

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, April 14, 2026 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. Scott-Hayden called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

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

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mrs. Guida Faria (7:15 p.m.)

ADMINISTRATORS' PRESENT:

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr. Christopher Buggy, Esq.

Mrs. Conteh-Mackey 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 at the Board's regular meeting.

Communications:

Communications are part of personnel and operations.

Comments from Public (on resolutions in **BOLD** and ALL MATTERS):

Mrs. Scott-Hayden - thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting and that the Board values their input and appreciates their time. She reminded the audience that all comments are to be respectful and constructive, and to refrain from calling out and yelling. The Board is unable to engage in back-and-forth dialogue; however, your comments will be reviewed and considered, and if feasible, the Superintendent or designee will provide a response at a later date.

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

Jill Hall advised the Board that the counseling department has taken on more responsibilities than ever, to name a few, group counseling, orientations, testing, letters of recommendation, attendance at IEP meetings, HIB reports, setting up college visits, safe space, remediate student conflicts, academic check ins, DCP, home instruction, advocate for students, safety checks, programs, coordinate assemblies. She indicated that they would continue to do what is asked of them.

Susan Lipstein – E-7 – grants – there are terrific grants and they have worked very hard to get donations. She is very proud of this community who supports the Ed Foundation. All the money donated goes back to the students in the district.

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Benaquista introduced Lisa from Fairview Insurance, who gave a presentation on the No Surprise Act regarding health benefits. She indicated to view the YouTube video explaining the cost driver of the No Surprise Act https://youtu.be/6E_HRECI-t8?si=-asPNlgWqMs1NO4H - presentation appended to minutes.

Dr. Benaquista asked Lisa to attend the Board's regular meeting of April 30th to present again.

Education/Student Discipline Committee Resolutions:

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

E-1. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT OF HIB

Superintendent's Report of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the period March 25, 2026 to April 14, 2026, 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 March 18, 2026 to March 24, 2026, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

E-8. APPROVE ASSEMBLY – BURNET MIDDLE SCHOOL

Approve assembly of a performance of the Letters from Anne and Martin from the Anne Frank Center in NY, through the Kean's Holocaust Resource Center/Diversity Council, on April 17, 2026 for all 8th grade students in the district at Burnet Middle School auditorium at 10:00 a.m., at no cost to the district.

E-9. APPROVE CONTINUATION OF SUSPENSION AND HOME INSTRUCTION

Approve continuation of suspension and home instruction for students #266543, #285026, #285024 and #316008 from the general education program.

All other resolutions will be presented and voted on at the next Board meeting.

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

Fiscal and Planning Committee Resolutions:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolutions were moved by Ms. Santana, seconded by Mr. Cohan, 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:

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

Mr. Cohan explained F-B7 and that the district did not reach 90%.

Board members had conversations with administration concerning SEMI. Dr. Benaquista indicated that they would have Special Services attend the next meeting.

Operations/Technology Committee Resolutions:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolutions were moved by Mr. Nasta, seconded by Mrs. Faria, for adoption:

O-2. REQUEST FROM UHSPTA SENIOR COMMITTEE

Approve request from the UHSPTA Senior Committee for the Board to waive the in-house transportation fee for the UHSPTA sponsored UHS Senior Pool Party, May 26, 2026, from 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. (with a rain date of May 28, 2026) at the Cranford Pool.

O-3. APPROVE CLUB PILATES UNION TOWNSHIP - TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK

Approve Club Pilates Union Township to provide a Pilate class to teachers for Teacher Appreciation Week on May 4, 2026 (3:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m.) at the Burnet Middle School gym.

