

Dresden Finance Committee Report

Tentative Agreement

The Dresden Finance Committee (DFC) met at a publicly warned meeting on December 18, 2006 and discussed the Tentative Agreement for the Teachers' contract. A motion was made to support the Tentative Agreement and the DFC members present voted 10 – 2 in favor of the terms of the Agreement. The following are the majority and minority opinions.

It is the opinion of the majority that the proposed increases in compensation for the teaching staff are appropriate. The cumulative effect of the smaller increase for each of the two years of the new agreement, as compared with the previously negotiated agreement, results in a reduction in the compensation differential paid by Dresden relative to the next highest districts in New Hampshire or Vermont. The majority felt the reduction in the differential will not impair the level or quality of education that the community expects. They note that health insurance costs to the Dresden School District (DSD) will be uniform regardless of the plan selected, and each teacher will be responsible for at least 20% of their health insurance premium. Furthermore, the DFC majority supports the establishment of the two committees to review the compensation structure and the evaluation process for the teachers. This is a positive response to the community's concerns. The success of the negotiation in the context of the DFC's guidelines was key to the majority opinion.

It is the opinion of the minority that the focus on the base increase does not reflect the fact that nearly one-half of the teachers will also receive step and track increases greater than indicated by the base increase. They feel the language of the agreement is too weak because it does not provide assurance that the step and track system will likely be replaced with a performance-based evaluation system in the next contract negotiation. Because NH State law limits the Dresden School Board's ability to hold open negotiation discussions, there is concern that the two committees will not provide for sufficient public input and may not produce a change in the compensation system. Finally the Tentative Agreement gave a retroactive pay increase, but lost the savings that switching the health insurance provider would have realized.

The DFC, as a whole, believes that there remains a need to monitor the progress of the commitments made within the agreement. The timeliness of the work of the Alternative Compensation and Teacher Evaluation committees is important in addressing the community's concerns.

Dresden School District Budget

On January 25, 2007 the DFC met at a regular meeting to discuss and vote on the Dresden School District (DSD) budget. Members of the DFC have attended the meetings of the Dresden School Board (DSB) throughout the budget process and were cognizant of the budget guidelines approved by the DSB. Despite the final percentage increase that exceeds the guidelines, the majority of DFC members present voted 7-2 to support Article 6 on the DSD warrant. Those in support recognize that significant increases occurred in expenditures that the DSB did not have control over. Gross special education expenses, state and federal mandates and debt service are

the main examples. However, special education revenue is also higher, making the net expense in line with the average annual increase. Because salaries comprise the largest expenditure in the budget, an increase in the NH retirement contribution rate for employers added an additional \$126,111 to the list of significant budget changes for next year.

DFC members in opposition felt that the DSB did not pay attention to the budget guidelines they adopted, nor did they challenge themselves with the question “Can we provide a quality education for less?” The minority feel the budget process needs to be changed so that the hard goals are set at the beginning, based upon what the DSB knows at that time.

SAU #70 Budget

The DFC reviewed and voted on the Supervisory Administrative #70 Budget at their meeting on November 20, 2006. With the addition of a Technology position, the DFC voted unanimously to support the SAU#70 budget.

Cheryl A. Lindberg, Chair for the members of the Dresden Finance Committee – Kari Asmus, Bill Bender, Tom Blinkhorn, Al Converse, Peter Christie, Bill Garrity, John Hochreiter, Karen Kayen, Dick Podolec, Athos Rassias, Henry Scheier, Irv Thomae, Paul Tierney