

TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION
WORKSESSION MINUES – SEPTEMBER 10, 2019

NOTICE OF MEETING:

The worksession meeting of the Board of Education of the Township of Union was held on Tuesday, September 10, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. at the Administration Building, 2369 Morris Avenue, Union, New Jersey pursuant to the notice sent to each member. Action was taken.

Mrs. Minneci called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mrs. Sherry Higgins, Mr. Ronnie McDowell, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Dr. Kalisha Morgan, Mr. Vito Nufrio, Mrs. Nellis Regis-Darby, Mrs. Linda Richardson, Mrs. Kim Ruiz, Mrs. Mary Lynn Williams

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

None

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Mr. Gregory Tatum, Mr. Gerry Benaquista, Mrs. Annie Moses, Mr. Gregory Brennan, Mrs. Kim Conti, Mrs. Ann Hart, Mr. Craig Wojcik, Mr. Barry Loessel, Mrs. Maureen Guilfoyle, Mrs. Sandra Paul

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr. Lester Taylor, Esq.
Student Liaisons: Joshua Tidwell, Pedro Torres, Faith Olayinka, Gianni Guido

Mrs. Higgins led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Brennan read the statement required under the “Open Public Meetings Act”, a copy of which is on file in the office of the Board Secretary.

Mrs. Ruiz read the District’s mission statement.

Comments from Public on Resolutions in **BOLD** only

None

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes will be approved at next week’s meeting.

Communications

Communications are part of personnel

Superintendent's Report

Mr. Tatum stated there will be ESIP presentations next week from Honeywell and Schneider Electric.

Each building at a successful start but probably not the most successful that I have seen over the course of the years. We did open our doors to approximately 7,219 students on September 5, 2019 – that is an increase of 82 students over the last year's school opening day. 911 observances are tomorrow – it is the 18th anniversary of the unfortunate event of September 11, 2001. As always the district will conduct activities in commemoration of this tragic event in this nation's history.

Back-to-School nights – although we have only started just a few days ago, we are in the season of our back-to-school night programs already. Tomorrow, Battle Hill and on Thursday, Union High School. Also before the next meeting Hannah Caldwell and Franklin will have their meetings on Monday, September 16th. I would suggest checking with your building principal or PTA for the times of those programs. Now we will go to our student liaisons.

Mrs. Williams left meeting.

Pedro Torres stated good evening I'm a sophomore at the high school. My commitment as a school liaison is to help create a better environment for me and my peers; acting as a voice to the Board on student issues. I will do my very best to bring their complaints and concerns to the Board along with any successes. I thank the Board and Mrs. Moses for affording me this great opportunity.

Joshua Tidwell stated I am a freshman at Union High School. My commitment as a student liaison is to ensure that the freshman, especially since they are an incoming class, feel that they have a voice in the decisions presented and passed by the Board. I would like to thank the Board, Mr. Tatum and Mrs. Moses for this great opportunity.

Faith Olayinka stated I'm a junior at Union High School. I would like to thank everybody for this opportunity to represent our school. As student liaison I would like to impact the community and our school – making sure each of our voices are heard and we bring new ideas to the Board.

Mr. Tatum stated I want to share this with the Board and I think the community needs to hear this as well. I want to read a letter I received today concerning the district.

“I am pleased to inform you that your district has satisfied at least 80% of the weighted indicators in each of the fire areas of the NJWSAC review process and has been designated as “high performing.” Commissioner Repollet will recommend to the State Board of Education that your district be certified as providing a thorough and efficient system of education, for a period of three years or until the next NJQSAC review. Congratulations on this accomplishment.”

This is the first time in the QSAC review history, as far as I know in Union that we have passed all indicators. We had a second reviewer come in and they recognized that many of the indicators that we have been working on, specifically education, had been met but had not been reported properly during the review process by some of our personnel but we have come to find out and I received again, which I think is a high accomplishment, I want to take my hat off to my assistant superintendents who work so hard in this process, along with myself and the County, for us to have this accomplishment. I think sometimes a bad message goes on out there that good things are not going on in this district and that is just not true. I'm so happy this couldn't have come at a better time because with all the things that go on here – all the positive things – all you ever hear are the negative things. As a Superintendent it gets very disconcerting because I know how hard we work and I know we are here for the children. We are here to do what is right and to comply with State regulations. This is some great news and there are some other things I want to share with the Board later on in closed session regarding another bit of good news that I received today from the State Department of Education. I have been on the phone with the State for a number of incidences over the last couple of weeks and I have been keeping the Board President and Vice President informed of this but more good news to come.

