

TEACHER/SUPPORT STAFF BNC MINUTES  
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2019  
GMTCC ROOM T-18

BNC members present: Sue Hamlyn-Prescott, Bill Sander, Katie Orost, Chasity Fagnant  
Others present: Charleen McFarlane, Deb Clark, Cat Gallagher, Darcey Fletcher, Thad Tallman, Yvonne Heath, Santha Dahlin, Melissa Greenwood, Patrick LaClair, Eric Hutchins, Paul Legris, Lou Weller, Betzi Goodman, Gail Whitten, Carol-Lynn Willean, Erin Carr

**1. Call to Order and Approval of Agenda**

S. Hamlyn-Prescott called the meeting to order at 4:50. No changes to the agenda were suggested.

**2. Board Negotiations Council – Executive Session**

K. Orost moved to go into executive session to discuss teacher and support staff negotiations because premature general public knowledge would clearly place the school board at a substantial disadvantage, inviting C. Gallagher, D. Clark, C. McFarlane and D. Griffiths to remain, C. Fagnant seconded, the motion was passed and the BNC entered executive session at 4:51. The BNC consented out of executive session at 4:58.

**3. Joined by Educational Support Professionals**

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said the BNC's thought was to have the same format as last year, with a set number of people from each side at the table. Other people can sit in the background. D. Fletcher said that would be fine. She thought it worked well.

BNC members introduced themselves. S. Hamlyn-Prescott said one BNC member, Bernard Barnes, is not here tonight. Mark Nielsen will be an alternate BNC member if that is agreeable. D. Fletcher said that is fine.

D. Fletcher said she is the chair for the support staff negotiating group. Thad Tallman and Yvonne Heath introduced themselves. D. Fletcher said the support staff group will also include Nicole Chauvin, Santha Dahlin, Andrew Belitsos, Judy Langlois, Earl Domina, and Cheryl Michaud. Just four people will be sitting at the table. D. Fletcher said it is agreeable to support staff to have one spokesperson on each side. She will be the spokesperson for support staff.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said the BNC wants to see if it is agreeable to have Cat Gallagher present at the table as a neutral party to help with clarification during meetings. D. Fletcher said that is agreeable.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott gave an update on Act 11 healthcare negotiations. Last best offers were presented to the arbitrator and then there was a mediation session where the two sides did not come to a resolution. There are some jurisdictional questions being decided by the arbitrator that may affect what will be included in last best offers, so there may be some tweaking of last best offers. The offers will go to the arbitrator in the next week or so. Both sides will present their offers on November 1 and 2. On November 15 both last best offer proposals will be made public. The arbitrator will decide on either the employee or the

employer offer. One or the other will be chosen, all inclusive. The arbitrator will make a final ruling on December 15. The two sides can decide to meet again before then.

D. Fletcher asked if we are going to discuss meeting dates. S. Hamlyn-Prescott said we can, but is there any reason to meet before November 15? D. Fletcher said she doesn't believe so. S. Hamlyn-Prescott said the BNC agrees. If the offers come out on November 15 everyone needs a week to look at them and the week after that is Thanksgiving, so should we meet the first week in December?

D. Fletcher asked what that meeting would look like. S. Hamlyn-Prescott said the BNC's thought was that first proposals would be presented. D. Fletcher said that sounds good.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said Thursday is the day that works best for the BNC. It was agreed to schedule the next meeting for December 5 and the one after that for January 16. S. Hamlyn-Prescott said the BNC will have to get back to support staff on the meeting time. (*Santha Dahlin arrived at 5:08.*)

Support staff left at 5:11.

D. Clark said she is comfortable with developing the budget without knowing what will be in the contract. We have had budgets before that had to be developed before we knew what would be in the contract.

K. Orost mentioned that teacher conferences are scheduled for December 5. The BNC discussed December 4 as a potential meeting date. The CES board meets that night. Support staff won't have to be at school for conferences on December 5. K. Orost suggested maybe the next negotiation meeting should not be until January. C. Gallagher said that might be a good idea. It might be good to have information about the last best offer before putting first proposals on the table.

Support staff came back in at 5:19.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said the BNC is now thinking December 5 is going to be too soon for the next meeting. We won't have enough information. It might be better to wait until after the arbitrator makes a final decision. It was agreed to plan on meeting next on January 16. S. Hamlyn-Prescott suggested a tentative time of 5:00.

