

**TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION
PLANNING SESSION AGENDA
AUGUST 26, 2021**

NOTICE OF MEETING:

TO ALL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS:

The planning meeting of the Board of Education of the Township of Union was held on Thursday, August 26, 2021 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.

Mr. McDowell called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

Dr. Guy Francis, Mr. Ronnie McDowell, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Dr. Kalisha Morgan, Mrs. Nellis Regis-Darby

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mrs. Yocasta Brens-Watson, Mr. John O'Shea (arrived 7:07 p.m.), Mrs. Kim Ruiz (arrived 7:07 p.m.), Mrs. Mary Lynn Williams (arrived 7:09 p.m.)

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

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

Mrs. Minneci led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. McDowell read the statement required under the "Open Public Meetings Act", a copy of which is on file in the office of the Board Secretary.

Dr. Morgan read the district's mission statement.

Comments from Public on Resolutions:

None

Communications:

LETTER OF RESIGNATION – PHILLIPS

Letter of resignation from Patrick Phillips, music teacher-Union High School, effective August 5, 2021.

REQUEST FOR LEAVE – ROBERTS

Request for paid child rearing leave followed by unpaid FMLA/NJFLA (concurrently) from Monika Roberts, school Counselor-Livingston Elementary School, September 17, 2021-February 25, 2022.

Personnel Committee Resolutions:

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

P-1A. PERSONNEL ACTIONS – NEW HIRES

Personnel Actions-New Hires be approved in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

P-1B PERSONNEL ACTIONS – EXTRA PAY

Personnel Actions-Extra Pay be approved in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

P-1C. PERSONNEL ACTIONS – TRANSFERS

Personnel Actions – Transfers be approved in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

P-2. ACCEPT LETTERS OF RESIGNATION/RETIREMENT

Accept letters of resignation/retirement from the following staff:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Eff. Date</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Notes/ Corrections</u>
Patrick Phillips	Teacher of Music	UHS	8/5/2021	Resignation	Effective date used is date letter was submitted.

P-3. APPROVE LEAVES

Approve leaves for the following staff:

Name	Position	Location	Leave Dates	Leave Type	Notes/ Corrections: All tentative approvals are pending required documentation.
Monika Roberts	School Counselor	Livingston	9/17/2021-2/25/2022	Paid Child Rearing Leave followed by Unpaid FMLA/NJFLA (Concurrently)	FMLA/NJFLA (Concurrently) entitlement not to exceed 12 weeks.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Benaquista stated a P-1C has been added because of transfers – to fill a vacancy from a late retirement – it is on the handout – to cover a vacancy in Hannah Caldwell. Mr. McDowell stated that will be added to the personnel resolutions.

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked is there a replacement for the music teacher at the high school? That is a hard position to replace. Mr. Benaquista stated there is a replacement but it will take a while to get the hire because leaving a district to come to us – Mr. Rago was able to get replacements. Mrs. Regis-Darby stated this person will be certified. Mr. Benaquista stated yes. Dr. Taylor stated I have been holding everyone to 60 days so we can find a suitable replacement. I appreciate that the Board is taking action tonight. Mrs. Regis-Darby stated this employee will be missed – he went through the entire school system here. It is sad to see that he is leaving us. Mr. Benaquista stated he did a great job with the elementary kids as well as the high school kids with the play. Mrs. Ruiz stated the high school kids are hurt over this one. Mr. Benaquista stated when I spoke to him, he is taking a chance while he can to continue his career path. If we are lucky, we will get him back. When you are young, you have to give it that try and do it. He left on a good note. He obviously wanted to work full time at the high school. He loved working with the kids. He was a phenomenal student of ours and a big part of that production when he was with us and we will keep in touch. The one great thing about Union is people do come back. Maybe he will be very successful because he has a lot of talent but maybe not – it is a tough field to make it in. I'm sure he will give back to our students in other ways while he is out. He is a great person. I wish him luck like you do. He is another one of our successful graduates.

AYE: Dr. Francis, Mrs. Minneci, Dr. Morgan, Mr. O'Shea,
Mrs. Regis-Darby, Mrs. Ruiz, Mrs. Williams, Mr. McDowell

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Discussion Items:

1. Board Retreat 2021 – Dr. Taylor stated Ronnie and I have talked about the necessity of getting us together to talk about Board goals, dynamics, ways we can work better than we do now.

Yesterday I took the leadership team on a retreat to Kean and Dr. Repollet gave us a beautiful space in the North Avenue Administration Building – top floor – so I can potentially seeing us do something like that.

We also discussed bringing an outside party to help facilitate the retreat so that there is an unbiased entity stepping in. Who that person would be is dependent upon the Board and myself to discuss. There are various organizations and I do have people in the field that do that and Dr. Morgan you probably know people as well who are consultants that do this work. I want to be frank and transparent with the Board and say I am not keen on the School Board Association because that area I'm not sure if they are experts. Mr. O'Shea stated I used them in other districts and I consider them worthless. We need a professional organization. Dr. Morgan stated we need someone who is familiar with a district like this – we are suburban/urban – our demographics have changed.

Mr. McDowell stated I thought it was a great idea. For me I see it as a way to build the unity among the Board members to get to know each other a little better than we do. For me, the

important thing is to build trust among each other. I hope we can do this without the public, no offense because you have every right to be there. It will be a quorum so the public has the right to be there but I want the public to understand that no business will be conducted, no resolution presented or passed. It will be for our own development as a Board and intellectually and relationship wise. I think Dr. Taylor came here as the relationship died; that is what he works with and depends on and I think it would be good for us to take that same route and path to try to develop a good cohesive working Board for the sake of our district.

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked when will this happen? Mr. McDowell stated that is what we need to talk about. Dr. Taylor stated like in the strategic planning and steering committee of which there are 3-4 members in this room, will likely have the strategic plan goals that we will be bringing to the community by late October and if the Board is to align its goals with the strategic plan goals, then I would suggest late October or November.

Dr. Morgan stated I'm wondering if you should push it back because certain Board members won't be here. Mr. O'Shea stated you two have experience on the Board and aware of what the good points are. I'm only here the first year and I'm sure there are a lot of things that you know about – what's working and what needs to be worked on. Give us that expertise. It is like an exit meeting. This is where we stand, this is what you should look at or develop.

Mrs. Ruiz stated I'm not necessarily opposed to it but I was thinking along the same lines – counterproductive for us but I get your position.

Mr. McDowell stated I agree with Mr. O'Shea. I think you have the knowledge and experience that can still benefit the Board and the district – your feedback, suggestions. It will be a value to the Board and the district.

Dr. Taylor stated it is common practice for Boards to do this annually. We can have another in the spring. Mr. O'Shea stated that is a good idea. Dr. Morgan stated it is usually before the school year starts but I understand what you are saying about waiting for the strategic plan.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated October? Mr. McDowell asked are we looking at during the week or on a weekend? Mr. O'Shea stated I have been on retreats and we did one for the whole weekend – never again. But you want to have it last 6-8 hours. One day is enough. Mr. McDowell asked will everybody be comfortable with a Saturday – set aside 6-8 hours? Mrs. Minnici stated I rather split it into two days. If we have to I will.

