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For Immediate Release

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Andover School Committee and Union Reach Tentative Agreement *Students and Staff Return to School on Wednesday, November 15, 2023*

Andover, Mass.- The Andover School Committee and the Andover Education Association have reached a tentative agreement that boosts contractual increases for teachers by 15.5% and for instructional assistants by 34%, each over four years, bringing an end to the three-day teachers' strike.

The agreement came after more than 60 hours across five days of marathon negotiating sessions led by a state-appointed mediator.

"We are pleased that students can get back into the classroom tomorrow morning to continue learning," said Tracey Spruce, Chair of the Andover School Committee. "With this deal, the administration gained important tools to continue strengthening the instructional practices that we know students need to belong, strive, and thrive."

In addition to the salary increases, the agreements give to AEA members:

- Eight weeks of fully paid parental leave and the option to use an additional four weeks of accrued sick time, bringing the total amount of fully paid parental leave to 12 weeks.
- The ability to use up to 60 days of accrued, paid sick leave when taking FMLA leave to care for a seriously ill family member.
- Increases to elementary teacher planning time, which brings the added benefit of extended recess time for students.

The School Committee is thrilled that the strike has ended, however, they stressed that with the increased teacher salaries provided under this agreement, the School Committee must consider cuts to programs, services, and school department staff beginning in the next school year. These reductions were communicated to and acknowledged by the AEA during negotiations.

Andover's long range financial plan includes 3.75% annual increases to the school department's budget allocation. Without budget reductions, the agreement will exceed this well-established budget principle. The School Committee remains committed to working with the Town Manager and Select Board to deliver budgets that are firmly within the parameters of the long range financial plan.

"We heard clearly from the teachers and many in the community that teacher and instructional assistant pay was the priority in this agreement and we responded accordingly," Spruce said. "At the same time, the final agreement is inconsistent with the principles of the town's long-range financial plan so, to live within our means, we will need to make meaningful program, service, and staff reductions."

“We would like to thank our parents and students for their patience during these challenging negotiations,” Spruce said. “The last several months, and in particular the last five days, have been difficult for our entire community and we are under no illusion that it will take time to rebuild the bonds that make Andover so unique. We are committed to that healing, and hope that we can work together in good faith to ensure that this is the last time our children’s education is disrupted by a strike.”

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