

Pleasantville-BriarcliffManorPatch

Pleasantville Teachers, Board OK Accord

A long time in coming, the two-year pay-freeze agreement wins approval in a single day's voting.

By Tom Bartley

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Ending a protracted standoff, the Pleasantville school board approved a two-year, no-raise contract Monday for district teachers.

Clearly buoyed by the accord, the board voted unanimously at a special evening meeting to accept contract terms the teachers had ratified only hours earlier. As some two dozen residents looked on, Board President Lois Winkler announced the settlement and outlined its provisions in the [high school](#)'s media center.

In addition to a salary freeze for this academic year and the next one, the agreement also freezes step hikes in the second year and stipends for extra- and co-curricular activities in both years.

"It reflects a savings," Winkler said, "of \$200,000 a year in teacher salaries—a potential savings of \$1 million over five years."

The agreement announced Monday was accomplished only after both the board and Teachers' Association of Pleasantville had acknowledged an impasse in their negotiations and formally declared an impasse. That allowed the state Public Employment Relations Board (PERB), which oversees collective bargaining by governmental entities, to dispatch a mediator to the stalled talks. The mediator, Louis Patack, emerged from a closed-door session on January 18 with the outlines of the accord, freezing pay but increasing the district's contributions to employee health-insurance plans.

Board members greeted the ratified agreement with enthusiasm, thanking the teachers and acknowledging their willingness, as Trustee Shane McGaffey put it, to "come to the table and get less."

Noting School Superintendent Mary Fox-Alter, the district administrators and "now the teachers" [had forgone pay](#) raises in a tough economy, McGaffey said, "If we didn't have that kind of community, I have no idea what would have happened to this budget."

Only two residents spoke at the board meeting. One, Veronica Constanza, applauded both the board and teachers for their "hard work to get to this point. ...I just want to say thank you," she said.

But Jeffrey Goldberg was unhappy with the secret negotiations that led to the accord.

"I've been complaining about this board's absolute refusal...to tell people what is going on," Goldberg said.

He urged a one-week delay, until the board's regularly scheduled meeting next Tuesday, before voting on the ratified agreement.

"Give people an opportunity to view this, digest it and comment upon it," he urged.

The board, however—with an agreement finally in hand—displayed no appetite for delay.

Trustee Dave McCullagh, declaring himself "proud of the fact that this board hides nothing," said, "I'm all for voting on this tonight."

Trustee Louis Conte, in voting to approve the agreement, also cited a study showing the

disparity between taxes sent to Albany by New York City's five suburban counties and the state aid they subsequently receive. Westchester, Rockland and Putnam along with Nassau and Suffolk contributed almost 27 percent of the state's revenue in 2009-10 but got back 18 percent in aid for education, Medicaid and other programs, the report by the Rockefeller Institute of Government, a research center, said. If aid to those counties had been allocated in proportion to tax dollars sent to Albany, the report noted, they would have

received between \$4.6 billion and \$7.9 billion more than they did.

The board's vice president, Thomas Exton, appeared to express the prevailing sentiment when he said, "This is a really good deal for the Village of Pleasantville." He described the accord as a "responsible, collaborative agreement."

Teachers' Association of Pleasantville President Lorraine Kearney did not return messages seeking comment Tuesday.