

## **General Membership Meeting April 20, 2016**

The meeting of the General Membership was called to order at 4:15 p.m. in the RHS. About 336 members were in attendance.

Purpose of the meeting:

- **Update**

- **New information**—State Legislature has a bill on Governor's desk that will help education. This could restore the \$5.5 million that was going to be eliminated for the construction planning part of the budget.
- **State Mediator**—The State Mediator is hoping to have our proposal out by either the end of this week or the beginning of next week. When this happens we will sit down as a negotiations team, and then get it out to the membership. There are no guarantees that both sides (REA and school district) will agree to this.
- **"Soft Pickets"**—Mitch has been out to a few buildings that are "soft picketing" and it is working; Amanda Stoudt had Channel 69 news show up. Ryan Hughes from Channel 69 news called Mitch and wanted information as to what is happening in the district with the REA. What members are doing with informational picketing, walking in together, etc. is working. People in the community are asking what they can do.
- **Working to Rule**—Working to Rule can be an issue, as those schools with 10 hour time must work their 10 hours because this is a contractual issue; people who are getting stipends shouldn't be punished for those who choose the work to rule. The issue is the resentment felt by the members who are willing to work to rule towards those who will refuse to work to rule.
- **Strike**—if we go on strike, we will lose our pay and benefits. The minute we decide to stop working, we are no longer paid employees and we lose pay and benefits.

- **Technology and membership meetings**—the issue of using technology to have the general membership meetings can be an issue if the technology fails. All minutes from General Membership Meetings will be sent out electronically to your home emails. Please give Priscilla your home email address for REA business.
- **Digital Signs**—the digital boards are up and running; the 5 static boards will be up by hopefully next week.
- **Questions/Discussion:**
  - **Can we get talking points for those concerned parents?** Yes we can. Jessica Sabol from PSEA will get these organized and Mitch will get these to members hopefully by Friday.
  - **COBRA**—when we go out on strike, the district is obligated to offer COBRA. COBRA allows you 45 days to enroll so a decision would have to be made by the individual member. What happens if you don't go for COBRA within the 45 days but enroll in it later? Then they go back to the first day of loss of coverage.
  - **What if we go out on strike one day at a time?** We lose benefits for that day. A job action is a conscious decision to stop working.
  - **We have to make up the days we miss—how is this messing up our salary?** We have to make up the 180 kid school days. What do they do with the in-service days? There is potential for us to lose a day or two.
  - **If we strike and we lose insurance coverage, will they take those days and deduct them off of our premiums?** No because we chose to stop working.
- **Contract negotiations update...keeping you informed**
  - **Mediator**
    - **What his proposal means to us.** Mediator has been on all negotiation sessions. When he comes up with his proposal, it is not binding on either side. All it means is he is coming up with a plan that we can choose to accept or reject. It will be presented to membership regardless of what is said.

Members will then vote to either accept or reject the proposal. Negotiation team will give their own opinions to the proposal.

- **What mediator is looking at**—Mediator is looking at salaries and benefits as well as language. The mediator is appointed.
  - **If we don't agree to his proposal, what is the next step?** Then we go back to negotiating face-to-face. We could call for Arbitration.
  - **Has the negotiation team met with the board since we said no?** No, because the mediator immediately stepped up.
  - **What information does the mediator use to develop the proposal?** The notes he took from the negotiation sessions.
  - **Were the comments we shared on the ballots shared with the mediator?** Yes, they were shared with our Uniserve Rep and he forwarded them on to the Mediator.
- **What would finally push us into a strike?** Would we want only 200 members to make the vote?
  - **Strike Authorization Vote**—Strike authorization vote gives the negotiations team the right to call a strike within 48 hours. It is up to the Negotiation team to call a strike; but the team can bring it back to the membership and ask them if they want the strike. The strike authorization vote was motioned, seconded, approved, voted on and passed at the last general membership meeting.
  - **What would be a quorum needed to go on strike?** If only 300 members show up for a vote, then that wouldn't be a fair quorum. We will never have everyone show up for a meeting; how many would be acceptable to call for a strike? Rik commented about half the membership.

- **Will we be told that we are taking a strike vote when and if that comes to the membership?** Rik commented that a school email will come out to check home email and it will be brought up on home email.
- **If we vote to strike and someone didn't vote to strike and we strike, do all members lose their benefits and salary?** Yes they do. They can cross the picket line, but it would not be recommended.
- **Is there a difference for non-tenured teachers and tenured teachers when there is a strike?** Rik will look into this.
- **Explain what would happen if 600 members strike and 600 members cross the picket line**—we look foolish and weak as a union.
- **Judging by state money—we are looking at increase in state funding.** There is so much dis-union in our union. At what point do we stand up for ourselves, instead of giving in? We need to start standing up for ourselves.
- **Act 88**—Act 88 stripped strike power of teachers; we have to give district 48 hours' notice prior to striking so the district lawyers can file an injunction against the strike.
- **Will the proposal from the mediator be for only one year?** The mediator can propose any amount of time for what he feels appropriate.
- **What were the most important topics written on the back of the ballots?** The following topics were written on the back of the ballot: Salary: Step and Column (524); Salary: Medical Insurance (202); Retroactivity (105); Other (longevity; safe school environment, etc. 92); Contract Language (66); Contract Length (16).
- **Contract Language**—contract language is taking some of our rights away: people can be put on improvement plans if they get satisfactory. Why was certain contract language eliminated? Trudi commented that the language in the contract come from PDE and

Rebecca commented the new regulations are on the PDE document given from the district. This is not part of Collective Bargaining and our contract can't override state law. If the state has it as a mandate, why would we put it in our contract? The contract language says that we have to follow PDE mandates. We can't bargain school code.

- **Back to School meeting/Labor Day Parade**--Have we given any consideration to the back to school meeting at the stadium or the Labor Day Parade? We are in discussion about the back to school meeting at the stadium and we are looking at marching in the parade with the rest of the unions.
  
- **We need to work this one step at a time.** We need to wait until the mediator comes with a proposal and then move forward from there.
  
- **Organizing...Getting the Word Out!**
  - **car signs** (reps have delivered these to their buildings)
  
  - **purchase notices** (reps have delivered these to their buildings)
  
  - **Building activities**—buildings have been doing soft pickets before/after school. Some buildings are working to rule or all members are entering the building at the same time.
  
  - **Ad signboards**—three electronic ones are currently operating; 5 standard signs should be up next week.
  
  - **School board meeting attendance**...2 meetings per month and REA would like schools to stand outside the administration building.
    - Committee of Whole Meeting (4/20)--13<sup>th</sup> and Union; 12<sup>th</sup> and Marion and Southern MS
    - Board meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup>—10<sup>th</sup> and Green; AS; NWMS
  
    - Reps got copies of the meetings and which schools should be attending so check with them.
  
- Other topics

- **Knight Walk**—why are we doing Knight Walk when it is a Saturday event? Do we have to volunteer to do it? Anything volunteer is by choice.
  - **Does work to rule affect Summer School or Extended School Year (Special Education)?** Summer school is a supplemental contract. Rik will look into the ESY for Special Education.
- **Meeting adjourned at 5:00.**