



Communications

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School Board Implements Last Best Offer

The Westlake Board of Education voted on Monday June 13th to implement the “last best offer” made to the teachers union. After more than a year of negotiations with multiple proposals and options going back and forth, it is obvious that we have come to an ultimate impasse. In that full year, the teachers union did not present us with a viable option, considering our financial reality. After 3 failed levies, we must curb our deficit spending.

Current financial forecasts show us going into the negative in 2019. That forecast is very conservative and represents “worst case scenarios” as sound financial planning dictates. The forecast currently assumes increases for teachers- but it also continues deficit spending.

Our last best offer when inserted into the financial projections, would stop deficit spending and extend the amount of time that we would have to return to taxpayers for a levy. It includes raises EVERY year for teachers.

The union’s counterproposal exceeds the amount of spending we have projected by 28% or \$1 million which not only continues deficit spending, but accelerates it. Under their proposal, we would have to be on the ballot in 2 years with an operating levy.

Our last best offer included an average 2.5% increase this year (2015-2016), a lump sum increase of 1.5% next year, and a 2.5% increase for all teachers in the 2017-2018 school year. In contrast, the teachers union’s wants an average 2.5% “step” increase in all 3 years, PLUS an additional 2.5% raise in year two, which amounts to a total of more than 5% raise in one year, guaranteed.

The union proposal is 28% more than we have previously budgeted for salaries and benefits, compounding our projected “worst case scenario” and increasing our *projected* spending by \$1 million. We must stop deficit spending and the last best offer is the only way we can balance the budget.



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Over the 3 years of the contract, the union proposal spends \$1.7 million more than the school district's last best offer, which includes raises, reductions in health care costs and elimination of a spousal reimbursement benefit.

Westlake teacher salaries and benefits are competitive. Our average teacher salary without supplemental contracts is \$74,500 which is in the top 2% of the 612 school districts in Ohio. Further, we're in the top 25% in Cuyahoga County and among similar districts. (Source ODE, FY 2015)

Teachers now pay \$160 per month for family coverage for health insurance which is less than half of what the average Ohioan pays. Their healthcare premiums would decrease under our latest proposal, due to plan adjustments.

Our last best offer represents a budget reduction that would allow us to postpone placing an operating levy on the ballot for a few more years and is in line with the classified/support staff contract that we reached this year. Under this offer, teachers will still get raises every year but we will be able to stop spending more than we bring in. Our budget reality simply cannot afford the excessive raises the union is demanding.

We understand that there are a lot of emotions about this issue, and we do value the work of our teachers and staff.

For full text of the last best offer, the union's counterproposal and some FAQ's, please visit: <http://www.westlake.k12.oh.us/negotiations/Pages/default.aspx>.

Any inquiries should be directed to Carol Winter, Board President:
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