

A Special Meeting of the 25th Board of Representatives of the City of Stamford will be held Wednesday, February 14, 2001 at 8:00 p.m. in the Legislative Chambers of the Board of Representatives in the Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard, Stamford, Connecticut.

Minutes

AGENDA:

The President called the meeting to order at 8:00 p.m. The President then read the Call of the Meeting:

NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING

I, Carmen L. Domonkos, President of the 25th Board of Representatives of the City of Stamford, Connecticut, and pursuant to Section C2-10-4 of the Stamford Charter, hereby call a Special Meeting of said Board of Representatives at the following time and place:

Wednesday, February 14, 2001
8:00 p.m.
Legislative Chambers, 4th Floor
888 Washington Boulevard
Stamford, CT 06904-2152

to consider and act upon the following:

1. P25.094, REJECTION; of labor contract between the Stamford Administrative Unit and the Stamford Board of Education for the period July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2003 and signed January 25, 2001.

INVOCATION: Given by Lisa Poltrack.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG: Conducted by President of the Board Carmen L. Domonkos.

President Domonkos asked Rep. Mary Fedeli to act as clerk in the absence of Clerk of the Board Annie Summerville.

ROLL CALL: There were twenty-five members present and 15 members absent. Absent were Reps. Alswanger, Biancardi, Gasparini, Gaztambide, Graber, Green-Carter, Imbrogno, Lyons, MacInnis, Mellis, Mobilio, Nanos, Shapiro, Spandow and Summerville.

MACHINE TEST VOTE: The machine was in good working order

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE PRESENTATION: Randall Skigen, Chair
Personnel Committee

Chair Skigen reported that the Personnel Committee met while he was out of town, and Vice Chair Loglisci conducted the meeting in his absence.

Vice Chair Loglisci reported that the Personnel Committee met on Wednesday, January 31, 2001. Present were Reps. Loglisci, Fedeli, Boccuzzi, Gasparini and Fortunato. Several other board members were also present along with Dr. Mazzullo, Ed Mathews and Martin Levine.

1. P25.094 REJECTION; of labor contract between the Stamford Administrative Unit and the Stamford Board of Education for the period July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2003 and signed January 25, 2001.
01/26/01 - Submitted by Stamford Public Schools **APPROVED BY VOICE VOTE**

Vice Chair Loglisci stated that this contract includes a raise of 3.62 percent along with step increases, that brings the total to 3.99 percent for each of three years. The Unit's original request was 5.9 percent for each of five years. This contract did not go to arbitration. All items are essentially the same, and there are more work days required of the unit members.

Vice Chair Loglisci stated the Committee discussed hospitalization changes, and in essence, this is the same contract in the past except for the wage increases and increased work days.

Rep. Boccuzzi stated that the Unit members are also receiving one additional personal day, and this would not represent a cost to the City because no substitutes need to be brought in.

Chair Skigen moved to reject the contract. The Committee voted 5-0 against rejection, which is, in essence, in favor of the contract. Said motion was seconded.

President Domonkos explained the vote. If you wish to reject this contract, you vote yes; if you wish to accept this contract, you vote no.

Rep. Boccuzzi stated he would vote in favor of this contract, but he wanted to put on the record his opinion that the correct process was not used in submitting the contract to us. Rep. Boccuzzi stated he wants assurances that in the future the contract will be submitted in proper manner.

Rep. Zelinsky stated that in the past, we have voted in the affirmative on contracts. Rep. Zelinsky asked why the procedure would be to reject the contract.

Rep. Martin responded that the law entitles the Board of Representatives to reject the contract. If the Board takes no action, the contract comes into effect. So, the real question is whether the Board wants to stop the contract, or reject the contract. The proper motion, therefore, is do you want to reject the contract?

Rep. Skigen read from the State Statute, 10-153d(b), “the terms of such contract shall be binding on the legislative body of the local or regional school district unless such body rejects such contract at a regular or special meeting called or convened for such purpose within thirty days of the filing of the contract.”

President Domonkos noted that Rep. White left the floor.

