

Dear South Hadley Families:

As you are likely aware, the South Hadley School Committee has been engaged in contract negotiations with the South Hadley Education Association (SHEA) for the past year. We have now entered a period of mediation in an effort to achieve an agreement that is fair to teachers, paraeducators and other contract units, while at the same time maintaining our responsibility to the taxpayers and safeguarding the district's financial future. Below we provide a summary of current negotiation points as well as information on SHEA's recent vote to "Work to Rule".

The following is a breakdown of where negotiations currently stand:

Unit A-Teachers & Specialists

- The School Committee has proposed a four year contract with increases of 2% in year one, 2% in year two, 2.25% in year three, and 2.5% in year four. Unit A members would receive a retroactive payment for year one and a retroactive payment going back to July 2022 for year two.
- SHEA has proposed a four year contract with increases of 2% for year one, 3% for year two, 4% for year three, and 4% for year four.
- In addition, **they've proposed that in years 2, 3 and 4, top step employees receive an additional 2% above and beyond the increases shared above.**
- The financial impact of this proposal would result in the highest paid teachers in the district receiving a 17% increase over the final three years of the agreement.
- **The total increase over four years would be 19% for educators at the top step.** Approximately 50% of our Unit A members are on the top step of the salary scale.
- With SHEA's most recent proposal, this would **increase the total budget by \$1.4 million over the duration of the contract just for this group of top step Unit A members.**
- As an example, these top step members in our district would make \$76,885.56 after the retroactive 2% cost of living increase. With the 17% increase proposed over the last 3 years of their most recent proposal, they would then make \$90,896.93.

Unit E-Paraeducators & Educational Therapy Assistants

- The first year of the contract, which would be 2020-2021, Unit E members would receive a retroactive payment of 2% to the current scale, as proposed by the School Committee.
- The School Committee has proposed a new scale to take effect July 1, 2022. This new scale would begin at \$15.44 per hour, instead of \$12.17 per hour as it currently stands. This would be a 24% increase.
- For year 3 of the 3 year contract, we've proposed a 2% increase.
- SHEA has proposed changes to the new scale, and a 4% increase in year 3 of the contract.

Last week, **SHEA voted on a work action called “Work to Rule”**. This is a legal and acceptable action that is within the union's right. “Work to Rule” is an action that calls on a contracted employees to perform no more than the explicitly stated contract job responsibilities. One example of “Work to Rule”, would be for the employees to arrive and depart from the school building at the exact time that is written in the contracts. SHEA leadership has reported to the district leaders that SHEA members will no longer be performing duties such as: getting students off buses before contracted hours, coming to school early to finish preparing for the day, staying after school to finish grading and preparing, communicating on school related issues beyond the contracted hours, completing non-stipend positions, and other student centered activities. This may have an impact on after school programming at some schools. You will receive communication from the building principal if after school programs at your student's school will be affected due to “Work to Rule”.

We are writing to assure our families that school and district administrative teams have developed plans to address whatever needs may arise during this time. However, we ask for your understanding in instances where these plans may conflict somewhat with your usual practices, particularly around arrival and dismissal times of the school day. We anticipate these adjusted plans to have a minimal effect on school operations, but simply want you to be aware of possible impacts before you experience them.

The School Committee stands ready, as it has throughout this process, to work towards a fair and responsible agreement with all contract holders and is grateful to SHEA for its agreement to accept our request to meet at the next earliest possible time to achieve that goal. Our next mediation meeting is scheduled for November 2nd. As it stands now, If we do not reach an agreement at that time, SHEA has voted to go to “Work to Rule” as early as November 3rd. We will be sending out a communication to the South Hadley Public School families with any new pertinent information.

Sincerely,

Alli Schlachter, Chairperson
South Hadley School Committee