

mea Bargaining Update

Published by Mesa Education Association ♦ Volume 9, Number 1 ♦ March 30, 2010

Talks Open: Budget will be Bad – or Worse

The opening session of the Meet-and-Confer process was yesterday, Monday, March 29 – six weeks later than usual. Representatives of MEA and the District waited until projected budget numbers are available. A review of finance options was the main topic of the meeting.

Budget cuts or more budget cuts. In his opening statement, Kirk Hinsey acknowledged that we again face the reality of hard budget decisions. He is optimistic that by working together we can make the best decisions. State-based figures show the District having to cut some \$28 million from next year's budget – if the May 18 sales tax election passes.

If Arizona voters do not approve that temporary sales tax, then the District will have to cut almost twice as much from the 2010-11 operating budget. Dr. Janice Ramirez, the District spokesperson, agreed that a failure of the tax measure would result in a total reduction of almost \$60 million, as much as has already been cut from the operating budget in the last two years. That amount is the equivalent of an 8% across-the-board reduction in all salaries.

Where would cuts be made? Dr. Ramirez explained that the Governing Board wants to see two sets of budget recommendations: one with the sales tax, the other if it fails. Almost 90% of the operating budget is used for employee salaries and benefits. Any major cuts must mean having fewer employees or less pay or both. Dr. Ramirez said that it is her goal – and she assumes that it is also MEA's goal – that we not reduce the salary schedules. MEA agrees that we would rather have a temporary pay reduction due to unpaid furlough days than make permanent reductions to the salary schedules.

Here are some steps which may be considered, especially if the tax measure fails:

- Unpaid furlough days: two or three days if the tax passes, more if it fails. One day for all employees saves the district \$1.3 million.
- Larger class sizes. For example, an average of two more students in every elementary classroom could save \$4.2 million. Keep in mind that larger class size does not mean finding more students, it means fewer teachers in the district.
- Implementing the reduced substitute plan for the entire school year.
- Reducing or eliminating programs like elementary art, music, and PE – which also means reducing teacher preparation time.
- Imposing student fees for athletics and “reorganizing” extra factor pay for teachers.

MEA recognizes the critical importance of the May 18 sales tax election. On the back of this update is more information – a Fact Sheet about Prop. 100.

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MEA Bargaining Team: Kirk Hinsey, Chairperson, MEA President and teacher at Powell J.H.; Valerie Angus, Professional Development; Joelyn Hilton, Educational Technology; Alex Reyes, Westwood HS; Jennifer Tellez-Carson, Entz; and Will Moore, AEA Consultant.

Prop 100 – Temporary Sales Tax Fact Sheet

- Proposition 100 provides for a three-year, statewide, temporary 1% sales tax, beginning this July. The money is specifically designated for public education and public safety. The Legislature put this measure on the ballot to help make up for a significant budget deficit.
- **The special election is Tuesday, May 18. Early balloting, vote-by-mail begins April 22.**
- If this tax measure passes, the Mesa School District still must reduce the operating budget for 2010-11 by \$28 million because of enrollment decline and state cuts to district funding. **If Prop 100 fails to pass, the district must cut an additional \$27 million.** If the tax measure fails, we will likely see additional RIFs, larger class size, salary reductions, and the possible elimination of entire programs.
- MEA and MESPA are working on salary and contract issues through Meet-and-Confer. Please understand that no agreements are final until we know the results of the May 18 special election.
- This sales tax measure is supported by the Governor, the Arizona Education Association, the state School Boards Association, the Administrators Association, the Arizona Chamber of Commerce, Valley Interfaith Project, and other community and parent organizations.
- MEA and MESPA will contribute PAC money to the Yes-on-100 campaign. AEA is organizing a grass-roots campaign across the state. In Mesa we are working in three areas:
 1. Outreach to every district employee to provide information and to answer questions.
 2. Distribution of Yes-on-100 yard signs.
 3. Neighborhood walks near our schools.See your Association Rep to learn how you can help.
- For more information about Prop 100, go to www.yeson100.com.



MESPA

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