Rep. Skigen stated that the Board of Finance issued a unanimous advisory opinion last week on this contract supporting the contract. Rep. Skigen stated that personally, he finds the amounts of the increases to be on the high side. The City is in a tight budget year, and there are a number of city-side union contracts coming up, and this administrative unit is probably across the board the highest paid employees in the City. The contract is coming in at a 3.6% increase, whereas over the past couple of years, all of the contracts have been coming in at 3% increases per year.

Rep. Skigen stated this contract is coming in at 3.62% plus a step, which brings it up to 3.99%. Rep. Skigen stated that when the Board gets to the teachers’ contract, higher increases will be necessary because the City is having trouble attracting and retaining teachers. Rep. Skigen stated he doesn’t believe that we are having similar problems attracting and/or retaining administrators. Rep. Skigen stated he would reluctantly support the contract.

Rep. Owens stated that this is the first time he has seen this contract and on Page 9, under Benefits, there is a reference to an Appendix C, and on Appendix C, everything is crossed out. Rep. Owens stated that while it was reported that little has changed in the contract, there are many cross-outs in it.

Rep. Esposito stated that over the last couple of years each contract is changed to reflect the new insurance carriers, and he believes this may be why that Appendix is crossed out.

Rep. Boccuzzi stated that he believes it is a change in the insurance policy.

Rep. Skigen stated that there is a change in the insurance coverage and that it is now designed to mirror the coverage that the Teachers' Union has. Rep. Skigen stated that Mr. Owens is correct, and there are numerous references to Appendix C, and the copy that we received tonight does not have Appendix C attached. Further, the Appendix C attached is a salary schedule, not an insurance schedule.

Rep. Owens also noted that the name has changed from "employees" to "unit members."

Rep. Boccuzzi stated that the members did not receive this contract until the night of the meeting, and therefore, it was difficult for the members to read it and try to discern the changes. The Committee had to take the school staff's word on what the changes were. There was no way that the committee could thoroughly review the contract because of the late receipt of it.

Rep. Skigen stated that the contract he previously received was not a black-lined version.

President Domonkos stated that Valerie Pankosky had advised her that the black-lined version was delivered today. There was a previous version that was provided earlier.

Rep. Skigen stated that the Board is seeing this black-lined version for the first time today. Looking at the list of people that are involved in this union, he is speculating that they are not being called administrators any more is that there are individuals included in this list, such as coordinator of summer school and director of special education, who may not be "administrators."

Rep. Owens stated that he appreciates the Board members comments on his questions, and his point is that we just got this contract and did not have time to review it.

Rep. Skigen stated that unfortunately, when we are dealing with contracts negotiated by the Board of Education, we have thirty days to act from the time at which an agreement is reached. An agreement was reached either on January 23 or January 25, which forced this Board into having a special meeting because the Board of Finance did not have an opportunity to issue an advisory opinion prior to its last meeting. The Charter also requires that the Board of Education also receive an advisory opinion from the Board of Finance before they finalize negotiations. This was never done in this case. State Statute requires that the contract be sent to the Town Clerk's office. We don't know if that was ever done in this case.

Rep. Skigen added that there is a memo that the president has prepared outlining the procedure that the Board of Education is required to follow. Rep. Skigen stated we are put between a rock and a hard place in this situation, because if we don't act by the 23rd of this month, the contract goes into effect automatically.

Rep. O'Neill asked Mr. Skigen if this is the first time he saw the contract. Rep. Skigen replied that on January 26, late in the day, received a non black-lined copy of the contract, which was sent out shortly thereafter. Rep. Skigen stated that the copy that the

Committee reviewed on January 31 was not a black-lined copy, so the Board was not aware of all the changes.

President Domonkos added that no summary was attached to the contract.

Rep. O'Neill stated that he is not really prepared to vote upon a contract of this magnitude without reviewing it, and reviewing it over the last five minutes is not adequate time for him to vote upon it.

President Domonkos stated that the original contract was mailed out during the week of January 29, 2001. The black-lined contract was delivered tonight.

Rep. O'Neill asked what would happen if the Board rejected this contract. President Domonkos replied that they would have to start the negotiations all over again.