Mrs. Minneci stated I would like to thank our student liaisons – welcome – we appreciate all that you are going to do and thank you for the good news Mr. Tatum. Congratulations to the students, staff and administrators for all that you do and have done to get this great report. Mr. Tatum stated and the support of the Board. The Board has pushed us in a lot of instances. I like to thank the Board for their support as well and sticking with us.

Education/Student Discipline Committee Resolutions

Mrs. Regis-Darby gave a committee update – we had a meeting tonight and we spoke about teacher mentoring program which is teachers new to the district will be getting teacher mentors. This does not come from the budget, they pay for this by themselves and they are being mentored by highly effective teacher within the district.

The school I&RS committee – it is going to run by Nicole Ahern's department and she is the counselor in the high school and this is going to support the teachers to support the students. The school improvement plan committee has been set. The instructional unit plan template is going to be implemented in 20-21 by the State and the last thing is the curriculum guides on the agenda.

Mrs. Regis-Darby presented the Education/Student Discipline Committee agenda.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Nufrio stated E-2 – I&RS – Mrs. Ahern will be overseeing this – is this for the entire district? Mr. Tatum stated she is the district coordinator but there is a person in every school. Mr. Nufrio stated each school must have an I&RS. Mr. Tatum stated correct. Mr. Nufrio stated it certainly has to be one that is actually working and doing the job. I'm still not sure how Mrs. Ahern is going to coordinate all of that – not that she can't. Mr. Tatum stated just like the anti-bullying specialist that we were mandated to put together two years ago when we changed intervention title; what it amounts to is that the counseling department actually at the elementary level oversees the I&RS process, they all report to her by organization. So they are already

doing that. Mr. Nufrio asked how will they actually report to her – monthly? Quarterly? Mr. Tatum stated she coordinates the efforts and she has monthly meetings. Also whenever there is new information coming in from the State – any changes in training that has to take place, it all comes through her office and she is more like the key point person for the district. Of course if there is any other issues that she comes about, the Central Office Administrators are her support. We also get information at our level and disseminate it to her. Mr. Nufrio stated you were already given the list of the members. Mr. Tatum stated yes, they develop that every year.

Mr. Nufrio stated curriculum guides – there is a gentleman in the public that asked and Mrs. Moses I guess you are the point person on this one. Are they available to the public and if so how? Mrs. Moses stated all the curriculum guides are available to the public online at the district website. Mr. Nufrio stated I did tell the gentleman that he can contact you. Mrs. Moses stated go to the district website, click on “education”, click on “curriculum” – once they are approved. Mrs. Hart stated these four aren’t yet. Mrs. Moses stated she posts them. Mrs. Cappiello stated they are on the agenda.

Fiscal and Planning Committee Resolutions

Mrs. Richardson gave a committee update – the committee met today and the first item brought up was F-8, the list of State vendors, and the report will show the items in color so the vendors that are expired could be identified. We also talked about the \$10,000 donation to Franklin School which is exciting. It is very deserving for that school to receive that funding.

Mr. Loessel gave us a briefing on what we are going to talk about next week – the energy savings plan and we will have two vendors present and it will not cost the school district any money; that is another positive thing moving forward.

The Play Unified item is for Special Olympics – we just wanted to make sure you get to read the back-up on that. We talked about the sign-language interpreter and we had a question about that.

Connecticut Farms parking lot – it is coming along very nicely. Mr. Loessel is on top of that as well – with fencing, paint and there will be no more children crossing the street from that parking lot. We couldn’t get speed bumps or different things that we wanted to alleviate people coming off of Route 22 and coming around that bend – it is a blind spot and very dangerous area. It was worked on over the summer time. The principal of that school wanted a little more time when school started to introduce that to the students – so he has that all under control.

Mrs. Richards presented the Fiscal and Planning Committee agenda.

