

Unions expect ratification of schools pact

By Amy Hauch
staff writer

Farmington Public Schools unions and district negotiators say they're satisfied with the tentative two-year contract reached early Monday. The unions hope to ratify them by the end of next week.

"It's a win-win contract," said Susan Zurvalce, chief negotiator and employee relations director for the 10,800-student district.

"I think it will be well accepted. It's an excellent contract for both the community and the staff. It's really terrific."

Three employee groups and administrators in the Farmington school district reached tentative agreements at 6:15 a.m. Monday — the start of the new school year and the day before students were scheduled to report.

Bargaining teams worked almost around the clock from Wednesday through the weekend to reach agreement just 15 minutes before employees met at Oakland Community College to consider a strike vote.

Teachers, educational support personnel and custodial, maintenance and cafeteria workers will receive a 6.5-percent, across-the-

board pay raise in each year of the two-year agreement.

Union ratification probably will follow a membership meeting early next week, said Zan Alley, chief union negotiator.

"I think they'll pass overwhelmingly," Alley said. "It's an excellent contract for all three bargaining units as well as the district."

THE CUSTODIAL, maintenance and cafeteria workers will receive better dental care insurance, comparable to what the teachers and the educational support personnel are receiving, Alley said.

The three unions, all affiliated with the Michigan Education Association, were granted the option to look for better overall insurance coverage for the same money over the next three months.

"That was one of our major goals. We were very pleased," Alley said.

Other changes include an additional 15 minutes of morning in-

struction for elementary school students, Alley said, eliminating 15 minutes of preparation time for teachers.

In exchange, the union was guaranteed that no more than one mandatory staff meeting per month would be held during the before-school preparation time. Substitute art and music teachers, who used to be hired only after five consecutive days of absence, now will be hired to replace absent teachers immediately.

Teachers turned down a request to lengthen the school year by one day, Alley said, because employees would not have been compensated.

Two additional kindergarten parent conferences were added to the school calendar.

THE DISTRICT will add classes via interactive TV, Zurvalce said.

A class, such as advanced high school German, would be broadcast live from a central location. Stu-

dents would watch in all three high schools and would be able to raise their hands and ask questions.

"You actually talk and raise hands like you would in a (regular) classroom," Zurvalce said. "The teacher can hear the students. It's interactive."

Although no agreements were reached, both sides had "worthwhile discussions" on alcohol and drug testing, serious communicable diseases and hazardous working conditions, Alley said.

The contract for the 740-member teachers union, headed by Jim Miser, president of the Farmington Education Association, expired Friday.

Contracts for the 300-member Farmington Educational Support Personnel union, headed by president Sally Krause, and the 215-member Custodial, Maintenance and Cafeteria union, headed by president Richard Hollowell, expired June 30.

BOTH HOLLOWELL and Krause

were satisfied with their tentative agreements.

"I think it was a fair and equitable contract after a long, hard negotiation," Hollowell said. "There's always room for improvement, and we'll work on that next time around."

"We didn't get all that we wanted, but what we did get, I'm happy with," Krause said.

The 100-employee bus drivers union, the Farmington Transportation Association, reached a new two-year agreement in May. The contract guarantees a 6.5-percent pay raise but will expire next June because of a late contract settlement, Zurvalce said.

Close calls like the one Monday are typical of collective bargaining, said acting superintendent Michael Flanagan, but this call was especially close.

"It just happens that it's part of the nature of negotiations," he said. "I have to admit, I've never seen one

this close. . . we were down to minutes before they (the union) had to go before their membership and decide on whether to go to work or another alternative. It was close."

EVEN THOUGH negotiations went through the night Sunday and into the early morning Monday, talks have been going on for months, Flanagan said.

Bargaining intensified in June, at the close of the 1988-89 school year.

"It seems like the last minute, but it really isn't. It's not just one night," Flanagan said. "A lot of tough issues are resolved in the months before hand."

"Each side has ideas on changes — it takes months. That's what negotiating is all about. It's almost the nature of the beast," he said.

It's remarkable what both teams did to pull that off. We had to negotiate at 2:30 (Monday morning).