Dr. Taylor stated the retreat went from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and we had Kean dining service serve breakfast, lunch and two coffee breaks and that was sufficient. Mr. McDowell stated we can agree to start at 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. and see where we end up. What about Saturday, October 23rd? It would be a good idea to have it at Kean and they can do the same thing. Dr. Taylor stated that would be great. I will work with Ronnie to talk about the consultant and other details. Dr. Morgan if you have any input, I would like to get an email from you about consultants in your circle.

2. Affirmative Action Complaints – Board Attorney – Mr. Taylor stated this is more of an FYI. I'm letting the Board know that I let Ronnie in on an idea to have our Board attorney take over investigations that come to the affirmative action officer's attention. Every district has to have an affirmative action officer but I'm coming to find that we tend to go to outside counsel to do investigations any how so that we have an unbiased perspective on these issues. My suggestion is that we go straight to the attorney; while still having an affirmative action officer in house who would be the organization and the person who collects the materials and dealing with the appeals and what nots. Are there any concerns?

Dr. Francis stated I have a concern with that. Past history has shown that the Board attorney is bias at times. Sometimes they get wrong information. I like the fact that we have an outside person who doesn't know what is going on in our district to get a sound unbiased information. I have seen it with Paul Griggs and Vito Nufrio and that is why we have the issues we have.

Dr. Taylor asked are you opposed to using an outsider to come in or is your concern about the particular? Dr. Francis stated I think we should go outside. You can have a relationship with a law firm but staying with our attorney because he is sometimes bias. They know what is going on. If there is another case that involves certain other employees, then they have their bias and I don't want that. I rather see someone who doesn't know our employees, our administration and can make a decision based on the information they collect. Mr. McDowell stated so other than Florio et al. Mrs. Ruiz stated a separate law firm. I have seen this before where entities would bring us in strictly to do the investigations. So when an issue would come up, the firm would do the investigation so we are out of the mixture. You don't have to necessarily go with a bigger firm. Mr. O'Shea stated what you are talking about is conflict because the nature of our present firm, knowing everything and anything going on. You want someone that is unbiased. We should hire a conflict attorney. Meaning they have no relationship with the district. I think we should go out for an RFP on that.

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked what would be the rationale for keeping present counsel? Mrs. Ruiz stated they would handle the other stuff. Mrs. Ruiz stated even if we loved our attorneys, we should still have a separate counsel that handles affirmative action because they should be a complete neutral so they are not bringing in any of the background knowledge that they have into the investigation and not formulated opinions or asking leading questions; just gathering information. It would be an employment law firm. You don't need a huge national law firm. You can use a firm that specializes in that. Mrs. Minneci stated we have had that in the past.

Mr. McDowell stated so one firm that is all they would do and keep them on retainer or per case. Mr. O'Shea stated we are appointing them for "as needed" for the year. Dr. Taylor stated I would do my due diligence on your behalf to track costs to see if we are starting to spend too much money for outside counsel. Mrs. Ruiz stated an RFP would be a good start.

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked how soon would you like to start with this RFP process? Dr. Taylor stated next week I will talk to Yolanda. Mrs. Koon stated I'll start working on it this weekend.

Mrs. Ruiz asked do we have a round about idea of on average how many affirmative action complaints we see in this district per year? Will this firm we handling 35 cases a year or 2-3. Mr. Benaquista stated the last year and a half have been skewed because of COVID but we have had some filed during that time. During my close out – my HR meeting to get prepared for this year, I had legal counsel help me present on some of the issues we have been dealing with. We did a more extensive understanding of a complaint filed and what is the difference between harassment, and something classified as affirmative action – both are wrong. Most of our complaints fall under harassment – still wrong – can't happen in the workplace but they file it under affirmative action complaint. It doesn't meet any of the protective classes but harassment is still there. You don't just turn away and not look at that – we have to correct that. I would say not just affirmative action, if you feel it needs to be outsourced, the little ones we can handle to reduce costs. There were years I did 35 investigations. I have probably done since 2015 – at least 100 investigations. Some are little and just needed to be documented some I spent my first couple of weeks on the job. Mrs. Ruiz stated that is more the reason to outsource it because all those investigations take time away from the work Mr. Benaquista should be doing but can't because he has to do these investigations.

Mr. Benaquista stated one thing I can say negative, sometimes you need to know the heartbeat of our district to truly investigate; an outside person comes in and after all the investigation the answer was PD. That school was doing PD to have the staff work together for months, it is deeper than that and that issue continued and grew into another issue. In certain circumstances, I think if we are going to hire outside counsel to be non-bias in interviewing and investigating, I think they have to have some background on possibly why this issue started and it is just valuable information. You go in there blind and you speak to people, it could be the last person you speak to that influences you the most.

Mrs. Ruiz stated that is part of the investigation, providing background. Mr. Benaquista stated they didn't even ask me – so to me it was a waste of money in my mind.

Mr. O'Shea stated I do feel that Mr. Benaquista has a good point. Let's find out first what the landscape is before we bring anyone in as an independent. If we can do a resolution and take care of things in house and clear, there is a big savings. If there is something really major, then that is when we bring that person in. When you and Mrs. Koon sit together, draft the establishment of the umbrella that we want that outside concern to look at an investigation especially if it is affirmative action. If it is harassment, we are talking something totally different here.

Mr. Benaquista stated we are talking about the backend of something – we have to talk about the issue. These things should be minimal and we have had too many ongoing things personnel wise happening and I think we need to work with leadership within the building on little daily things that end up triggering these big things.

Dr. Morgan asked what do you mean by big things/little things? Why isn't this handled at the building level before it even gets over here? What is going on with the building leadership that they can't seem to manage their teachers or employees before it gets over here? Mr. Benaquista stated sometimes things are happening behind the scenes – administrators are not all

on social media; things are happening between staff members and little things explode in the building.

Dr. Morgan stated many administrators should know the culture and climate of their building; they should know the pulse of what is happening in their building. I don't think something exploding on social media is never a shock – you kind of know what is happening whether or not you choose to own it is up to you. Mr. McDowell stated sometimes a large part of the issue has to do with the administrator then you have a much larger problem to deal with. If it is something between two teachers, then the building administrators should be able to work that out.

Mr. Benaquista stated we need to send stronger messages that it is not going to be tolerated. Dr. Morgan stated absolutely. Mr. Benaquista stated they are making choices when they come to our district to work and the people that are coming that cause the problems are making that decision. We shouldn't worry about that; we should just deal with it. Over time, things just kept growing and being allowed to happen. It is not just one group, sometimes administrators are in the middle of it. As a district, I think there have been years that it has been allowed; people have been empowered to do things way outside their responsibility and not even pertaining to their job.

Dr. Morgan asked was any of this addressed during their administrative retreat? Mr. Benaquista stated one of the main things we talked about the heartbeat and knowing what is going on. Dr. Taylor is doing this from his expertise from his experience. A lot of it resonated from what we need too. I spoke at the end of June about walking and being visible and I said if you want to know something, if the teacher is working, I don't want to hear that you are sending someone to check up and see if that person is working – I want you getting out of your seat and walking the building; do that daily. Dr. Taylor spoke about being visible, being out and knowing what is going on. You just brought validity to what you might hear – your eyes saw it.

Dr. Taylor stated the Board is going to get a very detailed email and it includes the agenda of the retreat. The bottom line is spent the day with the team laying out my expectations and that is one of them – be visible.

