

CLINTON TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION
Response to the Clinton Township Education Association's Comments on NJ.com

The Clinton Township Board of Education takes its efforts to reach a mutually agreed upon collective bargaining agreement with its local teachers' union very seriously. We have avoided negotiating through the media and have focused our efforts on the important task of negotiating with the union. However, our Board – comprised of elected volunteers – is compelled to respond to the malicious and misleading statements recently released by the teacher's union. Please note that the Board cannot get into the details of the negotiations without violating state and federal law, however, the erroneous comments must be addressed.

The first false statement made by the union that needs to be addressed is: *“(T)he only outstanding issue is salary.”* This statement is false. There are other outstanding negotiations items that remain unresolved, and the union is aware of this. Of course, salary is important. However, as the members of the Board of Education are fiduciaries of taxpayers' money, it is also important that the Board honor the obligation to live within the 2% cap on tax increases imposed by law.

The second false statement that we would like to address is: *The attorney negotiating for the Board “asked for an extension of seven to ten days to file their report to the fact finder.”* In reality, the parties had discussed that the Board report would be filed on March 4, 2016. The fact finder advised the parties that he would be out of the office through March 14, 2016, and it did not matter when the report was filed, as long as it was filed by March 14, 2016. The Board report was filed on March 8, 2016, the same day that the union claims that the Board asked for a seven-to-ten-day extension on submitting the report.

The Board continues to be frustrated by the union's delays, including but not limited to the following:

- a. A seven-month gap between the execution of the August 13, 2013 memorandum of agreement and its ultimate rejection by the union membership on February 24, 2014;
- b. A change in union leadership and negotiation team membership during this negotiations process;
- c. The union knowingly and willingly providing the incorrect salary guides to the Board (requested as per the original memorandum of agreement of August 2013) and not providing the correct guides for a year and a half;
- d. The union's refusal to negotiate during the summer months of 2014;
- e. The union's negotiations teams' inexplicable, unauthorized and unannounced exit (at 10:15 pm) from a January 13, 2015 mediation session;
- f. The union's refusal to negotiate during the summer months of 2015; and
- g. The union's failure to be responsive to the Board's most recent proposal since August 2015.

Lastly, the Board would like to address another comment made by the union that states: *“We are hopeful that the contract will settle before we have to expand our job actions.”* Of course, the union never *“has to”* expand job actions. All the union *“has to”* do is come to the bargaining table in good faith, ready to negotiate, and it will continue to find a willing partner in this Board.

We continue to respect our staff, their hard work and dedication to our children. As Board members, we all live in this community, we have children who attend these schools, and we too want a rapid resolution to this contract, which is fair to both our teachers and to our taxpayers. It is our hope that we can accomplish this very soon.