Mr. Taylor stated each Board member should have in their possession a sheet handout by the administration that says there is an agenda add on; that is also for discussion and approval this evening. This needs to be voted on tonight. It will be added as F-12A to the agenda. It came up today, the item is an event at Burnet Middle School on Tuesday, September 17th. Players from the NY Giants will play 60 minutes of active play with students while stressing the importance of staying active to live a healthy lifestyle. Modell’s Sporting Goods will also donate \$1,500 of athletic equipment.

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Richardson stated F-17 – the interpreter – it indicates a flat rate for two hours so if it is less than two hours it is \$175. Is that how the contract is written? Mr. Tatum stated in previous years we have had to do this because we have events where parents in the district need this service. A few years ago we were required at the last moment to hire someone. What we are trying to do annually have someone. The folks are not easy to come by. There are not a lot of people out there doing this particular service. Mr. Brennan stated reading the contract in the back up, it is also the way Mr. Taylor is interpreting it. Mr. Taylor stated it speaks for itself. The billing provision of the contract basically says a flat rate of \$175 for two hours; thereafter, \$70 per hour before 5:00 p.m. and \$75 per hour after 5:00 p.m. They will bill those charges at 30-minute increments. Invoices will be provided to the Board, subject to approval by the Board. It does not exceed the bidding threshold – I don't see a problem with it.

Mr. Nufrio stated in the committee meeting Mr. Loessel indicated that there were four responses for the ESIP but only to submitted information that was appropriate. We are only seeing the two because they submitted the information as opposed to the other two. Mr. Brennan stated there were only two proposals. There were four people that did the pre-proposal walkthrough. Mr. Loessel stated four came out. Mr. Brennan stated two submitted.

Mrs. Ruiz stated F-9 – what exactly are we being asked to approve today – an expenditure? Or a purchase? Because this trip already happened and the kids paid because I'm a band parent. Is this the difference of what we parents paid? And now they are asking the district to pay? I'm not clear. Mr. Brennan stated it is student money. It is not coming out of our budget. Mrs. Ruiz stated all the parents paid a certain amount. It says "paid by funds raised by students" – so we are approving something that happened three weeks ago? Mr. Benaquista stated if you write a check over \$1,000 from student activities, it has to be approved. Mr. Taylor stated this is essentially a ratification of the event. The payment has not been disbursed yet, it authorizes disbursement of funds.

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolution was moved by Mrs. Regis-Darby, seconded by Mrs. Ruiz, for adoption:

F-12A. APPROVE DONATION AND EVENT

Approve donation from Modell's Sporting Goods for \$1,500 of athletic equipment and approve NY Giants/American Heart Association event at Burnet Middle School on September 17, 2019, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

AYE: Mrs. Higgins, Mr. McDowell, Dr. Morgan, Mr. Nufrio, Mrs. Regis-Darby,
Mrs. Richardson, Mrs. Ruiz, Mrs. Minneci

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Operations Committee Resolutions

Mrs. Richardson presented the Operations Committee agenda.

Discussion item – letter from Township of Union Recreation Department requesting update to previously approved Trunk or Treat event. Requesting to add (a) rain date of October 27, 2019 and (b) access to indoor restroom facilities. This item was previously approved and is just being updated with a rain date and access to indoor restrooms.

DISCUSSION:

None

Personnel Committee Resolutions

Mr. McDowell stated that P-1 is to be discussed in executive session and then will be voted on in public once executive session is concluded.

Mr. McDowell presented the Personnel Committee agenda.

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Richardson stated P-10 and P-11 – who is going to be supervising the students? Mr. Benaquista stated the universities have supervisors that come in and monitor their students and they are put with one of our faculty members – like mentoring – while learning they will be student teaching, in this case working with case managers and doing their hours. Mr. Benaquista stated they are required to be supervised by the schools. Our supervisors and principals set them up with teachers that will be working with them.

Residency Committee Resolutions

Mrs. Minneci presented the Residency Committee agenda.

DISCUSSION:

None

Technology Committee

Mr. Nufrio stated there is no report to give; however, Mrs. Paul had told him that all is going well.

Approval of Bills

Bills will be approved at the regular meeting of the Board.

Unfinished Business

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated right now we have 181 days before the school year is over. I am asking that the Board please consider dual language because the best time to learn another language is when students are younger. There is a big connection between reading acquisition for students who are in a dual language classroom and appreciation for our population that we have here in the district. Especially, I'm putting the pressure on the education committee to please consider a dual language classroom for the 2020-2021 school year.