We actually read a book about “Lincoln on Leadership” – I gave you a copy. We actually looked through the lens of Lincoln style. The very first thing they did was an activity that had me trying to get people to realize how important it is on a team level to confront each other when there are issues and not walk around each other. I said I will not tolerate you not working things out with each other professionally. There were activities around that. I think when we establish a culture at this level, it will feed its way down to the weeds. There will always be issues and there will be affirmative action complaints, bias claims.

Mr. McDowell stated what we will agree to is an RFP for a law firm to handle cases that we send them – something that Dr. Taylor or Mr. Benaquista decide that it is deep. Mr. O'Shea stated a recommendation of the Superintendent. Mr. McDowell stated we can handle in-house – come through here first and we'll decide if we should go to the law firm.

3. Jefferson School conversion to elementary school – Mr. Taylor stated one of the responsibilities I was delegated to fulfill is the reorganization of our elementary school structure, including the move away from a central 5th grade to a more community model. I met with the Vauxhall committee last week and it was an amazing learning experience for me. There were a lot of veteran residents who lived there for generations and who really talked about what the history is about. Ronnie did one more great thing for me and he gave me the 2007 reunion program which includes a two-page history of Vauxhall which I found fascinating. What I came to understand, and I heard in about May or June I heard something needed to be done, but you need to be careful and listen to the community.

When I read the history and met with the Vauxhall residents, I got a real emotional internal feeling that this is something that we have to take very carefully down the road to process and with a lot of community input. I want to share with you my thinking. There are two needs that I was told I had to consider and I certainly believe are valid: (1) to return to a community school model – there are a ton of research out there that shows the importance of having kids, families, guardians feel connected to their local school. Ronnie and I had an hour and half conversation in my office and you were telling me about the neighborhood and the time spent in the playground; they are connected memories. Returning to the community school is very important for the health and wellbeing of our kids.

The second thing is, as the Board is aware, we would incur, if we change our transportation route to prek-5 model.

The history of Vauxhall School – built in 1914. We were a segregated community and the desegregation started in the 60's and it got resolved several years after the Board had to give up its efforts to integrate and the Office of Civil Rights stepped in and said you need to take more action. The Board back then had a volunteer system – families in the Vauxhall neighborhood that were willing to send their kids to other schools were welcomed to do so and mostly white students were the ones that fled Vauxhall. I used fled because that is the phraseology we use and it didn't do anything. So that is when the Board was forced to create some other alternative program – Jeff 6 came about and then Jeff 5. I got a heavy dose of history and what this told me was we have to take this thing carefully, slowly and surely. I have to be mindful as the chief instructional leader that we don't fall back into segregation and/or leave the Vauxhall community where it was in the 60's – dry of resources, diverse faculty and support staff.

I started to look at demographics. Our total district, and our Education Committee is going to get an email and more detailed demographic information, is 42% black, 26% Hispanic, 18% white and 8% Asian, 4% multiple and the rest Hawaiian, native American, pacific islander, Alaskan native.

I broke it down by school and the Education Committee is also going to get a chart that shows the social economics status of our kids in separate schools. Which school do you think has the most free and reduced lunch kids? Franklin – 52%. Which school had the least? Washington – 23%. We know all these things. The thing I need to do is to take this which shows imbalance in Franklin numbers but by January/February what would happen to the

demographics schematic if I moved all the kids back to their home schools? And what would I do? The Education Committee is also going to see a demographic layout of our staff and employees. You will see where the disparities are – Black, Hispanic, Asian staff as opposed to students. I will do the same thing with the staff if I was to move staff around, and how that would impact staffing. I have to be mindful of the history and begin as soon as October by holding a forum at Jefferson for the community. It will be open to anyone but for start – the Vauxhall community. I may do this via Zoom depending on what our infection rates are looking like. I could do it hybrid to get more people involved. If I need a follow-up, I can hold it in November. The purpose is to listen to things that I may not have caught by the Vauxhall Committee and what I don't know from the history lessons and trying to address those concerns. One of the concerns that already came up from the committee – she was describing how lacking the school was back in the day – basic resources. Those are the things I may hear about and maybe even more concrete on what resources were lacking and people have concerns about.

We will be developing the next fiscal year budget in November but we will have to start thinking about how the reorganization of Jefferson and the other schools will affect the budget. We will say approximately \$2.1 million. While this is a working timeline, the end game is by somewhere between late winter to early to mid-spring – roll out what my team and I and members of the Board will be involved in this process and come up with a plan to change the make-up of our schools.

One thing that has come up repeatedly when I talk about this is the review of Burnet and Kawameeh and how that factors in. My gut tells me to hold off on doing that; potentially merging the middle schools until the following year 2023-2024. Any questions?

Mr. O'Shea stated you will show us what the demographics will be if you make these changes? Where will we stand in with regards to the Civil Rights Act as far as desegregation? This was brought up when I was in another school district. The government came in and said you have to desegregate. We had all different kinds of models to show and they got rejected on all of them – finally when we came down to neighborhood schools and it turned out better. We did academies, elementary schools and other education fronts – that way it was a first come first served basis and it balanced out but we were always mindful about the government and we were mandated by the Supreme Court and they were the watch dogs. They watched over us for 20 years – back to 1986 to 2006 and they finally said we had it right and that is when I left. I'm not saying this district will have that problem – I hope not.

Dr. Taylor asked do we have records that date back then? Mr. Benaquista stated Linda Lewis asked me to look into some stuff that I will share with you. Diane helped me. I even called administrators that were here years ago asking if documents exist. Linda Lewis stated she requested it several years ago from administrators that were here; a lot of the core documents don't exist anymore. We have some other stuff that will give you some history when I was looking through it; it opened my eyes as well. One binder is what the Board was doing and notes. It is very interesting.

When we were speaking to the County, they felt that at this point in time, we are o.k. going to neighboring school; you can never do enough research to make sure you are doing the

right thing for your community. We may have to redraw lines based on our students today – where is the make up and we may still have to have some buses. The other thing with the savings is where are we getting the savings from and that is us taking on our transportation routes for special ed and that is whole different fleet that you need so you have to take into consideration on how much time will take to change over your fleet to small vans – you want to control as many routes as you can. Start thinking about when are leases are up on our buses – how many can we get rid of next year compared to the year after and project over time. The savings may not be right there and that is where you are talking about creating your sustainable revenue by controlling your own routes. Mrs. Koon stated and joint ventures with local districts around us going to the same special ed schools.

Mr. Benaquista stated looking at IEP's because some students are getting individualized buses and I don't feel that is right for a child's civil rights. I think part of being a student, is being on a bigger bus and be with everyone. We need to go deeper in many ways.

Mrs. Koon stated trying to break that apart because once the budget season starts which the October 15th date is the magic date for enrollment and that is when I start breaking down by school. I did reach out to Gail and asked her to pull something together so I can get a glance of what we are looking at and see what I could shift and make that budget support what we think it should be.

I kept on hearing about Central 5 and all the buses going to Central 5 and I forgot about K-4 that are going to all these different schools. It is maze we need to untangle and try to put a couple of scenarios together.

Dr. Francis stated Mr. O'Shea, I don't think it is going to matter in terms of violations of civil rights any more because Union is very diverse. The only issues you have is only Franklin where most of the students are coming from. The data is skewed because we have a large percentage of minority there because that is where they live; the same thing will happen with Vauxhall and Jefferson. You will have the higher number of minorities there. Mr. O'Shea stated that is what I'm worried about. It is the first thing they look at.

