

**September 4, 2007**

***An Open Letter to East Greenwich Residents:***

East Greenwich Teachers returned to school on August 30, participating fully and enthusiastically in our jobs.

On Friday, August 31, we were scheduled to receive a paycheck according to the town payroll schedule. We did not. Why? We don't know. Our representatives were negotiating a contract as state law permits us to do. Apparently the school committee and school department – who represent the Town of East Greenwich – do not believe in the right to collective bargaining, as granted by state law.

In a blatant act of coercion, the school department simply decided not to pay us. Citizens of East Greenwich, is this the way you want your elected officials to treat the educators who care for your children?

We were there when your children forgot their lunch money, and we made sure they ate. We were there when your children didn't have a ride home, and we made certain they were safe. We were there when your children called us at 10pm because they didn't know where else to turn for help. We have been **here** from their first day jitters through their post-graduate plans.

We have been and will continue to be there for your children. We believe you care. Please do not allow your school committee to dismantle and destroy one of the best things about this town. It has created an environment of intimidation and demoralization amongst the teachers that will not resolve itself for a very, very long time.

Please consider what we have meant to your children. Please pick up the phone and demand that the school committee engage in good faith bargaining, regardless of what you believe the contract should read. Fair and reasonable people understand that contract negotiations in a civilized society cannot take place under coercion.

The teachers have been working extremely hard in an effort to achieve a fair settlement. A cut in pay to go back to work is not a fair settlement. The school committee forced the teachers not to report to work by refusing to bargain on Monday night. Those representing the school committee did not have the authority to reach an agreement. They

would not call other school committee members who were not present in order to gain that authorization.

It is the union's wish to reach settlement as quickly as possible. **Thank you for supporting the quality education your children deserve.**

#### **Key Points of Information**

- Teachers initiated negotiations in September, 2006
- The union's negotiating team met for over 30 hours during school year between December and June
- A mediator was requested and appointed in late June
- Members of the School Committee have been unavailable for scheduled mediation until mid-August, 2007
- Teachers have met for over 100 hours of unproductive negotiations