

TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION
ORGANIZATION MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 6, 2026

NOTICE OF MEETING:

TO ALL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS:

The organization meeting of the Board of Education of the Township of Union was held on Tuesday, January 6, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. at the DMK Black Box Theater, 1980 Morris Avenue, Union, New Jersey pursuant to notice sent to each member.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY THE BOARD SECRETARY:

Mrs. Yolanda Koon, Board Secretary, called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

FLAG SALUTE:

Mrs. Koon led the Board and audience members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADMINISTER OATHS OF OFFICE:

Senator Cryan administered the oaths of office to the newly elected Board members.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEWLY ELECTED BOARD MEMBERS:

1. Dixiana Carbonell
2. Guida Faria
3. Nancy Minneci

REPORT ON OFFICIAL REPORT OF ANNUAL SCHOOL ELECTION:

Report on the Official Report of the annual school election held on November 4, 2025 as follows (*report only, no vote required*):

Three-year term:	Dixiana Carbonell	8,529
	Guida Faria	9,124
	Nancy Minneci	9,721
	Alexander Balaban	4,329
	Write-in	244

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

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr. Christopher Buggy, Esq.

MISSION STATEMENT – *Empower and Inspire Every Student, Every Day*

Mrs. Cappiello recited the mission statement of the district

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT 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.

ORGANIZATION”

Mrs. Koon informed the Board and public that the Board’s attorney will provide the process for the nomination of office of presidency.

Mr. Buggy read the following from Policy 0152:

“The Board of Education shall organize at its first regular meeting by electing one of its members as President and another as Vice President.

Any Board member may place a Board member’s name in nomination for Board President and Vice President; a second on the nomination is not required. Election for each office will be conducted by a vote when the nominations for that office are closed.

Voting shall take place by verbal roll call vote after nominations are closed. When more than one person has been nominated for a single position, the Board will vote on candidates in the order in which they were nominated.

The person with the majority vote of all of the members of the Board shall be elected. In the event no candidate receives a majority vote of all of the members of the Board, the procedure shall be repeated until someone receives a majority vote of all of the members of the Board.

Officers shall serve for one year and until their respective successors are elected and shall qualify, but if the Board shall fail to hold the organization meeting or to elect Board officers as prescribed by N.J.S.A. 18A:15-1, the Executive County Superintendent shall appoint from among the members of the Board a President and/or Vice President.”

PRESIDENT

Mrs. Koon, the Board Secretary, called for nominations for the Office of President

Moved by Mr. Cohan that Mrs. Scott-Hayden be nominated for the Office of President. No other nominations were made.

ROLL CALL:

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

President Scott-Hayden assumed the chair.

President Scott-Hayden stated it is not lost upon me to remember those who paved the way and pushed me towards excellence in service, education, and making certain to create opportunities for others coming behind me.

With that I thank my mother, who has a Servants heart, the Late Honorable Sheila Oliver who laid a path for women like me and also served as one of my former districts board president and also thank Terri Swanson-Tucker who also served the district in said capacity , I thank her for her district leadership, state leadership under Sheila and her mentorship/friendship.

I get to serve this year with a fellow educator/friend and the first Latina mayor of this great township, Patricia Guerra-Frazier! Let's go!

I thank my husband and my family for sharing me in so many ways and allowing me to do what I love to do and that is serve my community, stand with public sector labor and public education!

To my board colleagues, we as a board have strived to be transparent, collaborative and build trust within our community aa we work lock step with our township and district administration. Under Madam Carbonell leadership, I know we have grown tremendously!

We are still a ship at sail, surviving the storms that come, basking in the victories that we collectively achieved, acknowledging that we have more work to do and yet we are ready, willing and able to continue the path to educational excellence for every student that enters the doors of schools.

When we work together, we build strong sustainable schools where every student sees themselves as an integral part of what makes our schools stand out and thrive amongst the best of them!

If you haven't boarded this vessel of learning, leadership and love, I urge you to come out, get on board, be part of the team and engage in the work that puts the U and I in UNION!

God bless and I humbly thank you as I look forward to my year as President.

VICE PRESIDENT

President Scott-Hayden called for nominations for the Office of Vice President

Moved by Mr. McDowell that Mr. Cohan be nominated for the Office of Vice President. No other nominations were made.

ROLL CALL:

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: Mr. Cohan

MOTION CARRIED

Mr. Cohan congratulated the President for her election, and he looks forward to working with her and the rest of the Board to address the challenges ahead of us and to advance the interests of our students and community.

Mayor Frazier congratulated both the president and vice president on their election and thanked the Board for their service. She indicated that she is looking forward to a collaborative year.

Senator Cryan congratulated the newly elected president and vice president and thanked the former president Carbonell for her services. He indicated there will be a collaborative effort between the Board and the Township and that we will move forward together.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC (on resolutions and all other matters):

Virginia Jeffries – congratulated the newly elected president and vice president and thanked the former president. She asked if the committee meetings will be open to the public and if the meeting dates and times would be posted.

Ann Margaret Shannon – wished everyone a Happy New Year, congratulated the newly elected president and vice president and indicated that she looks forward to a successful 2026.