Dr. Francis stated we already have Franklin. The most important thing is your administration and teachers that you put there. Mrs. Regis-Darby stated I think it is a combination. Dr. Francis stated it is all about educating the kids. If you are committed to educating the kids, it doesn't matter what the demographics is. If they are all learning and achieving, that is very important.

Mr. McDowell stated we don't want to create another Franklin. Dr. Francis stated there is nothing wrong with Franklin – I'm just saying there shouldn't be anything wrong with Franklin. Why should Washington and Livingston and any other area school that we have, why can't we have the same dedication in teaching at these schools. I think sometimes it is a reflection of administration. Dr. Morgan stated I can speak to Franklin because my kid went there. Franklin was a disaster for my oldest kid. Dr. Francis stated why? Dr. Morgan stated because the teachers, in my opinion, didn't care enough and I switched my youngest kid to Connecticut Farms and it was a wonderful experience. Because I am an administrator and

because I know what the expectations that I have for my kids in my school, I did not see any of that with Franklin at all from kindergarten through 4th grade. Most of you went to Washington or Livingston School but I feel that the Franklin kids in the community suffer and they did not have the same opportunities that I see in the other schools.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated we can say the same thing because my kids went to Livingston School – 18 years ago – if you think about my kids walking into a classroom and somebody who looks like them – they didn't see that at Livingston School. Dr. Morgan stated growing up in Orange and Orange is an urban area, none of my teachers looked like me but I did feel that they cared. I'm still friends with my 4th grade teacher. I feel that we somehow Franklin just gets dropped. The sad part is that people in this community says that – don't send your kid to Franklin or Burnet – Burnet is the black school, send your kid to Kawameeh – that is being said amongst us.

Mrs. Minneci stated my kids are in their 30's the schools – Burnet and Kawameeh – that was the thing then. My kids went to Burnet and I thought they got a great education. It is still there and it is wrong. Dr. Morgan stated it is not fair to our kids. You cross one side of my street and those kids go to Connecticut Farms. Unfortunately my kid was sent to Kawameeh by accident and I felt it was a bad experience for him because no one knew who he was and relationships are formed in elementary school. Those relationships did not shift. It was a complete disaster for my oldest kid.

Dr. Francis stated I went to Burnet – we didn't feel that Kawameeh was a better school. Mrs. Minneci stated it was the adults. My kids loved it there. Mrs. Regis-Darby stated as a community we need to do a better job. Dr. Morgan stated you have to say that we have one curriculum.

Mr. McDowell stated if we did this, we have to proceed cautiously because this like walking through a minefield and we have to make sure we get those that will be affected, get them involved with their input. I thought it would be a good idea to make that a community school – Jefferson – it motivates the children, parents and hopefully the teachers that this is our school. It is also critical for the parents to get involved in the child's education because you can't drop your child off at Jefferson and catch the bus to Washington and say he is going to a good school, I don't have to worry about that – no, you still need to be involved in your child's education. We had the meeting this afternoon – steering committee – we listed items of what we should be concerned about in our district and number one was equity – that is what is going to have to drive a lot of this because the parents that are going to send their kids to Jefferson, need to feel that they are going to get everything that kids and quality teachers in the other schools get and if they are not, they have to speak up. A good example of that was between Burnet and Kawameeh – Kawameeh kids went on a ski trip and the Burnet kids didn't and it was the parents that did all this. If you want your kids at Burnet to go on a ski trip, then you get together with your PTA. Dr. Morgan stated the club should have been at Kawameeh as well as Burnet – that is where the equity is. Mrs. Ruiz stated the kids at Burnet did not have access to the same club. Now they do and I think they go on one trip together. Mr. McDowell stated that is the equity we are talking about.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated it is about branding your community school. With each community school, the supermarkets are involved, there are partnerships, the kids that walk, the parents collaborate so they walk together. I think that is where we fall short here – branding and showing off our schools. As a Board we may need to have one or two meetings at Franklin School. We may need to start showing up. We may need to highlight those things that have come out of those schools that we want to change the narratives. I see at the meetings the schools present what is going on in the district – what is this nonsense, tell me what is going on in your school – what innovative learning the kids are doing; how the kids are independent learners and thinkers and that will change the narrative.

Dr. Taylor stated I have listened to what everyone has to say. What I'm realizing is the community forum in October could very well unearth some really deep-rooted passionate discussions about race, segregation – it could even veer off into all that as much as it is about taking a school to a K-5. I will be mindful on how I navigate this. Mr. McDowell stated you will get a lot of feedback.

Dr. Francis stated if you move Jefferson to an elementary school pre-K-5, I think you should also consider doing Kawameeh at the same time; I think that clears up space. In that area, it would be Washington, Livingston and Kawameeh pre-k-5. I think you should consider that because that is what was the original thing.

Mr. McDowell stated with Mr. Tatum it was step one and step two. Dr. Francis stated he was talking K-6.

Mr. Benaquista stated if you talk about what Dr. Francis just said; you are going to be disrupting this community and you are not just disrupting Vauxhall, you are now taking kids that have been elementary schools and bringing them back and changing their environment. There will be a year where a lot of people will be impacted. The reason we talked about Kawameeh at the same time because you are impacting a large part of the community at once. After that year, you got over the hurdle. Some people that were in Washington and Livingston, are now going to Kawameeh and when we redraw the lines, we don't know how many people we are impacting because part of this is to balance out and make sure we are putting space back into our schools.

I shared this with Dr. Taylor, our enrollment towards the end of August went up a little bit in elementary. I want to start tracking how many kids, brand new registries, are coming from these developments – instead of them projecting 36, we already got 10 this year. We have to keep an eye on that. We have to be ahead of this because that 10 can easily become 30 and that 30 can easily become 90 and before you know it you should have put on an addition on Livingston and redistrict to create more space. The other thing is our pre-k's are eating up about 20+ classrooms district wide. Are we thinking about moving to a pre-k center to free up space because we are maxed out with classrooms.

Mrs. Koon stated there are at least 7-10 new developments all around. We need to go to our Congressman, Town Council and try to see how are they going to help impact. Mrs. Regis-Darby stated they said there wasn't going to be an impact. We had an impact study done.

Mrs. Koon stated we as a community and Board speak and keep speaking and be diligent – they have to hear us. We need everybody on board to communicate. We are here and busting out of the seams.

Dr. Taylor stated I knew I was getting a detailed oriented Assistant Superintendent because the points you brought up were not things I considered.

Mrs. Ruiz stated transition of Jefferson to pre-k to 5; so that means all of our other elementary schools will have to become pre-k to 5 too. Mr. Benaquista stated we will free up space. You are also restructuring lines to balance everything else. You have to remember Burnet and I shared my long-range plan with Burnet for our community is a brand new state of the art middle school referendum. One middle school for all our kids. Right now Burnet can house two classes with no problem. Kawameeh is now around 700 so you can restructure to hold more by your lines and you might need to shift some to balance it out so Washington is not crowded any more. Livingston has space but they can add some more students and you have a lot more students in Washington.

Dr. Morgan stated we are not talking about next year – 2022-2023? Dr. Taylor stated my proposal is to do the redistricting starting in the 2022-2023 year. Mr. McDowell stated it is just the one school – we are picking up an elementary school and the other schools become pre-k through 5 and right now they are pre-k to 4. The students that are coming from Vauxhall to the school, will now stay in their community school and so they will have room for the 5th graders. One other thing Dr. Taylor will include is the projected make up of Jefferson School – demographically.

