FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STATEMENT FROM THE SHARON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT ON NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SHARON TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

The Sharon City School District believes the public should be informed as to all of the facts in the ongoing negotiations between the District and the Teachers' Association, and offers the following:

FACT #1: The Tentative Agreement reached in November, 2016 would pay significant raises to the teachers.

The parties have been bargaining since January, 2016 over a new contract. On November 7, 2016, the negotiating committees of the District and the Union reached a Tentative Agreement which would have paid the teachers raises which average **3.03%** in each of the four years. The Union's membership voted down the deal struck by its negotiating committee. It is not known whether this rejection was caused by misinformation, bad faith or some other cause. In contrast, the District has consistently been willing to approve the Tentative Agreement even though it has lost valuable health care savings due to the delay, and has not yet attempted to renegotiate downward from the Tentative Agreement.

FACT #2: The Fact-Finder's Report contains errors showing he did not understand important facts.

Only two issues were before the Fact-Finder: the additional salary increases sought by the Union above the Tentative Agreement and a prep time proposal from the Union which would require two (2) additional teachers to be hired, at an annual cost of at least **$140,000**. The Fact-Finder recommended the Union's prep time proposal and stated in his Report at page 1 that "Preparation time was not formally provided for in the parties' collective bargaining agreements." This is an error. **The expired CBA contains a full page of prep time language in Article VI, Section 3.** The Fact-Finder also failed to note or acknowledge the significant financial cost required for the District to comply with the Union's proposal. The Fact-Finder also failed to note the evidence presented by the District concerning the financial stresses placed on the District's tax-paying community. The Fact-Finder, it should be mentioned, is not a City resident and would not be required to pay any tax increases needed to fund the recommendations contained in his Report.

FACT #3: All of the District's employees took two years of pay freezes, and only one group has suggested they be repaid.

To address financial stresses, during school years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 every one of the District's employees--from the Superintendent and principals to the teachers, custodians and other employees--agreed to take pay freezes to help the District through difficult financial times. Those pay freezes, which required the parties' agreement, were very much appreciated, but no groups or individual employees have received "make-up" raises since then, and only the teachers have asked for them.

FACT #4: The District's residents have faced several tax increases to address significant cost increases and the District's fund balance is in line with State-recommended guidelines.

To meet the challenges posed by flat State funding and unavoidable cost increases and to improve the District's financial health, over the last thirteen (13) years, the District has been required to raise taxes nine (9) times. The Union will say that any demand for salary increases can be met be raising taxes, but the City's residents have been paying increased taxes already.

The Union thinks the District's fund balance is "ballooning," but all the air in that balloon has been designated by the District to meet unavoidable cost increases. The District's annual unreimbursed PSERS liability has increased from roughly $260,000 in 2008-2009 to $1,600,000 in 2015-2016, and will be increasing further. The District's annual special education expenses have increased from $4.14 million in 2001-2008 to $5.96 million in 2015-2016. **The fund balance, which is within State-recommended guidelines, is there to pay those cost increases, protect the District's education quality and reduce the need for further tax increases, and once it's used, it's gone.**

The District will be placing additional information and updates on its website in the coming weeks, which will be posted at http://www.sharon.k12.pa.us/negotiations and on the District's Twitter and facebook accounts.