

TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION
WORKSESSION MINUTES – March 19, 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, March 19, 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 6:08 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mr. Michael Cohan, Mrs. Elsie Conteh-Mackey, Mr. Ronnie McDowell, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Mr. Greg Nasta, Ms. Chastity Santana

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mrs. Dixiana Carbonell, Mrs. Kimberly Scott-Hayden (arrived 6:36 p.m.), Mrs. Mary Lynn Williams

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr. Christopher Buggy, Esq.

Mrs. Conteh-Mackey led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. Conteh-Mackey 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. Minneci, that the Board go into Executive Session at 6:11 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: student matters, personnel, litigation 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: Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Conteh-Mackey, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. Nasta
Ms. Santana

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

The Board returned to public session at 8:01 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes will be approved at the regular meeting next week.

Communications:

Communications are part of personnel.

Comments from Public (on resolutions and all other matters):

Kathleen Brunsmeiers stated that there is confusion with the new 2023-2024 calendar and she was wondering if the district had a half a day on April 18th for the eclipse. Dr. Benaquista stated the graduation is June 18th and the last day of school is June 20th.

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Benaquista stated that the Superintendent Report will be next week; however, tonight we have BrandonTyrik, who is a former UHS student, and he would like to use the school for his music video for his song "No Regret" and he promises to work toward no cost to the district.

Brandon stated he is a 2013 graduate of UHS and works for the NY Knicks. He stated that "No Regrets" is about his growing up in Union and he would like to use the high school for his next music video. Dr. Benaquista stated this will go on the Board's next agenda.

Mrs. Koon, School Business Administrator, presented the Superintendent's proposed FY25 budget as outlined below. The presentation is appended to the minutes.

- Budget Mission
- Budget Development Process
- Superintendent's FY25 Proposed Budget - \$183,772,681.00 (all funds); increase of \$12,827,534.00 (over last year's budget) – 7.50% increase
- Drivers of 2024-2025 Budget – increase in health insurance premiums, UTEA/UASA/ACMTE/UTTA contractual obligations, contracted services, transportation, special services (related services)
- Snap-Shot of Staffing
- K-12 District School Enrollments and Trends
- Charter School Enrollment – 2021-39, 2022-53, 2023-46, 2024-62, 2025-51
- FY25 Revenues Sources – Total Operating Revenues - \$169,092,906
- FY25 State Aid – FY24 - \$45,949,949; FY25 - \$57,804,572
- Appropriations by Categories – grand total – FY24 - \$170,945,145; FY25 - \$183,772,679

- District Local Tax Levy: 2023-2024 – Tax Levy-\$101,603,143, Debt Service-\$1,874,000 - Total - \$103,477,143 – 2024-2025 – Tax Levy-\$106,048,985; Debt Service 1,810,750 – Total - \$107,859,735
- Transportation – total transported students - 2,290
- Schools Age and Square Footage
- Major Facility Projects
- Budget Cost Saving Measures – continues to explore cost-saving measures. Shared partnerships are sought at the local, the County and the State levels.

Education/Student Discipline Committee Resolutions:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolution was moved by Mr. Cohan, seconded by Mrs. Scott-Hayden, for adoption and E-1A was reported:

E-1. AFFIRM SUPERINTENDENT’S DETERMINATION OF HIB

Affirm the Superintendent’s determination of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the periods February 13, 2024 to February 20, 2024, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

E-1A. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT OF HIB

Superintendent’s Report of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the period February 21, 2024 to March 19, 2024, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes (*no vote required; for reporting purposes only*).

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Mr. Cohan presented the Education/Student Discipline Committee agenda:

DISCUSSION:

Ms. Santana informed the Board that with respect to E-2 Donation of Books – the books are being vetted.

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

E-14. APPROVE AFFIRMATION OF HIB – JEFF #4

Approve to affirm HIB – JEFF #4.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

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

E-15. APPROVE TO REJECT FINDINGS AND TO REINVESTIGATE HIB – UHS #33
Approve rejection of findings and to reinvestigate HIB – UHS #33.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Mr. Cohan gave an update from the Education Committee meeting.

[Fiscal and Planning Committee Resolutions:](#)

Mrs. Conteh-Mackey presented the Fiscal and Planning Committee agenda.

