stakeholders, on the status of the Hazel Park Board of Education's negotiations with the Hazel Park Education Association, the district's teachers' union. These negotiations have been going on since May of 2009 with little progress and no reasonable resolution. The Board of Education has voted to impose two portions of the School Board's last, best offer to the HPEA. Those portions deal with salary and health care coverage. This came about after over twenty negotiating sessions over a period of more than fifteen months. Over this prolonged period the district's financial status has grown steadily worse. This worsening has been partially due to unresolved contract issues.

With a depleted fund balance, rising retirement and insurance costs plus decreasing revenue due to declining enrollment and past cuts in federal and state funding, the Board felt that there was no alternative other than imposing those aspects of negotiations that most directly impact the District's financial situation, meaning salary and health care issues.

Despite burgeoning unemployment numbers across the community and the state, the HPEA entered negotiations demanding a raise. In full knowledge that the School District is now in deficit and has gone to extreme lengths to economize and downsize, after fifteen months of negotiations the HPEA has lowered their demand for a 2% raise to a 1/2% raise this year and 1% raise next year. But they still demand a raise.

In a time when many people are losing their health care insurance or cannot afford health care insurance, the HPEA insists on maintaining their costly MEA-sponsored MESSA insurance despite having the opportunity to take advantage of very fine and comprehensive insurance that would cost the

tax payers of the School District far less. Recently health care coverage through MESSA costs in excess of \$18,000 a year per teacher. Other insurance of which many would be envious is available and would save the district hundreds of thousands of dollars but the HPEA refuses to consider this. The Board has offered the HPEA the option of taking any insurance they wish but has set a limit as to what the Board would pay per month. The Board has set a cap on monthly insurance premiums at \$750 a month for a single person and \$1,400 per month for couples and families. The members of the HPEA would have to pay the difference for any insurance more costly than this. The HPEA has refused this, insists on maintaining their District-paid MEA-sponsored MESSA insurance and has offered to only concede to a slightly higher yearly deductible.

For the Board to prolong bargaining or to concede to these demands would not be financially responsible. Thus, the Board felt compelled to further implement a required Deficit Elimination Plan mandated by the state. For the HPEA to doggedly ask for more in a time when the community is coping with so much less is not reasonable.

The Hazel Park School Board values its teachers. When times were better the Board has been generous with compensation for teachers. The Board acknowledges that our teachers deserve very good health care coverage and the Board has offered that .

To meet the demands of the HPEA the Board would have to make drastic cuts that would harm the core values of the District and make it a less desirable place in which students can grow and learn.

We must keep in focus that student growth and learning is the over-riding aim of the District.

Sincerely,

Dr. Victor C. Mayo

Superintendent, Hazel Park Schools