

## **Negotiations FAQ Sheet**

### What is our Negotiations process?

- The membership completes a survey
- The Negotiations Committee meets and organizes our priorities based on this survey
- Jake, Brenda and Dean meet with Dr. Blanch and Matt Carr for initial negotiations
- The Negotiations Committee meets shortly after every meeting with the district to discuss next steps
- Meetings between the district and the SFA, as well as Negotiations Committee meetings, continue until both parties are satisfied
- The Negotiations Committee is only satisfied when it feels it has the best deal possible to present to the membership
- Jake and Brenda present the details of the deal to the membership at a general meeting. Each member receives a complete copy of the memorandum of agreement and the presentation
- As per our By-Laws, a vote of the membership must take place within three school days of this presentation

### What is the timeline for this process?

- The Negotiations committee has already met to begin the process and get a survey out to the membership
- The committee will meet again this year to review survey results
- Initial talks between the SFA and the District will begin this summer
- We will meet throughout next year to work towards an agreement
- Our goal is to reach a satisfactory agreement before our current contract ends.

### Who negotiates?

Our practice has been that our Chief Negotiator, President and Vice-President are at the bargaining table. We have the option of representation by the Labor Relations Specialist (LRS) assigned to us by NYSUT. We have a great relationship with our LRS, Tom Casey. We use him as a resource throughout the process, as well as the attorney whom we keep on retainer. If there is ever a time that we feel that we need to be represented by our LRS at the bargaining table, we could exercise that option. We feel that we are intricately familiar with the on goings of the district and the needs of our members and are the right people to bargain for the SFA.

The district is represented by Dr. Blanch and Matt Carr. They also have the option of being represented by legal counsel, but they choose to negotiate with us as well.

### Why is the negotiations report always so vague? “Negotiations are ongoing”

Confidentiality is crucial to this process. This can be frustrating for the members of the Negotiations Committee and the general membership. The details of the discussions between the SFA and the district are extremely fluid. This is where you must trust that the Negotiations Committee is working to obtain the best possible deal for you. There are positive and negative aspects that come and go as the

negotiations progress, and it would be premature to discuss these items before everything is finalized. If details of our talks were to become public, we risk pushback from the community about specific items. This would be detrimental to the process. Lastly, it is important that our entire membership get one clear presentation about the contents of the deal. Anything short of this creates rumors and speculation that are counterproductive. This is not an attempt at secrecy to hide anything from members, confidentiality maintains the integrity of this process.

#### What do you hope to accomplish?

As stated above, the goal of the Negotiations Committee is to obtain the best possible deal for **all** our members. If the Negotiations Committee feels that this is not the case, the Negotiations Committee *WILL NOT* allow the deal to proceed or be put up for ratification.

#### How much time do we have to decide before the vote?

Our By-Laws state: "Approval or disapproval of any collective Bargaining Agreement with the employer shall be determined by a majority vote of the members in good standing of this organization. Ratification votes will be held at the school level within three school days of a meeting of the membership called to discuss an agreement."

The Negotiations Committee works hard on a presentation that clearly captures the details of the new contract. They are available at the informational meeting, and in the days following, to answer any questions. Please make every effort to attend this, and all, SFA meetings.

#### What are the implications of working without a contract?

If we are not able to finalize an agreement for the following September, all conditions of the contract would stay the same. Teachers on the salary step schedule would progress to the next step. Lane movement would occur for members earning graduate/in-service credit. No monetary values in the contract would change.

#### Will we seek a retirement incentive?

Yes

#### Will we seek reimbursement for unused sick days upon retirement?

Yes

#### What is a "side deal" and why is it bad?

This is when an SFA member is offered something, often money, or time as forms of compensation; in addition to their regular salary. Many times, this is initiated by an administrator. If you find yourself in this situation, please approach a building rep or Negotiations Committee member. You may still have access to this compensation; however, the details must be worked out between the SFA and the district. This is in accordance with labor law, and our own contract. We want to ensure that these situations are worked out fairly and consistently. These deals are divisive and detrimental to the Somers Faculty Association.