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ETHAN ALLEN



style

Early News updated at 6 a.m.

Parents want payment made, Harutunian gone

By Jason Howe

Staff Writer

(single page view)

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NORTH ANDOVER — News that departing Superintendent Harry Harutunian is still on the payroll and collecting a weekly paycheck was greeted with disappointment by some parents yesterday.

School Committee Chairman Al Perry revealed this week that Harutunian is on paid administrative leave, collecting \$3,134 a week while his attorney and lawyers for the town hash out the details of a \$187,000 resignation agreement.

"It has really been a drain on everything," parent Brenda Reeve yesterday said. "There's more important work on our budget that needs to be done."

Harutunian resigned from his post following revelations he had an affair with a woman he also gave a raise to.

On Tuesday, Perry told The Eagle-Tribune that Harutunian would continue to get his weekly paycheck until the settlement is signed by both parties. Yesterday, however, he said that was not true, and that the weekly pay would be deducted from the final settlement amount.

"By my understanding, the clock started ticking on April 11," the day Harutunian agreed to resign, Perry said. "This will not cost us anything more than that figure."

Attorney Peter Barry, who is retained by the School Committee, explained that the pending buyout stipulates Harutunian receive his weekly pay, including his auto allowance and benefits, until June 30.

"After that, he will no longer be an employee of the school system," Barry said, stressing that wording for the deal was the only holdup in the process. The contract is not complete until signed, he said.

If it remains unsigned by June 30, both parties will have to renegotiate, Barry said.

Harutunian's attorney, Michael Long of Quincy, did not return telephone calls yesterday seeking confirmation of the payment schedule or receipt of benefits.

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According to his contract, Harutunian is entitled to the maximum health, life, dental and disability insurance coverage available to district employees.

Business Manager Paul Szymanski said benefits details were not immediately available yesterday afternoon because the staff member who handles them was out. He said they should be available today.

Parents yesterday seemed resigned to the dollar amounts involved and simply want the Harutunian saga behind them.

With administrators frantically rewriting a budget for the June 5 Town Meeting, parents want to see the School Committee's focus turn back to the business of educating children.

The buyout amount is "equivalent to a couple of teachers, but there are times when you just have to deal with the consequences," said Kim Dawley, a mother of two with one daughter in first grade.

"I think that he had to be let go. ... Our town needs financial credibility right now more than ever," Dawley said. "In situations like this, you never are excited to pay severance packages, but it will end up being a benefit to the School Department in the long run."



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