

TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION
WORKSESSION MINUTES – MARCH 7, 2023 – 7:00 p.m.

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, March 7, 2023 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. McKenzie called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mrs. Yocasta Brens-Watson, Ms. Dixiana Carbonell, Ms. Marissa McKenzie, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Mrs. Nellis Regis-Darby, Ms. Chastity Santana, Mrs. Kimberly Scott-Hayden

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mr. John O’Shea (via Zoom 7:21 p.m.), Mrs. Mary Lynn Williams (7:13 p.m.)

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr. Lester Taylor, Esq.

Ms. Santana led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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.

Ms. Santana read the district’s mission statement.

MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Moved by Mrs. Scott-Hayden, seconded by Ms. Santana, that the Board go into Executive Session at 7:07 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, student matters and legal matters.

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, Ms. Carbonell, Mrs. Minneci,
Mrs. Regis-Darby, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Ms. McKenzie

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

The Board returned to public at 7:56 p.m.

COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC ON RESOLUTIONS (agenda action items only):

Ann Margaret Shannon stated that G-1 should be either voted down or tabled because the grievance procedures are not being followed.

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes will be approved next week.

Communications:

Communications are part of personnel.

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Taylor informed the Board that the district faced many challenges with the budget because of years of underfunding, inflation and supply and demand.

Planning Process – Superintendent/Business Administrator met with each leader – principals, supervisors and directors – December 5-9, 2022. All schools were treated with equity and looked for any overlap.

The leadership team consisting of Mrs. Koon, Dr. Taylor, Dr. Perez, Mr. Benaquista, Sandra Paul and the special services department met January 24-March 3, 2023

The Board's Fiscal and Planning Committee meeting was today and the Board's review was March 1, tonight and March 14th.

Dr. Taylor and Mrs. Koon gave a presentation on the tentative budget. A summary is below:

Expenditure Challenges – extremely difficult events happening:

- Staff and teacher shortages which incurs increased substitute needs and outsourcing for specialized faculty – the district pays salaries in addition to substitute salary.
- Student's increased physical and cognitive challenges – pandemic not only fostered learning deficiencies but also additional special needs.
- Inflation and supply/demand increases – the cost of nurses has increased considerably.
- Costs for contracted services increased drastically in Fall 2022.
- Bus driver vacancies that led to out sourced transportation.

- Extraordinary services and shrinking OT/PT/speech candidate pool for students who require outside support.
- Paraprofessional vacancies that called for contracting service to fill positions with other qualified staff.
- Increased salary cost for all four collective bargaining units.

Revenue Challenges – district cannot generate enough revenue to keep pace with costs:

- A 2% limit on local taxes is below the rate of extraordinary student support costs, transportation, insurance, salary, health benefits and inflation increase.
- State has underfunded school districts for decades.
- Explained the Bank Cap and Adjustments the district is eligible to help close the budget gap.

Current Budget Year – FY23:

- We saw this coming, in October a hold was put on all accounts and increased scrutinization of all purchases.
- Renegotiated outsourced services rate.
- Routed some purchases to ESEA/ESSER grants.
- Reviewed efficiency of shared aides on busses.
- Consolidated bus routes and cut back on expenses for contracted busing services.
- The district may need this current year to pull additional funds from Fund Balance to cover this year’s expenditures.

Addressing the Budget Shortall:

- Reductions in various accounts – Mrs. Koon to prepare worksheets that show Board all scrutinization of accounts.
- Middle school schedules – to be adjusted by 14-minute earlier start (7:49 a.m.) and end time (2:29 p.m.) to cut transportation costs – cost savings of approximately \$500,000.
- Utilize state and federal grants.
- Bringing back behavior technicians (37) that we outsource – it will cut costs in half.
- Personnel – attrition and efficiencies.

Operating Expenditures Snapshot (see presentation attached to minutes):

- Total for 2023-2024 – originally proposed: \$164,742,044;
- Total for 2023-2024 - after proposed reductions: \$155,408,671;
- Total Budget for 2022-2023: \$141,281,748; and
- Percentage change/2022-2023 and 2023-2024: 10.0%.

Budget summary (based on flat state aid):	<u>2023-2024</u>	<u>2022-2023</u>
Total Operating Expenditures:	\$155,408,671	\$141,281,748
Total Revenue:	\$155,408,671	\$141,281,748

The State aid was \$1,781,675 for special education and \$5,702,656 for the equalization aid for a total of \$7,484,331 of additional State aid over last year.

