

# **Spotlight on the Board**

## **Notes from the District 15 School Board Meeting**

### **October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006**

This was a Special School Board meeting, called specifically to vote on the Tentative Agreement of the Teachers Contract. The meeting was not videotaped.

#### **Citizens Address the Board**

Two citizens addressed the Board before the contract was voted.

**Warren Kostka** – Attending D15 schools, helped negotiate police, teamsters contracts, married to a teacher. D15 has a legacy to follow: Mr. Fremd, Mr. Sundling. Usually do not negotiate in public. You are the elected representatives; don't go public until it is official. For most children, the teacher is the educational program. When you vote, remember that.

**Kathy Carver** - Thanks to the BOE for their time and effort. Upset, appalled: through referendum meetings, we talked about fiscal responsibility, but you really don't show it. How could you approve a contract you cannot afford, how can you do that? I think teachers are great and should make all the money they can. If we don't have it to give them, we don't have it. People in community are not having raises. When you were elected, it was because of fiscal responsibility. Not teachers against the Board – we have limited dollars. Don't want a legacy of debt. Be conscious of what you are doing. For example, why do we need to hire a consultant for transportation?

#### **Ratification of Classroom Teachers' Council Professional Agreement: 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09**

Board members made comments about the teachers' contract and the negotiation process before voting.

**Millar:** Respected the quality of the teachers, but the people of the community had spoken and they did not want the district to deficit spend. Increases in the contract were greater than the increases in the income coming into the district.

**Rowden:** After a failed referendum and an unprecedented turnover of the Board, as a new Board member she was faced with a whirlwind of changes including immediate budget cuts. After years of deficit spending, tough choices had to be made: freezing salaries, cutting staff, shouldering resentment. Of all decisions have made, this is the most important one. Negotiations are time consuming and difficult, with one factor confounding the process: the possibility of strike, which is prohibited in 40 other states. IL firefighters and police are prevented from striking because they are too important; the safety and welfare of our children is too important to allow teachers to strike. On Sept. 18<sup>th</sup> the teachers authorized an intent to strike, and from there the tenor of the negotiations changed. It became about what is best for teachers, district, and how to avoid a strike. There were personal attacks and no regard for the children and families, whose commitment is vital to the district. Quality was overshadowed. Just because you have the right to do something, doesn't mean its right to do.

**Keenan:** Sad that today's meeting was held today, instead of next week's regularly scheduled board meeting. We agreed at the end of the negotiation that the meeting would be held next Wednesday, when more people could attend. There is an appearance of a lack of transparency. It does not matter whether the Board or CTC votes first. "Fiscal Responsibility" is not the same as "anti-teacher", but the pendulum has swung too far towards union rights. Companies cannot stay competitive, with massive layoffs and movements offshore. The public sector

is a decade behind the private sector. This negotiation has put a spotlight on the process. This contract is not sustainable and the losers will be the teachers and children. Behind the scenes, I have been an advocate for teachers: wanted to hire back teachers, increase student contact time. This contract does not support this. If children were the priority, the CTC and the Board would be on the same side. This is spending without regard for revenues.

**Mikula:** Negotiations started in July 2005 and now we have a tentative agreement. There was compromise on both sides. Constituents communicated: some were positive, some negative, some threatening. The responsibility of the BOE alone to approve contract. Some of the issues are not apparent to the public. Time to put anger aside and move forward. We negotiate our contract every day in what we do and how we behave.

**Boucher:** Thank the negotiating team for countless hours and effort. Fair contract for both sides. You don't get everything you want. There are things that are very good for us going forward in financial responsibility. Good contract for base to move forward and great contract for our main responsibility: educating our children.

**Carlson:** Believe this contract is in the best interest of the district.

Board voted 4:3 to approve the contract (Carlson, Boucher, Silverman, Mikula voting "yes"; Keenan, Millar, Rowden voting "no"). Details of the contract were not discussed.

Meeting was adjourned.