Kathleen Bruns Myers – wished everyone a Happy New Year, congratulated the newly elected president and vice president and thanked the Board for their service. She also thanked the maintenance department of the district and town for the snow removal. She is looking forward to a happy and successful 2026 and invited the Board members to come read to her class.

REORGANIZATION RESOLUTIONS:

The following resolutions were moved by Ms. Santana, seconded by Mrs. Faria, for adoption:

ADOPT NJSBA CODE OF ETHICS

The Township of Union Board of Education adopts the School Code of Ethics for the 2026 Calendar Year:

WHEREAS, each School Board Member is responsible to read and become familiar with the Code of Ethics for School Board Members; the Code of Ethics became part of the School Ethics Act on July 26, 2001. Questions about the Policy should be directed to the District Board Secretary.

If the Board Secretary is unable to answer the question, you may be directed to the School Ethics Commission from whom you may request an advisory opinion; and

WHEREAS, the following Code of Ethics for Board Members, pursuant to district Policy 0142, is set forth as a guide to conflict-of-interest situations and unethical activity for Board Members.

CODE OF ETHICS FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

- a) I will uphold and enforce all laws, state board rules and regulations, and court orders pertaining to schools. Desired changes should be brought about only through legal and ethical procedures;
- b) I will make decisions in terms of the educational welfare of children and will seek to develop and maintain public schools which meet the individual needs of all children regardless of their ability, race, creed, sex or social standing;
- c) I will confine my board action to policymaking, planning and appraisal and I will help to frame policies and plans only after the board has consulted those who will be affected by them;
- d) I will behave toward my fellow board members with the respect due their office--demonstrating courtesy, decorum and fair play at all public meetings and in all public statements;
- e) I will refrain from inappropriate conduct in public meetings and in making public statements, refraining from any disparagement of my fellow board members or others on a personal, social, racial or religious basis;
- f) I will carry out my responsibility, not to administer the schools, but, together with my fellow board members, to see that they are well run;
- g) I will recognize that authority rests with the board of education and will make no personal promises nor take any private action which may compromise the board;
- h) I will refuse to surrender my independent judgment to special interest or partisan political groups or to use the schools for personal gain or for the gain of friends;
- i) I will hold confidential all matters pertaining to the schools which, if disclosed, would needlessly injure individuals or the schools. But in all other matters, I will provide accurate information and, in concert with my fellow board members, interpret to the staff the aspirations of the community for its schools;
- j) I will vote to appoint the best qualified personnel available after consideration of the recommendation of the superintendent;
- k) I will support and protect school personnel in proper performance of their duties;
- l) I will refer all complaints to the superintendent and will act on such complaints at public meetings only after failure of an administrative solution.

The board shall see that all members of the board receive training in understanding and adhering to this code of ethics and shall discuss it annually at a regularly scheduled public meeting. Each member shall sign documentation that he/she has received a copy of it and has read and understood it.

ADOPT ROBERTS RULES OF ORDER

Approve to adopt Roberts Rules of Order as the official procedure manual to be used to conduct meetings for the 2026 calendar year.

APPROVE MEETING NIGHTS

Approve the schedule of committee meetings, work sessions and regular meetings for 2026 be adopted in accordance with the schedule, appended to the minutes; and be it further moved that a copy be posted in the Administration Building and with the Township Clerk, that a copy be sent to the Star Ledger and the Union County Local Source for publication, and that a copy be sent to Tap Into Union to be placed in the events calendar.

APPROVE POLICY MANUAL

Approve the Policy Manual of the Township of Union Board of Education presently in effect be hereby readopted.

APPROVE DESIGNATION OF OFFICIAL NEWSPAPERS

Approve adoption of the formal resolution appended to the minutes designating (a) the Union County Local Source and the Star Ledger as newspapers to receive notice of meetings and (b) Tap Into Union as the electronic newspaper to receive notice of meetings for 2026.

APPROVE DESIGNATION OF INTERNET WEBSITE FOR OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION

Approve the adoption of the formal resolution designating the Township of Union Board of Education's internet website (www.tups.org) for official notification pursuant to the New Jersey local unit pay-to-play law, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

APPROVE DESIGNATION OF DEPOSITORIES FOR FUNDS OF THE TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION (School Activity Funds)

Approve designation of Connect One Bank, Citizens Bank, Wells Fargo Bank and Unity Bank as depositories for funds of the Township of Union Board of Education as currently maintained, in accordance with the list appended to the minutes.

APPROVE AUTHORIZATION OF DEPOSITORY BANKS TO HONOR AND CHARGE ACCOUNTS OF TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION

Approve authorization of the following depository banks to honor and to charge the accounts of the Township of Union Board of Education and all Board of Education checks and drafts bearing the stamp signature of the Treasurer of School Monies and the President of the Board of Education and that checks and drafts of the various Board of Education accounts be signed by the designated officers, in accordance with the list appended to the minutes.

