

Teacher Strike/Negotiation Status Update (September 29, 2021):

The District's negotiations committee ("District Committee") met with the school board to discuss the Redbank Valley Education Association's ("RVEA") proposal to begin voluntary non-binding arbitration. After discussions with the Board, the District Committee rejected the proposal to proceed to voluntary arbitration for several reasons. First and foremost, the District Committee has already submitted a best and final contract proposal that represents a compromise with the RVEA. The District Committee's offer will not be changed by the process of arbitration, and therefore, voluntarily paying for arbitration would be a willful waste of taxpayer money. Additionally, the RVEA asked for proposals to the arbitrator be kept private, whereas the District Committee feels they should be public so the community is kept informed. Furthermore, the District Committee would rather the matter be in the hands of the community as opposed to an outside arbitrator. To this end, the District Committee proposed an alternative to the RVEA which would (1) end the strike immediately; (2) ensure there are no other strikes during the school year, and (3) allow the community to make a binding decision on the issue. More specifically, the District Committee requests that the RVEA take the District Committee's Best and Final Offer to a ratification vote in front of its entire membership. In the event the ratification vote is approved, the parties will have a tentative agreement on a successor agreement and the strike will end immediately. In the event the ratification vote fails, the District Committee requests to have a referendum question placed on the ballot in the Spring asking the voters to decide if they wish to raise their tax rates to sufficiently to pay for the difference between the District's Best and Final Offer and the RVEA's Best and Final Offer. If the referendum passes, the District will agree to the RVEA's Best and Final Offer. If the referendum fails, the RVEA will agree to the District's Best and Final Offer. The District Committee is willing to allow the community decide this important local issue and is hopeful that the RVEA is willing to do the same. As part of this request, the RVEA would agree to end the strike immediately as well as agree not to partake in any other strikes during the school year.

The District Committee has presented this proposal to the RVEA and is awaiting a response to see if the RVEA is willing to take the District Committee's Best and Final Offer back to its full membership for a ratification vote, as well as whether the RVEA is willing to allow the community decide the issue through a ballot referendum, in the event the RVEA's ratification vote fails.