

**Status Update on B&G Negotiations  
from  
Board of Education President, Dr. Richard Skoda**

For anyone who has ever been involved in labor negotiations, and especially for those whose livelihoods are subject to the outcome of those negotiations, it is a time of frustration for all involved—even for those who are watching from the sidelines. Misinformation, often unintended as such, begins to fill a vacuum and such misinformation is currently making the rounds as the District has begun to negotiate an initial contract with the SEIU for the District’s Buildings and Grounds employees. The misinformation goes from hinting that a “hit list” exists of staff who will be terminated to the even more ludicrous notion that henceforth parents will be washing the uniforms of their athlete children. Neither of these rumors bears a grain of truth.

We recognize the positive impact that the Buildings and Grounds Department makes to our schools. We value the contributions of the employees of Buildings and Grounds, like all of our staff, in allowing us to achieve our educational mission. The Administration and our legal counsel continue to eagerly work towards and resolve the terms of an agreement that is fair to all sides. We are early in this process. We have not yet received, but look forward to receiving, the SEIU proposal outlining compensation and benefits. We are developing a brand new contract together and await their proposal on compensation and benefits.

Four bargaining sessions have been held since late January, when negotiations began. We had hoped that we would have completed our fifth session last week, but the SEIU, the representative of the Buildings and Grounds staff, asked that we move that previously scheduled March 5th session to the end of March.

The Board and Union teams are currently working first on the standard provisions common to school bargaining contracts (e.g., definitions of terms, union and management rights, grievance procedure). All language and working conditions proposals have been exchanged.

The administration’s previously discussed desire to have Building and Grounds under the supervision of a District-wide Building and Grounds Supervisor is not

subject to these negotiations. The reporting structure and future skills needed for supervisors are being analyzed by the Administration as our schools become more technical and costs increase. Any ultimate decision on supervisory restructuring that impacts the working conditions or wages of the B & G employees can be negotiated at the request of the union.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the exercise is the Administration performing a cost and quality comparison of outsourced costs vs. in-house. No final determination has been made on the approach. To obtain that comparison, under arcane State law provisions, the District must give notice to all parties and to the public of the bidding process. In addition, compiling wage and benefit comparisons with other districts' custodial, maintenance, and grounds employees is underway. It is the fiduciary responsibility of the Administration to bring to the Board comparable wage structures and market information for use in negotiations, as will the SEIU from their perspective.

Again, we have not yet received, but look forward to receiving, the SEIU proposal outlining compensation and benefits. It is our intention to have a contract ratified by the start of the fiscal year, July 1.