Mr. Nufrio stated it is nice to see Mr. Benaquista back. Mr. Tatum stated it is really nice to see him back. Mr. Nufrio stated because you were not around are we planning anything for the custodians. Mr. Benaquista stated I spoke to them – early October we will get back with them to negotiate. I spoke with John and he is getting dates. Hopefully have it done by the end of October/November. Mrs. Regis-Darby asked can we have those meetings a little later? Mr. Benaquista stated I'll send an email and confirm with everyone.

Mrs. Higgins stated I ran into a friend who is kindergarten teacher and she said they don't have any aides now. She has 22 kindergarteners and she is by herself. Is that temporary? Mr. Tatum stated 22 kindergarteners are not over the threshold. The number is 25. I will talk about some issues in executive session and kindergarten in particular.

Mrs. Williams returned to meeting (7:45 p.m.).

Mrs. Ruiz stated this issue was brought to my attention and I know we considered at our lengthy discussions on the busing policy. We went back and forth about the distance etc. The concern that was raised and it is an issue. We pushed it to 2.0 miles but the problem now that we see is if I live on the corner of the block, you live at the other corner of the block, for example, you might be 2.0 or more and I'm not but the bus is stopping at my house and picking up your kids and not mine and then traveling on. What exactly did we do? How is the district saving money? How is that fair because we are on the same block? I bring it to the Board's attention because it was brought to my attention by a parent and that is who we serve and we serve the children. It is obviously a concern and it doesn't make sense. It is counterintuitive to think I picked up two children on that block and the other two have to figure out how to get to school and I stopped right by their house and the bus is half empty according to the parent because that is the last stop and the bus is going to the school.

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked how many students were eliminated on the bus because of the new policy? How many students did this effect? Mr. Brennan stated I will have to get that from transportation.

Dr. Morgan stated when the policy was changed did we redraw the lines of where the students are picked up? Mr. Tatum stated in some cases there were some bus stops that were changed but for the most part the answer is no. I know the Indiana area there were discussions about that but it dealt with other issues. The 2.0 miles is indeed the State regulation from home. In answer to Mrs. Ruiz question, I received the same email regarding that and I did share it and I did take the opportunity to forward it to the Board President and we thought it would be healthy to have a discussion about this with counsel but not right this moment – it is a student matter – but we can talk a little more about this because there are some parameters under which some exceptions can be made but it is something the entire Board needs to discuss.

Mr. Nufrio stated exception is the key word and if you recall years back, we had a situation where it was very similar to what Mrs. Ruiz described where the next door child was not permitted on the bus. Once Mr. Tatum got a hold of that he did make a request to

transportation. Mr. Tatum stated in that situation we still had the flexibility of 1.5 miles and so forth but again counsel has to so advise.

Mr. Nufrio stated with anything it is still your prerogative to make that exception. I don't think it is a Board decision. Mr. Tatum stated let's talk about it then. Mr. Taylor stated what I would suggest is that we table this discussion for referral to the policy committee to review the recently amended policy which was amended to be consistent with State law (i.e. 2.0 miles for transportation). To the extent the Board wants to consider reverting back to the old way, the administration and it sounds like they were requested already but I want to memorialize it for the record, get some indication on how many students were impacted that fall within that half mile radius (1.5 to 2.0 miles) and also review the policy to see if any discretion the Superintendent is authorized to exercise without Board approval regarding exceptions. I will hold off on comments – pros and cons for closed session and/or review by the committee on that issue. We can do it this week and be prepared to update in closed session next week.

New Business

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated back to transportation – want to give a nice big shout out to Bus #61 – he is doing a fantastic job on that bus and picking up the students in the morning. He is very welcoming to the students – “good morning, how are you?” – he takes song requests from the students so he is doing a fantastic job so whoever is driving bus #61 – last stop is Highland Avenue – he is doing a great job.

Comments from the Public

Ann Margaret Shannon stated President of the UTEA. I want to give a shout out to Nicole Ahern – E-2 – I&RS – unpaid teams in every school – have been active helping students forever. Nicole has done an excellent job with I&RS. I hope we continue to applaud those teams for helping – unpaid teams.

