Furlough Rescission Implemented

As most of you know by now, there has been an agreement reached on the most appropriate way to give back a furlough day already served. While it sounds like no more than common sense, there were some details that needed discussion. There was also some flexibility required of the employer in that we (meaning the four employee advocates) actually sought a day’s pay for a day that was not worked. For all the matters that have been subjected to dispute over the past few years we should take the time to acknowledge that in this narrow matter of how to repay one spent furlough day, logic and fairness prevailed.

Here was the logic: If we could agree on the presumption that the first day furloughed was the day rescinded; then the natural remedy would be to return to the impacted employees the value of that lost day. That value has already been defined in the various collective bargaining agreements (albeit for other reasons) to be one per diem portion of annual salary. So, the December 30 salary distribution will provide everyone with one day’s pay at the respective per diem rate. Further, it was accomplished without requiring 10-month employees to report to work on January 25. Such a requirement would have been inequitable in that the result would lead to 10-month employees receiving disparate treatment in comparison to their 12-month colleagues. One group would have recovered the day’s pay without be required to work, the other would have had to work the extra day.

The simple retraction of one day of salary was fair, equitable, and easy for the payroll office to administer.

Now, it must also be recognized that the matter of how many furlough days were really necessary remains subject to much doubt. The return of this one day was good. The manner in which it was returned was widely agreed to be the best option. But the uncommitted $3.2 million operating fund balance from FY09 is still troublesome. It means that yet another day of lost income for AACPS employee could be returned.

Happy Holidays to you and your family!
So as not to lose the attention of readers by drowning them in dollar signs, let me put things in perspective. A $22 million dollar loss is the rough equivalent of 4% off of the salary scales, three hundred and forty teaching positions, or 125% of our healthcare fund balance. As you can see, the bargaining terrain is quite a rocky one.

“Policies of the past are no longer working. Status quo is failing. It’s time for the tail to wag the dog.”

There are less expensive ways to demand reasonable behavior at graduation ceremonies.

The proliferation of new programs notwithstanding, our bigger problem remain that of shrunk en revenues at the state and county level. Maryland’s got money problems that will have direct impact on its ability to fund local education agencies. Further, Maryland may be resolving some of its money problems by passing some of its bills down to the counties. The potential for the MOE waiver is one example. Another is to pass the burden of state teacher retirement and pension plan funding to local school systems.

A modification of the property tax revenue cap would help somewhat. If the proposed modification (a change of one word) was in place this fiscal year, it would have brought about $17.5 million more revenue without opening the door to unfettered spending. The adoption of the necessary zoning legislation to allow the video lottery tables at Arundel Mills would also provide over $50 million over the next three years.

Policies of the past are no longer working. Status quo is failing. It’s time for the tail to wag the dog.
Although the regular duty hours of Unit I members is clearly defined in the Negotiated Agreement, many Unit I members are facing increased pressure from AACPS administrators to engage in additional activities that extends their working hours beyond the negotiated duty day and workweek. In at least two high schools, teachers are facing an administrative expectation to attend evening high school graduation exercises; which includes an inappropriate modification to their regular duty hours, extending their workday until 9:00 PM to accommodate the expectation. Unit I members cannot be required to attend more than one evening activity per year, nor can they be required to work beyond their regular duty day or workweek.

Article 11.F requires: "Attendance at Back-to-School Night or one such similar evening activity as directed by the principal shall be required each year. This meeting shall not be considered part of the required workweek."

If Unit I members have already fulfilled this requirement by attending a Back-to-School Night activity or any other evening activity earlier in the school year, they cannot be required to attend any other evening activity for the remainder of the year. The contract language further clarifies that any such meeting shall not be considered part of the regular workweek. Attempts by administrators to mandate attendance at more than one evening activity (including evening high school graduation exercises) or to modify the regular duty hours to force attendance are in violation of the Negotiated Agreement. In addition, the Negotiated Agreement requires arrival and dismissal times of Unit I members to be established by the principal working with the Faculty Advisory Council.

Article 11.A requires: "The times at which teachers must normally arrive in the morning and may normally leave in the afternoon shall be scheduled in each school by the principal working with the Faculty Advisory Council (emphasis added) and considering the 7.0 hours limit stated above."

The administrators do not have the authority to unilaterally impose or modify the regular arrival and dismissal times of Unit I members. They are obligated, by contractual language, to work with the FAC to establish arrival and dismissal times.

If any Unit I members are being required to work beyond their regular duty day or workweek and/or are being required to attend more than one evening activity per year, they are strongly encouraged to contact their TAAAC UniServ Director to discuss these violations and the appropriate avenue of redress.

* To avoid charges of insubordination, All Unit I members are reminded not to refuse the directives of an administrator. Comply with administrative directives, but contact the TAAAC office as soon as possible to discuss any potential violation.

Arundel Mills and Video Gaming

The Maryland voters have spoken and whether we like or not, whether we supported it or not, slots have become a lawful recreational activity and a revenue source for entrepreneurs and government agencies. Moreover, by the time this article reaches its readers a license will have been issued for a site right here in Anne Arundel County. Betting odds indicate that by the December 7 meeting of the County Council all that will probably be left of the puzzle is a zoning piece. This is no longer a “slots” issue. The voters already disposed of that matter, and the disposition was favorable. It’s now a matter of whether the county fixes the zoning issue and takes its share of future revues; or whether the county would prefer the revenue to go to someone else. According to the Department of Legislative Services, the revenue is significant.
Anne Arundel County could project about $58.5 million in new revenues over the next three years; $6.9M in FY11, $21.6M in FY12, and $30.0M in FY13. In a revenue-starved tax-averse county like ours, whose per pupil effort in public education is routinely below the state average, maybe this is an opportunity we shouldn’t ignore.

NOMINATIONS OPEN

The TAAAC Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for President, Vice President, Board of Directors, and NEA Delegate. Nominations forms must be received at the TAAAC office by 5:30 PM on Tuesday, January 12, 2010.

Name ________________________________________________
Address ________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
Email ________________________________________________
School _______________________________________________
Phone (H) ____________________  (W) ________________

I would like to place my name in nomination for the following position(s):

- President
- Vice President
- Board of Directors
- NEA Delegate

(Have you been a delegate before: YES or NO)

“What helps me go forward is that I stay receptive, I feel that anything can happen.”

-Anouk Aimee

TAX PREPARATION

R. J. Pellicoro & Associates is now accepting appointments for tax preparation at the TAAAC office on the following dates:

- Monday, February 22  1-7 PM
- Thursday, February 25  1-7 PM
- Tuesday, March 2  1-7 PM
- Monday, March 8  2-7 PM
- Thursday, March 11  2-7 PM

Please call the TAAAC office to schedule an appointment.