THE FACTS –

The Franklin Lakes Board of Education is extremely disappointed the Union failed to ratify the tentative agreement that was reached with the Board last month. This failure to ratify followed nearly nine (9) months of negotiations which included impasse proceedings with the assistance of a State-appointed mediator. The proposed contract rejected by the Union called for a 3-year agreement with cumulative salary increases that exceed the Bergen County 3-year average settlements, increases in tuition reimbursements, additional stipends for technology assistance in each school, additional accumulated sick leave, and payment for increased instructional time in lieu of minimum days on parent-teacher conference days. The Board also agreed to the Associations’ request to clarify existing contract language specifying when instructional aides shall be required to participate in parent-teacher conferences and professional development. The Board also agreed to include stipends for teacher members of the newly established school improvement panel and District advisory committee for time outside of the contractual work day.

Regrettable, the Union’s failure to ratify the tentative agreement means that the parties were required to initiate formal fact-finding proceeding through a State-appointed Fact-Finder. The fact-finding process will begin on the evening of March 30th and extend an already protracted negotiation at a significant cost to the taxpayers. We have been assigned a fact-finder by the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC). The fact finder will be presented testimony, information, data and a tremendous amount of facts by both the Union and the Board. After the conclusion of the hearing or after receipt of the parties’ briefs, the factfinder will write a report and forward a copy to each party. The report will include a list of the issues in dispute, the parties’ positions on each issue, a recitation of relevant statistics or date, recommendation for settlement, and the rationale or basis for the recommendations. In accordance with the July 2003 amendment to the PERC Law, the report is required to be released to the public 10 days after the parties have received the fact-finding recommendations.

While the Board is disappointed with the Union’s failure to ratify this contract, it will continue to negotiate with the Union in good faith but with a continued commitment to the priorities that they have identified as necessary to maintain the outstanding educational program provided to the children of this District.

The Franklin Lakes Board of Education