

BVEC COLLECTIVE BARGAINING MINUTES – FINAL

Wednesday, April 10, 2024

4:00 PM – 5:30 PM

BVEC Conference Room.

In Attendance:

- BVEC Director Ms. Rammell
- BVEC Board Chair Dr. DoBell, Lone Rock School Superintendent
- BVEC Board Member Mr. Fiske, Florence Carlton Schools Superintendent
- BVEC Business Manager, Ms. Reynolds

BVEC Association Members:

- Ms. Gideon, Treasurer
- Cami Hildebrand, President
- Liz Pepion, Vice-President, taking notes
- Ms. Moresi, Member – NOT PRESENT

I. Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting began at 4:08pm. Rachella will not be present today. Dr. DoBell is not present but is coming.

II. Approve Minutes March 26, 2024

Minutes approved.

III. Public Comment or Correspondence

No public comment or correspondence.

IV. Continue CBA Review

Ms. Rammell: no language changes to propose regarding salaries. Section 2B added change to reflect hours and not days per contract year.

Discussion on maternity/paternity leave language. The word “healthy” was struck previously. Discussion held on proposed language change. Ms. Hildebrand brought proposed language changes and discussion was held.

Ms. Reynolds and Ms. Rammell: the six week is the standard leave amount in Montana. That also complies with FMLA.

Mr. Fiske: any additional leave would still have to be approved by the sick leave bank committee.

Ms. Gideon: Had a question on number 4, does that contradict the maternity sick leave bank language?

Answer is no.

Mrs. Rammell: Waiting for a call from the attorney for language on Just Cause and FMLA.

Mrs. Rammell: proposed that the change from 187 day to 1402.5 be made outside the meeting to save time. All agreed.

Fringe benefits: Discussion on adding the language which was specific to the flexible benefit section to the top of 1a. There has historically been no problem finding classified staff to participate.

Mr. DoBell entered the meeting at 4:28pm

Mrs. Rammell: do we want to look at the salary matrix so we can look at it and then discuss it in length on April 15th.

Mrs. Reynolds showed the salary matrix.

Mrs. Rammell gave some history for those who were not present during the last bargaining/contract negotiation. There was a lot of time spent with the last team discussing levels/steps. They were aligned more consistently with the idea that it would benefit BVEC and the employees so there was more opportunities to make adjustments on the base. Mrs. Rammell wants to point out that if we don't do anything, everyone moves a step or a lane, without an increase in the lane, everyone will make a bit more money than they did last year and will see a pay increase for the next year.

Ms. Gideon: Except when you are capped.

Ms. Rammell: When you are capped, you do get a stipend of \$1100, and there is a longevity bonus.

Ms. Rammell: Let's talk about a percentage increase of the base. What are the members' ideas?

Mr. DoBell: what is the cost to the Co-Op around mental health therapists, what is the cost to the Co-Op for a 1% increase?

Ms. Reynolds: I did not do that (run those numbers) but could.

Mr. DoBell: is there a set number of dollars?

Ms. Rammell: we would have to determine the threshold of what we are using from reserves and what we are asking from the districts. Typically, it's been about 4-5% for what the districts can sustain.

Mr. DoBell: that is for the whole Co-Op and not one specific group of people?

Ms. Reynolds: that is just for special ed, does not include mental health. Speech, OT, PT, Preschool.

Mr. DoBell: did we talk about sustainability now?

Ms. Rammell: We are looking at putting in measures that will help with sustainability.

Mr. DoBell: clarified that everyone understands the sustainability problem?

All present acknowledged understanding the sustainability problem the Co-Op is facing.

Ms. Reynolds: if we have a year next year like this year, we could eek by, but we could potentially use every penny we have next year. We are thinking if we could get 200K from districts to hold in reserves just in case, we would be able to go longer next year before making a determination if this is sustainable.

Mr. DoBell: Lone Rock made a commitment to put in the dollars.

Ms. Reynolds: no other district has come forth. If all IDEA dollars remain the same and we give raises, we would have to ask for more reserves from districts.

Mr. DoBell: the Co-Op needs to figure it out.

