



SCHOOL COMMITTEE

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Superintendent of Schools

September 18, 2023

Dear Members of the Andover Public Schools Community,

We're so pleased to see all of our students and educators back in school and settling into their routines. We know September can be a particularly challenging month for families in our school community and we hope the transition back to school has been as seamless as possible for everyone who works so hard on behalf of our students.

With the school year now underway, the members of the School Committee want to provide you with an update on the status of ongoing negotiations with Unit A of the Andover Education Association (AEA) (this includes teachers, nurses, and occupational and physical therapists).

We respect our educators and are grateful for their steady work and commitment to provide an excellent education to our students. Our goals in this contract, like all of our collective bargaining agreements, is to reach a fair and equitable agreement that helps our educators perform their work well, stay focused on their roles as classroom leaders and support their own personal lives and families. Of course, we have to balance those goals with our commitment to ensuring APS and the Town live within our means and the District, already the largest part of the Town budget, is mindful of all the Town's fiscal needs and priorities, including its commitment to the taxpayers who fund these vital government services.

As mentioned in our [update](#) to the community last month, our first negotiation session took place January 17, at which time the AEA provided the School Committee with a set of proposals that reflected their hopes for a significant increase in wages, increased tuition reimbursement, and other proposals. The same day, the School Committee presented an initial set of proposals that included a requirement for teachers to hold some parent teacher conferences in the evening.

On February 1, the School Committee responded to the AEA's wage proposal with its opening (and by no means final) wage offer, and other proposals, including agreement to increase tuition reimbursement. We have met eight times since then, repeatedly asking the AEA to respond to our wage offer so negotiations can move forward. Their only response so far has been to increase their demand by asking for two significant bonuses.

As we prepare to meet for the 11th time tonight (September 18), the AEA still has not offered a meaningful counter-proposal to our February 1 wage proposal. While we appreciate the importance of reaching a contract, and we know it hurts teacher morale when they work without a contract, we also know the only way to reach a fair and equitable agreement is to stay at the bargaining table and to exchange counter-proposals and ideas.

We don't feel it is appropriate to negotiate in public, but we believe it is important for the school community to know more about our offers, particularly since the AEA has begun releasing information that is critical of our efforts to reach agreement. We would prefer to avoid an uptick in unnecessary and negative rhetoric and are committed to staying focused on data, facts and meaningful dialogue.

Due to the confidential nature of contract negotiations, attendance at bargaining sessions is limited to the seven members of the School Committee bargaining team and the 15 members of the AEA's core bargaining team, plus an additional 30 "silent representatives" who are members of the AEA. However, the AEA asked to bring approximately 200 members to this evening's bargaining session. The School Committee declined this request as we believe an audience of hundreds will be a distraction and an obstacle to productive bargaining. However, we have informed the AEA that additional silent representatives (above and beyond the Union team of 45 members) may join our session this evening until the bargaining room is at capacity.

We will continue to update the community as often as we can. We have developed an initial [FAQ](#) that we plan to update as the negotiations continue. We are committed to reaching a fair and equitable agreement with our teachers and staff and hope that all parties can work together toward this goal.

Sincerely,

Tracey Spruce
Chair, School Committee