

TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING
(Board Retreat)

June 11, 2025 – 5:30 p.m.

NOTICE OF MEETING:

TO ALL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS:

The special meeting of the Board of Education of the Township of Union was held on Wednesday, June 11, 2025 at 5:30 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 5:31 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

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

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mrs. Elsie Conteh-Mackey (6:21 p.m.), Mr. Ronnie McDowell (5:32 p.m.)

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

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

Ms. Santana 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.

Business of the Board:

Board Goals:

Board President Carbonell indicated that she sent an email to the Committee Chairs with a template for Board Goals for the 2025-2026 school year; she asked that it be submitted to her by July. Dr. Benaquista needs the Board goals to guide his goals and we would like them to be in place by September.

Board Evaluation:

A link was sent to all Board members regarding the Board evaluation, please complete by July 22, 2025. Mrs. Minneci and Mr. Cohan indicated that they completed the Board evaluation.

Strategic Plan:

Dr. Benaquista spoke about the strategic plan needs assessment school community survey which was filled out by students, parents and staff and he received 2,287 responses. He also indicated that there were two live events for the community. The feedback helped create the Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan has four (4) major goals and objectives:

1. Goal 1 – Teaching and Learning
2. Goal 2 – Facilities and Grades Reconfiguration
3. Goal 3 – Communication and Community Engagement
4. Goal 4 – Staff Excellence and Development

Mission Statement – simple but powerful statement for people to remember – “Empower, Every Student, Every Day”.

Vision Statement - by providing accessible, tailored learning opportunities and robust support systems, all students will reach their full potential.

Tagline/Motto – “It’s All About U”.

He is happy with the way the plan came out. The Strategic Plan was not done in isolation. My team helped in the creation of the plan, along with a lot of input by others.

Board members had back and forth dialogue with Dr. Benaquista concerning the Strategic Plan and the Mission/Vision Statements. Mrs. Faria suggested that the word “and inspire” be added to the Mission Statement and it was agreed to add it to the Mission Statement. Dr. Benaquista indicated the Mission Statement/Vision Statement will be added to the Board’s June agenda for approval.

Mrs. Scott-Hayden suggested that the Mission Statement should be memorized, recited every day at school, and we should live it.

Board members had conversations regarding goals and objectives, professional learning/development. Dr. Benaquista indicated that there will be more objectives as time goes on. He informed the Board that there will be a dashboard that will be updated as needed that holds all this information.

Board members and Dr. Benaquista had conversations concerning the diversity of the teaching staff, staff excellence as the target, teaching staff standards, hiring qualified and prepared educators, importance of student/teacher relationship, student self-esteem.

Comments from the Public:

Board President Carbonell read her statement to the attendees of the meeting concerning public comment.

Virginia Jeffries – she has concerns on all the different colors on Policy 5111 and asked what do the different colors mean. She also indicated that the citations of the statutes - some delete the word guardian and that the statutes are not in the correct order. She mentioned that the strategic plan is a work in progress and she is looking forward for it being approved. Ms. Carbonell indicated that in the future, clean versions will be posted.

MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Moved by Ms. Santana, seconded by Mrs. Faria, that the Board go into Executive Session at 6:37 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: realignment

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

The Board returned to public session at 8:05 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 8:05p.m.

AYE: Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Conteh-Mackey, Mrs. Faria, Mr. McDowell,
Mrs. Minneci, Mr. Nasta, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, 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 Ms. Santana, seconded by Mrs. Faria, that the meeting be adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

All present voting YES

MOTION CARRIED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Yolanda Koon

YOLANDA KOON
BOARD SECRETARY