E-5(b) – the drone class – I understand that the drone class needs a high ceiling class at the high school. I don't know how easy it is going to be. I implore you to find a high ceiling room. I don't know if you know this but apparently there is a little problem with the financing and they might want the parents to pay for the drones – I don't know if this is true or not. Hopefully the kids don't have to pay for their own drone kits. I don't know.

As far as the buses, because of this financial situation we are, unfortunately I feel for every parent who has a bus student. I think the question is “has this change decrease the number of buses?”

Cathy Sharpe stated I have been vocal about food service and what a mess it was. For four days now, the food service has gone up at least 100%. The children got macaroni and cheese two days in a row that look like macaroni and cheese and the little guy next to me said “don't tell my mom, but it is better than hers.” For once the kids have a big choice. Even if they order just a bagel – they get the bagel, cream cheese, there is always a vegetable in there, a yogurt – all that in the same thing. The people that are working behind the counter are so helpful to the keys, they make everything look so appetizing and this is on the elementary level. I can

imagine what it is like up further. The kids even get a choice of sandwiches sometimes up to four choices. I really want to say whoever voted for this new company, did a great job.

Mr. Brennan stated thank you for bringing that up because the RFP was a bear to put together but it was worth the efforts.

Michael D'Aminici stated the 2.0 mile thing sucks. I don't have a car. My son is only 7 years old in the 2nd grade – living on the top of Astoria and Indiana Streets. Is he supposed to walk all the way down to Stanley Terrace and go to Franklin School? We were at Jefferson School, you have the Franklin bus over there – you have 30 kids waiting outside for the bus and you only pick up three. Does that make any sense? No. You said two-mile rule. One more block away from Jefferson School is Maplewood or Millburn, where do you get the two miles from? Now you have all these other kids stranded over there and how do they get to school? Then you are messing with everything else – people being late for work, you lose your job, you can't leave the job early; if you don't send your kid to school you get DYFS; you don't pick up your kid then DYFS comes after you. How do you fix the problem? There are a lot of parents affected by it.

Mr. Taylor stated for those of you who are new, customarily the Board will hear all the questions and comments from the public and then respond if they can either through the Board President and/or administration at the end of public comment.

Sadanti stated to piggy back on what he said; that was why we came today. I do appreciate an email went somewhere. I hope that in the future something like this parents could get more of a heads up. We only got the notice three weeks before school opened and that left us scrambling and trying to figure out what to do. We are still trying to make it work.

Rody Martin stated I have a couple of pet peeves and I spoke about them over the last couple of years. One, when I walk in my district as a district leader, Hannah Caldwell and Burnet Middle Schools – whoever is cutting the grass does not clean up behind themselves. What happens, you track the grass into the building. Who does that? They have to clean up behind themselves it makes no common sense. They leave all around the school. That is not smart. We need to get to the bottom of that. I talked about it the last couple of years and it is still nothing happened.

Second, who is this insurance company and I talked about this the last five years, that keeps giving this free solicitation where they are putting the insurance company for life insurance stuff into the packets coming home and it is on Genesis. Are the friends with somebody in the Town? How do they get free solicitation? Who is this insurance company? You go to any of the school websites you click on it and it gives you insurance and it comes home each year in the packets. Somebody has to get to the bottom of that, I don't know who they are. If parents have their own options for insurance but it shouldn't be solicited from the school. It has been going on for five years. I don't know where it is coming from.

I got the reviews about the food as well – that's good but as I suggested two years ago when I was PTO president in Newark – we had nutrition committees – it is a smart thing to do.

Have students from each grade, somebody from the food service department, the superintendent office and they do quarterly meetings to talk about the food. It worked well for those schools in Newark.

Jeff Monge stated a comment on the busing – it is cost benefit. The assumption is that a decision was made to be able to save money. My business mind is you are going to bring out the distance to save money. Where is the money that is being saved? Fifty kids are not getting bused, that is going to reduce the fleet by x-amount and then it is going to reduce the staffing by x-amount so then there is a dollar amount and then you look at the cost benefit of it all. I know for sure that you have some buses that are filled and then some that are empty. That doesn't make any sense to me. I think that is beyond having the conversation as it pertains to concerns like this. Look at the cost benefit because it may not be worth all the hassle when you have situations like this with a parent.

