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FACT FINDING REPORT

**RICHMOND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
MEA-NEA Local 1, Richmond
MERC CASE NO: D90 C-0446**

**Fact-Finding Hearing at 11 A.M. on Saturday, September 1, 1990
at the Richmond High School**

Present: Nancy White and Jerry Haymond, Uniserv; David Nicholson, Esq., and Eugene Jakubiak, Acting Superintendent, Richmond Community Schools. Doug Olson, President Richmond Schools MEA Local; Jim Munroe, MEA Uniserv Staff, Local 1; Linda Hartman, Vice President, MEA Local 1; Mary Alice Busch, REA Teacher/Negotiator; Kathy Miles, Teacher; Peter Curtis, Teacher/Negotiator; Michelle Stafford and John Smith, Local 1 Bargainers.

Evidence shows that the Richmond Community Schools Board of Education has been in error over each of the past three years in estimating revenue, particularly local revenue. The citizens' emphatic refusal on five occasions to pass millages, when viewed along with the Board's over-budgeting of local revenues and over-estimation of anticipated student enrollment, indicates a lack of general community support for the Richmond Community Schools and appears to indicate low growth of enrollment. This is the context of the current dispute, and lasting resolution can not be attained without addressing these factors.

Other significant elements and complications, at least in part symptoms of the above situation, are a \$200,000-plus and increasing deficit, concern for the ultimate cost of removing and replacing underground storage tanks and nearby contaminated soil. Board efforts to cut costs and reduce expenditures have been largely successful. The negative side of this accomplishment is the lack of physical education in Grades K-6, reduction of one counselor and three

Richmond Community Schools

Donald R. Burkholder

Administrators, no bus transportation, no interscholastic sports and wrestling and minimal buildings and grounds maintenance.

There have also been staff reductions as follows:

- one high school English teacher
- one middle school shop teacher
- one social worker
- reduction to one-half time of a speech teacher
- elimination of bus drivers
- elimination of a bus mechanic helper
- elimination of a custodian
- elimination of a secretary
- reduction of bus mechanic to half-time
- elimination of transportation director

It is apparent that the root of this present situation appears to lie not only in the numbers factor, including decreasing enrollment, over-optimistic budgeting of revenues, and failed millages, but also in deeper, seemingly well entrenched, historical patterns of distrust and lack of appreciation by the residents of the District. With this in mind, the Fact-finder, who is both a former public school teacher and a former public schools trustee, offers recommendations to the Board of Richmond Community Schools in the hope that the community will come to develop a sense of trust in and support of the school system, factors which now appear to be lacking. The ultimate linking of the schools, their staff and teachers with students, parents and community could lead to a more positive, healthy environment for all parties. Improved teacher/administrator/staff morale, based on linkage with and the appreciation of the community, would be an asset.

Recommendations re Contract

A one-year contract extension with a salary re-opener on February 15 would provide the opportunity to re-evaluate the District's finances at mid-year. There is no doubt that the REA teachers, by reasonable standards, are due for a raise. The size and circumstances are a separate matter. The District, for several reasons, is seriously in debt. Therefore, a raise under present circumstances is not possible. Recognizing up front that the possibilities for salary growth are limited, a mid-year review of District finances appears to be the most realistic solution, with consideration of a salary increase.

Regarding other items requested by the REA, the Fact-Finder recommends that all items remain unchanged, including insurance coverage, except for the following:

- 1) Released time for Union officers other than the President, as per REA position. This is a previous Board position and appears feasible.
- 2) The Board position should prevail regarding Family Illness. The Board's view of the intent of the Family Illness provision appears to be reasonable.
- 3) The Driver's Education remuneration should be \$12.50 per hour, reflecting a move toward the middle range of surrounding districts.
- 4) New language should be worked out and initialed on the above items as soon as possible.

Recommendations re the Board

The Fact Finder's recommendation for the immediate dispute, if accepted, would meet the demands of the moment. However, they would serve as no more than a stop-gap measure if the Board does not take immediate strong action to build community support, trust,

and acceptance, manifested at some point in the near future by passage of increased millage. The District is certainly not over-taxing itself for education at the present time. Hopefully, the District residents realize that the quality of their young people's education and future potential, as well as the value of their property, are serious considerations which are closely related.