Ms. Gideon: We all have the cost-of-living increases.

Ms. Reynolds: We are wondering what you are looking for, so we know.

Ms. Hildebrand: We don't know what is realistic to ask for.

Mr. DoBell: I can't confidently bargain without having an answer to what the program is going to look like. A commitment from districts is needed before we know what we're dealing with.

Ms. Hildebrand: We would like the cost-of-living increase but realize that may not be sustainable.

Mr. Fiske: Does everyone realize there is a precarious situation with the Co-Op?

Ms. Rammel: We can look at the numbers but sounds like you're aware of what is going on.

Ms. Reynolds: Insurance went up 89%. The increase is based on your loss ratio. We need a bigger group. It would have been 114% increase if not a for a "gift." We cannot stay with MUST. They essentially don't want to work with the Co-Op. The increase would average About \$1500 on the low plan. Some insurance companies would not offer a bid because they said they could not be competitive with MUST. We did get bids from Pacific Source (PS) and BCBS Direct.

Ms. Rammell: There is an insurance committee meeting on Tuesday.

Ms. Reynolds directed people to look at the Pacific Source website and see if their doctors are there. PS premiums are about \$30-40 lower. There is a requirement for a percentage of employees to be enrolled in the program.

Ms. Rammell: PS is 19 % and BCBS is 25% increase. Current is \$800 contribution from Co-Op. There will not be a huge increase in the cost of benefits.

Mr. Fiske: We need to know if we can continue to support CSCT. If we can't, what would the Co-Op look like? It's a massive question that must be answered. Everybody in the Co-Op is relying on the (tuition?) levy to support special education. We weren't thinking we'd be behind the ball on

lack of reimbursements. There is a chance this will get worse. We are looking at avoiding the ship sinking for a year. When do you finally say...? Every board and political campaign is saying we need mental health support but how do we fund it?

Ms. Reynolds: The cost to run the program is \$2M per year or a little more. Unsure if they can cover one more year with the current reserves.

Mr. Fiske: Schools must look at how much districts must contribute. A= full, B= partial, C= zero and let it run its course. We must pay bills.

Ms. Reynolds: With reserves at the end of this year, if we lost what we think \$280K, our reserves will cover that for 2024-25, then there is nothing. There is a reason there used to be twenty providers across the state and now there are eight. There have been studies that show therapists get smallest increase. CSCT got the lowest amount. By January we will know if the ship will turn around. We can cover the program with reserves and if something happened and the program turned around, maybe some of the money can come back to the schools.

Mr. Fiske: No argument about needed services and what is needed. We are all hurting differently in terms of special ed impact or tuition.

Mr. DoBell: We cannot make decisions unless we have all the information.

Ms. Reynolds: We cannot go forward with summer planning for CSCT while waiting for all the information.

Mr. DoBell: Can you take the current cost, anticipate the same revenue for this year, see what the loss was, generate that for the next year, incorporate what breakeven was and determine the percentage it would take to keep?

Ms. Reynolds: it would take 50K per district to keep afloat. Robert offered to pay, Todd does not know his budget and the other two districts were silent. We are not going to see increases in IDEA or other funding sources.

Mr. Fiske: the goal is keeping everything whole, if that mean no raises, which means whole. You are guaranteed your step and/or lane. Otherwise, it's an offer of zero or better. We're not going below zero, and we must ask member schools if they are in on keeping it going. I don't want to parse that out. Everyone feels like we are doing our best to take care of our team. If you let this go, it'll never come back. Everything is fine for 24-25 but...

Ms. Gideon: Maybe we should look at a one-year only contract since everything is up in the air?

Ms. Reynolds: Our projects have been out for two years.

Mr. Fiske: You can add an addendum if it is felt like there is a change. We were set for Monday to do a full day of negotiations. There is just the numbers question. Will it be useful to have the meeting on Monday?

Ms. Rammell: we could come up with some numbers to consider on the 15th. It would be worthwhile to meet. 12:40pm to 3:30pm on Monday for the next meeting. We would like to move forward for our CSCT staff because we don't want to have staff moving towards looking for other jobs.

V. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 5:28pm