



**DOVER SCHOOL
DISTRICT**

DOVER SCHOOL BOARD – MINUTES

Meeting Type:	Workshop Meeting
Meeting Location:	SAU Curriculum Conference Room
Meeting Date:	Thursday, September 30, 2010
Meeting Time:	5:30 pm

A workshop session of the Dover School Board was called to order by Chairperson Carolyn Mebert on Thursday, September 30, 2010, at 5:35 P.M. in SAU Curriculum Conference Room.

Those members present were Kenneth Appel, Carolyn Mebert, Matt Mayberry, Audra Lurvey, and Doris Grady. Absent were Beth Setear and Robert McCrory. Also present were Attorney Tim Gudas, Attorney Matt Upton, Uniserv Director Peter Miller, Human Resources Coordinator Robin LaFleur, DTU members including, President Deb Hackett, Candace Hall, Nicole Gallagher, and Beth Lynch.

Attorney Matthew Upton, of Drummond Woodsum Law Firm in Portsmouth, presented this information session on “Collective Bargaining in a Trouble Economy”. Attorney Upton used a Powerpoint presentation to discuss the history of economic issues dating back to the Great Depression. He discussed local economic challenges ways of successful bargaining during more difficult economic times. Attorney Upton mentioned ideas such as looking at under utilized benefits such as workshops or course reimbursement and rolling the savings into salaries. Benefits can also be modified (ex. Reducing prescription drug plan) to create a savings that can be used for salaries. He stated that there are certain percentages of citizens who will approve a contract all of the time, and a certain percentage that will never approve a contract. The goal of the group would be to obtain the approval of the middle group.

Attorney Upton continued, saying that health insurance can be a great source for savings. Wellness programs, shopping for health insurance carriers more often to find additional savings are both ways to create more savings. Using CPI-U indexes to determine cost of living increases might also be a good way to determine increases in salaries in a difficult economy.

He stressed that whatever contract was agreed upon had to be easy to explain to Councils and citizens. Also, management must have a master plan for what they would like in a contract. It is a process, not an event. There needs to be a reasonable succession toward the goal.

Specific items he discussed included:

- Making incremental changes
- Any contract can’t be fixed in one step
- Both sides should be aware of local economic factors, including home sales, delinquency in real estate, foreclosures, layoffs
- The value and availability of both short and long term savings and cost avoidance measures should be known.



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At the table, remember to:

- Understand and embrace economic factors
- Be creative in finding cost savings and cost avoidance
- Be realistic
- Consider Interest-based bargaining to assist in the creative/education process
- Avoid long term management-union conflict over current economic circumstances or uncertainty.
- The theme of any contract settlement must include ‘Belt Tightening’.
- Sometimes no contract may be the best alternative.

Mid Contract considerations:

- Develop good will with voters (try to eliminate excessive spending)
- Emphasize future cost avoidance or budget stabilization measures.
- Emphasize value to tax payer
- Compare to other local or comparable communities
- Be transparent
- Reach out to taxpayer and parent groups
- Consider other budgetary savings to offset wage increases
- It’s all about how you “spin it”.
- Educate city councilors

Dr. Mebert asked for ideas on how to educate the public. Attorney Upton recommended Local access shows, programs to increase test scores, although he doesn’t believe these are the best indicator.

Mrs. Grady stated we still have three schools in need of improvement. The tax revenue may not be available. We will know in December if there will be a revenue increase or decrease. She also commented that she agrees with Ms. Hackett that skill growth and development is what most parent’s like to see in their children.

Dr. Mebert noted that Dover has many people in high property tax areas who do not have children in school and do not want to approve any contract. Attorney Upton mentioned that they would probably always be part of the group who might never approve a contract with an increase.

Attorney Upton stated that general settlement trends include raises averaging 1-2.5% in total new money. This includes the value of the steps. There are some in this range with 0% and some with 4%. Many are status quo.



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He discussed the Evergreen law and said that this would provide a benefit for those people who are still on steps. Deb Hackett noted that 40% are on top of step and 60% are still on steps. The benefit to Evergreen is that the cost of the contract is actually less since steps have already been included.

Preparations for impasses include:

- Impasse will lead to mediation and possibly Fact Finding.
- The last best offer should be defensible to voters and union members based on unique economic circumstances of the community.
- Pull the plug if bad there are the beginnings of bad blood. At this point, a mediator should be brought in.

Mr. Mayberry asked Mr. Upton what he had seen that might be considered creative proposals. Mr. Upton responded that one example was a school loan repayment plan that benefited 2nd year and higher teachers. This provided \$1,000 per year and was to be used specifically for loan repayment. He continued that the biggest challenge was getting new people at the lower salaries offered by school districts.

Ms. Hackett stated that Dover has lost many good teachers to other school districts because their salaries would be increased by a considerable amount. Peter Miller asked if it was a priority for the Dover School District to keep them.

Mr. Upton again mentioned that the problems in the contract were not going to be fixed overnight. It might take 2 or 3 contracts for all of the changes to be made.

Ms. Hackett commented that it seems that negotiations have become stagnant. She is hoping to hear about some new ideas, examples including flex accounts. Attorney Upton stated that this meeting was meant as a catalyst to jump start negotiations.

Mrs. Grady stated the need for give and take by both parties and was in agreement that the contract would need to be sold to the public.

Ms. Hackett stated that there have already been too many changes. Many causing her to be in the building hours after the end of the school day. Mrs. Grady said that not all teachers were like Ms. Hackett. She also stated that the DTU should say to the public that they have problems and will try to fix them.

Mr. Mayberry suggested that each team meet and reflect on what was learned at this workshop.



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Mr. Upton also mentioned Intraspace Bargaining. Basically, there is a stated beginning and an end date and the number of issues negotiated is limited. He continued that it can be an effective way to bargain. Someone needs to be brought in to facilitate this process who hasn't been involved prior to the new bargaining. They need to be a strong negotiator.

Mrs. Grady also commented on the new film called. "Waiting for Superman". Others in attendance had heard of this movie and had plans to view it.

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Setear, Secretary