

**Windsor Central Supervisory Union  
Board Negotiation Council Comments Regarding  
Fact Finder Recommendations  
for the Teacher Collective Bargaining Agreement**

We, as the elected and designated representatives of the governing boards of the Barnard, Bridgewater, Reading, Woodstock Elementary and Woodstock Union High School districts and the Woodstock Central Supervisory Union, (Board representatives “herein”) to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement with our teachers/special educators for a collective bargaining agreement for a three (3) years term commencing July 1, 2014 and ending June 30, 2017, believe we are obligated at this time to inform the voters and tax payers of the districts we represent of the status of our negotiation efforts. (Note: the Killington and Pomfret districts (also members of WCSU) did not participate in these negotiations since their teachers are not “unionized”.)

We began negotiations in early 2014 with representatives of the Association (VT-NEA) that represents the teachers/special educators our districts employ. In September, 2014, having failed to reach agreement on several key issues, we met with an impartial mediator. The mediator’s assistance failed to bring about agreement and we submitted the disputed contract issues to an impartial fact finder in December.

On February 18, 2015, the fact finder issued her report and recommendations. We invited the Association to a meeting to discuss the report during the week of March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015, at which time the results of important town meeting votes would be known. The Association responded that it would not be available to meet until the last week of March. Given the delay between issuance of the fact finder report and the date of a possible meeting with the Association (under Vermont law the report is to be made a public document ten (10) days following its issuance), we, as the representatives of our boards, are releasing the report along with our comments on the report’s recommendations. What follows is a summary of the contract issues that remain unresolved along with our comments on the fact finder’s recommendations.

The teachers/special educators subject to this contract negotiation include the following:

	Teachers	Special Educators
Barnard	6.95	.4
Bridgewater	5.96	.6

Reading	5.9	.75
WCSU		4.75
Woodstock Elementary	16.1	3
Woodstock Union HS	<u>54</u>	<u>6</u>
Total	88.91	15.5

**COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS:**

At commencement of negotiations, the terms and conditions of employment of the teachers/special educators employed by our districts/supervisory union were set forth in three (3) collective bargaining agreements, as follows

Barnard	Separate Agreement
Bridgewater	Separate Agreement
Reading, Woodstock Elementary, WCSU and Woodstock Union HS	Joint Agreement

Our goal was to establish a single collective bargaining agreement for all six entities. Board and Association representatives have reached substantial agreement on a single collective bargaining agreement for the covered teachers/special educators, with the primary exception of the five (5) items discussed below.

**DURATION OF CONTRACT:**

Board and Association representatives developed contract proposals for a three (3) year contract covering FY 2015, 2016 and 2017. The fact finding hearing occurred in December of 2014, nearly halfway through FY 2015. For reasons discussed in the fact finding report, the fact finder recommends that the parties settle on a two (2) year contract, covering only FY 2015 and FY 2016. Board representatives find this recommendation acceptable.

**SALARY:**

At the commencement of negotiations, each of the six (6) involved entities had separate salary schedules for their teachers/special educators. It was a goal of the Board representatives to establish two salary schedules, as follows:



Bridgewater	VEHI \$1200 Comp	0%
Reading	VEHI Dual Option	4%
WCSU	VEHI Dual Option	4%
Woodstock Elementary	VEHI Dual Option	14%
Woodstock Union High School	VEHI Dual Option	4%

It was the goal of Board representatives to negotiate health insurance provisions that provided for enrollment of all teacher/special educators employed by Barnard, Bridgewater, Reading, Woodstock Elementary and WCSU in the Vermont Health Benefit Exchange commencing July 1, 2015. Preceding such enrollment, the Boards proposed that WCSU and Reading employees pay 5% of the premium cost of the VEHI Dual Option Plan during FY 2015. The Boards further proposed that Woodstock Union HS teachers continue enrollment in the VEHI Dual Option plan since it, as a “large” employer, would not be eligible to enter the Exchange during the term of the contract under negotiation. However, its teachers should pay 6%, 8% and 10% of the VEHI Dual Option premium cost in FY 2015, 2016 and 2017, respectively.

The fact finder’s report recommends that Bridgewater, Reading, Woodstock Elementary and WCSU continue enrollment in their current VEHI plans for FY 2016 with employee contributions for Reading and WCSU being increased by 1%, effective July 1, 2014, to 5%. The fact finder further recommends that the Woodstock Union HS employee contribution only be increased by 1% to 5%, also effective July 1, 2014. These increased employee contributions should continue without change in FY 2016.

Board representatives are willing to support these recommendations to their boards with two adjustments. First, as with the matter of adjusting salaries at this time in FY 2015, the Boards believe it is appropriate to implement the increased employee premium contributions for Reading, WCSU and WUHS employees in FY 2016. Second, since Reading, WCSU and WUHS will be bearing higher premium costs in FY 2016 (1%), the Boards consider it appropriate for Barnard employees to incur the same 1% increase. (The Boards did not and do not propose an increase for Woodstock Elementary teachers who have been paying 14% of the premium cost for several years.)

## **CONSOLIDATE SPECIAL EDUCATION EMPLOYEES AT WCSU:**

Board representatives proposed that all special educators employed by Barnard, Bridgewater, Reading, Woodstock Elementary and Woodstock Union HS (as listed above) be transferred to and employed by WCSU, effective July 1, 2015, as required by Vermont law. The fact finder report recommends that this transfer occur as proposed by the Boards and the Boards find this recommendation acceptable.

## **ELIMINATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATOR POSITIONS:**

Board representatives proposed that future decisions to reduce the number of special educators be implemented by considering numerous factors in addition to seniority such as specialized training and experience in selecting the teacher(s) to be let go.

The fact finder recommendation rejects the boards' proposal and instead recommends that such reductions be based solely on seniority, as requested by Association representatives. Board representatives are willing to accept this recommendation.

## **CONCLUSION**

To conclude, Board representatives hope to meet with the Association later this month and settle this contract on the terms outlined above.

By the members of the Windsor Central Supervisory Union Board Negotiation Council, this 16<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2015.

Justin Sluka,	Council Chair and representative from the Reading School Board
David Green,	representative from the Barnard School Board
Seth Shaw,	representative from the Bridgewater School Board and the Windsor Central Supervisory Union Board
Paige Hiller,	representative from the Woodstock Elementary School
Dwight Doton,	representative from the Woodstock Union High School Board