



ANDOVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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June 12, 2020

AEA Bargaining Status Update from the Andover School Committee

The School Committee is disappointed we were unable to reach agreement on a one-year “bridge” contract with the Andover Education Association (AEA), representing Andover Public School teachers. The current contract with the AEA is set to expire on August 31, 2020. A one-year bridge contract would have made salary-only modifications, and was intended to delay addressing larger issues until a more secure economic time.

The COVID-19 pandemic has financially impacted every industry and economy in the world. Many people across the state and within our town are unemployed. A priority of the School Committee during this pandemic, and heading into AEA negotiations, has been to maintain school staff and avoid the layoffs other Massachusetts districts have been forced to implement. We intend to uphold this commitment to our teachers. With this in mind, we offered multiple proposals that collectively would increase the pay of Andover teachers by more than \$1 million in the 2020/21 school year. Regrettably, the AEA rejected each of these proposals.

Although it is disappointing, the School Committee must acknowledge that a fiscal reality of the global pandemic is Andover’s inability to afford the same level of increases provided in many past negotiated contracts with the AEA. We remain committed to retaining and supporting the high-quality, devoted staff we have the privilege of working with, particularly as we look toward an atypical 2020/21 school year. But the current economic climate calls for realistic consideration of the financial situation in which our town and residents find themselves.

In preparation for the 2020/21 school year, Andover anticipates significantly less town revenue and reductions in state Chapter 70 aid for education. The Town Manager’s updated financial plan calls upon the School Committee to cut more than \$800,000 from the FY21 school operating budget previously voted upon by the School Committee with support from the Select Board and Finance Committee. Additionally, we know there will be significant new expenses incurred to reopen school safely in the fall including costs for personal protective equipment (PPE) for our staff and students, additional cleaning requirements, and additional technology to support students and staff. These costs continue to evolve, but existing guidelines suggest they will be extraordinary.

The School Committee will continue to work hard to manage the school budget responsibly. We have invited the AEA to continue our negotiations over the next several weeks. Our goal is to settle a three-year contract by August 31, 2020 that reflects the reality of the economic crisis, enables us to maintain our commitment to Andover’s teachers, and supports our shared goal of delivering the highest quality education given available resources in uncertain circumstances.

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About APS: The mission of the Andover Public Schools, in partnership with the entire Andover community, is to educate by engaging and inspiring students to develop as self-reliant, responsible citizens who are thinkers, problem solvers, and contributors prepared to participate in an evolving global society.