Mrs. Ruiz asked what would Jefferson look like if we do this? Mr. McDowell stated we need to have that information when the forum is done. Dr. Taylor stated I think I have to accelerate the timetable on that and get that information sooner.

Mrs. Ruiz stated Dr. Taylor, two years ago, there was a team that was working on this plan and Miss Hall was part of it. I do remember that you had data on what the schools would look like, particularly Jefferson. Dr. Taylor stated Gerry just mentioned that to me so it is something we can produce soon rather than later.

Mr. McDowell stated Vauxhall has changed in all the years I have been here. Dr. Taylor asked historically what was the demographic data showing you – 42% black population, 26% Hispanic – was it always like that? Mr. McDowell stated there were a lot of Latin, Portuguese, Spanish families that moved in. Mr. O’Shea stated also there is a lot of rental and that is another factor – a lot of transients.

Mr. Benaquista stated when I was speaking to community on both sides, Vauxhall and Franklin area – I think Jefferson, depending on how we draw the lines and how many buses we bring in, it will be similar to Franklin and this is informal data from - the one thing I heard, is that they were o.k. with the make up of the school because organically it became that. The other thing I heard was that when we do this, we are doing this. It is not happening organically. We are now changing to be a neighboring school. It may be strategically drawing lines to keep some

balance. In the future you don't know if the Town will end up changing in any way but we can control some of the diversity there. They are proud of Franklin and not too long ago Franklin had the top scores. Remember, it is not about Franklin can't be the best – any of our schools can be the best but it comes down to time on task, teachers focused, giving kids what they need. Mrs. Koon stated and changing the environment. Mr. Benaquista stated every child can learn. Mrs. Koon stated we are changing that environment – a new stage, paint.

Dr. Morgan asked how did the other schools get cleaned and painted and Franklin didn't? Mrs. Koon stated that is prior to Yolanda. Dr. Morgan stated Franklin just was not important. Mrs. Koon stated you are right. Mr. Benaquista stated we had a lot of down time and unfortunately I had to get on top of some people who were responsible – this is the time you can make this building good and they weren't ordering paint because if they ordered the paint they would have to use the paint. Other buildings said this is my opportunity; again it is how they feel – it is their school. I'm talking about people that are in charge of doing that job. Some people take ownership and some don't. Some principals have a great relationship with their head maintenance/custodial people and they push harder. I don't blame the people that pushed for more money to make the schools better; we are blaming the people that aren't doing it. Get jealous and fight harder for your school.

Mrs. Koon stated going back to Dr. Taylor, you need to be visible and that is what we are doing. I plan to walk the schools. I like to have the principal, custodian, everybody – we all walk together and understand where the problem is. I've been up on the roof top. You have to inspect what you expect. I told my maintenance guy, I can look at you – tighten up your pants and care. Take pride in your school. You keep talking about this person not doing it but there are simple things you can do. I'm real passionate and you can tell. Study shows it is not about putting money, yes resources, but it is again, the administration, teachers and people who care. The principals have to get everybody involved to really care about their school and stay on them.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated we have an accountability checklist – we had summer programs this summer and the kids can tell the custodian, you missed 12:30 bathroom check – each door there is a sign off. In June there is an accountability sheet that goes to every building, these things need to be done – painting, cleaning, everything. Mrs. Koon stated I think to with administrators, we have to get better at communicating. Sometimes I think they are afraid of confrontation or a negative; but you have to have that conversation and it is about solution.

4. Strategic Plan – Dr. Taylor stated I have a group of 17 people to serve on a steering committee to help us identify the goals that will address the core concerns that we have in the district. This group will take the goals to the general community in November to that group which could be in the hundreds help us develop the action steps, measure and demonstration to achieve action steps, timelines to get things done. This steering committee will meet at least two more times – next date is October 4th. In November, I will be putting a mass-call out to have any body in the community will be invited to take part in the process of creating the plan. The plan will draw out all the actions, how they align with the goals and the measure of success and who will be responsible for getting us to those goals. I anticipate on having a strategic plan to implement in January. We can officially as a Board, since you will have a reorganization meeting, codify the Board goals to align with the strategic plan.

We came together as a steering committee to identify 3-4 goals that will guide us in the next three years by creating a safe space for all of us to be open about our concerns. I had them share their name and what their role was in the district and also identify the one big issue and come to the table and talk about it. We started to brain storm on what our district needs to do to be world class and dump it out on post-it notes. We came up with about seven themes that identified the cluster of post-it notes. The one that seemed to identify the main concern was “equity”. Our next step at our meeting in October is to look at the way I funnel all of these themes into something more easy to read than post-it notes and whittle down the things that we believe to be the most important and present concerns we have to address which will amount to 3-4 goals.

Mr. McDowell stated 17-18 people from the community – the object again is to come up with 3-4 main goals that we would like to guide our district. What we are looking to aim for like equity and others. We want something to guide us and trickle down to be the goals of the Board, goals of the building administrators – everything needs to tie into the 3-4 goals. Everything that is done, even evaluation wise, is tied into those goals. One of the members brought up a good point, what will the end look like – will we be able to know when we have accomplished goal one. We don’t want this to be something that rolls on for years to come. We want to have an end point. The end point won’t be the end, it will be that we accomplished that goal; then what is next for our district. I’m glad Dr. Taylor has all these people involved and all stakeholders giving their input. We will be reaching out to the community and there will be many more people involved in this process to come up with the steps we will be taking to our goals. It will be a process but it won’t be stuck on the wall and once in a while we take a look at it. It will be “we” throughout everything that has to do with education.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated it is a living document that will align our district together. That is how I look at it.

Dr. Morgan stated I saw the post-its and I see “inclusive”, “equity” – what data points are we using. Are we using what people think? Or what we know we need? Dr. Taylor stated I established three norms that the group is going to live by. One, start and end meetings on time. Two, respect the people that are speaking at that particular time because I do anticipate in the next couple of meetings, we are going to have some heavy duty conversations, it will get a little more tense. Third, you have to bring evidence to the table to support; it doesn’t have to be quantitative data, it could be qualitative data. I have to call out one of our leaders on the team for having me put out that third norm wasn’t up there until Nicole Ahern mentioned it at the leadership team retreat. I have to give her thanks for that.

5. Central Leadership Reorganization Chart – Dr. Taylor stated I spent 4-5 weeks collecting information from members of the leadership team about their roles and responsibilities. I have been speaking with a lot of people; modeling other districts’ organization charts and have now come up with a proposed organization chart and have it considered for adoption in September. The organization chart shows who reports to whom. We hadn’t updated the chart since 2019 and a lot has happened since then. It is common for districts to do this every so often because the district leadership team and hierarchy needs to adapt to the changes that

have happened. Also when you have a new superintendent, that person brings in a different set of needs. I want to thank the Board personnel committee helped get to a certain place with this chart. There was a point where I was considering not to fill the second assistant superintendent position that we budgeted for and the Board Personnel Committee made a very reasonable argument on why we need that individual. What that did to me was put this on my radar this idea that if I had somebody what would I do with that person and I really internalized how important it would be to have somebody in curriculum. The entire leadership team has seen this and this is the first time I'm making it public.

