

## Grievance over staff shuffling denied

Written by Mark Jaeger  
Wednesday, 25 August 2010 17:17

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### **Northern Ozaukee School Board sides with administration on reassignment of secretaries**

The Northern Ozaukee School Board has upheld a ruling by Supt. Bill Harbron denying a grievance filed by the union which represents school district office workers. The grievance alleges the district has been improperly shifting secretarial personnel to fill vacancies.

With two office retirements at the end of the last school year, the district has shuffled several secretarial assignments.

The union, however, contends the district is required to post vacated positions and does not have the authority to move secretaries around unless they request it.

“The board agreed the administration has the authority to reassign employees to openings within the same job classification to best serve the district,” Harbron said.

The union’s only recourse now is to take the grievance to the Labor Relations Board.

The job shuffling has resulted in Sandra Hencke moving from a secretarial position with the district’s virtual program, Wisconsin Virtual Learning, to Ozaukee Middle School, and Kelly Bartow moving from the office at Ozaukee Elementary School to Ozaukee High School.

The hiring dispute is just the latest example of the testy relationship the Northern Ozaukee School District Auxiliary Association has had with the administration over hiring practices. Chris Koss, president of the auxiliary union and a longtime employee of the district, appeared at last month’s board meeting protesting the district’s practice of offering new workers more than entry level pay.

“Over the past year I’ve worked very long and hard to smooth the waters between the union members and administration,” Koss said.

She said the union objects to hiring employees at the top of the pay scale, when the labor contract specifies that new workers should be paid a base salary.

In particular, Koss cited the hiring of a secretary for Wisconsin Virtual Learning at a pay rate above the top of the contract’s pay scale.

“Practices like these are creating a lot of dissension and hard feelings with our employees,” Koss said.

“It is quite insulting for someone who walks in the door getting paid as much as someone who has worked here for 14 years or more. Our contract specifically says all new hires shall be placed at base pay on the pay scale. I wish you would honor the contract. To me, a contract is golden. It shows respect to the people who have worked long and hard for the district.”

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Harbron said the administration has the discretion to pay new employees based on their work experience.

Koss attempted to renew her objections about the secretarial shuffling at this month's, when the board was asked to approve hiring an IT department secretary for \$14.32 an hour. The value of that position, including salary and benefits, comes to \$48,000.

Her comments were cut short, when the administration noted that the auxiliary union had filed a grievance against the district for his hiring practices.

In the case of several new teacher aide hirings, Board President Paul Krause said the district has been able to attract highly qualified personnel whose experience would merit more than the district's entry level pay.

"Thanks to the recession, we have been able to attract certified teachers for aide positions. These are not high-school graduates looking for a first job," Krause said.

The board approved a slate of new instructional hirings at the meeting, including three special-education teacher's assistants, three special education paraprofessionals, a half-time special education teacher and two elementary school paraprofessionals.

Based on updated enrollment estimates for the virtual school, the board also approved recalling two employees who were given preliminary layoff notices.

A guidance position was reinstated to six-tenths of a full-time post, and will work with at-risk high school students, and an intervention teacher was returned to half time.

A two-tenths of a fulltime music position was also reinstated, who will aid the virtual and brick-and-mortar programs.

The reinstated positions are expected to cost the district a total of \$49,000.