

Town gives raises to school staff members

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COVENTRY — This week the Coventry Town Council approved a ratification of the contract between the school department and the Coventry Teachers' Alliance (CTA) School Related Personnel (SRP) members that includes raises for staff over the next three years.

According to Coventry Acting Town Manager Ed Warzycha, the

contract includes a salary increase of 2 percent this year, 2.5 percent next year and 2.5 percent in the third and final year of the contract. Both parties also negotiated a change in the staffs' medical contributions which will increase from 13 to 15 percent in the third year. There were also several wording changes made to the agreement which Warzycha referred to as "clean up" items.

The Coventry School Committee approved the ratification of the

contract on a 3-1 vote on September 13 but one member, James Pierson, voted against the contract.

Coventry Superintendent Craig Levis said the contract is fair for both sides, while Coventry School Committee Chairwoman Katherine Patenaude said the "negotiators were very reasonable."

"We worked very hard to come up with something we felt was a fair contract," Levis said.

"I want to thank the people that

did work on this contract," Patenaude said. "They gave some things and I thought it was very fair. It wasn't an easy contract considering the raises you have had in the past and the things you still have to pay for."

"I am also hopeful that when this goes before the council that they will see clearly that you have made some sacrifices and continue to and have in the past, certainly in your pensions."

"I am deeply concerned that this school committee has been spending a lot of money," said Pierson said at the meeting earlier this month. "In fact we have on our agenda new positions. I'm not certain this is sustainable given the current financial state of the town."

CTA President Kelly Erinakes said she was "disappointed" about Pierson's vote and pointed to the

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fact that other employees in town have recently received raises as part of their own contracts.

"To sit there and say the town and schools are spending too much money and to take one set of the employees out shows disrespect," said Erinakes. "I respectfully have to say I'm very disappointed with that vote as will be the 60 or

so members that live in town."

Warzycha recommended that the council approve the contract this week, which they did on a unanimous vote.

"It's a very good proposal," said Warzycha. "I think it's a good contract."

"I think, personally, that the SRP is the backbone of the school department and I think they deserve as much support as has been given to the CTA and every other unit so I totally support this contract," said councilor Kerry McGee.

The contract covers 236 staff mem-

bers employed by the Coventry School Department. The SRP pension plan was in critical status due to under funding up until several years ago. The SRP is made up of district clerks, custodians, teaching assistants and aids, secretaries and maintenance workers.

The council approved the ratification of a 3-year contract with the teachers back in April.

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