Connecticut Farms – you will hear from the president of the PTA. I actually went over there. You have to talk to the parents. You went through the process and we started this process over a year ago and we said we were going to include the parents and make sure we hear their voices and I know there was a meeting months ago and now you guys are implementing something that the parents weren't even part of the final implementation plan; that is not what was promised to the parents. I know that there was money spent to prepare for that and you guys didn't even speak to the parents about the final implementation plan. I would suggest that you try to do that at least before you start implementing because otherwise you are going to run into some issues.

The engineering program – I just found out – it is three years at the high school. In my opinion a highlight of the high school; my son made a presentation to my wife and I why he should go to the high school and one of the things was the engineering program. I was trying to push as a parent and as a Board member for four years. Now I hear it has been cut and now you only have intro to engineering. Four or five years ago, the high school made State finals for robotics. We were in the paper and all of a sudden we decimated the program. I know we lost the engineering teacher last year but it is the whole thing about going back to the business model. If someone gets hit by the bus, everything can't go to shambles, the next person has to be able to step up. The person should be the program. The program should make the person. What we end up doing here is we pay for people to get their education, masters, all that training and then they leave. There has to be some accountability there. As a district, if we provide those opportunity to learn and be able to get educated, then they have to make a commitment to our district. Otherwise you are not right for this district and we shouldn't be investing in them if they can't invest in us.

The QSAC report – Mr. Tatum are you going to make something official and send out to parents. You should. Mr. Tatum stated it has to be a Board resolution. Mr. Monge stated the Board should because we do get all this negative stuff and it is sickening but with the positive stuff the unfortunate part about it is that it is heard within these four walls and the public needs to hear it. I love hearing about sports scores and all that and that is important but this is extremely important as well. I think you have to put out a press release and let the community know.

Mr. Tatum stated the busing issue – the design behind that was not necessarily to save money. We received a mandate from the State when we started the pre-k program that no child that was in the pre-k program could be bused under 2.0 miles because that money is State monitored and regulated. Our thought was how do you take a 4-year old and put them at 2.0 miles and then take the older children and put them at 1.5 miles. That was the discussion that was held just so everyone understands the origins of that. It was not necessarily about saving money.

The second thing, when we talk about the engineering program, and we had this discussion before, I appreciate the comment about the fact that something needs to be negotiated and in place in terms of retention of staff but I also want you to understand that was not a position that was cut. No academic classes were cut. Unfortunately we still find ourselves in a situation where filling that position has been very difficult. That is really what the issue is here. I know we have budgetary issues but we tried to spare the academic programs. We do have this great program but getting someone who is qualified to teach that course is what we are up against.

Mr. Monge stated fundraising – that technology changes on an annual basis. It is my understanding that person was doing a really good job of identifying grants for the district to go after. If that is a void that is in this district, we need to be able to speak to that and I did speak to Mr. O. and one thing that we talked about was we have the Union Chamber of Commerce. We have people who can sponsor some of these great classes so why not go into our business community to sponsor drones or our classes. It is something that I think we should do and the Chamber is sitting right there. I'm part of the Chambers.

Mrs. Minneci stated Mr. Monge if you could send your suggestions via email to Mr. Tatum, we would appreciate it.

Mr. Nufrio stated I did see something that is before the legislature, a legislation to somehow make provisions for teachers who may not have the actual teaching certification but they have the expertise. You may want to check with the State Department and see where that is going because that could help open the door for more possible candidates. If they approve it we may be able to get the candidates that otherwise not able to get.

Alexander Balaban stated regarding the STEM program in Union – you have a great valuable resource in Union – Kean University; do you partner with them in terms of STEM program? Mr. Taylor stated as I indicated earlier please make your comments/questions, when you are finished the Board will move on to the next speaker and respond at the end.

Mr. Balaban stated I think that we do have valuable resources in this community both business and academic, such as Kean University, I think it would behoove you to partner with institutions such as that. I don't know if you have a STEM lab in the high school, it seems like a lot of districts are heading that way and STEM is being emphasized Statewide.

Regarding the busing issue, has the State emphatically said that you cannot go beyond the 2.0 threshold for all grade levels? Has the State contacted you and said this is a State mandate? If they didn't contact you in previous years, what changed this year?