#### **4. *Joined by Teachers***

The teachers arrived at 5:24.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott reviewed the proposed ground rules for both groups, which had previously been emailed out. All the rules were agreed upon, except #9: *Mutual exchange of initial proposals shall be made in writing at the second meeting. New proposals shall be introduced no later than the fourth, except that parties are able to make counter proposals to existing proposals throughout negotiations.* Patrick LaClair said the teachers had a concern that, given the situation with healthcare, there might not be enough time to consider issues related to salary by the fourth meeting, which will likely be in January, if there is any

delay in the arbitrator's decision beyond December 15. They propose an additional rule: *In the event of a delay in a finalized healthcare plan beyond December 15<sup>th</sup>, the parties agree to reopen the timelines for meeting dates and introduction of new proposals.*

Teachers and support staff left at 5:32 so the BNC could caucus.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said if we explain that we are not proposing to have the next meeting until January their proposed rule will probably not be needed. The BNC discussed the language of the proposed rule and agreed on preferred wording: *In the event of a delay in the arbitrator's decision on the statewide healthcare contract beyond December 15, the parties agree to reopen the timelines for meeting dates and introduction of new proposals.*

Teachers and support staff came back in at 5:39. S. Hamlyn-Prescott said the BNC discussed with support staff not having the next meeting until January. If teachers agree not to meet until then, the BNC thinks the proposed additional rule is not needed.

P. LaClair said he thinks the teachers would want to have additional meetings before January, if not to talk about the financial side at least to work on language proposals. Melissa Greenwood said she thinks they would want at least one meeting date before January. P. LaClair said he thinks the period from January to March could be too short for negotiations.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said if the additional rule is going to be put in, the BNC proposes that the wording be: *In the event of a delay in the arbitrator's decision on the statewide healthcare contract beyond December 15, the parties agree to reopen the timelines for meeting dates and introduction of new proposals.*

Teachers, support staff and BNC agreed on the ground rules as proposed with the addition of a 13<sup>th</sup> ground rule as discussed. A copy of the ground rules was signed by all parties.

Support staff left at 5:48.

BNC members introduced themselves to the teachers. S. Hamlyn-Prescott said Bernard Barnes will also be on the BNC and the BNC has one alternate, Mark Nielsen, if that is acceptable. If the rest of the BNC is here he would sit in the back.

Patrick LaClair and Melissa Greenwood said they are co-chief negotiators. Eric Hutchins will be taking notes. Those three will be at the table. M. Greenwood and P. LaClair will take the lead on speaking. The rest of the team will be in the back. Other team members are Paul Legris, Lou Weller, Betzi Goodman, Gail Whitten, Carol-Lynn Willean, and Erin Carr.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said the BNC hoped to follow the same format as the last negotiation session. It worked best to have only one spokesperson at the table. The BNC requests that the teachers consider which one person could be a spokesperson during negotiation sessions, knowing that the group could caucus at any time.

M. Greenwood said she and P. LaClair want to reduce the burden on each of them, so only one of them would speak on each topic and the other could clarify if needed. If there is a proposal that one of their colleagues is better to be able to speak about, they would defer to that colleague.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said the BNC is proposing only one spokesperson. The group can caucus at any time.

P. LaClair said, given the multitude of interests across all the schools it is important to them, if there is one person who has greater knowledge about a question, to have that person be able to speak about it.

C. Gallagher said last year M. Greenwood and C. Willean sat next to each other. M. Greenwood was a great spokesperson and C. Willean sent her notes or asked for a caucus when necessary. At one point in the past the association asked to have one spokesperson from the board and the board was gracious enough to do that.

M. Greenwood said one night the spokesperson could be P. LaClair and another night it could be her. It would be predetermined before each night. P. LaClair said he feels it brings added value to the negotiations. Nothing in the ground rules is preventing the BNC now from having more than one spokesperson. They feel it adds value to have greater context and perspective. He suggested caucusing. The teachers left to caucus at 5:55.

It was moved and seconded to go into executive session to discuss teacher negotiations because premature general public knowledge would clearly place the school board at a substantial disadvantage, inviting C. Gallagher, D. Clark, C. McFarlane and D. Griffiths to remain, the motion was passed and the BNC entered executive session at 5:55. The BNC consented out of executive session at 6:12.

The teachers came back in at 6:12.

