



Palatine Township District 15 teachers getting raises

Board, union reach 3-year deal

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Bucking a trend in which neighboring school districts froze base salaries, Palatine Township Elementary District 15 and its teachers union on Monday agreed to a new three-year contract with raises.

The deal, which starts in August, will offer teachers base raises of .75 percent in the first year, 1.9 percent in the second year and 1.45 percent in the third year. That's in addition to lane and step increases that reward teachers for experience and education. School officials estimate those raises will average to 2.77 percent in the first year, 2.66 percent in the second year and 2.54 percent in the third year.

Superintendent Daniel Lukich said the Classroom Teachers Council and board met 10 times, starting the second week in May, and had a final session on Thursday. Lukich said both sides wanted to finalize a deal by June 30.

A special meeting was called for Monday, the last day of the school year, as officials needed to meet a deadline to lock in insurance rates, which wouldn't have been met if the board voted on the deal at the regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday.

Board members Tim Millar and Sue Quinn voted against the contract, emerging after a 1-hour and 45-minute closed session.

"Fiscally it's going to hurt the kids in the long run," Millar said.

Quinn said the district won't bring in enough revenue to support the raises and that could force the schools to cut programs, or to spend from their reserves or to raise taxes.

"Good luck to anyone trying to pass a referendum in this environment," Quinn said, adding she's against a tax hike. "Nine out of 10 failed in the last election; it's not going to happen."

Board President Gerald Chapman and CTC President Lisa Nuss pointed out the teachers will see increases to their health insurance costs, calling them concessions that help balance out the raises. Neither side would elaborate.

The union approved the deal earlier on Monday, earning the more than two-thirds needed to ratify the pact. Nuss didn't provide the percentage of how the approximately 860 union members voted.

Nuss isn't worried about public perception, especially in lieu of recent teacher negotiations in Palatine-Schaumburg High School District 211 and Township High School District 214. Teachers in both neighboring districts agreed on five-year deals with base-salary freezes for the first year, although teachers will earn step increases.

"Teachers have always been well-supported by the community and the parents. I would anticipate that would continue," Nuss said.

Nuss called the negotiations professional and respectful, adding both sides came in open-minded.

In 2006 teachers worked without a contract for weeks and threatened to strike before an agreement was reached. Support of the union was an issue during the April elections, and some were criticized for the perception that they were too sympathetic to the union. Three of the four board members elected then are new to the body. Lukich and several top administrators are also new.