

October 5, 2018

Dear Mayor Craig, Members of the Board of School Committee and Members of the BOSC Special Committee on Negotiations:

The MEA Negotiations team is taking this opportunity to express its concern about the issues with the negotiations process. We prefer to keep our negotiations as positive as possible, recognizing that what has passed has passed and we must continue to communicate. We would ask that, instead of punitive comments about perceptions of what has happened, we all go forward with a new sense of purpose and urgency to be able to develop a collective bargaining agreement that works for everyone involved, and is followed by everyone involved as well.

MEA has waited for a salary proposal from the Board for months. We have been told many times that the proposal was two weeks away. Yes, we have cancelled one meeting in August to give the Board more time for this proposal. The Board Committee cancelled the next two meetings, very publicly in the Union Leader, which meant the plan was still not ready. That was four weeks ago. Our response was that we would meet when there was a ready proposal. Since the plan is apparently still in the works, MEA finds that this waste of time needs to stop. We did not take anything off the table at any time, so we have items to discuss. We acknowledge that we have the health benefit information and we are considering its effect on our unit members. That will need discussion. We also acknowledge that the Board Committee recently received information that serves as some explanation about current and past proposals that will hopefully lead to more discussion.

With this information in mind, and knowing that the educators of the Manchester School District are working hard every day with every child, we ask that you honor step increases as prescribed in the status quo contract. This would show tremendous good will for district educators who qualify for advancement on the salary schedule. The current withholding of their compensation is unfair. These educators have earned the step increase by virtue of their experience. MSD will see a continuous exodus of educators, as they find they can earn much more in other districts, and be respected for what they do by their administrators and governing Boards. Many of our educators have suffered their step loss four times in the last six years, resulting in a monumental loss of income over the course of their careers. Some have totaled a loss of over $165,000 in

personal earnings, not including compounding losses of retirement income and investment incomes. We have seen the Aldermen approve three years of guaranteed step increases for non-unionized employees. In all fairness, the educators deserve to receive their steps and some recognition for those at the top of the scale. With increments funded, we are convinced that we will be able to settle contract issues over this year to achieve an excellent agreement. We have never held a desire to prolong this process. MEA waited six months after declaring intent to negotiate, until the Vice Chair approved negotiations to start and changed the make-up of the originally appointed committee. Working without a contract is a dangerous precedent that should be avoided at all costs. We desire to work with you, but need to have something to work on with you. Manchester educators have worked for the past 12 years under less than flat funding with decreasing buying power. We have a low and noncompetitive starting salary, and we would hope that you feel the same way. These asks have been publicly stated in past BOSC meetings, with no reaction or action at all.

We have done as we have asked you to do: consider a change in the negotiations team. We have had some intense conversations and came to the decision to change our team. From here, our negotiations team will consist of Maxine, Michelle and me, with an attorney. Any communications will need to be addressed to us only. We will take your offer to come back to the table and negotiate all proposals on the table. We will send a list of dates and times that will work for us and our attorney.

Thank you for your prompt positive response to our request for fairness and support. Please note that time is of the essence.

Sincerely,

Sue Hannan, President

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