

TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES – JUNE 27, 2017

NOTICE OF MEETING:

TO ALL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS:

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Township of Union was held on Tuesday, June 27, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. at the James Caulfield Administration Building, 2369 Morris Avenue, Union, New Jersey 07083. Action was taken.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. McDowell at 7:02 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mr. David Arminio, Dr. Guy Francis, Mr. Ron McDowell, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Mr. Jeffrey Monge, Mr. Vito Nufrio (by phone), Mrs. Nellis Regis-Darby, Mrs. Mary Lynn Williams, Mrs. Nancy Zuena

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

None

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Mr. Gregory Tatum, Mrs. Annie Moses, Mr. Gregory Brennan, Mr. Gerry Benaquista

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr. Paul Griggs, Esq.

Mr. Arminio led the Board and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Brennan read the statement required under the “Open Public Meetings Act”, a copy of which is on file in the office of the Secretary.

COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC ON RESOLUTIONS:

None

Mr. Arminio read the Mission Statement of the District.

OPERATIONS COMMITTEE RESOLUTIONS:

Moved by Mrs. Zuena, seconded by Mr. Monge, that the following resolutions be adopted:

O-1. RESCINDING CONTRACT AWARD

Rescinding of contract award to Northeastern Interior Services LLC for bathroom remodeling at Livingston Elementary School, Franklin Elementary School, Connecticut Farms Elementary School, and Burnet Middle School, Union High School per quotations 10826, 10827, 10403, 10402, 10400, 10414 and 10407, not to exceed cost of \$234,875 previously approved at the June 20, 2017 Board meeting.

O-2. AWARD OF CONTRACT – NORTHEASTERN INTERIOR SERVICES LLC

Award contract to Northeastern Interior Services LLC for bathroom remodeling at Livingston Elementary School, Franklin Elementary School, Connecticut Farms Elementary School, and Burnet Middle School, Union High School per quotations 10826, 10827, 10403, 10402, 10400, 10414 and 10407, not to exceed cost of \$299,275, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Nufrio stated there was obviously more work that needed to be done and that is why this was amended to a higher figure? Mr. Brennan stated no, all the quotations are exactly the same and the amounts are exactly the same but Buildings and Grounds’ their calculator was not working properly and the aggregate number of all those quotes should have been \$299,275 not \$234,875. We had to rescind and award with the proper aggregate cost. Mr. Nufrio stated it was a technical problem. Mr. Brennan stated yes it was a technical issue.

AYE: Mr. Arminio, Dr. Francis, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. Monge, Mrs. Regis-Darby, Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Zuena, Mr. McDowell

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: Mr. Nufrio

MOTION CARRIED

Mr. Nufrio stated that he apologized to the Board for not being able to be present, I have a medical issue that I am trying to recover from and certainly it would be very difficult to be present. Each day is getting better and I hope that I have everyone’s confidence and I do want to indicate that I understand Mr. Griggs and the law firm’s position on this and I respect it but just to point out in the past, voting was permitted at special meetings by phone as long as it had nothing to do with executive session which you can’t vote on anyway. With that I am happy to be with you at this time.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE RESOLUTIONS:

Mr. McDowell stated I want everyone to know that we are pulling P-5 – there is a question about an agreement that was made last year and we need to research that and how that agreement affects this.

Moved by Mr. Arminio, seconded by Mrs. Zuena, that the following resolutions be adopted:

P-1. PERSONNEL ACTIONS

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

P-2. APPROVE EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT 2017-2018 – ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT - MOSES

Tentatively approve the Employment Contract of Annie Moses, Assistant Superintendent for the 2017-2018 school year, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes. This contract has not been approved by the Executive County Superintendent.

P-3. APPROVE EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT 2017-2018 – ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT - BENAQUISTA

Tentatively approve the Employment Contract of Gerald Benaquista, Assistant Superintendent for the 2017-2018 school year, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes. This contract has not been approved by the Executive County Superintendent.

P-4. APPROVE EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT 2017-2018 – SCHOOL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR/BOARD SECRETARY - BRENNAN

Tentatively approve the Employment Contract of Gregory E. Brennan, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary for the 2017-2018 school year, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes. This contract has not been approved by the Executive County Superintendent.