Gerry made a presentation to the Board a while ago advocating for the creation of Director of Curriculum position as a means to provide even more layers of support to elevate the rigor and quality of our curriculum programs and assessment.

What I'm proposing is that we create those two positions; stick with the assistant superintendent of curriculum, instruction and assessment and consolidate some of our supervisor positions to pay for those new director positions. I'll present a cost analysis to the Board in September when I will also share this chart in final form so the Board can consider adopting it but only after looking at the fiscal impact.

The supervisors who will be impacted have already been spoken with by me. I would be recommending internal promotions to help offset some of the costs. While I'm not comfortable sharing details about that plan just yet because it involves people and how that process will go, I will assure you that my means of trying to offset the costs comes from the consolidation of the supervisor positions.

The director of personnel position would be kind of new, it was a manager level position, but I certainly see the need now since I have been here for almost two months to create a position that has more authority. The amount of stuff related to personnel matters that Gerry and I have been dealing with is overwhelming. Mr. Benaquista stated it previously was Director of Personnel because I was it.

Dr. Taylor stated here are some minor title changes – Lauren Walker, the Director of preschool has been the Director of preschool on paper – this would just be codifying that title change. The changes are to the 2019 organizational chart. Relatively minor changes – having the Director of Transportation, Buildings and Grounds, Food Services and Security – now become managers. I found it very difficult, as an outsider, in the process of interviewing with the Board, distinguish between the directors, as certified by the Department of Education, who are true administrators versus the people that are managing departments like transportation etc. I have spoken with those individuals prior to sharing this with you.

Some of the supervisor roles would shift because as I consolidate. The consolidation is coming from the merging of K-12 and 5-12 supervisors. We previously had K-4 ELA, K-4 math, 5-12 ELA, 5-12 math. Having a layer at the director level will certainly help the supervisors of K-12. The assistant superintendent for curriculum, who will have to be a rock star, to meet the test and really set the vision; directors will help work through who will feed down to the supervisors and hold them accountable for the importance of seeing that vision to fruition. The vision is the

strategic plan will be hovering over that person's work. For instance, if equity becomes a goal and one of the things we talked about today in the steering committee meeting was the need to be sure that we are teaching black history and in compliance with the Amistad. We may be doing it here and there but at least doing it in a very articulated manner – K-12 and doing it authentically. If that is written in the strategic plan, that's going to be what the assistant superintendent despite his/her/their vision has to make sure it gets done with the help of the directors and supervisors. Questions?

Dr. Francis asked I saw the original one you proposed, you have director of curriculum, instruction, assessment – at one point you had science and math together and now you separated them and you have math and computers and gifted and talented and science with world languages – should world language be the humanities? Dr. Taylor stated your right; so I'll be transparent about my rationale – it is to provide equity among the responsibilities of the supervisors. I have to have a line that shows shared responsibilities between the director of humanity and the director of stem over the science; by September I'll make that.

This organization chart as opposed to the last one, actually shows you the hierarchy of supervisory responsibilities. Principals are hierarchy in scheme rise above the supervisor level but below the director level. Vice principals are at the supervisor level.

While the teachers will report to the principals, it is recognized that the directors of athletics, in the case of nurses, would be supervising – but not being the direct report. Let me describe it more carefully – all the building certificated faculty and support staff, except for the child study team, will report to their principals in each building directly. But we know the supervisors and the director of curriculum, they will all be supporting specific content area – they just won't be the person to be the direct report. Dr. Morgan stated but they will help with observations. Dr. Taylor stated yes.

Mrs. Ruiz stated are you saying that the supervisors will not be directly reporting to the principals. Dr. Morgan stated no, they will report to the directors. He is saying all the teachers and any certificated people in the building, report to the principal.

Dr. Taylor stated the principal is the manager, should be the instructional leader but also has managerial responsibilities; supervisors and directors don't – they are my go to people for special projects, curriculum. That is one reason why I want the people in the building level that are certificated to report directly to their principals. If there is a science scheduling problem, they shouldn't be going to the science supervisor, they should go to the principal.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated the supervisors are going to be assisting the principals with observations. Dr. Taylor stated all hands on deck with observations.

Dr. Francis stated money – is this going to cost us more? Dr. Taylor stated it may cost us more money but not extraordinary amounts of money. Mrs. Koon stated two are already budgeted – director of personnel and the assistant superintendent was not taken out of the budget.

Dr. Taylor stated this is not a final version but I will share it with you when it is. We are consolidating supervisor positions – we are saving money here. You already budgeted for certain positions. The only position we haven't budgeted for are the two director positions and the increase won't be a drastic increase for director of personnel.

The big picture is you consolidate the supervisors, you get money out of that, you bump up the director of personnel from manager, it is not a lot of money. It won't be an extraordinary increase if an increase at all. I'm sorry I don't have the numbers yet. It wasn't until an hour before this meeting the version I shared with you. Mr. O'Shea stated you will get us the numbers.

Dr. Francis asked since you changed the titles to managers, do we have to change any titles? Dr. Taylor stated we have to change the policy that dictates the organization chart – if there is a policy number. We will also have to update the job descriptions. My timeline would be in September to request the Board approve the new organizational chart pending the budget information and in October look at the updated job descriptions. Then begin the search, probably mid-September, for the assistant superintendent and the other positions we have to fill and maybe recommendations for hire if I hire internally. We can probably have this chart completely implemented and positions filled by November/December. We will be a whole team.

I will be going full-court in doing a search for an assistant superintendent, as well as the other positions. We will do a thorough search.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated will we have to hire director of curriculum – are those position internally or hire? Dr. Taylor stated I don't have commitments yet but I do have people who I think will be good, strong, quality people within. I do want to post and see what is out there.

Not to denigrate any position, the all important position to me right now is the assistant superintendent for curriculum. I lean on Gerry for operations, personnel, details, I need to lean on somebody for the other side of things too. I'm proficient in that area but I don't have the time, resources or capacity to do all that and I need someone I can trust and take the rigor and expectation that I have that I talked to the team about yesterday.

Dr. Francis asked did we work out the lunch situation and how we are going to do lunch in school? Dr. Taylor stated regarding the reopening of school – nothing has changed since I put out my FAQ and re-entry plan. We are limited on space. We are going to try to have our kids facing in one direction if possible. It is a challenge. Mr. Benaquista stated we will be flexible earlier and have them outside. Dr. Taylor stated it is up to the principals; we are going to finalize the plans tomorrow. Unfortunately I can't report that we made any changes that will give us more wiggle room.

Dr. Francis stated you will have to feed everybody. Parents are asking how are you going to handle lunch. Dr. Taylor stated I got emails about that and I have been very transparent. One individual suggested we consider changing the schedule so kids can be released early and have lunch at the end of the day. They are being creative. I nixed that after looking at the schedule and spoke with transportation and it is very complicated. People are giving me some ideas.

Mr. McDowell asked is there anything else you want to bring up in this planning session? Mrs. Regis-Darby stated I think as we are moving forward with education, you have to think about the way our community is changing in terms of the different dialects that are spoken in our community to reflect that in our buildings. I have been saying this for the last two years; we need to consider starting a dual language program within our schools. I just wanted to bring that up again.

