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DALLAS POST

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Dallas board rejects 8.75% salary hike for teachers

By ERIC FOSTER
Post Staff

It's back to the drawing board for the Dallas School Board and its teachers.

The long-awaited fact-finder's report on the Dallas School District's contract negotiations with teachers has not moved the district and teachers' union closer to a new agreement.

The district's 142 teachers voted unanimously to accept the report as the basis for a contract, accord-

ing to William Wagner, president of the Dallas teachers' union.

But the school board voted unanimously to reject the report at an executive session December 17.

The major stumbling blocks are salaries and the length of the contract.

The teachers originally asked for a five-year contract with a 9.85% average increase, according to the fact-finder's report.

The school board offered a shorter contract — two years — with a \$2,100 raise each year.

That was later changed to three-years with a \$2,450 raise each year.

Fact-finder John Hamrick of Bethlehem recommended a four-year contract with an average salary increase of 8.75% a year, along with some increases in health and insurance benefits. Hamrick suggested an 8.5% increase in the current year, 8.75% each of the next two years and 9% the fourth year.

The proposal would bring the average teacher's salary from the

current \$39,620, the highest in the area, to \$55,416 in the 1994-1995 school year.

"What we're saying is we can live with the fact-finder," said Wagner. "The feeling of the people was it was an impartial finding. It wasn't what I felt. It wasn't what the board felt."

The school board however cannot live with the fact finder's recommendations.

"I do not feel that it is in any way realistic or reflects what is happening in the economy," said board

member Ellen Nagy. "It's totally based on what other school districts have given their employees. To me it's flawed logic. In my view by basing it only on what other school districts are doing, it's just an ever-continuing building process. It's just totally unconnected with reality."

"We value our teachers, we have wonderful teachers. It would be wonderful if we could afford to pay what they're asking. But the traffic won't bear it," continued Nagy. "They should get a raise. I don't

agree with the Taxpayers Forum." (The recently-formed Dallas Taxpayers' Forum has suggested a two-year wage freeze.)

But said Nagy, "today the average raise is 3, 4, 5% if people are getting a raise at all."

Both Nagy and Ernest Ashbridge, president of the school board, point out that the districts with which the fact-finder compared Dallas negotiated their teacher contracts in better economic times.

See BOARD REJECTS, pg 10

Dallas Borough taxes rise

By GRACE R. DOVE
Post Staff

Although Dallas Borough will end 1991 with \$4,286.92 on hand, residents face a tax increase for 1992 so the borough can catch up on old bills. The present 14 mill property tax will be increased to 16 mills, while the per capita tax will increase from \$5 to \$10. The 1992 budget of \$503,506 was passed December 17 with councilman William Peiffer casting the one dissenting vote.

"There is no fat in this budget," commented Council President Don Cooper. "Our revenues have steadily dropped over the past three years, possibly due to the condition of the economy, while our expenses have increased. I commend the Council for all their work on the budget. It's a difficult situation for new members, to have to confront a tax increase at the beginning of their terms."

Cooper explained that the tax increases are expected to generate approximately \$22,000 in revenues, which, combined with the cash on hand, will balance the borough's 1992 budget.

"We're not operating with a deficit," Cooper continued. "We have some outstanding bills, such as money owed to the road pension fund, increases in the police contract and a loan for the new police cruiser, which must be paid in January. Our ending balance is a true balance, not a paper balance."

Cooper also commended Dallas Borough Manager Milton Lutsey for his financial expertise which

See BOROUGH, pg 2



GOING DOWN TO LONDON TOWN - Shown from left are Dallas Cheerleaders Wendy Vaughn, Tami Landon, and Ginger Williams. The three cheerleaders will perform in England over the Christmas Holiday as part of the American All Stars Cheerleading Squad. (Post Photo/Eric Foster)

Trio from Dallas will cheer in London

By ERIC FOSTER
Post Staff

For many, the holidays are a time to return home to friends and family.

But for Dallas High cheerleaders Ginger Williams, Tami Landon, and Wendy Vaughn, the Christmas holiday will be a time for travel.

The day after Christmas, the three cheerleaders will be boarding a plane in New Jersey to fly to Great Britain to perform for the Lord Mayor of

Westminster's New Year's Celebration at the Royal Albert Hall.

Along with their mothers, the three will be in Britain until January 2, squeezing in time to tour the country. The families are paying the cost of the trip.

The three cheerleaders, along with Jamie Maniskas, tried out for the National All Stars Cheerleading Squad at Penn State University in July of 1991. Out of nearly 100, they were chosen to

See CHEERLEADERS, pg 3

Fact-finder apparently ignored data about local economy, wages

By ERIC FOSTER
Post Staff

When fact-finder John Hamrick was preparing his report on negotiations between the Dallas School District and its teachers, among the data he was supposed to consider — in addition to what other area school districts are doing — were wage trends in area industries and businesses, and the number of fixed-income households.

When the report was finally released however, scant attention was paid to the state of the economy, while teacher contracts in other districts were dealt with in detail.

"Some of the fact finders, if they don't feel satisfied with what has been presented at the hearing, will do outside research," said Patricia Crawford, Secretary of the Labor Relations Board which arranges for fact-finding hearings. "For the most part, they limit themselves to what is presented by the parties."

School board member John Cleary and Dallas superintendent Gerald Wycallis say that the school board brought up the current state of the economy, fixed-income households, and wage trends.

The information was given short-shrift in the report. In the first paragraph of the section on salaries, the report mentions a millage increase, the county's unemployment rate, and the state's declining contribution to the district's budget. No mention is made of what typical salary increases have been this year for other businesses.

