

TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION  
WORKSESSION MINUTES – September 12, 2023

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, September 12, 2023 at 5:00 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 5:10 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

Ms. Dixiana Carbonell, Ms. Marissa McKenzie, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Mr. John O’Shea, Mrs. Kimberly Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Mary Lynn Williams

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mrs. Yocasta Brens-Watson (5:48 p.m.), Ms. Chastity Santana (5:14 p.m.), Mrs. Nellis Regis-Darby (5:32 p.m.)

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr. Christopher Buggy, Esq.

Mrs. Koon 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. McKenzie read the district’s mission statement.

MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Moved by Mrs. Scott-Hayden, seconded by Mrs. Williams, that the Board go into Executive Session at 5:13 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, legal issues and presentation by superintendent search firm.

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, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. O’Shea, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams,  
Ms. McKenzie

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

The Board returned to public session at 7:12 p.m.

The Board President welcomed everyone back for the new school year.

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

None

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes will be approved at next week’s meeting.

Communications:

Communications are part of personnel and will be approved next week.

Superintendent’s Report:

1. Statewide Assessment Data – September 19th
2. Student Liaisons – Neissa Filias; Gia Patel – September 19th

Education/Student Discipline Committee Resolutions:

Ms. Carbonell presented the Education Committee agenda. The following resolution was reported at the meeting:

E-1. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT OF HIB

Superintendent’s Report of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the period August 16, 2023 to September 12, 2023 (no incidents to report) (*no vote required; for reporting purposes only*).

DISCUSSION:

None

Fiscal and Planning Committee Resolutions:

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

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolution was moved by Mr. O’Shea, seconded by Ms. Carbonell, 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:**

Ms. Santana stated that if there is a field trip for a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class, all 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classes should be participating.

Ms. Carbonell stated she is glad to see the initiatives on the agenda.

**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**

**Operations Committee Resolutions:**

Ms. Santana presented the Operations Committee agenda and the following discussion item:

**REQUEST FROM TOWNSHIP OF UNION RECREATION DEPARTMENT - Letter from Township of Union Recreation Department requesting the use of the Jefferson School parking lot on Saturday, October 21, 2023 (rain date October 22, 2023) from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for the Township’s annual Trunk or Treat event, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.**

**DISCUSSION:**

Ms. McKenzie stated that the discussion item will be voted on next week as O-3.

**Personnel Committee Resolutions:**

Mrs. Scott-Hayden presented the Personnel Committee agenda.

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolutions were moved by Mrs. Scott-Hayden, 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. APPROVE SUBSTITUTE LISTS**

Approve Substitute Lists for the 2023-2024 school year.

Name	Position	Rate
Lisa T. Herbert Younge	Sub-custodian	\$16.00/hr.
Thomas Muir	Sub-security	\$15.00/hr.
Roberta Plattner	Sub-secretary-WES	\$15.00/hr.*
Donna Carlyle	Sub-secretary-BHES	\$15.00/hr.*
Gina Ciaccio	Sub-secretary-CFES	\$15.00/hr.*
Rosalie Melegh	Sub-secretary-HCES	\$15.00/hr.*
Ellyn Smith	Sub-secretary-FES	\$15.00/hr.*
Maria Marques	Sub-secretary-HCES	\$15.00/hr.*
Patrick Casey	Sub-security	\$35.00/hr.
Radcliffe Sangster	Sub-security	\$35.00/hr.
Marc Pereira	Sub-teacher	\$120.00/per day
Tagouia Davis	Sub-teacher	\$120.00/per day
John Zurka	Sub-teacher	\$120.00/per day
Diane Dimperio	Sub-teacher	\$120.00/per day

\*Previously approved 8/15/2023; corrected hourly rate.

**P-5. APPROVE STUDENT TEACHERS AND INTERNSHIPS**

Approve student teachers and internships for the 2023-2024 school year, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

**DISCUSSION:**

Mrs. Minneci asked about the resignations and hiring of employees. Mr. Benaquista stated that the district is in good shape. We are working on hiring a chemistry teacher, still short on special services staff; district hired a woods teacher and also will be filling administrative openings in October.

