

TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION
WORKSESSION MINUTES – November 15, 2022

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, November 15, 2022 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. Williams called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

Dr. Guy Francis, Ms. Marissa McKenzie, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Ms. Chastity Santana, Mrs. Kimberly Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Mary Lynn Williams

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mrs. Yocasta Brens-Watson (7:15 p.m.), Mr. John O’Shea (7:04 p.m.), Mrs. Nellis Regis-Darby (7:02 p.m.)

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Dr. Scott Taylor, Mr. Gerald Benaquista, Dr. Gretel Perez, Mrs. Yolanda Koon

ALSO PRESENT:

Christopher Buggy, Esq.

Dr. Francis led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. Regis-Darby arrived at 7:02 p.m.

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

Mr. O’Shea arrived at 7:04 p.m.

Dr. Francis read the district’s mission statement.

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

None

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes will be approved next week.

Communications:

Communications are part of personnel and operations.

Superintendent's Report:

Mrs. Williams stated next week we will have our Superintendent's Report. Mr. Sherlock Dow is here to give a presentation to the Board regarding a program that will be beneficial to our brown and black boys so you can get the same information that Mrs. Minneci and I got when we met with Ann Margaret Shannon and Mr. Dow for a meeting.

Dr. Taylor stated the Student Spotlight will be from Jefferson School and there will be a presentation by Principal Bossard and Ms. Haikowski, the coordinator of restorative practices will give us an update on EDP is going.

Mr. Sherlock Dow stated he is the President of Zeta Nu Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Alpha Phi Alpha is the oldest black Greek letter organization here in the United States and abroad. He stated that they have been chartered in Plainfield for 66 years.

Our charter is in Plainfield, our service area is Union County – we are able to work with all 21 municipalities in terms of programming for residences of Union County. Only recently we have been able to start working outside of Plainfield and get a lot of kids into our programs.

We have four national programs – every chapter within Alpha Phi Alpha have these programs:

- Project Alpha
- Go to High School Go to College – mentoring program
- Brothers Keeper
- A Voteless People is a Hopeless People

Project Alpha – we are partnering with the education association and we will do a one-day full-day program (8:30-4) with young black and brown males. This is a males only program focused on males 7-12. We have leadership workshops, financial literacy workshops, partnership with the March of Dimes and talk about abstinence, what a health relationship looks like, what a toxic relationship looks like for our boys and how they should be working in terms of being appropriate within those boundaries. Then at 6 p.m. is a banquet for them and their parents and other dignitaries, such as yourself, to partake in this. This will be held at Galloping Hill – February 11, 2023.

We want to capture the students of Union to participate in this and also for them to get the benefits out of it.

Go to High School Go to College is a mentoring program. We target the at-risk population. The students are not necessarily mainstreamed or making honor roll. These are children that are in alternative schools, children that don't think college is them but would like to do trade school, children that have dropped out but have their GED and want to get back in to go to college. We partnered with Union College to have the children go from the mentoring program to Union College. We meet once a month for two hours to mentor them.

A Voteless People is a Hopeless People is a great program. Year one, we were able to contact 2,000 voters and it is non-partisan. Year two, we were able to contact 5,000 and this year we contacted 20,000. This teaches the children civic advocacy. It educates them on why they should vote and why it is important. We also have voter registration.

Brothers Keeper is what we do within the fraternity. That is more from a mental health perspective. This is not typically what we have for the children.

One of our partnerships is with the Securities and Exchange Commission. We have a program on financial literacy called the Stock Market Challenge. It teaches the children about stocks and why it is important. Year one, we give away is \$50 per person to the highest group with the highest return; year two was \$100 and this year it is \$1,000.

Etiquette Development Workshop (January 28, 2023) – the kids come in for a full four-course meal. They learn to set the table, sit at a table, pull a chair out for a woman and we have a certified trainer that comes in to work with the children.

Get Home Safe (May 13, 2023) – this is for the new drivers on how to engage with police, once the police pull you over. Some of us talk about “the talk” – this is more engaging and hands on. We partner with the Plainfield Police Department.

Statewide Phone Bank Call Out (a voteless people is a Hopeless People) – students will spend four hours calling registered voters and remind them to go vote on election day.

Adopt-A-Block (July 22, 2023) – this is community engagement. The children come in and clean up the block. Next year we are attempting to partner with Habitat with Humanities so they can learn carpentry, electrical work, things of that nature.

Ms. Santana stated she loves it; it will be great for the district; but don't forget the females. Mr. Dow stated all other programs includes females except Brother's Keeper. Alpha Kapa Alpha is the girl's program – they are leading an all-girls initiative and I'll have them speak with Ann Margaret Shannon to bring that to the Board.

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked where the funding is coming from. Mr. Dow stated that an MOU would be prepared for the district and year one would be \$2,000 except for project alpha and the stock markets challenge – those have their own individual line items in the budget because they are more involved and year two would be \$5,000 and thereafter. Dr. Taylor stated it would be paid with ESSER funds.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated a parental consent would be needed. Mr. Dow stated the consent is building based and would go through the school. We would have a liaison at the school to work with.