Specific recommendations for the REA and for the RCS Board are listed in the Fact Finding Report in Brief, presented to the parties on Labor Day, Monday, September 3, 1990 at the MERC offices. An edited statement of the items submitted and discussed at that time is attached.

The Fact Finder, noting the often unpleasant but necessary characteristics of the task at hand, sincerely thanks Nancy White and Jerry Haymond, representing the Richmond Education Association, for a superbly professional, thorough, and persuasive presentation. Likewise, Attorney David Nicholson and Acting Superintendent Eugene Jakubiak represented the Board of Richmond Community Schools in a very professional fashion. Unfortunately, the merits of a party's presentation and its logic are often not the prevailing factors in a dispute such as this due to the realities of the situation at hand. Nevertheless, the fact finder can only hope that in any similar situations in the future, he will encounter advocates/presenters who exhibit such a high level of professionalism and courtesy.

Donald R. Buckhold

Fact-Finder

Sept. 20, 1990

Date

RICHMOND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
MEA-NEA Local 1, Richmond
MERC CASE NO. : D90 C-0446

Fact-Finding Report in Brief*

REA:

1. Extend the contract for one year.
2. Set salary re-opener on Feb. 15, recognizing up front the possibilities for salary growth are limited.
3. No change in health insurance coverage.
4. Released time as per Union position for Union officers other than President (a previous Board position).
5. Board position on sick leave should prevail.
6. Driver's Ed non-classroom remuneration should be \$12.50 per hour.
7. New language should be worked out on the above today, Labor Day..

RCS Board

1. Work at, and organize to, develop community trust and support, as noted below.
2. Consider ways to become more relevant to, or to serve the needs of the community in new ways, e.g., possible Adult Education Programs combined with other districts, leading to increased head-count, etc.*
3. Facilitate improved relationships between parents/community and the teaching staff/administrators/school system.
4. Develop a media/public relations program to keep the community informed, recognize student/teacher accomplishments, publicize new school programs/services. An existing employee may be capable of being trained in this field. **
5. Review school administration, business, and central expenditures to identify/assure the best use of available funds. **
6. Review administrative staff need for feasibility of training in budgeting, estimating revenue, etc...***
- 7.. Adopt a policy and practice (if it has not done so) of encouraging trustees and administrators/teaching staff to attend appropriate workshops/seminars in special areas. Alternatively, develop the possibility of, define appropriate areas for, In-Service training.. Although the cost of such programs may seem overwhelming, the long-term benefits could be very significant.

*A complete Fact-Finding Report, with rationale, etc., will be submitted shortly.. This Report in Brief, submitted on Sept. 3 (Labor Day) 1990, is intended only to summarize the findings and make recommendations. Hearing was conducted on Saturday, September 1, 1990, at the Richmond School District headquarters. The teams for both parties are meeting today, Labor Day, at MERC offices in Detroit, at 1 p.m.

-Burkholder

** Several models are available, including South Reford/Redford Union in Wayne County. The Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) may be able to provide similar, smaller scale models in rural districts which result in increased head count, state funds for the administering district, etc. The primary benefit is the ability to provide ongoing, needed services to residents of the community.

*** Workshops are rather regularly available in these areas, generally offered by the MASB.

a) Recognizing that the Board of Trustees of the Richmond Community Schools are an elected governmental body, a local government by definition, the Fact-Finder offers these suggestions or recommendations in the hope that they will lead to a long-term improvement not only in the relationship between the REA and the Board, but between the residents of the Richmond School District and the teachers/administrative staff and students of the District. As a matter of information, the Fact-Finder has served both as a public school teacher and an elected school board member, and therefore believes he has a special sense of empathy for the problem.

As for immediate action, the Board should accept the recommendations on page one for the REA, so that immediate movement toward resolution of the dispute can take place.

Submitted by Donald R. Burkholder in expedited
Fact-Finding as a Summary Report B b)

Donald R. Burkholder
Name

September 2, 1990
Date

b) Full Report to Follow