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**

**Policy Committee:**

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following policy was moved by Mrs. Williams, seconded by Mrs. Scott-Hayden, for adoption:

**POL-1. APPROVE REGULATION 2464 – GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS (M)**

Approve Regulation 2464 – Gifted and Talented Students, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

**DISCUSSION:**

None

AYE: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Ms. Carbonell, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. O'Shea,  
Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Ms. McKenzie

NAY: Mrs. Williams

ABSTAIN: Mrs. Regis-Darby

MOTION CARRIED

#### Residency Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Minneci presented the Residency Committee agenda.

#### DISCUSSION:

Ms. Santana asked how many students did not come back with re-registration? Dr. Benaquista stated he would get back to the Board next week.

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked if Clear System was working. Dr. Benaquista stated yes; there will be a districtwide review and will be using the Clear System.

#### Technology Committee:

Mrs. Brens-Watson presented the Technology Committee agenda.

#### DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Brens-Watson stated she would like to thank IT for keeping the district safe. iMax has been delivered to the TV studio; kindergarten Chromebooks will be distributed and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders received their Chromebooks.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated she just returned from Africa and she would like to ask the Board to donate old computers to the schools in Africa. Mrs. Brens-Watson stated it creates an internal connection for the district when you do that. Mr. O'Shea stated you have to have documentation that states where it is going; if you don't receive the documentation, you can't send it.

Ms. Carbonell and Mrs. Williams both thanked the IT department for keeping us virtually safe.

#### Approval of Bills:

Bills will be paid next week.

#### Unfinished Business:

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked about PD's on SEL component – what is the direction on equity. Dr. Benaquista stated that they are evaluating vendors/programs and he is focusing on literacy programs. He informed the Board and literacy and safety is his top priority and then look at other programs. This will be brought to the education committee first. In INRS, equity is part of this but he needs to look at our budget

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated true literacy goes under equity. You need to give equity a new lens and you will not get the results for literacy unless you work on equity.

Dr. Benaquista stated our mission statement doesn't have equity. We need to afford what we do; there is a lot of inequity with special services and across the board.

Mrs. Brens-Watson stated we had experts tell us what we need to do. We need to follow-up on what was in the roadwork given to us. She continued by saying equity is what you build into the organization. We don't need more consultants; we need things to be put in place.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated as a Board we need to have a collective decision. We want you to succeed but it needs to be addressed. Dr. Benaquista stated we have to complete what we do. We need to educate parents that an "F" is not acceptable; students need to be successful.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated you have to do intervention – Tier 1, 2, 3 – you need to screen students to see how they are doing. Ms. Carbonell stated Dr. Perez presented some initiatives; what needs to be done and the fiscal responsibility. We need to look at the cultural perspective. Dr. Perez stated we are looking at the instructional component – curriculum, NJTSS, equity.

Ms. Santana stated it starts with us and the mission statement doesn't have equity. We need to make the equity real. She also asked that phone numbers be added to the district website for everyone in the district. She also asked that children be let in earlier so that they can eat breakfast. Dr. Benaquista stated he will look into this.

#### New Business:

Ms. Carbonell stated September 15<sup>th</sup>-October 15<sup>th</sup> – we celebrate Hispanics. How does the district celebrate.

Mrs. Minneci stated thank you to the teachers and staff for a great opening at Hannah Caldwell. Ms. Santana stated she went to Kawameeh, Washington, Burnet and the high school – it was great – she loved it.

Mrs. Brens-Watson asked the status of North Third Street? Dr. Benaquista stated that they are setting up a study for that area; police will take lead and get community input.

Mrs. Minneci stated the field looks beautiful. Dr. Benaquista stated the official ribbon cutting will be soon. Union football beat Westfield on Friday night on our new field.

#### Comments from the Public:

Elsie Mackie stated – compensatory education – there is not enough time to make up for what they missed during COVID. Is there any way we can have this done on weekends and staff get a weekend stipend? Maybe this would help kids come back into the district.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Mrs. Regis-Darby, seconded by Ms. Carbonell, that the meeting be adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

All present voting YES

MOTION CARRIED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

*Yolanda Koon*

YOLANDA KOON  
BOARD SECRETARY

