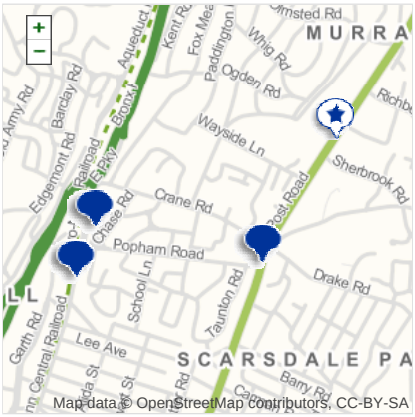
ScarsdalePatch

SCHOOLS

Teachers Save District $1.28M: Vote to Cut Raises 1%

The Scarsdale Teachers' Association reopened their contract Tuesday and voted to save the district nearly $1.3 million over the next two years by reducing their negotiated salary increase by 1 percent.

By **Jaclyn Bruntfield** February 10, 2010



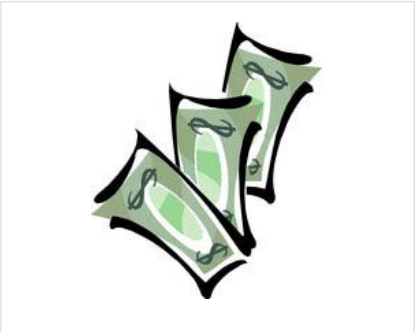
In an effort to alleviate budget constraints and possible layoffs, Scarsdale teachers voted Tuesday afternoon to save the district nearly $1.3 million over the next two years by reducing contractual pay increases by 1 percent until 2012.

The move – a reduction ultimately resulting in a 2 1/4-percent salary increase for Scarsdale's teachers until the union contract expires July 30, 2012 – was met with applause at Tuesday evening's budget study.

While it is not yet clear if the funds added to the 2010-2011 budget will automatically go toward saving eight teacher and librarian positions next year, Scarsdale Teachers' Association President Trudy Moses said, "we do not wish to see colleagues lose jobs."

Moses said that a majority of teachers voted for the 1-percent decrease in pay because they care deeply for Scarsdale's students and their colleagues. This largely unprecedented reopening of a union contract adds $624,000 to next year's budget.

Board of Education (BOE) President Barbara Kemp was moved by the announcement, heralding it as "so deserving of applause."



"It is just, to me, amazing, the harmonious labor relations we have," Kemp said.

Superintendent Michael McGill said that the Scarsdale community is setting the bar for other school districts in the area that are also facing difficult budget decisions but handling the pressure with seemingly less civility.

"I have never heard of a faculty organization doing this in any place," said McGill. "You know that unions don't reopen contracts to save jobs."

In his introduction to the proposed budget draft currently under review by district administrators and the BOE, McGill said that many community members voiced concerns that a reduction in services would inevitably occur while teachers, receiving pay increases, seemed to suffer less.

"A salary contribution may or may not occur," McGill said. "The idea of a teacher contribution raises fundamental questions about the nature of a contract and about the relationship between employee group and employer."

The Scarsdale Teachers' Association represents Local #2929 in the American Federation of Teachers and also belongs to the New York State Union of Teachers.

According to a 2009 document (http://www.scarsdaleschools.k12.ny.us/20191062213541450/lib/20191062213541450/epapers/ConditionsofEmployment.pdf) outlining the inner workings of union negotiations, "the collective bargaining process in Scarsdale is civil. While the parties clearly represent their own interests, they look for 'win-win' solutions and undertake a good deal of common fact-finding and problem-solving."

The $624,000 addition to next year's budget will undoubtedly ease tensions within the district, BOE and the Scarsdale community that largely stands in two camps – those who want to maintain services and those who are fighting a tax increase that will likely settle in the mid 3-percent range.

On Monday, an outpouring of community support (http://scarsdale.patch.com/articles/the-people-versus-the-board-of-ed) for the Scarsdale Teen Center resulted in a majority of decision-makers favoring a $55,000 contribution instead of eliminating all monetary aid to the center, which serves as a popular hang out (http://scarsdale.patch.com/listings/scarsdale-teen-center) for many local teens.

Although that proposed contribution is down $12,000 from this year's budget, the Teen Center will not experience a total loss of funding from the district as originally anticipated.

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