The other things is grants and Union is able to attract a sufficient amount of grant money and I'm impressed with that and that is great. I don't think you have a particular person designated as a grant's writer. If you do, thank you. I know in some districts it works out and in others it doesn't. I think you are a big magnet just because of the size you are. I'm sure teachers apply for grants and other stuff – good luck in that venue also.

Woman in audience stated the bus situation – I just wanted to know when should we anticipate some kind of solution – a resolution from the Board because kids still have to go to school – we need to figure out a plan and would appreciate swift response.

Laura Detjen stated in working with the Township Committee, I think it is a great suggestion to reach out to the Chamber of Commerce and the engineering department for the resources. I always have to choose what meeting I'm going to – the Township Committee meeting or the Board of Education meeting and they are always on Tuesday. I just wish one person, one organization, let's get together and change and work together.

Although I was disappointed in French/German being eliminated in the middle school level, I am extremely happy about some of the new courses that have been implemented – the African-American History and the Leadership, Financial Literacy. Thank you for approving the program at Kean for a few of us teachers. It will be invaluable to our students.

I am happy that the para situation was resolved but we are still in dire need of so many paras and I hope you approve the substitute list tonight that allows some of the vacancies be filled by substitutes for the time being. There are many teachers giving up their prep period and covering for those paras and substitutes.

The bus situation is dire and that is a safety concern as well. These kids need aides and we need our prep periods. It is important for me to me there for those kids that don't have the aide. I hope swift action is taken on that as well.

Kathleen Brunsmyer stated I'm a happy new member of the staff at Livingston School in our full-day pre-school program. It is awesome, a fabulous program. Former para – I just wanted to say, I can't speak about other schools, but Livingston School, young man who cut the grass, he even picked up all the acorns off the ground so the little guys wouldn't slip and fall on them. At Livingston School they are cleaning up the grass and acorns so way to go Livingston crew.

I wanted to say the same thing regarding the paras. I know we came to an agreement that is not the answer. There are so many students who don't have the person that they need. I again ask you guys to move quickly to try to fill those positions.

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked are we in compliance in terms of the para situation – we are covered and meeting our compliance with that? Mr. Taylor stated we will discuss the para issue in executive session under personnel.

Mrs. Santana stated I wanted to speak about a certain aspect of education that we encountered this week. As many of you know, I'm only in two schools – Kawameeh and Washington and we have to make the parents more welcomed. I know I'm always welcomed when I come into the Admin Building – everyone loves me. I feel that when we get to these doors and I completely understand that you do not want to interrupt instruction, the first week of school is hectic, everybody is everywhere but we cannot turn away parents because you don't have parents that are thick skinned as I am that will still stay there and keep ringing until you let me in even if you tell me I can't come into the building. I want to find the paper that says if you physically have a child that I bore inside that building, you are stopping me from getting in. It is not existing; I'm going in and ringing the bell – unless there is a fire drill, a lockdown but we have to be more parent friendly. All schools – we should want parents in the building. For example, kindergarten assistants – maybe we can have more volunteers in the classrooms. Yes we are in compliance with 25 students and one teacher but maybe an extra set of hands is something that is needed and we might get that if we are welcoming our parents.

Sometimes I feel when we are going through the agenda, I fortunately or unfortunately know things like what I&RS because I have children with IEPs and 504s but maybe we can be a little more public friendly and speak to what exactly the things we are talking about are. You guys know it because you are living it but us as a public could stand to know what is being spoken about.

The dual language – how does that work in other districts? I know Nellis you have been talking about it for years. Would it be Spanish, French, sign language – just be in the high school level. Absolutely right, my first language was Spanish – I learned English in kindergarten and it took me a month to learn it. I love that dual language program.

I know we have a liaison between the Township meetings and the Board of Ed. Can we know who that is because maybe that liaison can help with what Laura was speaking about as far as not having to run from one meeting to another. We should have a seat – not a physical seat at the table as the public but we should be able to address and see what is going on.

As far as Pomptonian, I heard great things but I'm a little saddened that Suehay Monge is not here today. She put so much work and research, legwork and pictures and getting us to that level. Shout outs for Pomptonian but also to all the energy she put into it.

Gianni Guido stated I don't have a lot to say but to piggyback on the food service comment because the food is really good. It is nice to go to lunch and actually have a lunch that is good. I was surprised that they eliminated French and the other languages in the middle schools because I started French in the middle school and I still take it up to now. It helped me a lot by starting in the middle school and now as a senior in high school.