Dr. Morgan stated I know my time is ending, I just want us to stay focused on reading. We must make sure our students are reading before they get to third grade. I'm very passionate about it because if students aren't reading, they can't do math or science or anything else. Just because I'm not on the Board I will be watching but we must be sure that our students are reading. Please make that a priority. Mr. McDowell stated that was one of the post-its.

One thing I wanted to bring up is Hamilton School. We need to start thinking about what we can do with that school – if anything.

Mrs. Williams stated re-registration. That is something when I first got on the Board and I think with COVID a lot of people have been displaced and they might not be where they used to be. I think that is something we need to look at especially because it is really difficult to get kids out of our district but it's easier to keep them from getting in – in the first place. Special education students that aren't supposed to be in our district costs us a lot of money. Dr. Taylor asked when was the last re-registration? The Board responded two years ago – 2019.

Mrs. Minneci stated there needs to be a PD for whoever is involved in the re-registration so that everyone is on the same page. It should be done in their own building. Mrs. Ruiz stated you have to have interpreters present. Mrs. Minneci stated everyone needs a PD so every school is on the same page. You register at the building you are going to, you need interpreters, it needs to be organized and thought out properly. Mr. McDowell stated you can do some online but I think we need to be careful about that too.

Comments from Public

Jill Hall stated since 2001 I have been coming to meetings and Mrs. Cappiello can probably list how many times I have begged this Board to stop using the terminology of “guidance” and there it was. It is “school counselors”. Since 2000, the State of New Jersey has not issued certifications for guidance counselors. They used to get certified at 30 credits. School counselors have to complete 48 masters level credits and 700 hours of internship to be certified as a school counselor. We do mental health.

The reconfiguration – six and half years ago conversations began as part of a larger committee similar to the steering committee of what the district really needed. It was representative of all corners of the district and we looked at a couple of things. One part of the committee was about saving money and then there was another part of the committee that was very much about does the current school configuration really address the type of social development of kids; and the truth was that it didn't. Socially we are disconnecting our kids because we are not creating school attachment. We do not have an appropriate middle school configuration that addresses the pivotal developmental stage for kids. We move them in 4th

grade, 6th grade; they are together in 5th grade and separated at 6th grade and back together in 9th. The data is very compelling that we are going about this the wrong way.

I hear you Dr. Francis but we missed the perfect time to do; we should have done this reconfiguration during COVID but we have to continue to look forward at this reconfiguration. I know it will be extraordinarily expensive but that can't be the reason why we don't do it. Those kids are coming; the developments are being built; we have known it for six years and we can't hide from that. It is not appropriate for our community. It is why we can't switch the narrative. It is the reason why our kids are not as academically successful as they know they can be. It is the reason why we can't provide for them on what they should have.

Mrs. Koon stated can I have a motion to extend? Board approved.

Ms. Hall stated we know that the redistricting for Jefferson has to be done with great care. We looked at the fact that we are going to need buses for pre-k and kindergarten because they are not permitted to walk across Route 78. We have all that explanation. I know we have to do Jefferson now.

Mr. Benaquista left the meeting at 9:10 p.m.

We have to look at Kawameeh and do what it needs to be done there and we have to look at Burnet. We have to get created and talk to these builders who are building and ask them "what are you going to do for us" because we are doing this for you. We have to get in front of the Township Committee – which we have done. There was consensus about this three years ago so now they need to show us where the money is. We have to pitch it and sell it because this is what is best for our kids. We are never going to get there until we do it.

Mrs. Barfield stated in light of what I learned today, you have concerns throughout the district about cleanliness and with COVID, I'm blown away with sanitation and germs and all that other stuff. I want to move forward. I'm opting to home school my daughter. She excelled greatly and she is just not ready to enter into this environment; nor do I support or want that, especially on a full-time status. I know what is best for her. My question is are there any type of strategic alignments in order for the parents who are opting to home school their children so that we can make sure we are in accordance with graduating and things of that nature so they can still get the diploma from Union Board of Education. I'm wondering if those partnerships are there or if there is a recommendation on what program is in alignment with the district. Do we have a support system like that or are we totally on our own.

Dr. Taylor stated you will continue to homeschool your child? The answer is no, we don't have any way to provide you that support once you go the homeschool route. Unfortunately, the Governor double downed on this directive – there will be no virtual option unless a child is quarantined. I have received a few emails from parents asking about homeschooling resources.

Mr. McDowell stated there are homeschool associations. Mrs. Barfield stated I want to be ahead of the cart not behind it. I don't want to pick something randomly. I'm trying to find

out the requirements I need to meet. Dr. Taylor stated you can email me directly and I can share with you curriculum documents which at least will show you the standards and the skills we require the kids to learn in each grade. You can go to Lakeshore Learning Center for resources. They also have books for grade levels and you can match them up to the curriculum guides.

Mrs. Barfield stated that is a good start; additionally how do I notify the attendance office? Put that in an email also? Dr. Taylor stated yes to me and I will forward but you will get a response from me. Mrs. Barfield stated other parents that are opting that; so we can come together and facilitate something amongst us. Dr. Taylor stated like a POD. Mrs. Barfield stated like a homeschool alliance. I think that would be a good step.

Dr. Taylor stated tomorrow or over the weekend, placing on our website – under the FAQs with a resource area for homeschooling parents. I don't feel comfortable getting too close to that area because that might blow the lines on what the district can do and what homeschool is doing. Since I'm serving the community – so to help people looking for resources.

Mrs. Barfield stated if I can know what your requirements are for my daughter who is going into 8th grade – curriculum guide that she needs to be at, in writing, to make sure she has those standards to keep her education – a report card, her tests, or whatever she has to do to make sure because I don't want to be the reason she falls behind. There has to be some type of dialogue because it is not fair to us homeowners of students. You have to adapt and change. We still deserve that right.

Dr. Taylor stated I will start working on those resources and maybe direct people to curriculum guides. I will work on that – give me a couple of days.

Bernadette Watson stated you talked about Franklin School – keep in mind that everybody from Mill Run, which is in the Franklin area – they go to Hannah Caldwell and that is 2 plus bus loads of children. Anyone who lives on Manor Drive is directed to Hannah Caldwell. We started that years ago when they opened Hannah Caldwell and they had to offload the students at Franklin because they were overcrowded; so we never revisited sending those students back to their homeschool. They automatically go to Hannah Caldwell. It will change your numbers again at Franklin and Hannah Caldwell.

Re-registration is an absolute must and PD and it should be done at the school level. We did it in the gym. People that don't want to do the re-registration during the day, they would do it at night because you offered them money. I think it needs to come back to the school level. PD is a great idea. We took the documents and they are sitting in boxes somewhere here so they were never put in the child's file. When they come to school, each child got their documents put in their folder so there was never a question when they moved on. We don't know where those current documents are. There are people that have moved and stayed virtual because they had the opportunity and they don't live in Town. I would love to do the PD.

Mr. McDowell stated if we do the reorganization, Hannah Caldwell would be a community school again. Mrs. Watson stated you would have to redraw the lines. When we

opened up Hannah Caldwell and we took from Franklin, Hamilton and Connecticut Farms. We brought those three schools together.

Catherine Lewis stated teacher – I was a kid in this district and you asked about demographics and there was about 15 Hispanic kids and we all knew each other – that was in the early 90's. We were one of the smallest groups – there were more Asians, Blacks and Whites. Now we are the second largest.

Regarding the Board retreat, I think that is amazing and you should do it every year. The Board is always changing and things to learn.

