

Everett School Employees Benefit Trust
Thursday, March 31, 2011
Minutes

Attendance

Mike Gunn
David Jones
Susan Lindsey
Molly Ringo
Betsy Selders

Absent

John Morrill

Also Attending

Kim Mead
Sean White via phone

Recorder

Kellee Newcomb

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Susan Lindsey at 4:08 p.m.

Adoption of Agenda

A motion was made by Molly Ringo and seconded by David Jones to approve the agenda as written. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion of Possible Legislative Actions Relating to the Trust

The special meeting was called today in response to Senate Bill 5612 which relates to a proposed requirement that school districts or educational service districts would have to purchase employee health insurance coverage through the state health care authority (HCA), rather than have the options currently provided through the Everett School Employee Benefit Trust. If approved, this requirement would take effect September 1, 2013. The group reviewed the senate bill, as well as the insurance benefits language in the collective bargaining agreement. Molly reported that she had contacted Melanie Curtice of Stoel Rives on behalf of the Trustees for advice on the possible legislative actions. Melanie's suggestion was that the Trustees may want to engage as a group to take a stand with the legislature and advocate for the continuation of the Everett School Employees Benefit Trust.

Kim Mead, Everett Education Association President reported that she had been contacted by the Washington Education Association (WEA) regarding the possible insurance changes. She provided information on what steps the WEA is taking to inform their membership of the possible changes. She stated there is a huge difference of opinion on the cost savings to the state if all school employees received insurance benefits through the HCA. One study done indicates a savings to the state; another study indicates a cost to the state. The Trustees discussed the impact to Everett school employees in the possible loss of their current benefit options. The insurance plan with PEBB (Public Employee's Benefits Board) does not offer the variety of benefit options that the benefit trust is providing including wellness programs and disability components. The group discussed their responsibility in taking an advocacy role with this possible legislative action and what steps they would take to communicate the Trust's position to legislators. The Trustees agreed to compose a letter to be mailed out to all benefit eligible employees of Everett Public Schools to inform them of this possible legislative action and to encourage them to contact the legislative representatives who serve Everett Public Schools.

Sean White of Mercer was contacted by phone at 4:32 p.m. He provided information to the group regarding what he had gathered so far in researching the proposed bill. While it looks like the bill didn't make it out of committee, it doesn't mean it won't become part of the state budget discussions. While this is the third year in a row that an identical bill has been proposed, it hasn't yet made it out of committee. Some things are different than in the past however, with the current state budget issues and the recent restriction of union rights in Wisconsin. Sean indicated he would provide any help he could to the Trust. The Trustees thanked Sean for his assistance. The call ended at 4:37 p.m.

The Trustees discussed what their next steps should be and the strategies that they would use in this situation. A motion was made by Betsy Selders and seconded by Molly Ringo/David Jones to be proactive with regard to the state's possible taking away the ability to have some local control over school employee health benefits. The Trustees are opposed to Senate Bill 5612 because it restricts local rights to certain benefits and insurance coverage. The Trustees are acting as advocates on behalf of their members. The motion passed unanimously.

Kim Mead reported that EEA members received an email memo outlining what was in the bill, what could happen to their insurance benefits and that more information will be provided when available. The Trustees discussed their next steps. Molly reported she would inform Superintendent Cohn of the Trust's next steps.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:23 p.m.

Sincerely,

David Jones
Secretary