

PESPA/Pinellas County Schools
Minutes
June 12, 2024
PCTA/PESPA building

Present: Paula Texel, Dena Collins, Nelly Henjes, Jamie Beck, Gary Jepperson, Dave Richmond, Libby Navarete, Cheryl Cunninham

Meeting begins at 2:01 pm with introductions.

Gary Jepperson is introduced to PESPA as our new Chief Financial Officer. Gary provides the bargaining team district information on the budget. Handouts have been provided with the available funding comparative.

Gary shares that the district is in the process of closing the 4th quarter and it has not been determined in the carry forward. Mr. Jeppeson walks the team through the first document, current available funding comparatives. State is providing additional increase in dollars, however, the family empowerment scholarship is taking much of the allocation. The school district is a flow through for these dollars that are provided to private and charter school students. For the 24/25 school year there has been an increase of \$36,152,447 from the previous school year for the Florida Empowerment allocation. The document also provides information on categorical funding. Pinellas County has received a decrease in categorical dollars for the 24/25 school year. Overall, \$11,998,153 is available in new state funding to be utilized for salary and health care increases. Another handout provides information on the change in student enrollment over the last 5-years. It also points out the increase in the Family Empowerment Scholarship dollars as the state has increased the students eligible to participate. We are now seeing the impact of students that have never enrolled in a public school and the impact it is having on district funding. The last handout is a graph of the consumer price index as compared to increases over time for Pinellas County employees.

Paula shares that a 1% increase for all corresponds to \$6.8 million. Fund balance policy for is 5% and we are currently 5.1% compared to 5.2% from last year.

Paula asks for any questions; Libby asks for caucus 2:20 pm. Return from caucus at 2:31 pm

Nelly asks questions about the budget. There are just over 2000 PESPA members, and there are only 188 making more than \$22 an hour. State mandate shares the fund balance is 3%, however the district has the fund balance at 5%. Libby is asking about taxes that are coming into the district. Mr. Jepperson shares the state funding allocation includes all the taxes. The number provided is what we are receiving in the state calculation.

Paula shares the district added in the accepted language from the previous session and brought back some changes to a couple of articles that were rejected at the previous session.

- Article 2, Section O was requested to be removed as Article 17, addresses retroactive pay.
- Article 5, Section C, 4 was reverted to original language.
- Article 9, Section K was changed to promotional position.

- Article 13, Section A was revised, and some language was added back that was previously rejected.
- Data was provided on extended leaves and shift differential.

Caucus at 3:22

PESPA rejected Article 2, Section O and Article 9, Section K and accepted the other language proposed. The union and the district had a discussion on promotional probation and shared examples of why the language could be beneficial to both the employee and the district. The union did not agree with the language as written and provided a revision that was shared.

Caucus 4:21 pm 4:40 pm

Language concludes and Nelly provides the district with rationale for raises. PESPA desires to seek to increase the living wage in Pinellas County. Currently 188 employees in this bargaining unit are making \$22- the living wage. Her goal in bargaining this year is to increase the minimum wage by \$7.00 for all employees in her bargaining group.

Paula clarifies \$7.00 remaining in their current level. Nelly confirms. The district read this request in the newspaper the day prior and was able to cost out the ask of the union. This is approximately \$21.4 million dollars for this bargaining unit alone. The district has received \$12 million in new funding that is available for all groups. The ask is going to be a challenge. We are closing the books, and a better understanding of what we have. We have come to the end of the ESSER/ARP funds. Looking forward to our upcoming referendum that would impact 25/26 school year. The district does not have a counter proposal regarding salary increases to bring today. Paula continues to share that we are aware of the cost of living. As a district we have tried to provide consistent salary increases to our employees. We do recognize the health care may also have an impact on the dollars available for additional salary, and we are going back and working on that as well. The reserves are nearing the bottom of what our policy allows. The way we capture money is to look to our units. The need of personnel. All divisions are being asked to look and trim to get more money available to use for potential salary increases

Paula asks, what is the plan when we come back to the table. Nelly shares her plan is to TA language the week of June 24 and then continue discussion regarding salary increases.

Session End 5:10 pm