The affirmative action complaints, I agree with Dr. Francis and Mrs. Ruiz, we need an outside person investigate things. I personally have had issues but I agree with Mr. Benaquista because I blew the whistle on things that people still don't know about and the outside person really didn't investigate every single thing I brought. I brought hard evidence. It didn't go well and a year and half later we had our meeting, then they had the Board attorneys do it. Here we are 3-1/2 years later and a bunch of people resigned but I still feel uncomfortable in many ways. I'm in a different building and thank God for my supervisor who has been my supervisor forever, all the other supervisors or principals/admins, they don't know me and I'm not comfortable. My issues were never fully addressed. I was never told it was correct. I was trying to defend our kids, moneys, all sorts of things. I wasn't punished in any way but I feel like everyone is afraid of me. I don't have proof that anyone is doing that and I love my principal at Kawameeh. It is a real problem. Mr. Benaquista, Mrs. Ruiz, Dr. Francis is correct – it is not a one size fits all. It's not like harassment should be handled by an outside person, affirmative action should be handled from inside or vice-a-versa. It needs to be how big is the case. If it is a small thing and it can be handled inside and done fairly, do that. If that is not happening, have an outside person who is going to look at all the evidence and investigate things. It is not a one size fits all. We need to own up that these issues are real and exist. Both sides of the table can be correct having an issue with something that is going on. I didn't want to air my dirty laundry but I felt like it came up and it was really important and how I feel. I am uncomfortable and I don't know what administrators heard or what they think. It was never addressed. I was never told.

Community school – I believe in community schools and I think it is forgotten a lot – is the economic factor. We are talking about demographics, parent involvement or whether teachers care or not – I think the underlying reason for a lot of things is economics. Parents may appear that they don't care; the parents in this school can be involved, they have the time, the support system and then there is a single mom – so that parent can't be involved. Teachers, faculty, Board member, community members – we are guilty of this – we see all these parents don't care; it's not that they don't care, they can't – they don't have the time, resources, they have a language barrier and a lot of times that is an economic issue and we need to look at that.

Mrs. Koon asked for a motion to extend. Board agreed.

Ms. Lewis stated I brought that up because it is rarely mentioned and it could be overlooked. Some schools may need more support with school counselors, having things accessible too them, I'm totally for the redistricting and the lines.

Mrs. Minneci stated the community schools, before COVID I would go to Hannah Caldwell for PTA meetings – 5-6 there; with the virtual you had 30-40-50, so I think those are some things we need to look at to keep our families involved. Even Open House – maybe do virtual and you will have more people participate.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated we have two PTA meetings, one in the morning and one at night so it accommodates the parents schedule – sometimes it is just collaboration.

Mrs. Barfield stated Ms. Lewis, I just want to be human and humane, when you spoke I had goosebumps. It happened to me as a parent. Concerns for my daughter's educational learning; so that is when I posed and asked my first question and I learned about the 3-minute rule and not realizing you can extend it, my concern at this point is moving my daughter onward, upward, and forward is to just talk about this homeschooling issue that I didn't see online. What happened to me when I came here, I posed a question to a principal so I had to move my child out of the school. I'm educated and so are my family members, it is highly upsetting when I complained at a Board meeting and had to give my address, which should be banned, you can ask for ID when I enter, but it should be banned after what happened to me because I came home on Halloween Eve right after a meeting like this and had a no black sign put in front of my house. It was called a bias crime because it was in a street and not on my property. My daughter saw it and I had to have that disgusting conversation with her. I feel you; I had to move my kids around. I have gone through a lot with this district. I just want to be human/humane, your emotions in talking about it, I feel the same; I share your sentiment. Instead of Livingston, I sent her to Franklin and then I had to take her out again because of how that principal treated me - all I asked for was a teacher conference and the principal got involved – she's a threat. I never met you. I feel for you. People need to be human.

Chasity Santana stated I see you, I hear you, I don't know what you are talking about. When you speak to lunches, in this district we do have children that have different needs with food. My son is a Type I diabetic, he is insulin dependent, every time he eats has to go to the food people and ask how many carbs on in the sandwich, go back to the nurse and get his insulin and get his food. Please be mindful. This lunch, no lunch situation, cleanliness, social distancing – keep all of that in mind when we are sitting at tables and making decisions about children eating or not eating.

The redistricting – I told you on that Concerned Citizens Zoom meeting – Jill Hall gave a presentation. We even sent out surveys to the community; to say we are only focusing on Jefferson for 2022 and not the other side of Town, I think yes we missed an opportunity with COVID but moving forward we should be doing it completely. I see the K-6 and the 7-8 Burnet and high school being one. We do have to change that narrative of Burnet being bad. It is not bad. We need to completely take it out of our verbiage. What we need to do is change our mindset and it starts here when we have people coming and speaking. My kids are in Washington and Kawameeh and my kids want to go to Burnet. It starts with the proper redistricting and I think the model they put together is going to give us what we need. There was a lot of research and data done.

Residency, I completely agree with reregistration. I gave no paperwork and just because of my face or mouth, we know her just let her go. I do think we need to go in and that everyone brings in the proper documents and if we need interpreters, that is fine and an option.

504's go under the Director of Counseling Services and they go straight to the Assistant Superintendent; I think now you are putting another layer so it will be going to a Director. Dr. Taylor stated not for 504's, it goes through the special ed department. Ms. Santana stated it does not. It should. If you have an IEP, it goes through the Director of Special Ed. If you have a 504, that goes through the Director of Counseling Services. If I had an issue with the 504 and the Director of Counseling Services is not satisfying me, then I would go to the Assistant Superintendent. Now you are putting another layer in that Director of Curriculum. I'm making you aware and that is what I was doing with my son. I screamed at Kim Conti for about an hour and then she said I don't handle 504s. Mrs. Regis-Darby stated that is why her numbers in that presentation – when I asked that 504 question – did not match up.

Dr. Morgan stated in my experience 504's never came under special services. It was the Director of Guidance and the high school principal. When I was elementary principal, I handled all 504s with my guidance counselor. A 504 is not an IEP and not a special education issue.

Ms. Santana stated my point is before I would go to Mrs. Ahern. If there was an issue with her, I would go to Assistant Superintendent Moses. What you are doing now is putting in a Director of Curriculum.

Dr. Morgan stated can we look into the number of families that choose not to send their kids to Union? I received an email from Roselle Catholic saying that there are 67 families from Union alone in Roselle Catholic. We have Union Catholic, Seton Hall Prep, St. Peter's – we have all these schools and I'm curious. In my school, I met with parents to find out exactly why they pulled their kids out and many had different reasons but most reasons were the kids didn't feel safe, curriculum wasn't rigorous enough, teachers didn't care so then I as the assistant superintendent was able to put things in place. I'm trying to get parents back. I pulled my kids out, as a Board member, I can tell you why but I think it should be a group conversation with people who pulled their kids out. Dr. Taylor stated I'll get back to you on that.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Dr. Francis, seconded by Mrs. Regis-Darby, that the meeting be adjourned at 9:42 p.m.

AYE: Dr. Francis, Mrs. Minneci, Dr. Morgan, Mr. O'Shea,
Mrs. Regis-Darby, Mrs. Ruiz, Mrs. Williams, Mr. McDowell

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

YOLANDA KOON
BOARD SECRETARY

