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Weather

by the City of Heppner

February 11-17				
	High	Low	Rain	Snow
Tues.	38	29	61	7 in.
Wed.	32	22	21	3 in.
Thurs.	30	18		.07 in.
Fri.	32	20	14	7 in.
Sat.	50	27		45 in.
Sun.	56	32	33	trace
Mon.	48	32	23	trace

Moisture for the week was 1.52 in.

8 PAGES

More contract talks scheduled

Teachers picket School Board

The Morrow County School Teachers and the School Board ran head to head Monday night over contract negotiations, and when the dust settled the two sides agreed to meet later this week and "bargain until a settlement is reached."

The emotion packed meeting at the old Lexington school (moved to the gymnasium because of an overflow crowd of 275) was the culmination of months of frustrating negotiations between the School Board and teachers, who have been working without a contract since July of last year.

To the accompaniment of loud applause, foot stomping and yelling, the teachers asked repeatedly for the board to schedule a negotiating session in an effort to settle their differences and avoid a strike.

The board would not agree to another session of talks, saying they could not set a date at that time. However, Tuesday morning a new session was scheduled, at which both sides have supposedly agreed to "bargain until settlement is reached."

The apparent last-ditch session is scheduled for this Thursday night at 7 p.m. at Riverside High School in Boardman, and if successful may head off a possible strike by the teachers.

Teachers in the district have opened two Morrow County Education Association (MCEA) union offices in the county, one in Boardman and one in Heppner, from which coordinate their efforts.

The School Board has been making contingency plans in case of a strike, and said Monday that the schools will stay open if the teachers strike.

Many people from the estimated crowd of 250-300 people were allowed to speak Monday night, and comments ranged from criticism of the School Board's position to criticism of the teachers'.

Terry Tallman from Boardman echoed many of the sentiments of those present, saying that the district and the teachers are in this together, and need to find a way out.

"I think if there is a strike then everybody in our county will be a loser," Tallman said. "With the budget coming up even without labor problems it would be difficult to pass. If there is a strike, I would find it very difficult to vote for the budget."

"Teachers should maintain some perspective. It isn't a 'we' versus 'you'; we're in this together. We have created this situation and we have to get ourselves out of this."

The teachers stressed over and



School Board Chairman Joe Stevens (center) is greeted upon arrival at board meeting by picketing teachers.

over that they were willing to negotiate in good faith, but that the School Board was not.

"We, as teachers, are willing to lock ourselves in a room and settle this thing," said lone teacher Gordon Meyers. "We're saying why can't we get in a room and settle this thing."

School Board Chairman Joe Stevens of Boardman said that the board had been negotiating in good faith. "We're willing to negotiate. We have to be together when this is all over," he said. "we can't do it your way; we can't do it my way; we have to do it our way."

Major hangups on the contract talks include eight points (see story below) including management rights, maintenance of standards, early retirement, general supervision, just cause, salary, insurance and fair share.

Insurance was one item discussed, with the teachers saying they want to choose their own insurance company, and the Board saying that they want to choose a company to save some money.

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Where they disagree

Salary

Way it is now: The 1984-85 salary schedule has a base salary of \$14,278. The top salary, after 14 steps is \$24,100. A longevity step worth 15 percent more than step 14 is available after 19 years of teaching.

School Board

1. Increase the base salary to \$15,563, so that the District will be more competitive with other districts in hiring new teachers.

2. Increase the first nine steps of the salary schedule by 9 percent. Increase steps 9 through 12 by 7 percent, and steps 13 and 14 by 6 percent. The longevity step would get a 3 percent raise in 1985, a 6 percent raise in 1986, and a 6 percent increase in 1987.

3. A total salary increase of 28.01 percent over three years.

Teachers

1. Increase the base salary to \$15,420.
2. Change the structure of the salary schedule to upgrade the salaries of the most experienced teachers.

Explanation: The largest percentage of increase would go to those teachers who have been with the district for 18 or more years.

3. A total salary increase of 26.25 percent over three years.

Insurance

Way it is now: Teachers have fully paid medical and dental coverage for themselves and their families.