Dr. Francis asked if they would partner with the Union Police Department. Mr. Dow stated that is what they would like to do. We would have a board liaison to help us with that.

Dr. Francis asked what about transportation some people may not be able to drive to Plainfield if that is where it is? Mr. Dow stated we would have to have discussions if that is a hurdle for us.

Education/Student Discipline Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Scott-Hayden presented the Education/Student Discipline Committee agenda.

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Regis-Darby had a question on E-5 – student settlement agreement and same would be discussed in executive session.

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolutions were moved by Mrs. Scott-Hayden, seconded by Ms. McKenzie for adoption:

E-1. AFFIRM SUPERINTENDENT’S DETERMINATION OF HIB

Affirm the Superintendent’s determination of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the periods October 12, 2022 to October 18, 2022, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

E-1A. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT OF HIB

Superintendent’s Report of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the period October 19, 2022 to November 15, 2022, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes (*no vote required; for reporting purposes only*).

DISCUSSION:

None

AYE: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. O’Shea,
Mrs. Regis-Darby, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Fiscal and Planning Committee Resolutions:

Mr. O’Shea presented the Fiscal and Planning Committee agenda.

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Koon stated with respect to the budget, she stated that they issued the allocations per school and principals and departments are in the process of gathering information to come up with their assigned budget.

The Governor’s address is the third Tuesday of February, it is a TBD date. We are putting together preliminaries and we are expecting flat. The Board doesn’t vote until March on the preliminary budget and then at the end of April to adopt the budget.

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolutions were moved by Mr. O’Shea, seconded by Mrs. Scott-Hayden, for adoption:

F-7. PRE-APPROVE DISTRICTWIDE STUDENT FIELD TRIPS

Pre-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:

Ms. McKenzie asked under donations – what is donor choose? Mrs. Koon stated it is a portal for teachers to post their project needs and anyone can donate for that project.

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked if the dates were correct for F-20 – Shared Services Agreement? Mr. O’Shea stated yes, we never signed a contract. Mrs. Koon has advised the administration in Town that we want our own individual program as far as what are costs will be. Certain things were bundled with the Township; we will get our own program.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated F-24 – iReady – you need to review the iReady contract because PD should be embedded in when you resign your contract. Dr. Perez stated iReady is costly; we did have conversations about this because of very high invoices and they were charging us for meetings/training. It is very costly and it opened conversations about looking at something else if iReady doesn’t work for us cost wise. I will look into this again. Dr. Taylor stated let’s do that by January so that we can build something new into the budget if necessary.

Mrs. Brens-Watson stated to look at other systems anyway because iReady is ineffective and I have heard negative feedback from faculty, students, administrators.

AYE: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. O’Shea,
Mrs. Regis-Darby, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Operations Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Minneci presented the Operations Committee agenda.

Mrs. Minneci stated we also have a discussion item – Crossroads requests this every year and it should be added to the agenda next week.

REQUEST FROM CROSSROADS – BATTLE HILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GYM

Request from Crossroads Christian Fellowship to use Battle Hill Elementary School gym for the volleyball/basketball 2023 season for the months of January, February, March and April from 7:00 p.m.-9:30 p.m. every Thursday, beginning, January 5, 2023 through April 6, 2023, in accordance with the information in the hands of each Board member.

DISCUSSION:

It was asked if a Certificate of Insurance would be provided and Mrs. Koon stated yes.

Personnel Committee Resolutions:

Ms. McKenzie presented the Personnel Committee agenda.

Dr. Taylor stated there will be additional hires added next week; we have 8 paraprofessionals to recommend to the Board. Update, between the 8 that we will recommending – we will be up to 13 direct hires for paraprofessionals.

DISCUSSION:

None

Policy Committee:

Ms. Santana presented the Policy Committee agenda.

The following policies were presented to the Board for *first reading* and second and final reading will be next week:

POL-1. APPROVE POLICY 2425 – EMERGENCY VIRTUAL OR REMOTE INSTRUCTION PROGRAM (M)

Policy 2425 – Emergency Virtual or Remote Instruction Program, in accordance with the information in the hands of each Board member.

POL-2. APPROVE REGULATION 2425 – EMERGENCY VIRTUAL OR REMOTE INSTRUCTION PROGRAM (M) (NEW)

Approve Regulation 2425 – Emergency Virtual or Remote Instruction Program, in accordance with the information in the hands of each Board member.

POL-3. APPROVE POLICY 5512 – HARRASSMENT, INTIMIDATION OR BULLYING (M)

Approve Policy 5512 – Harassment, Intimidation or Bullying, in accordance with the information in the hands of each Board member.

POL-4. APPROVE POLICY 5700 – STUDENTS RIGHTS

Approve Policy 5700 – Students Rights, in accordance with the information in the hands of each Board member.

POL-5. APPROVE POLICY 2415.50 – TITLE I – SCHOOL PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Approve Policy 2415.50 – Title I – School Parent and Family Engagement for the following schools (a) Franklin Elementary School, (b) Jefferson School, (c) Burnet Middle School and (d) Union High School, in accordance with the information in the hands of each Board member.