APPROVE AUTHORIZATION TO SCHOOL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR TO APPROVE PAYMENT OF BILLS BETWEEN MEETINGS

Approve authorization to the School Business Administrator to approve payment of bill(s) between Board meetings on an as needed basis, in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:19-4.1 for the 2026 calendar year.

APPROVE LIST OF FINANCIAL VENDORS

Approve list of financial vendors (including flex-spending, 403(b), 457(b) and ROTH companies, etc.) doing business with the Township of Union Board of Education, in accordance with the list appended to the minutes.

APPROVE GENERAL COUNSEL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION COUNSEL – TAYLOR LAW GROUP

Approve the law firm of Taylor Law Group as General Counsel and Special Education Counsel at an hourly rate of \$190.00 (paralegals \$100/hr.).

APPROVE SPECIAL LABOR COUNSEL – APRUZZESE, McDERMOTT, MASTRO & MURPHY

Approve the law firm of Apruzzese, McDermott, Mastro & Murphy as special labor and special project counsel at an hourly rate of \$190.00, on an as needed basis.

APPROVE BOND COUNSEL – WILENTZ GOLDMAN & SPITZER

Approve the law firm of Wilentz, Goldman & Spitzer, as bond counsel for the district.

APPROVE ARCHITECTS

Approve the following architectural firms: (a) EI Associates, (b) Parette Somjen Architects LLC, (c) Spiezle Architectural Group Inc., and (d) Potter Architects.

APPROVE ENGINEERS

Approve the following engineering firms: (a) Consulting & Municipal Engineers, (b) T&M Associates, and (c) Colliers Engineering.

APPROVE AUDITOR

Approve the auditing firm of Suplee Clooney & Co. to audit the district's financials, not to exceed \$70,000.

APPROVE FINANCIAL ADVISORS

Approve Phoenix Advisors to manage secondary market disclosure obligations for continued compliance with disclosure requirements and Acacia Financial Group for year 2026.

APPROVE INSURANCE BROKER - FAIRVIEW INSURANCE AGENCY

Approve Fairview Insurance Agency as the property/casualty/workers' compensation brokerage service for the district.

APPROVE 504 COMMITTEE COORDINATOR - RETTINO

Approve Vincent Rettino, Director of Personnel, as the 504 Committee Coordinator for year 2026.

APPROVE PUBLIC AGENCY COMPLIANCE OFFICER – KOON

Approve Yolanda Koon, School Business Administrator, as Public Agency Compliance Officer (PACO) for year 2026, at no cost to the district.

APPROVE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION OFFICER – AWARDING CONTRACTS - KOON

Approve Yolanda Koon, School Business Administrator, as Affirmative Action Officer for awarding contracts for year 2026 under P.L. 1975, c. 127, at no cost to the district.

APPROVE CUSTODIAN OF RECORDS – KOON

Approve Yolanda Koon, School Business Administrator, as Custodian of Records for year 2026, at no cost to the district.

APPROVE QUALIFIED PURCHASING AGENT – KOON

Approve Yolanda Koon, School Business Administrator, as Qualified Purchasing Agent (QPA) for year 2026, at no cost to the district.

APPROVE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION OFFICERS

Approve Affirmative Action Officers for year 2026, at no cost to the district, as follows: Isabella Scocozza, as Affirmative Action Officer; Lauren Walker, as Assistant Affirmative Action Officer and Chris Carew, as Affirmative Action Officer for classroom practices.

APPROVE DESIGNATED PERSON – ADA/FACILITY COORDINATOR, INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR AND AHERA

Approve Anthony Cirella, Facility Manager, as ADA/Facility Coordinator, IPM coordinator and AHERA designated person for year 2026, at no cost to the district.

APPROVE TREASURER OF SCHOOL MONIES – TED GEORGIU

Approve Ted Georgiou as the Treasurer of School Monies for year 2026.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Ms. Carbonell – indicated it was a pleasure to work with the Board and congratulated the Board President and Vice President.

Mrs. Minneci – congratulated the Board President and Vice President; she looks forward to working with them. She thanked everyone for supporting her on her re-election and she looks forward to the next three years.

Mrs. Faria – thanked everyone on her re-election. She indicated that it was a great learning experience and everyone was so welcoming. She is looking forward to great work ahead.

Ms. Santana – congratulated the newly elected president and vice president and thanked Ms. Carbonell for her service. She is excited to be challenged and to work together to give the children of Union what they need.

Mr. Cohan – indicated that there are nine individuals on this Board and we speak with one voice. The Board is moving in one direction – the Board’s mission and goal is to benefit the students.

Mr. McDowell – this Board is outstanding compared to previous Boards. Everyone brings something to the table. He indicated that Dr. Benaquista is dedicated and works hard for this district.

Mrs. Conteh-Mackey – congratulated the President and Vice President. She indicated that this Board has a deep commitment to the district and students.

Mr. Nasta – congratulated the President and Vice President and looks forward to working with them. He indicated that this Board is going in the same direction – for our students.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Cohan – indicated the Code of Ethics is a very important resolution. It is the values that guide the Board.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Mr. Nasta, that the meeting be adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Yolanda Koon

YOLANDA KOON
BOARD SECRETARY