Officials set hearing on ethics code proposal

Continued from Page 1

Marks issued a public apology later that month, referring to the incident as "an error in judgment."

"ALL EMPLOYEES must commit themselves to avoid conflicts between their private interest and those of the general public whom they serve," says Section 1 of the draft code, concerning Public Policy.

"To enhance the faith of the people and the integrity and impartiality of all officials and employees of the City, it is necessary that adequate guidelines be provided for separating their roles as private citizens from their roles as public servants."

The report is divided into several sections and subsections titled:

- public policy.
- definitions.
- conflict of interest and ethical conduct (gratuities, preferential treatment, use of information, full disclosure, outside business dealings, doing business with the city, suppression of public information, use of city property).
- violation enforcement and advisory opinions.

- integrity and the city.
- why integrity is important.
- personal reputations.
- the city's reputation.
- standards of conduct.
- the gray areas.
- relationships with others.
- soliciting gifts or favors.
- accepting gifts or favors.
- city-sponsored events and activities.

- reporting certain financial and other interests.
- special rule of the individual.
- the gray areas and relationships with others.

THE CODE frowns on accepting "substantial" gifts whether in the form of money, service, loan, travel, entertainment, hospitality, thing or promise, or in any other form.

"In my mind, if somebody says, 'Here's a pen from my company,' that's one thing; a dress shirt is something else," Costick said. City employees and officials are allowed to accept an occasional free lunch, but should also stay even by picking up the tab or "going Dutch."

Appearance are also important, says the report, as well as using public employment for private gain; giv-

ing preferential treatment to any organization or person; impeding city efficiency or economy; losing complete independence or impartiality of action; making a city decision outside official channels; affecting adversely the confidence of the public or integrity of the city government; and accepting preferential treatment in use of city property.

"The Conflict of Interest and Ethical Code is intended to be preventive in nature rather than punitive," said the code.

The code instructs that matters

concerning elected and appointed officials of the city be referred to the mayor, city council and city attorney. Matters concerning appointed employees, full- and part-time of the city of Farmington Hills, should be referred to the city manager and city attorney.

"Given time to think about it, each of us could fashion our own working definition of integrity and all of these definitions might turn out to be surprisingly similar. That's because people generally have a good sense of ethics, a sense usually instilled by

our parents and nourished by our society," says the report.

"To the city of Farmington Hills, integrity means a special kind of fairness, honesty, evenhandedness and sincerity, a kind that transcends both the law and values of individuals. It's achieved by observing an overriding set of ethical standards and by recognizing that the city's actions and decisions impact a diversity of groups, including citizens, contractors, suppliers, the general public, and of course, all city officials and employees."

Labor Day holiday hours set

Several closings are scheduled in observance of Labor Day on Monday, Sept. 4.

Farmington Hills City Hall, Farmington City Hall, the 47th District Court, the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce, the Farmington Observer, Oakland Community College-Orchard Ridge Campus and all banks will be closed for the holiday.

In Farmington Hills, trash collection will be delayed one day next week only. In Farmington, trash collection will not change next week.

The U.S. Postal Service will operate on a holiday schedule on Labor Day.

There will be no window post office box service or regular mail delivery.

Only express mail, special delivery and perishables will be delivered.

Mail pickup from collection boxes will be on a holiday schedule, as posted on individual boxes, Farmington postmaster Kenneth Harris said. Students in Farmington, Walled Lake and Clarendonville schools will be off on Labor Day, along with students attending OCC.

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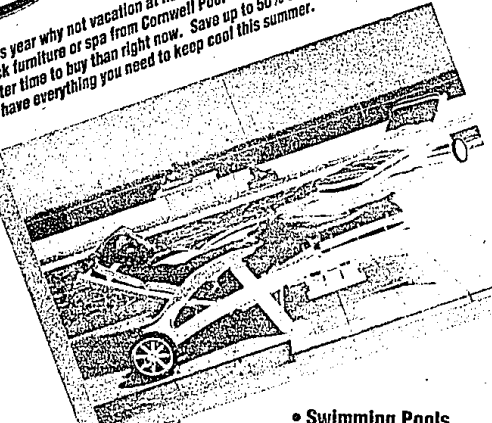
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