

TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION
WORKSESSION MINUTES – September 10, 2024

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 10, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. at the Administration Building, 2369 Morris Avenue, Union, New Jersey pursuant to the notice sent to each member. Action was taken.

Ms. Santana called the meeting to order at 6:00 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. Mary Lynn Williams (arrived 6:01 p.m.)

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr. Christopher Buggy, Esq.

Mrs. Scott-Hayden led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. Scott-Hayden 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.

MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Moved by Mr. Cohan, seconded by Mrs. Conteh-Mackey, that the Board go into Executive Session at 6:02 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 and legal update

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, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Minneci,
Mr. Nasta, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams, Ms. Santana

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

The Board returned to public session at 6:57 p.m.

MOTION TO RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION:

There being no further business before the Board it was moved by Mrs. Conteh-Mackey, seconded by Ms. Carbonell, that the Board return to public session at 6:57 p.m.

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes will be adopted at next week's meeting.

Communications:

Communications are part of personnel.

Comments from Public (on resolutions):

Michelle Zatta asked that the public be able to speak on any matter at this portion of the meeting because sometimes the meetings go too late.

Superintendent's Report:

The Superintendent will report at next week's meeting.

Education/Student Discipline Committee Resolutions:

Mr. Cohan presented the Education/Student Discipline Committee agenda. The following resolution was reported:

E-1. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT OF HIB

Superintendent's Report of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the period September 1 to September 10, 2024 (*no incidents to report*), in accordance with the information appended to the minutes (*no vote required; for reporting purposes only*).

DISCUSSIONS:

Mr. Cohan thanked Dr. Benaquista and stated the Education Committee met with the current instruction team and he is very encouraged. It will be a very valuable resource for our teachers.

Fiscal and Planning Committee Resolutions:

Ms. Carbonell presented the Fiscal and Planning Committee agenda.

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolution was moved by Ms. Carbonell, seconded by Mrs. Williams, 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 available to each Board member.

DISCUSSION:

Ms. Carbonell requested more information on F-9b (fundraisers).

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Operations Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Scott-Hayden presented the Operations Committee agenda.

DISCUSSION:

None

Personnel Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Minneci presented the Personnel Committee agenda.

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolution was moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Mrs. Williams, for adoption:

P-1A. PERSONNEL ACTIONS – NEW HIRES

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

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Cohan asked if FTE positions are still available. Dr. Benaquista stated we are in good shape. Mr. Cohan also asked about P-6 – 401K/ROTH. Mrs. Koon stated it needs to be renewed every year.

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Policy Committee:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and the Policy Committee, the following policy was moved by Mrs. Williams, seconded by Mrs. Minneci, for *FINAL READING AND ADOPTION*:

POL-1. REGULATION 2464 – GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

Approve Regulation 2464 – Gifted and Talented Students, in accordance with the information available to each Board member.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Residency Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Minneci presented the Residency Committee agenda.

Technology Committee:

Mr. McDowell presented the Technology Committee agenda.

Approval of Bills:

Bills will be approved for payment at next week’s meeting.

Unfinished Business:

None

New Business:

Ms. Carbonell suggested that the teachers should speak to the district students about 911 because these students weren’t even born at that time and it did impact our community.

Mrs. Minneci stated 11 residents of Union were lost; there are several scholarships for our students from that.

Mr. McDowell stated there is an Islamic book available for teachers, so they understand the needs of the students.

Mrs. Minneci stated she attended the opening of school for Hannah Caldwell Elementary School and it was very nice.

Mr. McDowell stated he has the best school – Franklin Elementary School.

Mr. Cohan stated a shout to transportation. There is a partnership with the Police Department and keeping our community involved regarding traffic.

Mrs. Minneci stated she attended the convocation at Union High School and all the speakers did a great job.

Mr. Cohan asked that they receive invitations for back-to-school night. Dr. Benaquista stated he will send it out.

Comments from the Public

Michelle Zatta stated that the library will be twice a month at Livingston School. We are a working community, and our students need library visits weekly and we need a full-time librarian.

Lisa Krause stated that the student's are off October 4th for the Jewish holiday, but October 3rd is the actual date. It is the highest holy day. I know I can take a personal day but I have witnessed and have felt antisemitism. Please correct the date. Dr. Benaquista stated he will meet with his team. It is not one person that makes this decision.

Sol Antencio thanked Ms. Carbonell for asking questions and she hopes it can be expanded to the high school.

Virginia Jeffries spoke about the Open Public Meetings Act and Policy 0167 – public participation.

Natercia Lopes stated she doesn't believe in this Board. She believes librarians are important to our schools. Parents should be involved in the school calendar. The superintendent didn't meet with parents regarding curriculum. The community should be able to attend meetings by phone or virtually.

Melissa Diaz wanted to thank Marissa McKenzie for always helping out.

Clay McClain stated he values differences of opinion, it is how you learn. I wish the Board a successful school year.

Michelle Zatta stated the meetings are not an open discussion. When will you have open discussion meetings with the parents.

Virginia Jeffries stated you don't need to be a resident to make a comment at a Board meeting.

Mrs. Scott-Hayden asked for a moment of silence for the teachers and students who lost their lives in the school shooting in Georgia and for all who were lost in 911.

Kathleen Bruns-Meyers stated that September is suicide prevention month. We have no idea what is happening in everyone's lives so try to be extra kind.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Mr. Cohan, seconded by Mrs. Minneci, that the meeting be adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Yolanda Koon

YOLANDA KOON
BOARD SECRETARY