Mr. Tatum stated when you hear a senior in high school saying how good the lunch is because most of the time they are going in a totally different direction.

Mr. Taylor stated in terms of managing expectations, there were a number of questions about the busing/transportation. I just want to reiterate as Mr. Tatum indicated that the change that the Board implemented is consistent and compliant with the law. The 2.0 miles is what the law allows/requires – the Board did not take away or did anything that would be contrary to the existing state of the law.

With respect to managing expectations in terms of timing, as I indicated earlier the committee is going to review the existing policy, the contract with the vendors, data regarding the students and families who are impacted by the half-mile difference and look at the “cost benefit” issues; albeit the cost wasn’t the issue. The issue was compliance with the directive from the State regarding pre-k and then we will call it equity issues as it pertains to older students who are able to walk but happen to give them transportation and the younger students were not allowed based upon the funding source for the younger students. If in the event the Board is going to entertain or make a change in the policy, the bylaws require that there be two readings of a policy. If there is going to be a change, if the committee was in agreement with making a recommendation to the Board, the first reading could be next week and then the second meeting would be in October. There may be certain circumstances as an emergency be declared and we can waive the two meetings but probably it would be a two meeting/two month process to change the policy just as there was a two month to change it in the first place. It wasn’t done overnight, it was a secret, it was done in accordance with the law and existing Board policy for the first meeting and second meeting.

Mr. Nufrio stated Mr. Taylor, you said a directive of the State – it was not a mandate. Mr. Taylor stated I was referencing and paraphrasing what Mr. Tatum indicated. Mr. Nufrio stated if someone asks if it was a mandate. Mr. Taylor stated it was mandate regarding pre-k funding and sources. Mr. Tatum stated it was a contingency. Mr. Nufrio stated right but the rest of the transportation regulations was simply a suggestion. Mr. Taylor stated I haven’t seen it so I was just paraphrasing.

Mr. Nufrio stated they gave you an outline and this is what you could follow. I voted against it. It is a public matter. The point is that it isn’t a mandate as far as what I have learned. It is something that is open for discussion for sure.

Mrs. Santana asked who is the liaison to the Township? Mrs. Minneci stated myself and Mrs. Williams. The Township meetings are the second and fourth Tuesdays and we are the second and third so there is one conflict.

Motion for Executive Session

Moved by Mrs. Regis-Darby, seconded by Mr. Nufrio, that the Board go into Executive Session at 8:30 p.m. to discuss the following subject matters without the presence of the public in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 10:4-12b.

- Pending or anticipated litigation, contract negotiation and matters falling under the attorney-client privilege. FB/OB v UTBOE
- Matters involving employees and terms of their employment and contract.

Please take notice that minutes will be taken of the discussion conducted during the executive session and the Board will disclose the minutes of the executive session when the disclosure will not result in unwarranted invasion of individual privacy or prejudice to the best interests of the Board of Education and provided that such disclosure does not violate federal, state or local statutes and does not fall within the attorney/client privilege.

Action may be taken when the Board reconvenes in public session.

All present voting YES

MOTION CARRIED

The Board returned to public session at 9:56 p.m.

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolution was moved by Mr. McDowell, seconded by Mr. Nufrio, for adoption:

P-1. PERSONNEL ACTIONS

Personnel Actions be approved in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

AYE: Mrs. Higgins, Mr. McDowell, Dr. Morgan, Mr. Nufrio, Mrs. Richardson, Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Minneci

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: Mrs. Regis-Darby, Mrs. Ruiz

MOTION CARRIED

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolution was moved by Mrs. Regis-Darby, seconded by Mrs. Richardson, for adoption:

APPROVE APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION OF EMERGENCY AID APPLICATION

Approve application and submission of the 2019-2020 Emergency Aid application to the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE).

AYE: Mrs. Higgins, Mr. McDowell, Dr. Morgan, Mr. Nufrio, Mrs. Regis-Darby, Mrs. Richardson, Mrs. Ruiz, Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Minneci

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Motion to Adjourn

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Mrs. Richardson, seconded by Mrs. Ruiz, that the meeting be adjourned at 10:01 p.m. All present voting YES MOTION CARRIED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

GREGORY E. BRENNAN
BOARD SECRETARY