

Dist. 15 approves teachers' contract

4-3 board vote seals deal

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While it was far from unanimous, the Palatine Township Elementary District 15 school board Friday approved the tentative contract it agreed to with its teachers union this week.

The 4-3 vote leaves only Monday's ratification vote by the teachers before the new three-year deal can become official.

While details will not be released until after the teachers' vote Monday, school board President Nancy Lee Carlson said the contract will serve the district well in the long term.

"I believe this contract is in the best interest of the district in a fiscally responsible manner," Carlson said.

Board member Scott Boucher, who voted for the contract, said he felt it was a fair deal for both sides.

"It is a great contract for our main responsibility, which is educating our children," Boucher said.

But board members Tim Millar, Wendy Rowden and Kelly Keenan disagreed and voted against the new contract.

"We didn't solve our main problem," Millar said of the district's spending of more money than it is taking in.

Millar said he believes the teachers' threat of a strike was the main reason a deal was struck.

After 16 months of negotiations, including 30-plus hours over the weekend, the two sides agreed on a tentative contract late Sunday night, avoiding a potential strike.

Rowden said she could not understand why Illinois is one of only a few states where teachers are able to walk off the job.

"The ability to strike adds a whole new element to the bargaining process," Rowden said.

Once the threat of a strike was used as a bargaining tool, Rowden said, the tenor of the negotiations changed and the union began promoting its own self-serving interests, instead of what was best for the kids.

"We are sadly left to question the integrity of the people who we once held in such high esteem," Rowden said.

Board member Paula Mikula, who supported the deal, said she believes the district must begin moving forward.

"It is time now for everyone to put all their anger aside," Mikula said.

Board member Linda Silverman also supported the new contract.

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

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