While sometimes teacher salaries are compared with those in other professions, Crawford says that "it's more typical to use just other school districts."

As the section on salaries nears its conclusion, the report begins a paragraph with, "An examination of the evidence..."

The evidence cited is limited to

See FACT-FINDER, pg 10

Complete text of the fact-finder's report on wages

Following is the text of the Fact-Finder's report and recommendations on teacher salaries. It is presented in full. The entire report contained 52 pages, of which six were devoted to this topic.

WAGES AND SALARIES: Both parties presented numerous exhibits to support their positions. The School District presented evidence that its real estate millage rate rose from 116 mills from 1986-87 to 158 mills in 1991-92. It also pointed out the condition of the economy and the 8.7% unemployment rate in Luzerne County in June, 1991. It noted that the burden of financing the cost of education is being shifted more to the local school districts and the amount of funding from the state is uncertain and declining. In 1986-87, the state's contribution was 44.7% of the District's budget while the District contributed 53.9%. In the 1991-92 budget, the state's contribution has declined to 37.9% while the District's contribution has increased to 60.4%. One of the reasons the District seeks a two year contract is because of the uncertainties in state funding.

The School District noted that it did not disagree with the Association's analysis of its financial condition but it maintains it should not be penalized for its conservative fiscal policy which has brought about a financially responsible budget. The Association stated the District's local tax effort has decreased in light of a marked increase in the market value of taxable property. The District maintained that that fact alone does not mean the taxpayers can afford to pay increased taxes because many are on fixed incomes. The fact that the value of their property has risen does not mean they are able to afford to pay higher taxes.

The Association concluded that the School District is in good financial condition. It noted that the District's actual fund balance on

June 30, 1990 was \$729,181.00 of which \$656,716.00 was used to balance the 1990-91 budget leaving \$72,465.00 unallocated. The District's 1991-92 budget projects a 1990-91 ending fund balance of \$301,191.00 as revenue used to balance 1991-92 expenditures. It stated that its analysis indicated that the actual 1990-91 balance carried into the 1991-92 budget was understated by at least \$100,000.00.

The Association's objective during these negotiations is to maintain its salary structure and other benefits in line with salary structures, of not only its neighboring school districts, but with other school districts of comparable wealth throughout the state. To support its objectives, the Association has presented numerous exhibits and financial information in an attempt to show that the school district does have the ability to meet its demands.

The positions of both parties have merit. The School Board recognizes the need for quality education and has shown its support by providing the teachers with comparable or better wages and benefits over the past years. It also recognizes its responsibility to the taxpayers who must foot the bill and are growing more and more vociferous in their opposition to tax increases at all levels of government.

The Association, on the other hand, is attempting to keep its members, at least, abreast with the wages and benefits of teachers in other school districts. On the other hand, the Association recognized the dilemma of the School Board by showing its willingness to compromise on a number of issues and to discuss other issues in order to reach an amicable agreement.

It seems that both parties are interested in maintaining the

See REPORT, pg 10

Lake-Noxen youngsters collect 'Toys for Tots'

By GRACE R. DOVE
Post Staff

Santa's elves usually wear cute red or green outfits and scamper busily around the North Pole preparing for Christmas. But for more than 1,200 area families, Santa's helpers proudly wear Marine camouflage uniforms and big smiles as they distribute toys to families with kids under 15 years

of age. And the students at Lake-Noxen School helped make the gifts possible this year.

In its yearly "Toys for Tots" campaign, the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve solicits donations of toys to be distributed to needy families. According to Sgt. Donald Funk of the Marine Corps Reserve Training Center in Wyoming, the Marines met their goal of approximately 45,000 toys, which were

distributed to 1,200 families Friday, December 20. Parents pick up the toys and take them home to wrap and place under the Christmas tree for their children, Sgt. Funk explained.

Individuals, corporate sponsors and school groups like the Lake-Noxen students donated tons of toys. Private cash contributions were used to purchase more gifts. Several Lake-Noxen sixth-grad-

ers explained why they helped out. Kim Halowich said, "It's something special to do for the holidays, special for me as well as for the kids." Toni Bartholomew added, "For me, it's as much fun giving presents as opening my own."

"It's nice to help someone out at the holidays," Mike Casey said.

"I felt sorry for the kids who

See TOYS, pg 2

DAMA changes schedule, lifts bag limit for holidays

Because of the holidays, the Dallas Area Municipal Authority (DAMA) will not collect trash or recyclables on Christmas Day, December 25, or New Years Day, January 1.

For both weeks, the collection schedule will be one day late for Wednesday, Thursday and Friday's collection. Wednesday collection will be on Thursday, Thursday collection on Friday, and Friday collection on Saturday. Monday and Tuesday collection will remain the same.

Because of the large volume of trash generated during the holidays, there will be no bag limit

beginning Christmas week and ending January 4.

"We're also saying that even though there's no bag limit for the holiday season, please try to recycle as much as possible," said Tom Bagley, executive director of DAMA.

With two quarterly bills already sent, the first due in September and the second in December, Bagley said that 80% to 85% of the residents have paid their bills - in contrast with the 95% payment rate that the authority expects with their sewer bills.

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Community Events

CHRISTMAS EVE CHURCH SERVICES:

- Dallas United Methodist Church, 7:00 PM.
- Trucksville United Methodist Church, 7:30 PM.
- Idetown United Methodist Church, 7:00 PM.
- Fellowship Evangelical Free Church, 7:00 PM.
- Shavertown United Methodist Church, 7:00 and 10:00 PM.
- St. Therese's Church, 4:30 PM, 7:00 PM and Midnight.
- Emmanuel Assembly of God Church, 6:30 PM.

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