P-5. Agenda item tabled to future meeting (Employment Contract of Manuel E. Vieira, Assistant School Business Administrator for the 2017-2018 school year).

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Minneci stated this related back to our meeting last week – where it says certification and that is where my question is and I should have asked it last week. Are you being certified, is it a tenured position where it says you have a Certificate of Eligibility and you are working towards a permanent certificate? Article III – Certification – it reads Mr. Benaquista and it is the same for Mrs. Moses, that they “have a Certificate of Eligibility and is therefore eligible to be certified”. Is it a process? Mr. Tatum stated that the standard contract say Certificate of Eligibility which is the minimum requirement you have for a school administrator. Both of these individuals have been through the mentorship and now they possess a standard certificate. Mr. Benaquista stated mine is still in process. Mrs. Minneci stated it didn’t say that here so I wasn’t sure. Mrs. Moses is the same and I didn’t know if they were both going through an internship because it says “then they will immediately begin mentorship”. Mr. Tatum stated the Certificate of Eligibility enables you to seek employment anywhere but business certification is issued once you are in the program and they go for a one year mentorship which they have completed and then they are eligible for standard. Mr. Griggs anything I’m missing on that? Mr. Griggs stated no. Mrs. Minneci stated that was my question and I probably should have asked it last week but this is a different venue then being over there on TV and people looking at you and saying different things. I just wanted to clear that up and that was my question.

My other question was with Mr. Vieira but you took that off so that doesn’t mean anything.

Dr. Francis stated on P-1 – the re-registering secretaries, are these for the people that did register? Mrs. Zuena stated it is to finish re-registration. Mr. Benaquista stated we had about 2500 out of the 7000. Mrs. Zuena stated we have 2,091 left. Mr. Benaquista stated and we tiered it down and we are not offering as many sessions to keep the cost down. Mr. Monge stated at some point we are going to have to bring this stuff in house. What is the game plan? If you still have folks that are not registered but will decide to register at the last minute that is one and two is the language barrier. I have heard some potential concerns about that. I’m not sure

how you guys are dealing with the issue of potential language barrier. Mr. McDowell stated it was only in English on the website. Mr. Monge stated I understand you will end up having two things – one is you are going to have people that are not going to be responsive for whatever reason and then they will try to come in right before school – that's one. Two you are going to have a group of folks that are having difficulties with the language barrier so there may be a communication issue.

Mr. Tatum stated on those special cases, I had a few phone calls and I have had those parties come in and provide the parents with assistance here. Julia is here during the day time and completely understands the re-registration process and worked with a number of families and I had a call last Friday who just didn't understand the documents and I told her to come in next week and Julia will help you. I think as the other dates are concerned, Annie and Gerry can attest to this – those dates are set in the summer time and they are centrally based. We will continue to see people here and an announcement went out last night saying that students will not be able to enter into school or play sports in the summer time. Mrs. Zuena stated that will get them moving.

Mr. Monge asked are we actually following up with that? How is that being followed up? Mr. Tatum stated Linda Ionta was involved with that. Mrs. Zuena stated she asked for a list. Mr. Tatum stated and she said the coaches would assist with that. We just met this morning about that.

Mrs. Moses stated they can come in the summer during the day and in the morning because Mrs. Hubbard is here at 7. People can come on their way to work and register and during the day we have Suan who speaks Spanish. Mrs. Zuena stated she didn't make the next robo call. Mrs. Moses stated as far as at night, and that is a concern and with respect to mom and dad can't speak English, then what do we do. Mrs. Zuena stated I said a Saturday morning from 9 to 12. Mrs. Moses stated I know parents want to register their children and that is why there was such a large turnout last night. Mrs. Zuena stated last night it was crowded but besides that when I went in it was 3-4 minutes. If you had your documents, it was off and running.

Mr. Monge stated honestly I don't want to be here. This is Tuesday and we shouldn't be here. With all due respect as it pertains to questions, that is why we have work meetings and please feel free to speak whether it is in a work meeting or public meeting, I don't think it is fair to the process personally that we are here tonight. If folks have an issue, as Board members, we should be able to speak up because I do the same. I think people should speak up and everybody should respect your opinion on things and if you have questions you should get them answered. We are here because that process wasn't respected.

