

RHAM board rejects contract

By MIKE SAVINO

Chronicle Staff Writer

HEBRON — The RHAM school board could be going through binding arbitration for the second time this year after rejecting a contract for non-certified personnel Monday.

Representatives for CSEA/SEIU Local 2001, the union representing non-certified employees at RHAM Junior/Senior High School, said both sides had reached a tentative agreement on the contract during negotiations before the six school board members voted down the proposal Monday.

Board members Thomas Tremont, Danny Holtsclaw, Joseph Farrell, T.J. Morelli-Wolfe, Kenneth Lee and Mike Turner all voted against the contract.

Board members Susan Griffiths, James Cherry, Dieter Zimmer, Maryanne Leichter all voted in favor of the proposal, while Debra Dee was not present.

The union, which represents 75 para-educators, custodians, maintenance workers and administrative personnel at the two schools, said Thursday it was “deeply disappointed” the school board shot down the “fair contract.”

Board members voting against the contract could not be reached for comment or deferred comment to Griffiths, who is out of town, but Superintendent Robert Siminski said opponents were worried about pay increases and the length of the contract.

He said the non-certified employees, who currently make \$11.68 per hour, would increase their wages by 13.85 percent over the four-year span of the contract. Siminski said the non-certified employees have been working without a contract for more than a year, forcing both sides to revert to the terms of the agreement ending in 2007-08.

The union also the school board’s decision could now force both sides to enter arbitration, “marking the second time in less than a year that they have been unwilling or unable to reach a voluntary agreement with district employees.”

The school board went to binding arbitration with the teachers union, which resulted in a new contract in March after Marlborough approved the agreement. Hebron and Andover rejected the contract, but all three sending towns must vote against such proposals for a rejection.

The union said the rejected proposal was similar to the one issued by an arbitrator in February. Siminski agreed, saying the impact of the health insurance costs “mirrored” that of the teacher’s contract, even though the structure of the two agreements are different.

Siminski also said the school board will need to meet when Griffiths returns to decided its next step, but arbitration is set to begin in early December.