

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING  
Coventry Town Hall Council Chambers  
1670 Flat River Road, Coventry, RI  
August 25, 2009 – 9:00 a.m.

Present: Raymond Spear, Laura Flanagan, Glen Shibley

Town Manager Thomas Hoover

Absent: Kenneth Cloutier, Frank Hyde

President Spear announced that the purpose of today's meeting is for consideration of the following resolution.

Resolution in opposition to legislation introduced in RI General Assembly regarding mandatory binding arbitration for teacher contracts

Whereas, mandatory binding arbitration on all issues, including wages and benefits, presently in force for local police and fire, has led Rhode Island, according to RIPEC, to having the 5th highest police costs in the nation and the highest paid firefighters nationally; and

Whereas, Connecticut mandatory binding arbitration has led to contract awards that have resulted in the highest paid teachers in the country; and

Whereas, unions don't generally strike, they "work to rule"; and

Whereas, teachers' contracts would be automatically extended if agreement is not reached by the end of the expiring contract; and

Whereas, Rhode Island cities and towns have to comply with statutory and decreasing property tax caps; and

Whereas, binding arbitration chills the negotiation process and would create a disincentive for teacher unions to settle the unresolved issues by negotiations as they will perceive that they will gain more thru an arbitration award rather than a negotiated labor agreement; and

Whereas, arbitration can take well over a year and cost tens of thousands of dollars; and

Whereas, the proposed mandatory binding arbitration legislation being advanced by the teacher unions does not take student welfare into account, conform to the existing property tax caps ("3050"), and does not recognize management rights that our courts have established or prevent strikes or work to rule.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the Coventry Town Council respectfully requests the Rhode Island General Assembly to reject Senate Bill S-713 and any and all binding arbitration legislation currently being considered for teacher contracts and not mandate the extension of contracts for teachers beyond their expiration date.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town Clerk is hereby instructed to submit a copy of this resolution to State Senators and State Representatives in the Rhode Island General Assembly seeking their consideration and support.

During discussion at the Town Council meeting on August 24, Councilman Hyde had a concern with the opening paragraph, which states that “mandatory binding arbitration on all issues, including wages and benefits, presently in force for local police and fire, has led Rhode Island, according to RIPEC, to having the 5th highest police costs in the nation and the highest paid firefighters nationally”. Mr. Hyde questioned the above statement and didn’t believe it should appear in the resolution which is being considered by the Council.

Manager Hoover noted that the resolution reflects the opinion of RIPEC and we would be merely restating the opinion. Mrs. Flanagan is satisfied with the resolution along with an amendment discussed at last night’s meeting to incorporate the title of the bill, Senate Bill S-713, into the resolution. Mr. Shibley concurs.

President Spear further commented that in his experiences dealing with RIPEC over the years, he has found that when they publish something, they have usually done the research behind it and aren’t often wrong.

Motion made by Glen Shibley seconded by Laura Flanagan to approve resolution as amended, incorporating the title of the bill into the resolution. All voted aye. (Motion passes 3-0)

Motion made by Laura Flanagan seconded by Glen Shibley to adjourn meeting. All voted aye.

---

Town Clerk