

A FAIR AND AFFORDABLE SALARY INCREASE

While I am one of over 300 HB Elementary and middle school teachers, I am one of the 6 negotiation team members, and one first grade Peterson parent, I am NOT here because of these responsibilities. I am here as an advocate for quality public education and its affordability.

The teacher's salary proposal is affordable. Although the phrase "You get what you pay for" is cliché, it's true! Attracting and retaining educated, motivated, teachers who inspire our children to be successful is a need. This need can only be fulfilled by providing our teachers with a salary increase which the District can afford and has the ability to pay.

Everyone in the room tonight has a vested interest in the district fulfilling its fiscal responsibilities. However, I have a hard time believing that the President of the School Board, Mr. Jaffee, and the trustees are unwilling to grant a salary increase that is affordable. Throughout our negotiation sessions since the beginning of this school year, the district's negotiating team has never communicated to us that the District **cannot afford** a fair salary increase. It's not a question of being able to afford a fair salary increase, it's a matter of budget priorities.

Keep in mind, three facts:

#1 Time and time again it's been made clear by Mr. Curran, our chief financial officer, that declining enrollment is no longer a concern. Our student enrollment is strong because parents know we offer a quality public school education.

#2 We are proud that our district is doing very well financially and has a reserve of approximately 7 million dollars. 3 million dollars above & beyond what is required by the state.

#3 Our district is a \$48 million dollar district and that additional 2% the teachers are proposing and deserve equals approximately \$465,000. This is less than 1% of the district's budget. The district can afford a fair salary increase. It's a matter of budget priorities.

With the strong student enrollment in our schools, our strong financial standing, and with a salary increase the district can afford, I and every person standing here today urge the Board to take this opportunity to demonstrate with actions, NOT words, that teachers are a budget priority. YOU know we're worth it!

Thank you and Happy Holidays.