Rep. Boccuzzi stated he understands the members' frustrations, and that the contracts received at the committee meeting were missing pages. The Committee had to take the word of the Superintendent of Schools and the negotiators. The changes that were discussed were those that had a monetary value. Rep. Boccuzzi added that the changes indicated on the black-lined copy do not seem to cost anything. Rep. Boccuzzi stated that he believes we should not reject the contract. The Committee made a point to the Board of Education regarding the handling of this, and stated he was uncertain what the final outcome would be if we rejected the contract and it went to arbitration. Rep. Boccuzzi stated he agrees with Mr. Skigen in that the percentage increases seems to be about 1% more than we typically award, but this is not all that different from what the Board of Education usually does – their contracts are typically higher.

President Domonkos stated that a financial summary was provided tonight by the Board of Education. Also, a copy of the Board of Finance opinion was provided along with a copy of the President's memorandum to the Board of Education, Superintendent of Schools and union presidents. That memo also has the state statute and charter provisions attached.

Rep. Esposito stated that he will vote to support the contract, but he is uncertain if it is the right thing to do. Rep. Esposito stated it would probably create more problems to not vote for it. Rep. Esposito stated he feels very strongly, as Mr. Skigen does, that these increases are rather high, and these are the highest paid people in the City of Stamford, other than a few police officers. This is also in an area where there is no shortages. In education, we are facing a serious crisis in teacher shortages. On Friday, at his daughter's high school, a teacher is leaving the system in mid-year. Last year, Mr. Esposito's daughter started a course in September, the teacher left the second week, and unbelievably there were 11 different substitute teachers during the semester. Rep. Esposito stated he has not heard one instance where the City has had a problem because the City could not find an administrator. At Education Committee meetings and Board of Education meetings, you trip over administrators and they are tripping over each other. Rep. Esposito stated that if the salaries weren't so high, some may leave, and we could

then start some people at a lower level. But, there is no problem in finding administrators, and there is a serious problem in finding teachers, and that problem is going to get worse because New York City is looking for 50,000 teachers, and communities around us are paying more for teachers than we are. The money has to go to teacher salaries. Rep. Esposito stated if he was a member of the Board of Education, this is where he would place his emphasis.

Rep. Loglisci stated that perhaps the Board of Finance should alert the members of the Board of Education that we expect them to hold the costs down to administrators, because they are the ones that are telling us how important it is for us to raise the salaries of teachers, and they should realize that the funds have to come from somewhere. Rep. Loglisci stated we don't have to keep widening the gulf between teacher and administrator.

Rep. Boccuzzi stated that the subject of teachers leaving came up at the meeting, and the school staff stated they were going to do some type of a survey or review to find out why teachers are leaving. Rep. Boccuzzi suggested that what they should look at is not only the salary, but also the way the top echelon in the school system treats the teachers. Maybe some of the teachers are leaving because they don't feel they are backed by the Board of Education or administration. Perhaps that is why some of the teachers are leaving. The Board of Education stated that is one thing they would inquire about in the review.

Rep. Poltrack stated that not only is there a problem with support of the teachers by the principals, but there is also problem with teacher morale in the schools. The staff in many of the schools that she has visited does not always have a good sense of camaraderie as in years past. In some cases, these principals, who are exorbitantly paid, are not necessarily the best. Rep. Poltrack echoed Mr. Esposito's concern that we are perhaps giving too much for too little.

Rep. Esposito stated that in response to Mr. Boccuzzi's statement about the school system's review of teacher leavings, he hopes that they are not going to go out and hire an expensive consulting team to get the answer to that question.

Rep. Day asked whether Mr. Loglisci or Mr. Skigen have an assessment of what the risk would be in an arbitration scenario.

Rep. Skigen responded that at this point in time, generally, once a tentative agreement is reached, that would typically constitute the City's offer in arbitration, so there is only a downside to this in his opinion.

Rep. Zelinsky noted that of the 52 members of the unit, 41 are at step 3. Would these members of the highest step receive another step?

Rep. Loglisci responded that the step increase only goes to those who are not at the highest step.

President Domonkos explained the vote. If a member wishes to reject the contract, s/he should vote yes. If a member wishes to approve the contract, s/he should vote no. The motion was rejected by voice vote. Rep. Owens and O'Neill abstained.

The President announced that the motion had failed.

Upon motion duly made and seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

*The proceedings are available on audio tape at the
Offices of the Board of Representatives.*