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolution was moved by Mrs. Conteh-Mackey, seconded by Mr. Cohan for adoption:

F-7. APPROVE DISTRICTWIDE STUDENT FIELD TRIPS
Approve districtwide student field trip destinations and purposes pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.8, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Mrs. Conteh-Mackey presented the remainder of the Fiscal and Planning Committee agenda.

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

F-12. APPROVE GENERAL FUND TAX LEVY – TENTATIVE BUDGET

Approve the General Fund tax levy of \$106,048,985.00 in the 2024-2025 school year, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

F-13. APPROVE TRAVEL EXPENDITURE MAXIMUM

Approve Travel Expenditure Maximum (not to exceed \$85,000.00) for the 2024-2025 school year, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

F-14. APPROVE ESTABLISHING A MAXIMUM DOLLAR LIMIT – PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Approve establishing a maximum dollar limit for professional services \$8,515,980.00 for the 2024-2025 school year, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

F-15. APPROVE USE OF EXCESS SURPLUS FUNDS/FUND BALANCE

Approve the Board of Education to include in the General Fund Budget \$2,477,287.00 of the Board of Education’s excess surplus funds \$1,970.21 and additional fund balance \$2,475,316.79 (@ 6/30/23 per audit) to help close budget gap.

F-16. APPROVE BANKED CAP

Approve in the tentative budget the adjustment for banked cap in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-10.1(b). The district has fully exhausted all eligible statutory spending authority and must increase the base budget in the amount of \$352,129.00 for the purpose of instructional supplies and materials. The district intends to complete said purposes by June 2025.

F-17 APPROVE USE OF ENROLLMENT ADJUSTMENT

Approve in the tentative budget the adjustment for enrollment in the amount of \$1,187,368.00 in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-15.3. The district has fully exhausted all eligible statutory spending authority. The adjustment will be used for instructional supplies and transportation costs and will complete this by June 30, 2025 and acknowledges that it cannot be deferred or incrementally completed over a longer period of time.

F-18. APPROVE ADJUSTMENT FOR HEALTH CARE COSTS

Approve in the tentative budget the adjustment for increased costs of health benefits in the amount of \$850,535.00. The additional funds will be used to pay for the additional increases in health benefit premiums.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Legal Committee:

Ms. Santana presented the Legal Committee agenda.

Operations Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Scott-Hayden presented the Operation Committee agenda.

DISCUSSION:

Ms. Santana informed Mr. Nasta that outstanding lunch debt can be discussed in operations.

Personnel Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Minneci presented the Personnel Committee agenda.

Policy Committee:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following policies were moved by Mr. Nasta, seconded by Mrs. Scott-Hayden, for **FIRST READING**:

POL-1. APPROVE POLICY 5111 – ELIGIBILITY OF RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT STUDENTS (M)

Approve Policy 5111 – Eligibility of Resident/Nonresident Students, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

POL-2. APPROVE REGULATION 5111 – ELIGIBILITY OF RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT STUDENTS (M)

Approve Regulation 5111 – Eligibility of Resident/Nonresident Students, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Minneci stated years ago we removed the language where employees that did not live in district could bring their children to attend our schools. She believes 5111 should be brought back to committee for further review and consideration. Mr. Buggy stated since it was moved and seconded, bring it to vote and if it fails, it can go back to committee.

AYE: None

NAY: Mrs. Conteh-Mackey, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. Nasta, Mrs. Scott-Hayden,
Ms. Santana

ABSTAIN: Mr. Cohan

MOTION FAILED

Residency Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Minneci presented the Residency Committee agenda.

Technology Committee:

Mr. McDowell gave an update to the Board from the Technology Committee meeting – telephones are being installed in all classrooms, employees are being trained on copier/fax, all tickets have been resolved.

Approval of Bills:

Bills will be approved next week.

Unfinished Business:

None

New Business:

Mrs. Scott-Hayden asked that “comments from the public” be added at the end of the worksession. The policy committee will review Policy 0164.

MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Moved by Mr. Cohan, seconded by Mrs. Conteh-Mackey, that the Board go into Executive Session at 9:59 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: student matters, personnel.

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

The Board returned to public session at 10:36 p.m.

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

E-16. APPROVE REINSTATEMENT OF STUDENT

Approve reinstatement of student ID #268119, per the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Mr. Cohan, seconded by Mrs. Scott-Hayden, that the meeting be adjourned at 10:37 p.m.

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Yolanda Koon

YOLANDA KOON
BOARD SECRETARY