Operating Revenue Snapshot:	<u>2023-2024</u>	<u>2022-2023</u>
Total State Aid:	\$45,949,949	\$38,465,618
Extraordinary Aid:	\$3,500,000	\$1,700,000
Saved funds (fund balance)	\$4,000,000	\$3,645,708
Local Taxes	\$101,603,143	\$97,142, 109

Financial Impact on Residents for 2023-2024:

Total Expenditures General Fund:	\$155,408,671
Tax Levy:	\$101,603,143
Increase for Average Home:	\$150.92

Long-Term Fiscal Health:

- Restructure middle school schedule for potential implementation 2023-2024; high school schedule for potential implementation 2024-2025.
- Continue scrutinizing every requested purchase.
- Intensify recruitment of paraprofessionals and faculty.
- Continue to create programs to keep and return special needs students in-district.
- Continue evaluating efficiency of personnel.

It was stated that the district will try to provide intervention programs, intensify recruitment of paraprofessionals – 34 vacancies and will be looking at all staff to maximize staffing.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated intervention for the middle schools – do it the right way – 4 days per week and 5th day monitoring.

Mrs. Brens-Watson stated regarding 7th period stipends – we need to make sure steps have been taken to not pay stipends for those not working.

Ms. Carbonell stated all decisions must be data driven on how funding should be spent on programs.

Education/Student Discipline Committee Resolutions:

Ms. Carbonell presented the Education/Student Discipline Committee agenda.

Ms. Carbonell stated the numbers were inverted on E-1 and therefore it should be readdressed. Dr. Taylor stated he would reach out to Nicole Ahern. E-1 and E-1A were tabled until the next week.

Fiscal and Planning Committee Resolutions:

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

Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolution was moved by Mr. O’Shea, seconded by Mrs. Brens-Watson, 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:

Mrs. Minneci stated that dress down day fundraisers are contributed by the teachers and asked if students can do something too so they can contribute to those fundraisers.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated the moneys that are donated to the schools, are they being tracked and is it being used for a specific purpose? Mr. Benaquista stated that an account can be added to the specific donations in the future.

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked if back up could be provided regarding F-19 and F-20. Dr. Taylor stated Isabella can provide that next week.

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Grievance/Negotiations Committee:

Ms. McKenzie stated that G-1 (responses to UTEA grievances) will be tabled for further discussion and be brought back at the regular meeting.

Operations Committee Resolutions:

Ms. Santana presented the Operations Committee agenda.

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated O-2 – did we look at other companies to perform the demographic survey? Mrs. Koon stated there were two other companies and this company was highly recommended and he will report to the Board.

Personnel Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Scott-Hayden presented the Personnel Committee agenda.

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked if SEL training could be added to the Security Manager job description. Mr. Benaquista stated we have done many trainings and he will update the wording in the job description.

Policy Committee:

Mrs. Williams presented the following policies for **FIRST READING:**

POL-1 POLICY 7510 – USE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES

Approve Policy 7510 – Use of School Facilities, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

POL-2.POLICY 5200 – ATTENDANCE (M)

Approve Policy 5200 – Attendance, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

POL-3.REGULATION 5200 – ATTENDANCE (M)

Approve Regulation 5200 – Attendance, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked what the update is concerning Policy 7510. Mrs. Williams stated it was discussed that everything needs a written request, signage is being put up and at this time the fence will be repaired. It is not for the public, it is for the students and it was agreed that it would be locked.

Residency Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Minneci presented the Residency Committee agenda.

Mrs. Minneci stated there were supposed to be three residency hearings today. One did not show up; the second we asked the investigators to go out again and the third one is going to submit documents.

Technology Committee:

Mrs. Brens-Watson asked who is covering for Mrs. Paul while she is out. Dr. Taylor stated Donna Restivo and Craig Wojcik.

Approval of Bills:

Bills will be approved next week.

Unfinished Business:

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked what buildings are hosting summer school? Dr. Taylor stated Ms. Scocozza is working on that and we will consolidate buildings. Mrs. Koon stated next year will be tight so the summer programs will need to be consolidated.

Mrs. Brens-Watson asked how are we going to fund the summer programs? Dr. Taylor stated federal grants, there is no ESSER money – just Title I money so it is only for Title I programs and students.

New Business:

Ms. Santana stated the outstanding school lunch debt is around \$250,000. We are working on putting strategies in place; before school it was around \$15,000. I will report monthly on this.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated she visited Hannah Caldwell Elementary School and there is a sign that says “no dogs allowed”; it should say “except a service dog”. Mr. Taylor stated call Dr. Taylor instead of bringing this to a Board meeting. Dr. Taylor stated I would like the sign taken down.

Comments from the Public:

Kristen Nunes stated we have horrible substitute coverage, students can’t even go out for recess because there is no one to cover. Can administrators help out?

Ann Margaret Shannon stated thank you for tabling G-1. The Stock Market Challenge is March 9th and she is working with the NJEA for professional development on social justice.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Mrs. Regis-Darby, seconded by Mrs. Williams, that the meeting be adjourned at 9:13 p.m.

All present voting YES

MOTION CARRIED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Yolanda Koon

YOLANDA KOON
BOARD SECRETARY

