

**BITTERROOT VALLEY EDUCATION COOPERATIVE**

**AND**

**THE COOPERATIVE EMPLOYEES' BARGAINING UNIT # 4403, MFPE, NEA, AFT, AFL-CIO**

Date: 1/18/2021

Attendance for Union: Rachella Moresi, Wendy Wanner, Karen Gideon

Attendance for Management: Jenny Rammell, Robert DoBell, Brian Rayburn

Other Attendees: Chris Hughes, Jill Reynolds

Session Began at: 3:35

Time constraints today: None

Minute taker: Karen Gideon

Review/Approve last minutes: All bargaining team members indicated approval of the minutes from 12/07/2020

**Employee Issues:**

1. No language issues. Discuss proposed MOU to close the contract by Feb 15 and negotiate salaries, remunerations, and "other topics that are mutually agreed upon" through additional MOUs.
- 2.

**Management Issues:**

1. Determine best options to keep all programs sustainable and build reserves as needed.
- 2.

**Discussion topics and decisions:**

Rocky provided background for the employee issue. State union leaders held a meeting with local officers 1/7/21 and shared concerns about threats to collective bargaining rights and existing Collective Bargaining Agreements. Many bills are being proposed at the MT Legislature that are of concern. As any of those bills are signed into law, they will take effect immediately. Any contracts that are open for negotiations can be stripped.

Since our CBA is currently open, the union is asking that we close it as is by 2/15/21 and consider an MOU to extend the expiration date of the collective bargaining agreement from June 30, 2021 to June 30, 2023. The MOU states that the parties may bargain and negotiate wages or other remunerations during the term of the CBA agreement as well as "other topics that are mutually agreed upon". Any agreements would be memorialized in an MOU document separate from the CBA.

Rocky indicated that the employees do not have any language issues to bring to the table. During the bargaining session 12/7/20, Rocky had brought up a few ideas but those ideas were not formally introduced. These included clarifications to the retirement language and to the Non-Human Service Bachelor's degree Behavior Consultant position.

Further discussion ensued, with board members indicating that they want to do what is best for employees but that MFPE leaders are stirring up fear which is a reactive strategy. They indicated that even if bills passed in legislation, we could still have local agreements. They assured us they would be fair, as if we still had a CBA. There were many questions about the MOU and board members indicated they would not be able to recommend it be approved as is. Chris indicated that a state CSCT task force may recommend changes in the Spring and administration may need the flexibility to bargain language along with financial issues. Karen asked that we include Melanie Charleson at our next meeting to answer questions. The team agreed and will try to schedule a meeting before January 26.

Questions:

What does "other topics that are mutually agreed upon" mean and what if we couldn't mutually agree to discuss certain topics?

What are included as "remunerations" in the MOU, e.g. employees paid over 9 months vs. 12 months?

If the MOU is signed, could we still bargain until a closing date if indicated in the MOU?

If we go ahead and bargain "as usual", what are the employees at risk of losing?

If the bills don't pass in the legislature, are we locked out from opening the contract to more fully bargain?

Does the MOU have to be presented at the January board meeting or could it wait until the next one on Feb 23<sup>rd</sup>?

Issues targeted for next meeting: Continue discussion with field rep, Melanie Charleson, present to answer questions.

Confirm next meeting dates/times: TBD

Meeting adjourned at: 4:35