P. LaClair said he would respond as the spokesperson on this issue. The teachers respect where the BNC is coming from and they are grateful for the background information C. Gallagher provided on the history of this issue during the caucus, but they reserve the right to operate on their side of the table in the way that seems most reasonable, logical and beneficial. But in good faith they are prepared to plan beforehand which person will speak on each agenda item and which person will answer questions on each item. If the other person feels the need to add something they will caucus and then bring it back.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott asked if he is saying that for a particular meeting it will say on the agenda who the spokesperson is. P. LaClair said they will discuss for each agenda item who is best suited to speak and answer questions on that item, so only one person will be speaking on each item, but in the course of the evening each of them might address two agenda items. He feels it is in their interest to make sure the arrangement doesn't result in any confusion and it is their responsibility to make sure it doesn't. That is as far as he and M. Greenwood are willing to go.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott asked, there could be two different people speaking, but only two, and it would be designated on the agenda ahead of time who will be speaking? P. LaClair said perhaps on occasion another person might present a proposal related to that person's school. They want to ensure that the person best suited to speaking is the one speaking.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said the BNC would caucus on that. She said last time both sides agreed to have C. Gallagher at the table as a neutral party who could clarify what one side was saying. The BNC found that effective. Do the teachers agree to that? P. LaClair said they would caucus on it.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said if the teachers want to meet before January, the BNC was considering December 4 because there are a lot of concerts the week after that and there are teacher conferences on December 5. December 4 is the night of a CES board meeting. P. LaClair said December 4 was not an option that came up when the teachers discussed dates but they will look at it again. They were looking at November 18 or 19. They could also potentially look at November 12 or 13. S. Hamlyn-Prescott said Thursdays work best for the BNC. P. LaClair said Mondays are the best day for teachers, Tuesdays are second, Wednesdays are third and Thursdays are fourth. S. Hamlyn-Prescott asked them to look at Wednesdays again. She said January 16 is another date we had considered.

The teachers left to caucus at 6:19.

B. Sander moved to go into executive session to discuss teacher negotiations because premature general public knowledge would clearly place the school board at a substantial disadvantage, inviting C. Gallagher, D. Clark, C. McFarlane and D. Griffiths to remain, K. Orost seconded, the motion was passed and the BNC entered executive session at 6:19. The BNC consented out of executive session at 6:34.

The teachers came back in at 6:34.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said the BNC is willing to start off with what the association proposes regarding a spokesperson, as long as the agenda is very clear about who will be spokesperson on different proposals. Agendas have to be given out 48 hours before the meeting.

P. LaClair said they will try to have conversations about who will speak prior to 48 hours before the meeting. There may be situations where they are not always explicitly clear on the agenda about who will speak but they will try.

P. LaClair said those in the room during the last negotiation cycle felt C. Gallagher's insights brought a lot to conversations. She was sometimes able to bridge a gap. As long as the conversation is productively facilitated by her presence they welcome her.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott said the next meeting would be the second one and proposals can be presented only at the second, third and fourth meetings. That becomes a concern if we have

a November meeting; then all final proposals would be in January. The added rule only addresses a delay in the arbitrator's decision.

P. LaClair said the teachers are willing to make the next meeting December 4. S. Hamlyn-Prescott suggested 6:00 as a start time. She asked if they have a suggested January meeting date. P. LaClair said no. He thinks the final 2 weeks would be a place to start. S. Hamlyn-Prescott asked them to keep in mind that Mondays and Tuesdays are very difficult nights for the BNC to meet. Mondays tend to be board meetings and on Tuesdays it is very difficult for her to get here from Burlington. P. LaClair said they will try to accommodate Wednesdays and Thursdays as much as possible.

S. Hamlyn-Prescott gave an update on Act 11. She said last best offers were presented. There was a negotiation session on October 22 but the parties were not able to come to consensus. Right now there are some jurisdictional issues the arbitrator will decide on. Based on his decisions there may be tweaking of last best offers. Both sides will present their last best offers to the arbitrator on November 1 and 2. The proposals will be made public on November 15. The arbitrator's final binding decision of which complete proposal he will accept is December 15. That is why the BNC was looking at waiting until January for the first meeting.

The teachers left at 6:41.

**5. Other Business**

It was moved and seconded to go into executive session to discuss teacher and support staff negotiations because premature general public knowledge would clearly place the school board at a substantial disadvantage, inviting C. Gallagher, D. Clark, C. McFarlane and D. Griffiths to remain, the motion was passed and the BNC entered executive session at 6:43. The BNC consented out of executive session at 6:56.

**6. Adjourn**

K. Orost moved to adjourn at 6:56 and the motion was seconded and passed.

*Minutes submitted by Donna Griffiths*