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NESHAMINY FEDERATION OF TEACHERS HOPEFUL THAT ARBITRATION RESULTS WILL SPARK SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS

NFT Leaders Say Arbitrator's Findings Show A 'Middle Ground' Is Possible

LANGHORNE, PA (May 15, 2012) — Despite the Neshaminy School Board's unanimous rejection of the non-binding arbitration award presented by Arbitrator Rochelle Kaplan two weeks ago, Neshaminy Federation of Teachers leaders say teachers are hopeful the school board will finally engage in serious negotiations.

"We believe the arbitrator's award is a realistic reference point for continued negotiations," said NFT president Louise Boyd, "and we remain ready to bargain at any time. While Ms. Kaplan's findings were not a clear victory for either side, we believe the award demonstrates there are numerous ways for both sides to compromise in an effort to end this four-year impasse."

Boyd noted that the arbitrator's findings were very 'middle ground' with neither side coming out with everything it sought.

"We're still trying to understand why board president Richie Webb continues to say publicly that we have not shown the board how the District can afford our last proposal, or for that matter, the suggested compromise outlined by the arbitrator," Boyd said. "We've submitted detailed presentations to the board concerning their budgets, and we presented in-depth testimony and data during arbitration regarding the budget and how the board can afford to come to an agreement if they were truly resolved to do that.

"Instead, as with the arbitrator's award, it's the same old story, their way or the highway," Boyd added. "It's our schools and our students who suffer the consequences of the board's inflexibility. We've shown the board how this can be done. The arbitrator has shown them how it can be done, but they simply can't see beyond their entrenched position. They seem

determined to devalue teachers and break our union at any cost. Ironically, the cost has not come in dollars, rather it has come at the expense of the students of Neshaminy.”

Boyd noted that the NFT’s attorney received a request today from the state-appointed mediator regarding dates on which the NFT and school board could be available to hold negotiations. The NFT has accepted four of the dates offered by the mediator; two in May and two more in June, and now awaits confirmation from the mediator as to dates accepted by the district.

Rumors of a possible strike have been voiced by both the public and media since last Wednesday evening’s NFT general membership meeting, at which members voted to accept the arbitrator’s non-binding award with reservations, and to authorize NFT leadership to call a strike at any time they deem necessary. Leaders said the actions taken at the membership meeting—which included ending the work-to-contract action that had been underway since the beginning of the school year—sent a clear message from teachers that the NFT bargaining team will return to the bargaining table with renewed purpose and with the full support of federation members.

“We certainly don’t want to strike again, but the public should be aware it is a strong possibility if the district continues down the ‘take it or leave it’ path – an unacceptable position to our membership and for the quality of education in Neshaminy schools,” Boyd said. She noted that the board’s demands for larger class sizes, and its insistence on an end to language ensuring teachers’ professional voice in education decisions both remain in the board’s contract proposal.

“This is not just a financial roadblock we’re facing from the board,” Boyd said. “Their demands, if accepted in their current form, would indisputably hurt our students’ education.”

Note to Editors: The complete version of the Final Arbitration Award is posted for review on the [NFT’s Community Page](#).

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