

SCHOOL  
DEPARTMENT

# A public peek into teacher contract talks

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Over the past year the School Committee negotiating team has met with the leadership from the Brookline Educators Union, trying to hammer out a new contract.

Until recently, few details of the talks have become public. On June 17, that changed, as the School Committee made a statement about what they have offered.

The two sides then engaged in an alternating series of statements and counter-statements, culminating with the BEU's

offer to hold negotiations in public – a sharp departure from Brookline's long-standing policy.

In the spring, both sides declared an official impasse, leading to mediation, the TAB previously reported. But after five mediation sessions, there is still no contract.

"To those frustrated by the lack of an agreement, I share your frustration. We have made serious, respectful responsive and substantial offers," School Committee member Rebecca Stone said in the statement.

Stone is a member of the committee's collective bargaining team.

With the release of statements from both sides, several sticking points become clear, including: teacher raises; increasing elementary teacher workdays; and adding an extra pay "step" for veteran teachers.

The BEU has been vocal about what President Jessica Wender-Shubow calls "work intensification," which means more

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job expectations, in recent years.

In their most recent public statement, the BEU said it would agree to open the negotiations to public scrutiny if the School Committee agreed.

"We trust and we are utterly confident that if the people of Brookline hear our ideas and priorities they will like them. They are very reasonable," said Wender-Shubow, president of the BEU.

Last November, Concord decided to open its teacher negotiations to the public after being without a contract since June 2015. Massachusetts Teachers Association President Barbara Madeloni said other communities in the state have been invited to adopt open negotiation, but Concord, to her knowledge, is the first to do so, the Concord Journal previously reported. Concord

teachers reached an agreement in late March, according to the Journal.

But holding negotiations in public is not how the School Committee structures negotiations, Stone said.

The last three-year contract expired in 2014 and the union agreed to a one-year bridge contract in August 2014, knowing an override would most likely come before voters, the TAB previously reported. However, that contract ended in August, and as is common, the teachers have been working under the terms and annual raises of the previous contract since then, the TAB reported in early June.

"What needs to be clarified is that offers made by the school committee are respectful and responsive to what the teachers have asked for..." said Stone.

The last planned mediation is June 29. It is the mediator's decision to extend or call for additional sessions.