

November 10, 2020

The RSU 9 Board of Directors has reviewed the Majority Petition signed by a large number of school staff and understands that many staff members have expressed that they have no confidence in our Superintendent.

We Value Our Employees

First and foremost, the Board wants to ensure that all members of the community know that the Board appreciates the dedicated staff who work in our schools and on behalf of our students. We respect our staff and truly value their commitment to students. The Board wholeheartedly agrees with the sentiment expressed in the petition that educators - and all other staff working to support our mission - play a crucial role in our communities.

The Board also supports our Superintendent as she leads our school system through one of the most tumultuous events in our nation's history. She takes her direction from the Board, and is carrying out our decisions and directives as we try to navigate through these uncharted waters.

To the extent that there are communication issues between the Board and staff, or the staff and the Superintendent we are committed to working on that issue. When we met privately with the Superintendent to discuss her employment, she indicated that she was committed to working to build strong bonds as well. It is our belief that during these challenging times we must strive to work through our differences and we are committed to doing so - providing guidance and resources to our superintendent to be able to effectively respond to concerns.

We are Committed to a Fair Contract with our Teachers

We acknowledge that the negotiation of a successor contract with our professional staff is taking time. There are a variety of reasons for this, including the pandemic and the complexity of the issues in play. The Board believes that there are many shared goals in negotiations, including that teacher salaries be increased, that we continue to offer fair benefits, and that we strive to provide teachers with the time and resources needed for them to do their jobs.

Regarding teacher salaries, the Board is well aware that RSU 9 teacher salaries must increase to be competitive with surrounding districts and reflect the tremendous responsibility and skills of teachers. We are committed to addressing this issue. We did not reach this place overnight, however, and we cannot fix the issue in one contract cycle. With declining enrollment, expected loss of state subsidy, and the reality that many families in our communities cannot shoulder an increased tax burden, there is a limit to what we can do to address this issue in the very near term. Despite these challenges complicating contract negotiations, the Board has budgeted a significant amount to increase teacher salaries this year, and we have offered the entire amount budgeted during our negotiations with the professional staff. Specifically, we have proposed increasing salaries by 4.25% this year, 3.62% next year, and 2.56% the following year. This represents an increase of 10.78% (or more than \$1.1 million dollars) over the next three

years. We aim to move our salaries and benefits closer to the average salaries and benefits in our region, and we believe that our proposals move this ball forward.

We are Committed to the Health and Safety of Our Employees

Our unions have requested that the Board enter into a signed agreement with them on a range of issues relating to the safe operation of our schools during the pandemic. The Board wholeheartedly believes that the safety of our staff and our students is one of our highest priorities. The Board has expressed a willingness to sign an agreement that would

(1) ensure that staff continue to have a voice on our District's safety committee and real input on any changes to our current plan; and

(2) commit to following all MDOE and CDC standards.

The no confidence vote has been heard and taken seriously. The board is doing due diligence to work with all parties to resolve disputes and foster collaboration. While this may take some time, we are mindful of the need for all parties to come to a resolution as quickly as possible, therefore we will be taking action and seeking resolution in the next three months.