

Staff union urges district to reconsider outsourcing

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Neshaminy

The two sides are set to meet with a fact-finder next month.

Before Neshaminy school board members consider outsourcing some jobs to save more than \$30 million, the support staff union asked the directors to remember their staff's dedication to the district.

The board's reply, though, was that bidding out those positions isn't about the employees, it's about money.

Earlier this month, business administrator Joseph Paradise announced that Neshaminy could save more than \$30 million over the next five years by bidding out transportation and custodial services.

Mindy Anderson, president of the Neshaminy Educational Support Professional Association, Tuesday night told the board and a standing-room-only crowd that she was "appalled and ashamed" that the support staff is being treated "like second-class citizens."

"We are a vital part of the community," said Anderson. "It's not a question of dollars and cents when children's lives are at stake."

Anderson also invited the board back to the bargaining table. Board President Ritchie Webb said they're ready to meet anytime, but the union has to be willing to give back.

"We value them and their service," he said after the meeting. "But, we have no money."

Anderson said the support staff has been giving back and is willing to pay for their health care.

While school board directors have said Neshaminy can't keep paying for a top-tier health insurance plan, union members have said they can't afford to contribute what the board is asking.

The support staff, which includes 270 full-time and 282 part-time positions for jobs ranging from bus drivers to janitors to food service workers, has been working off an expired contract since July, administrators said.

The board is proposing annual wage increases of 1 percent in the first year and 3 percent in the second and third years of a three-year contract. The union, though, wants a five-year deal with no wage increase in the first year - provided there's no employee contribution to health care premiums - and a 3.5 percent wage increase for the middle three years plus a 4 percent increase in the final year of a five-year contract, according to the district's Web site.

The board is also asking the support staff to contribute 10, 11 and 12 percent to a changed base medical plan over three years. The union wants to keep the PC-15 plan and pay 0, 2, 3, 4 and 5 percent over five years, administrators said. Both parties are scheduled to meet with a fact-finder Feb. 11 and 25 to present their sides and offers. A nonbinding recommendation is expected March 25, officials said.

"We're not going to sit back and be bullied," Anderson said. "We alone can't solve the district's financial problems. We should all be on the same team + to make this a proud place to live, work and educate our children."

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