School Board

1. Continue fully paid family coverage.
2. Add long-term disability insurance.
3. Retain the right to select the insurance carrier.

Explanation: The district wishes to retain the right to "shop" for the best available coverage at the lowest price.

Teachers

1. Continue current benefits.
2. Add long-term disability coverage in 1985-86; add vision care in 1987-88.
3. Maintain current insurance carrier.

Explanation: If carrier is changed, reduced benefits would follow.

Teacher Discipline

Way it is now: All teachers are protected by a "just cause" provision which requires the District to prove that an undesirable pattern of behavior has been established before a teacher can be dismissed during the school year or his contract renewal can be denied at the end of the school year.

School Board

1. The District should have a greater latitude to evaluate and remove new teachers during a probationary period provided by the Fair Dismissal Appeals Law.

Explanation: Providing immediate job security is an unreasonable limitation of management's ability to evaluate and remove new teachers. The Fair Dismissal Appeals Law provides a three year probationary period during which a teacher may be dismissed for "reasons deemed sufficient" by the district.

2. Dismissal and non-renewal of probationary teachers and dismissal of permanent teachers should be covered by the Fair Dismissal Law rather than "just cause".

3. Exclude Extended Responsibility Assignments (coaches, band director) from the "just cause" requirement.

Teachers

1. The Fair Dismissal Appeals Law offers less protection and would represent a loss of job security.

Explanation: The Fair Dismissal Law is more concerned with the process followed to fire a teacher than with the reasons the teacher was fired.

2. The current language has worked in the district and provides protection for teachers from being fired for personality conflicts or being late one day.

3. Maintain the current protection for all teachers.

Money Paid for Collective Bargaining

Way it is now: "Fair Share" has not been part of the collective bargaining agreements between the parties.

School Board

1. It is up to the Association to command voluntary participation of the teachers and adamantly opposes including provisions for raising money for collective bargaining in a contract.

Teachers

1. Mandatory payment of collective bargaining fees to be withheld from teachers paychecks.

Explanation: This does not require teachers to join the union. It only demands that all teachers pay for the costs of collective bargaining.

Early Retirement

Way it is now: Teachers who choose to retire at age 58 receive District paid insurance coverage until age 65.

School Board

1. The district would maintain the current benefit without expansion.
2. Expanded benefits would increase the operating costs of the district and deny students the benefit of learning from its most experienced and valued teachers.

Teachers

1. Insurance coverage is not sufficient incentive to make early retirement a desirable option.

2. Proposes a \$300 per month stipend for a teacher who has completed 20 years service in the profession, 10 of which must have been in Morrow County.

Maintenance of Standards

Way it is now: Conditions of employment shall be maintained (or improved) as required by this Agreement. This shall not be interpreted to deprive teachers of professional advantages.

School Board

1. Change wording to: Except as this agreement provides, all contract terms and conditions of employment shall continue to be applicable during the term of this agreement. The District agrees that no one covered by this agreement shall suffer a loss of compensation by reason of the agreement.
2. Generalized language of the current agreement serves as a breeding ground for grievances.

Teachers

1. No reason to change current language.

2. Current language has existed 10 years without major difficulty.

General Supervision

Way it is now: General supervision, ticket selling at sporting events, dances, concerts, etc. will be paid at the amount of \$6.50 per hour during 1984-85. No employee will be paid for the supervision of any activity which takes place within the regular school day.

School Board

1. Raise the hourly rate to \$8 during 1985-86, and by an amount equal to the general salary increases for 1986-88.

Teachers

1. Raise the hourly rate to \$8 during the 1985-86, \$9 during 1986-87, and \$10 during 1987-88.

2. Make all supervision outside regular working hours voluntary.

The positions for the Morrow County Teachers and the School Board are those detailed by Gary Axon in his Factfinding Report published by the Employment Relations Board January 30, 1986. A spokesperson for the teachers and a spokesperson for the Board presented their respective arguments to him at a Factfinding hearing December 16, 1985. Axon's conclusions are not included in the arguments presented here.