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated POL-1 – it states active instruction; there is no language if we have to go back to some virtual learning for asynchronous versus synchronous learning; there

needs to be a clear distinction between asynchronous, synchronous learning versus active instruction. You need to look at this policy.

Residency Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Minneci presented the Residency Committee agenda. She stated that there was a hearing today and it will be discussed in executive session.

Technology Committee:

Mrs. Brens-Watson gave the following technology update:

- New Chromebooks for middle schools – Donna Restivo managed this project. This included recruiting middle school students to unbox the Chromebooks and separate the device from the charger in preparation of the distribution process. Librarians helped distribute the Chromebooks. Old Chromebooks were collected for 2nd grade students
- Lincoln Tech interns – working with Lincoln Tech to accept four interns in the upcoming weeks
- Esports and Girls Who Code will be presenting at the December Board meeting
- 2nd grade Chromebooks were cleaned and then distributed to Kindergarten; librarians helped with the distribution
- Expanding Wi-Fi for larger bandwidth and more coverage at Union High School

Approval of Bills:

Bills will be approved next week.

Unfinished Business:

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked if Dr. Taylor would be giving a presentation to the parents regarding the assessment the students took earlier in the school year. Dr. Taylor stated the start strong data will be out in a few weeks and he would be presenting in December.

New Business:

None

Comments from the Public:

Ann Margaret Shannon stated thank you for listening to Sherlock Dow; extremely excited and she urges the Board to approve him. UTEA will pay for the project alpha and stock market challenge (\$26,000) programs.

Cathy Arminio stated I had to come tonight to share good news to you. More than 830 people will be touched by the goodness of some Union High School students because the Union High School Interact Club, directed by Dr. Ed Baffa, performed a tremendous act of giving. In junction with the Rotary Club and Hilman Consultants, they held a sock-tober drive. Last year the club collected 1,099 pairs of new socks. This year, the members of the Rotary Club and Hilman, along with caring citizens, donated 492 pairs. Students and families at Livingston School collected 261 pairs. Union High School students donated 912 pairs. These groups all joined forces together and we collected a total of 1,665 pairs of new socks. These socks will be

donated to the Gateway Family YMCA, Elizabeth Branch, where they participate in Code Blue in Elizabeth, as well supportive and transitional housing for men, women and families who will be beneficiaries. The students in the Interact Club and Dr. Baffa are to be commended for their dedication for making our community a better place. Rotary and Interact members take action to make our community better. We contribute time, energy and passion to carryout meaningful and sustainable projects that promote peace, fight disease, provide clean water, support education, help mothers, children and the needy and grow local economies. Our school district should be so proud of these students and their teacher, Dr. Baffa.

David Arminio stated next Monday, November 21st, the fourth class of the Union High School Athletic Hall of Fame will be inducted. There are 10 people from the Class of 1950 to the Class of 2009. The plaques will be placed in the hallway of honor in Union High School; go down there and take a look.

Union's Got Talent is taking place this Saturday, November 19th at Kean University. Twenty acts will perform for over \$2,000 in prize money. The event is presented by the Township of Union, the Douglas Krueger Scholarship Fund, the Union Special Improvement District, Investors Bank, TapIntoUnion, BCB Community Bank, the Red Cadillac and Kean Stage. All the money raised goes to Union High School students scholarships and the arts program.

The semi-quin centennial, our 250th anniversary of the founding of our country, is coming in 2026. The federal government is already making plans. On the State level, the New Jersey Historical Commission and the Crossroads of the Revolution have joined together in a public/private collaboration which has been named "Revolution NJ" to plan events. Union County has been meeting to plan events on the County level. The Union Township Historical Society is offering to collaborate with the Board of Education and hopefully, along with the Township of Union, so that we too can plan some meaningful events in 2026. It is not too early to start thinking about what we are going to do.

Fatoumata Doukoure stated that her daughter has not gone to school, and this is the second time I have come to complain. I have been saying, I have been calling and crying. I don't know if you are hearing what I'm saying. My daughter is home and she is a sick kid. I feel bad for her. The home instruction teacher has only come to our home five times. She sits at the window looking and waiting for her and she doesn't show up. Last week they told me that they found a nurse for her, she has one-to-one nursing, and I asked when she would go to school. Mr. Joe said they are waiting for the Board of Education to approve it. This week I called and asked why they didn't pick up my daughter; they said they can't because the Board of Education didn't approve it. I want to know why? I don't know why? It has been two months.

Dr. Taylor stated this is matter I have been actively working on with Mrs. Conti and I can update the Board in executive session. The matter is something we are not taking lightly. I will absolutely follow-up with our special ed department to look into what you just pointed out so I can verify the accuracy and timeline.

MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Moved by Mrs. Regis-Darby, seconded by Ms. McKenzie, that the Board go into Executive Session at 8:15 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: student matters; update on ongoing litigation.

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.

AYE: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. O’Shea,
Mrs. Regis-Darby, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

The Board returned to public session at 9:01 p.m.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Mrs. Brens-Watson, seconded by Ms. Santana, that the meeting be adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

All present voting YES

MOTION CARRIED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Yolanda Koon

YOLANDA KOON
BOARD SECRETARY

