

SUMMARY

TEA REGULAR MEETING

APRIL 18, 2018

ROOM 4-C, 4TH FLOOR, KSC

Conference call-in was available

1. Alton Gaskill opened the meeting at 12:00 pm.
2. WTD Bargaining Update (see below).
3. Transit Bargaining Update: Two issues are still an ongoing source of discussion with the County: retroactive pay on certifications and whether the medical premium share is pre- or post-tax.
4. Treasurer's Report: Balances are \$240,846 and \$56,752. The Dues Committee has drafted forecasts of revenues and expenses and will present them to the Board next week for any revisions or other issues around the forecasts.
5. Bylaws Committee Update: the Committee met to review Jim Cline's comments last week and will have a second meeting on April 30 to discuss further revisions.
6. Alton moved to adjourn at 1 p.m. Seconded by Jerry Williams.

Summary of Wastewater Treatment Division contract discussion.

Roger Browne reported that mediation will be in late May or early June. The County has presented their option for providing a fixed stipend to WW staff and managers to purchase coverage outside of the County's system as an alternative to joining the Coalition of Unions/Master Labor Agreement. (MLA)

A member asked whether WW members would have an opportunity to vote in June on joining the Coalition or Teamsters.

(With regard to the Coalition idea) Roger replied that TEA cannot just vote to join the Coalition, it would have to be asked (by them).

Roger explained that before exploring an option to join Teamsters, TEA needs to conclude bargaining with the County, and bring the offer to members. Otherwise, COLA for 2017 and 2018 would be lost because bargaining for that union would be starting in 2019 and they could not bargain retroactively. It is also not possible to leave TEA and join another union while there is a pending ULP, that would have to be resolved first.

Member Comment: my comments are designed to improve the democratic process.

(Regarding why there was no vote on the Master Labor agreement) Roger replied that the bargaining team never had an understanding of the offer to bring to members for a vote on the MLA, but we understand the concerns. The bargaining team's purpose is to present TEA's position, reach a certain point in negotiations at which further progress seems unlikely, and bring that arrangement back to members for a ratification vote. By joining the Coalition, it would do all the bargaining and there is less money in the general fund for labor than there is available for WW employees through the current arrangement, where monies come from self-funding.

Comment: this detailed information is what should be in the TEA Times and updates should be sent more frequently.

Question: what are the expectations for the next round. It seems like we have diminishing bargaining power.

Roger replied that the County would like TEA members to believe that as part of their strategy. Mediation will bring the two parties closer together on the issues but will not be binding on either party.

Question: since it's not binding, what is the incentive for the County to change their approach?

Roger: Mediation will reveal that the County is not bargaining fairly and is not as labor-friendly as they represent to the public. By introducing a neutral third party, TEA expects to improve the County offer to TEA.

Comment: I have seen where being a bit stubborn can be a benefit, such as the furlough pay for WW supervisors.

Roger: TEA won in that ULP and 2 court cases. Our goal is to get what's fair so we hold out for those items. In mediation we say this is as far as we are willing to compromise.

Member Comment: we have great insurance coverage and we want to keep it but it feels like we risking losing it because of the "black mark" on TEA from the ULP.

Roger: Jim Cline is preparing a legal position to forestall the change of health care to an outside provider in the event that the County moves to implement their offer. But it is currently TEA's belief that this is just the County's bargaining strategy and that it will revert to County insurance at some point.

Member Comment: TEA's communication on this has improved recently.

Alton commented that it is good to see the level of interest and participation reflected in the number of people attending the meetings. The communication through email is somewhat limited by the County's "limited use" restrictions. We are using the website more and intend to explore other options.

Member Comment: there are other options for communication than KC email system.

Question: what is the General Fund issue?

Roger: the General Fund receives property taxes and is limited by the past voter initiatives to specific increases which are less than inflation. WW sets rates for its services to cover actual expenses for operations, so it makes sense to stay with a contract that is funded independently (and not the position the coalition is forced to take).

Q: can you explain the mediation timeline?

Roger: the mediator will meet as long as he/she feels there is progress being made. Then a contract will be written up. But it's not a fixed date. The good thing is that the mediation requires the parties to attend.

Q: what happens if the mediator stops because there is no progress?

Roger: TEA would tell the membership, the County would draft an agreement and present it to TEA. Then TEA says yay or nay.

Q: how does it affect Healthy Incentives for 2019?

R: Regardless of what happens with the contract, all members are covered at the Gold level for 2019.

Question: so there are 3 main bargaining issues: COLA, health care, and salary steps?

Roger: yes, the County is not agreeing to the step increases even though salaries come out of the WW fund. Not many labor groups have the self-funding as a way to allow better salary increases.

Question: what determines the comparison salaries?

Roger: TEA originally did a massive market study on salaries in 2005 for the first agreement. At that time, TEA and the County negotiated on the sources for the salary comps. Since then, for each agreement, TEA just collects data from the sources. All classifications were examined in the original study.

Question: is this information on the WW negotiations going to all members or just WW members?

Alton: we do not generally differentiate and send only to one unit. Also, one member sent their comments on the TEA Times to members, who then were confused as to whether the comments were coming from the Board. We ask that members not forward the TEA Times email with their personal comments.

Member Comment: I am worried about the need to have salaries and benefits that are attractive to future workers, because so many are retiring. This seems to be a rationale for staying in the smaller TEA organization rather than joining the Coalition.

Question: is there a new contract with Jim Cline under consideration? How does it work since he is now out of contract, and does the Board intend to review other possible legal firms for the work?

Alton: the Board has not made a decision on the draft contract yet. The terms of the old contract continue until a new one is signed. The Board is not considering other firms because of the advantages from the Cline firm's history with TEA and its work with other unions, including pro bono work for TEA in the past.