



SPECIAL EDITION

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BULLETIN

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For the Association: Cheryl Bost, President; Robert Anzelc, Executive Director; Barbara Tyler, Mark McDonald, Herman S. Whitter, Esq.; Mediation Panel Member Robert J. Pellicoro

TEAM TABCO SCORES WIN IN SALARY DISPUTE

President Cheryl Bost announced today that mediators agreed with TABCO's contention that a cost of living increase of 2% was both reasonable and affordable.

Although the effective date recommended by the panel defers the COLA for this year to the last pay month of the FY 2009 school year, if funded, it would adjust the salary scale for the coming year to a 2% higher baseline prior to any settlement that may be reached in this year's negotiations.

To review, negotiations between TABCO and BCPS came to impasse after months of disagreement over salary. BCPS refused to include a COLA in its budget request, and County Executive Jim Smith was equally intractable in response to TABCO's push for a minimal COLA for teachers.

State Superintendent Nancy Grasmick acceded to TABCO's request for a declaration of impasse on May 16, when it became clear that negotiations were permanently log jammed.

During the summer months leading up to meetings with the mediation panel, President Bost and TABCO Negotiations Team members spent countless hours preparing data clearly showing that "to deny the COLA entirely will exacerbate the slippage of the Baltimore County salary scale relative to the salary scales in effect for teachers in the closest comparator jurisdictions," as reiterated in the report of the mediation panel. (Comparator jurisdictions cited were Anne Arundel, Harford, and Howard counties. Both Anne Arundel and Howard County teachers will be receiving COLAs of 5% this year.)

The mediation panel also concluded that though BCPS cited a slow economy among its reasons for denying the COLA, neighboring jurisdictions face the same budgetary problems and yet, "Not a single other jurisdiction in Maryland, despite the overall economic climate, has decided in this time of teacher shortages and increased demands placed on instructional staff to freeze teacher salaries by denying any COLA whatsoever."

Although TABCO leadership has consistently sounded a warning about the loss of hundreds of potential hires and new hires, as well more veteran employees, BCPS has failed to react in ways to make it competitive in the state. Starting salaries in Baltimore County will drop from 7th to 13th in the state this year, without a COLA. Mediators highlighted these problems, stating that "...the pattern is clear—teachers in Baltimore County, despite being similarly situated, are receiving consis-

tently lower COLAs (or equivalents) than their counterparts."

President Cheryl Bost expressed elation with the support for Association positions contained in the mediation panel's report. She said, "Over and over again, we were told by system leaders and the county executive all the reasons why they couldn't fund an increase. This report solidifies our reasons as to why they need to fund at least a 2% COLA for teachers and offers ways in which the school system can fund the increase. Clearly, the panel recognizes the short and long term retention issues if no COLA is funded. We look to the superintendent and the Board to show equal recognition of the issues and fully fund the panel's recommendations."

Continuing, Bost declared that, "This is not the perfect resolution, but it is better than zero and adds to our base salary structure for the future. Additionally, we are extremely pleased that the full report acknowledges the merit of many of the points we argued."

The panel's recommendation states:

"For the reasons noted earlier in this Report, the Panel recommends that the Board and TABCO agree to increase the FY 2008 salary scales by a 2% cost of living adjustment to be effective as of the last pay month of FY 2009.

Pursuant to Maryland law, as well as the express recommendation of this Panel, this increase is conditioned upon the Board's ability to fund that salary adjustment."

In explanation of deferring the increase to the end of the year, the panel addresses the Board's contention that affordability is an obstacle, stating that "affordability in this case has some aspects of genuine ability to pay and some aspects of simply "budgeting all other costs first and giving bargaining unit wage increases the last priority" [wording taken from FOP Interest Arbitration award]."

As Bost reflected on the long months of activity leading to the mediation panel's final report, she said, "This is a huge win for our organization. It exemplifies the strength of our team coming together and utilizing all means necessary to say we will not be overlooked. Through job actions, increased visibility, and the impasse process, we took a stand for public education in Baltimore County. This was a stand not only for teachers as professionals, but also for the students that we teach each day."