Mr. Nufrio stated I don't have a question but I would like to comment. Mr. McDowell stated there are other comments that people want to make but we need to move on.

Mr. Arminio stated point of order – is it a question or comment on one of the resolutions that he has then he can make it now. Is it something else? Mr. Nufrio stated it is not a question on the resolutions.

AYE: Mr. Arminio, Dr. Francis, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. Monge, Mrs. Regis-Darby, Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Zuena, Mr. McDowell

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: Mr. Nufrio

MOTION CARRIED

Mr. Nufrio stated I just want to congratulate everyone in the eventual approval.

Mr. McDowell stated before we adjourn we need to set a date for our planning meeting.

Mrs. Minneci stated I would like to make a comment. It pertains to some of the things that go on here. I am new to this and I'm only on the Board six months and I have sat on the other side of the table for many years. Forty-one years as a teacher. I sat as a Union rep. Forgive me if I make a mistake here or there. I sat with Mr. Tatum many times and he knows what I am about. Most of you don't know what I'm about. I'm about education, about the kids, I lived in this Town for 35 years. I have educated my kids in this Town. I don't have a kid in this school and I will not have another kid in this school. I haven't had any kids in this school for 11 years. I'm here to do my job to educate kids and if you have any insinuations, a beef with me, you want to learn what I'm about, sit with me and talk to me. I don't appreciate being singled out, not by name but by insinuation at a Board meeting. I have to speak my mind and I'm sorry and this is not me and this is not the type of person I am. Just like this other little comment and it is a waste. It is not a waste of time. If I don't understand something I have the right to abstain, I have the right to vote no and the right to vote yes. I have to speak my mind because I think it is crazy that I am being singled out. I thought we were supposed to be here as a unit. Work together as nine people for the kids. Maybe you don't think that is what I am about but you don't know me. Sit with me one time and ask me what did you do – do you want to call my former supervisor, my former colleagues, my former students and find out what I'm about – I'm about kids and that is all I have to say and I'm sorry if I sound angry but I'm a little bit insulted on the things that are said and the comments that are made.

Mr. Monge stated and I assuming you are talking to me. Mrs. Minneci stated if the shoe fits wear it. Mr. Monge stated and I will put it on. The point is Mrs. Minneci is we are here at a working meeting and I may be out of order and you can put me out of order. The thing is we are supposed to be independent bodies and to be honest you two guys made a decision and an abstention and I think it is only right for us to hear why you are abstaining. If it is a question then I respect that. Mrs. Minneci stated my point is I am new to this. Mr. Griggs stated Jeff, you need to back off. It is none of your business what they vote on and why they vote. Mr. Monge stated I'm not questioning that. Mr. Griggs stated you went down that road. Mr. Monge stated I didn't mean it that was not my intention. Mr. Griggs stated I have the right to ask you the question why you vote on something. Mr. Monge stated I got you but that is not what I'm trying to say. Mr. Griggs stated that inhibits a person's voting ability. Mr. Monge stated I appreciate that and that is not what I was trying to say and if it came out that way I apologize. Mr. Griggs stated it did.

Mr. Tatum stated I would like to make a comment so everyone knows where I stand. Any time anybody has an issue or doesn't understand – whether it is during the week or weekend, whatever the case may be, my phone is on. You are welcome to come see me and sit

together in the evening. I will do that for anybody. Please know that door is open to everyone at this table. I think unfortunately sometimes there are mishaps and there are things that may need refinement. I believe that between the work session and the public session we have that opportunity if available and again the ability to ask a question at the meeting. If I as a Superintendent can clarify anything for anyone, I'm willing to do that so that we can have a smooth meeting so that we don't have this.

Mr. Monge stated as the Finance Chair, if anybody has any questions about finance, please I will give you more information than you want. Mrs. Minneci stated but if you have any questions about my character or my integrity, please come to me. Mr. Monge stated I'm not questioning and if I do believe me I will talk to you directly.

