

Dist. 15 voting tonight on teachers' pact

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The Palatine Township Elementary District 15 school board will take the first step today toward approving the new tentative contract it agreed to with its teachers this week.

The school board has scheduled a special meeting for 5 p.m. today, during which a ratification vote on the new three-year deal will be taken.

While the board has a regularly scheduled meeting Wednesday, school board President Nancy Lee Carlson said it has been usual practice in the district to schedule a special meeting when holding ratification votes.

"This is not unusual," Carlson said. "We have done this before with other contracts."

While the board will vote today, Lisa Nuss, chief negotiator for the Classroom Teachers Council, which represents District 15's 772 teachers, said it doesn't matter which side ratifies first, and the school board's decision will not have any impact on their vote, which is scheduled for Monday.

"Our members are going to base their decision on whether or not they think this is a fair contract," Nuss said.

Some residents, including Bryan Neal of Rolling Meadows, were concerned a Friday meeting would prevent many residents from attending.

"I believe there is a general expectation that (the ratification) would be held at a regular board meeting," Neal said. "For good government, a Wednesday presentation seems much more appropriate."

Following more than a year of negotiations, including 30-plus hours over the weekend, the two sides came to an agreement on a tentative contract late Sunday night, avoiding the possibility of a strike.

While both sides are waiting until the deal has been ratified to release details, issues that were being negotiated over the weekend included salaries, health and retirement benefits, and class sizes.

The teachers have been working without a contract since the previous one expired Aug. 31.

Today's meeting is scheduled for 5 p.m. at Walter Sundling Junior High School, 1100 N. Smith St., in Palatine.

District 15 serves nearly 13,000 children from Arlington Heights, Hoffman Estates, Inverness, Palatine, Rolling Meadows, South Barrington and Schaumburg.

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