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

Personnel Committee Resolutions:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolutions were moved by Mrs. Conteh-Mackey, seconded by Mr. Nasta, for adoption:

P-4. APPROVE CHAPERONES – UHSPAC BOSTON TRIP

Approve the following chaperones for the UHSPAC Boston, MA trip, April 23-26, 2026 with Worldstrides:

1. Carlos Esquivel, Director/Chaperone
2. Melissa Hannon, Director/Chaperone
3. Rich Grennor, Director/Chaperone
4. Ashley Carr, Director/Chaperone
5. Constance Novoa, Nurse/Chaperone
6. Paul Campbell, Chaperone
7. Ron Rago, Chaperone
8. Aaron Hannon, Chaperone
9. Karen Rago, Chaperone
10. Diane Esquivel, Chaperone

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

Policy Committee:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and the Policy Committee, the following policies were moved by Mr. Cohan, seconded by Ms. Santana, for **FIRST READING**:

POL-1. POLICY 0142.1 - NEPOTISM

Approve Policy 0142.1 – Nepotism (M), in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

POL-2. POLICY 3125 – EMPLOYMENT OF TEACHING STAFF MEMBERS

Approve Policy 3125 – Employment of Teaching Staff Members (M), in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

POL-3. POLICY 4125 – EMPLOYMENT OF SUPPORT STAFF MEMBERS

Approve Policy 4125 – Employment of Support Staff Members (M), in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Cohan indicated that there were concerns with the new language originally added to Policy 0142.1 and the Board reviewed the policy again and developed additional language to be added.

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

Residency Committee Resolutions:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. Minneci reported on the following residency investigations.

R-1. REPORT OF STUDENTS TRANSFERRED TO DISTRICT OF RESIDENCE FOLLOWING RESIDENCY INVESTIGATIONS

For informational purposes only (no vote required): The following residency investigations were completed, and the listed students were transferred to the appropriate district of residence:

Student No.	School	Grade
#310048	Burnet Middle School	6 th
#350066	Battle Hill Elementary School	3 rd
#321082	Kawameeh Middle School	6 th
#276575	Union High School	11 th
#266627	Union High School	11 th

For informational purposes only (no vote required): The following totals are as of the March 24, 2026 Board meeting (2025-2026 school year):

	Total	Elementary	Middle School	High School
Students Removed:	0	0	0	0
Students Transferred	13	6	1	6

Approval of Bills:

Bills will be approved at the Board’s regular meeting.

Unfinished Business:

Ms. Santana - the wrestling team did well and the end of year banquet is April 28th. It is now baseball season.

Mrs. Minneci – attended the LES book machine ribbon cutting. She thanked Ms. Scocozza for bringing the machine to the district. She also attended TREP\$ - it was a nice turnout and our students are amazing.

Mrs. Minneci reminded Board members that they need to respond to the Hall of Fame invite. She also indicated that LES will be having a tricky tray at the VFW on April 18th.

Ms. Carbonell – thanked Ms. Bruns Meyers for always attending events in the district. She gave a shout out to Dr. Benaquista and his leadership team – there is a lot of celebrating in our district.

Mr. Cohan – attended opening day of the Union Little League – which was also it's 73rd season anniversary. The field was dedicated as Jim DiGiovanni Field at Hall Stadium in honor of Jim DiGiovanni.

Mrs. Scott-Hayden – she was the guest speaker at the NAACP and indicated great things are at our schools. She indicated that the Vauxhall Farmers are happy to hear of a neighborhood school and invited them to the Board meetings.

Mr. Lester Taylor arrived at meeting 8:19 p.m. and Mr. Buggy left meeting.

New Business:

Ms. Santana – attended the Franklin parent night and she listened to all who spoke. She indicated she supports Dr. Benaquista; parents are upset. She also attended the Washington PTA meeting. She indicated that the parents were concerned with the new lines.

MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Moved by Ms. Santana, seconded by Mr. Nasta, that the Board go into Executive Session at 8:25 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: students; HIB appeal

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: 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

The Board returned to public session at 10:04 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. Carbonell, that the Board return to public session at 10:04 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

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 10:04 p.m.

All present voting YES

MOTION CARRIED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Yolanda Koon

YOLANDA KOON
BOARD SECRETARY