Mr. Nufrio asked Mr. McDowell can I have the floor? Mrs. Minneci stated you always have to have the last word Vito. Mr. Nufrio stated I have to and you will be happy to what I'm about to say. I have known Mrs. Minneci for at least 24 years and I can attest that she is a professional, an educator and one who does care about kids and I do believe that she has the only interest and sincerest interest is about what we do for our students and all of our children in Union.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated I think everyone who is sitting here has that interest and that is the reason why they are here. I don't think that anyone who is sitting here does not have the best interest of the kids here in Union. That is all I will say on that.

Mr. Arminio stated I know I'm the longest standing Board member – you can always ask us. I know when other Board members first came on, they would pick up the phone and call us. Mrs. Minneci stated I understand that. Mr. McDowell stated I think after we adjourn, maybe we can have a discussion then. Not about Board business but about how we feel about each other. As long as it is not Board business, we should be o.k.

COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC:

None

Mr. McDowell state we need to set up our planning meeting. Mrs. Zuena asked what was our regular meeting in August? Mrs. Cappiello stated our regular meeting was August 15th and Mr. McDowell won't be there. It was discussed you would do both meetings together on August 22nd. Mr. McDowell asked are we moving the regular meeting to the 22nd. Mrs. Cappiello stated that was what was discussed. Mrs. Zuena asked what time? Mr. McDowell stated the planning meeting at 4:30 p.m. Mrs. Zuena asked if everyone could be available at 4:30 p.m. on August 22nd? But we will not be able to have committee meetings. Mr. Benaquista stated if we have to we can schedule them prior. Mr. McDowell stated it would be our planning meeting followed by our regular meeting. Dr. Francis stated he can't do 4:30 it is too early, I'll be late. Mr. McDowell stated our plan is to do it on one day. Mrs. Zuena stated or we have to have it two different weeks. Mr. McDowell asked if half hour later would work? Dr. Francis stated yes.

Mrs. Zuena stated then would we change the time of the regular meeting? Mr. Benaquista stated we can start the regular meeting later.

Mr. McDowell stated if you have any suggestion for the planning meeting of what we need to discuss, please email them.

Mrs. Zuena stated planning session 5-7 and then regular meeting 7:30 p.m. start. Is that good for everyone? Dr. Francis stated this is the 3rd Tuesday? Mr. McDowell stated no it is the 4th Tuesday. Dr. Francis asked how many Board meetings do we have? Mr. Tatum stated just one. Mr. McDowell stated July and August just one meeting.

Mr. Monge stated is it possible for us and I know last year I had a concern and maybe some other folks did too – we just got stuff to vote on – a week before hand and we didn't have any committee meetings. Is it possible to get an agenda prior to that so we have a committee meeting? Mrs. Zuena stated you will get it the week before. Mr. Monge stated I mean prior to that. Last year, we had all this stuff that we were voting on and we didn't have a working meeting and we didn't have any committee meetings – we just came into vote. I'm just saying if we could get the agenda two weeks prior then if people want to have conference calls for committee meetings at least if we have questions, then we have time to get answers. Mrs. Zuena stated even if we got it the Tuesday before and if the committees decided that they wanted to meet that night, they can still meet that Tuesday before. Mr. Arminio stated you can meet anytime you want. Mrs. Zuena stated if you have it a week before that is not enough time? Mr. Monge stated earlier than the Friday before the meeting.

Mr. Tatum asked can we prepare the agenda for the same calendar that we normally do and get it to the Board the 4th and that is two weeks prior. Get it done on our regular time. Mrs. Zuena stated for August. Mr. Tatum stated so that Friday. Mrs. Cappiello stated the 11th. I'm back on Monday, the 7th, so I can do that. Mr. Tatum stated we do the agenda review on Thursday. Mrs. Zuena stated the 10th. Mr. Tatum stated and then we will get it posted and you'll have it. Mrs. Zuena stated everyone will have it for the 11th.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the Board, it was moved by Mr. Arminio, seconded by Mrs. Regis-Darby, that the meeting be adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. McDowell stated before we vote, everybody will be excused that is not a Board member after the vote.

AYE: Mr. Arminio, Dr. Francis, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. Monge, Mrs. Regis-Darby, Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Zuena, Mr. McDowell

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: Mr. Nufrio

MOTION CARRIED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

GREGORY E. BRENNAN
BOARD SECRETARY