

District 15 teachers pact details revealed

By Chad Brooks

Daily Herald Staff Writer

Posted Thursday, October 26, 2006

With the new teachers contract officially approved, school board members in Palatine Township Elementary District 15 released details Wednesday on the new three-year deal.

The new contract calls for base salary increases of 2.12 percent this year and 2.13 percent the following two years. In addition, a 2.54 percent step increase each year will be given, rewarding teachers for the number of years they have taught in the district.

School board President Nancy Lee Carlson described the contract as fiscally sound.

"It is especially fiscally sound on the issue of our retired teachers," Carlson said.

Retired teachers will now receive cash payments for health care, as opposed to staying on the district's plan, which they were previously able to do.

"It will in the long run be extremely beneficial to the long-term financial strength of the district," Carlson said.

Teachers will now be responsible for paying higher costs for things such as prescription drugs.

Board member Scott Boucher, who voted in favor of the contract, said he was pleased with the in-roads the new contract has made on health benefits.

"We aren't at where the private sector is yet, but we were a lot closer than we were before," Boucher said.

Tim Millar, one of three board members to vote against the deal, said he was not in favor of the contract because it does not solve the district's problem of spending more than it is taking in.

"Just from that standpoint, we are going in the wrong direction," Millar said.

Under the new contract, Millar said teachers with a bachelor's degree who started in the district in the 2001-2002 school year and was earning \$33,097, would be making \$55,921 after five years if they acquire their master's degree.

"That is a 67 percent increase," Millar said. "It is a shocker when you actually see the numbers."

Superintendent Robert McKanna said the new contract does not harm the district financially and will not cause any programs or teachers to be cut this year.

"I don't see the current contract causing us to do anything adverse," McKanna said.

Another problem Millar has is that contract calls for a reduction in school days by one each year.

"We still have paid a lot of money, and now we are losing education time," Millar said.

The new deal also includes measures that allow the district to build a personnel file paper trail on its teachers.

Previously, Millar said teachers could have their files expunged after three years.

"It made it very difficult for us to pursue a case, unless two incidents happened within three years of each other," Millar said.

Carlson agreed this was a plus in the new contract.

"Before, it was nearly impossible to terminate a tenured teacher," Carlson said.

Other details of the contract include additional planning time for staff each week and an increase from \$1,000 a year to \$1,250 in tuition reimbursement.

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