

TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION  
WORKSESSION MINUTES – January 14, 2025

NOTICE OF MEETING:

TO ALL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS:

The worksession meeting of the Board of Education of the Township of Union was held on Tuesday, January 14, 2025 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.

Ms. Carbonell called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

Ms. Dixiana Carbonell, Mr. Michael Cohan, Mrs. Elsie Conteh-Mackey, Mrs. Guida Faria, Mr. Ronnie McDowell, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Mr. Greg Nasta, Ms. Chastity Santana, Mrs. Kimberly Scott-Hayden

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

None

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Dr. Gerald Benaquista, Ms. Marissa McKenzie, Dr. Jose Rodriguez, Mrs. Yolanda Koon

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr. Christopher Buggy, Esq.

Mrs. Faria led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance and read the district's mission statement.

Mrs. Koon read the statement required under the "Open Public Meetings Act" that adequate notice was published in The Union County Local Source, The Star Ledger and/or Tap into Union, posted in the Administration Building and the Clerk's Office of the Township; a copy of which is on file in the office of the Board Secretary.

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes will be approved next week.

Communications:

Communications are part of personnel and operations.

Comments from Public:

Joan Pikula from the Township of Union Education Foundation – building community relationships is important, higher achievement for students. She invited families to their spring reception in May.

Superintendent’s Report:

Superintendent Report will be at the regular meeting.

Education/Student Discipline Committee Resolutions:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolutions were moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Ms. Santana for adoption:

E-1. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT OF HIB

Superintendent’s Report of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the period December 19, 2024 to January 14, 2025, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes *(no vote required; for reporting purposes only)*.

E-1A. AFFIRM SUPERINTENDENT’S DETERMINATION OF HIB

Affirm the Superintendent’s determination of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the periods December 11, 2024 to December 18, 2024, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Minneci mentioned with respect to the number of HIB cases the district has, Dr. Rodriguez was going to contact other districts to see how many cases they have.

Ms. Santana asked who are evaluating the people evaluating the teachers. It needs to be fair across the board so that students learn the same in all schools. Everyone needs to be evaluated and it should be discussed by the Education Committee.

AYE: Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Conteh-Mackey, Mrs. Faria, Mr. McDowell,  
Mrs. Minneci, Mr. Nasta, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Ms. Santana, Ms. Carbonell

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Fiscal and Planning Committee Resolutions:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of School, the following resolution was moved by Mr. McDowell, seconded by Ms. Santana, for adoption:

F-7. APPROVE DISTRICTWIDE STUDENT FIELD TRIPS

Approve districtwide student field trip destinations and purposes pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.8, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Cohan indicated a second is not required and asked that someone look into this. Ms. Carbonell deferred this to counsel.

AYE: Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Conteh-Mackey, Mrs. Faria, Mr. McDowell,  
Mrs. Minneci, Mr. Nasta, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Ms. Santana, Ms. Carbonell

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Operations Committee Resolutions:

Mr. Nasta indicated that there was a discussion item. Ms. Carbonell indicated this will be discussed at next week's meeting.

Personnel Committee Resolutions:

Ms. Santana indicated there were no personnel resolutions being approved this evening.

Policy Committee:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following policy was moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Ms. Santana for **FIRST READING**:

**POL-1. POLICY 0164 – CONDUCT OF BOARD MEETING**

Approve Policy 0164 – Conduct of Board Meeting, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

**DISCUSSION:**

Mr. Cohan indicated that this policy was updated to reflect that there would be only one opportunity for the public to speak and that would be at the beginning.

Ms. Carbonell mentioned that more information will be provided at the regular board meeting; committee presentations will be given to the Board and if anything needs to be addressed in the interim, email the Superintendent.

Dr. Benaquista informed the Board that the Chain of Command is being sent out so that if it is building based, you start with the principal.

AYE: Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Conteh-Mackey, Mrs. Faria, Mr. McDowell,  
Mrs. Minneci, Mr. Nasta, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Ms. Santana, Ms. Carbonell

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

**MOTION CARRIED**

Residency Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Minneci indicated that there is nothing to approve, agenda items will be reported next week.

Approval of Bills:

Bills will be approved next week.

Unfinished Business:

None

**New Business:**

Ms. Carbonell - she and Mrs. Scott-Hayden met with three impressive seniors for the position of student liaison to the Board. One will be selected to represent the spirit of Union High School.

Ms. Santana – she is the liaison to Washington Elementary School and she has spoken with the principal and PTA. Pasta Dinner is February 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Comments from the Public:**

Susan Lipstein – Union Ed Foundation – Joan was a teacher in Town. The Ed Foundation has been around since 2001 and is a non-profit 501(c)(3) and all moneys raised are from donations. The date of their spring gala will be May 15<sup>th</sup>. She is waiting on information from Dr. Benaquista regarding grant applications because the district needs to review first. The foundation’s goal is to fund a portion of each grant request.

Elizabeth Gomes, student in district – she attends Jefferson school and if schools are redistricted, she won’t be able to see any of her friends. So she asked that the schools not be redistricted. Dr. Benaquista – there may be a shift of students but until the company gives us the new lines, we don’t know where anyone will go.

Ann Margaret Shannon – asked if there were any other changes in the calendar other than the democratic primary date. Dr. Benaquists indicated he will highlight any changes in his Superintendent Report next week.

New Jersey Hall of Fame – it sounds terrific and she hopes that the district can do field trips there.

Changes in the 5 tier pension could be a great recruiting tool.

Jill Hall – reminder 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade orientation – January 15, 2025. Tom Rich at KMS – “Always Connected” presentation – January 16, 2025. Heights by UHSPAC – Friday-Sunday at Union High School – come support our students.

Kathleen Bruns-Meyers – gave a shout out to all the PTA’s. February 7<sup>th</sup> – Livingston Elementary School – staff relay night at Union High School. Redistricting meetings, please send me an email.

**MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Moved by Ms. Santana, seconded by Mrs. Faria, that the Board go into Executive Session at 7:53 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: personnel; attorney-client privileged matter.

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 10:19 p.m.

MOTION TO RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION:

There being no further business before the Board, it was moved by Mr. Cohan seconded by Ms. Santana, that the Board return to public session at 10:20 p.m.

ALL PRESENT VOTING YES

MOTION CARRIED

Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolution was moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Ms. Santana, for adoption:

E-7. APPROVE APPLICATION FOR NJDOE GRANT AWARDS

Approve application to the following three New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) grant awards: (1) Expanding Access to Computer Science High School Courses, (2) Climate Literacy for Community Resilience, and (3) Esports Industry Career Exploration Grant.

DISCUSSION:

None

AYE: Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Conteh-Mackey, Mrs. Faria, Mr. McDowell,  
Mrs. Minneci, Mr. Nasta, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Ms. Santana, Ms. Carbonell

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Mr. Cohan, seconded by Ms. Santana, that the meeting be adjourned at 10:21 p.m.

ALL PRESENT VOTING YES

MOTION CARRIED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

*Yolanda Koon*

YOLANDA KOON  
BOARD SECRETARY



