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'237' Head: DOE Delays Pay Hikes As Retaliation

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'SHOULDN'T TAKE AN ETERNITY': Teamsters Local 237 President Greg Floyd says he suspects the Department of Education has held up wage hikes for some of his members out of anger that he criticized safety 'reforms' that he said would actually make schools less safe for the School Safety Agents he also represents.

Teamsters Local 237 has filed a complaint with the state's Public Employment Relations Board, accusing the city of refusing to sign off on a contract that would bring wage increases to employees in several titles including Supervisor of School Lunch and School Food Service Manager, possibly in retaliation for criticism by the union's leader.

President Greg Floyd said Local 237 filed the petition because the titles were given raises in a set of “successor unit agreements” that would be granted once the city signed off on them.

Talks Broke Down

But talks with the Department of Education fizzled out in June 2016, the city never signed off on the agreements, and the employees haven’t seen their raises.

“These employees have been owed raises since last May,” Mr. Floyd said in a phone interview. “Last year, the DOE told us it would take two weeks to close the agreements, but ‘two weeks’ should not take almost a year.”

The union’s 2014 memorandum of agreement with the city provided three 1-percent wage increases effective in 2012, 2013, and 2014 respectively, a 1.5-percent wage increase effective in 2015, a 2.5-percent wage increase effective in 2016, and a 3-percent wage increase effective in 2017. Those terms were consistent with the bargaining pattern for all civilian-employee unions over that period.

Need DOE Sign-Off

But it stipulated that the final increases couldn’t be paid until the city signs successor-unit agreements for the DOE titles—Supervisor of School Lunch, Associate School Food Service Manager, School Lunch Manager, School Food Services Manager, Chief School Lunch Manager, and Education Facilities Officer.

“This shouldn’t take an eternity,” Mr. Floyd said, “especially because the hard part is already done.”

According to the petition, the last meeting between Local 237 and the DOE regarding the agreements was in June, and the department “indicated they would contact Local 237 regarding another meeting,” but it was never scheduled.

The petition stated that a Local 237 representative sent four e-mails between October 2016 and February 2017 to Karen Solimando, the DOE’s executive director of labor relations, asking about the agreements.

DOE Stalling?

The union only received one reply, according to the filing—an email in mid-December stating the DOE had not prepared any draft agreements for titles represented by Local 237, but Ms. Solimando would call the next day to discuss matters.

The union said that call was never made, and it never received any reply to subsequent emails sent in January and February 2017.

The petition alleged the DOE violated the Taylor Law by failing to “meet at reasonable times and confer in good faith with respect to...the negotiation of an agreement.” Mr. Floyd said he believed the city’s lack of action was a “penalty” for his open criticism of the DOE’s recent school-safety reforms—School Safety Agents are also represented by Local 237—which he told THE CHIEF-LEADER could make city schools more dangerous.

In a September interview, he said that he was concerned that the city was under-reporting the number of weapons confiscated from schools in an effort to make dangerous schools seem safer, a claim the DOE denied.

He has also said the city’s growing use of alternative programs and previous calls to reduce the number of metal detectors in schools would allow officials to sweep incidents under the rug.

“It’s ironic that we find ourselves in this position with the Department of Education after meeting with them, the NYPD and the administration over school safety,” he said. “I see it as a penalty on us for speaking out about safety and other issues.” DOE officials had not commented on the petition by press time.

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