

TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION
WORKSESSION MINUTES – NOVEMBER 11, 2025

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, November 11, 2025 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.

Ms. Carbonell called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

Ms. Dixiana Carbonell, Mr. Michael Cohan, Mrs. Guida Faria, Mr. Ronnie McDowell, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Mr. Greg Nasta, Mrs. Kimberly Scott-Hayden

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mrs. Elsie Conteh-Mackey (arrived 7:26 p.m.) , Ms. Chastity Santana

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr. Christopher Buggy, Esq.

Mr. Nasta led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance and 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.

Approval of Minutes:

The minutes will be adopted at the Board's regular meeting.

Communications:

Communications are part of personnel.

Comments from Public (on resolutions in **BOLD** and ALL MATTERS):

Ms. Carbonell - thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting and that the Board values their input and appreciates their time. She reminded the audience that all comments are to be respectful and constructive, and to refrain from calling out and yelling. The Board is unable to engage in back-and-forth dialogue; however, your comments will be reviewed and considered, and if feasible, the Superintendent or designee will provide a response at a later date.

Katherine Bruns-Meyers –told the Board that she had received a template for a book and used that template to make a book about her class and shared the book with the Board members.

She asked if the Board could lock up the new playground at Livingston because there is garbage and other items left on the playground.

Dr. Benaquista indicated that this problem is also at other schools; however, if they place locks on them, the community is unable to use. He indicated he will work with Ms. McKenzie on what the next steps will be to protect our property. Ms. McKenzie indicated that signage has been ordered.

Carlos Esquivel – thanked the Board members who attended the band competition. He indicated they were asked to run the band competition for next year too.

Michelle Zatta – concerns with the pre-k at Hannah Caldwell. Parents were never informed that a teacher was leaving, and she believes Ms. Walker should have notified the parents, not the teacher. She also indicated that the position should have been filled because it is an interruption to the students. She still has concerns and is waiting on an answer regarding the temperature in the building and would like the records for that.

Dr. Benaquista indicated that the administration will decide who will monitor the temperature in the classrooms. Dr. Benaquista informed everyone that since we went to solar everything goes on with a computer, and it is set to go on and off at certain times of the day and night is different than daytime.

If a parent has an issue, the parent needs to contact the principal. If there is an issue in the school, the principal would need to contact the Superintendent so, if necessary, students can be relocated.

He indicated that we have new teachers who will be coming from other districts and will be approved next week; however, they cannot resign until they are Board approved. These new teachers will need to give 60 days' notice to their former district. Principals provide coverage to the best of their ability.

Board President and Board members agreed that communication is important, and the supervisor should have notified the parents prior to the teacher telling them. A procedure needs to be in place to notify parents. Dr. Benaquista indicated he will include this in his principal meeting this week.

Mrs. Conteh-Mackey arrived at 7:26 p.m.

Superintendent's Report:

The Superintendent Report will be presented next week.

Education/Student Discipline Committee Resolutions:

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

E-1. AFFIRM SUPERINTENDENT'S DETERMINATION OF HIB

Affirm the Superintendent's determination of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the periods October 14, 2025 to October 28, 2025 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 October 29, 2025 to November 11, 2025, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes (*no vote required; for reporting purposes only*).

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Cohan had questions concerning E-8 – student suspension; therefore, it was agreed to by all Board members to table E-8 until after executive session.

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

All other agenda items will be approved at next week's meeting.

Fiscal and Planning Committee Resolutions:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolutions were moved by Mr. McDowell, 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.

F-15. APPROVE CONTRACT – COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Approve School Contract with the State of New Jersey Department of Human Services, Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, for educational services for a district student *attending a non-public school* for the 2025-2026 school year in accordance with the non-public information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

All other agenda items will be approved at next week's meeting.

Operations/Technology Committee Resolutions:

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

O-4. APPROVE AMENDMENT OF LONG-RANGE FACILITIES PLAN AND AUTHORIZE SPIEZLE ARCHITECTURAL GROUP TO SUBMIT TO NJDOE

Approve amendment of the district's Long-Range Facilities Plan (LRFP) to address the five-year reporting requirements and to be consistent with proposed school facilities projects; the Board authorizes Spiezle Architectural Group Inc. to make the submission to the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) on behalf of the district, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Cohan asked if the cost for all work that needs to be done is \$39,000,000. Dr. Benaquista indicated that there are different phases so it is more than that; however, to move forward, this needs to be approved and submitted to the State.

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

All other agenda items will be approved at next week's meeting.

Personnel Committee Resolutions:

The personnel items will be approved at next week's meeting.

Residency Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Minneci reported on the following:

For informational purposes only (no vote required): The following totals are as of the October 28, 2025 Board meeting (2025-2026 school year):

Students Removed:	0
Students Voluntarily Transferred:	3

Approval of Bills:

Bills will be approved at next week's meeting.

Unfinished Business:

Mrs. Scott-Hayden congratulated the newly elected Board members and looks forward to working with everyone.

Ms. Carbonell – it is a pleasure to work with you all and we are a good team, and we will make the district better.

Mrs. Minneci – it is a pleasure to work with this group. She has been on the Board for 9 years and is happy to spend the next three years working with everyone and that they will work hard for the district. Each member brings something different to the table.

New Business:

Mr. Cohan – attended the remembrance celebration today for Veteran's Day. It is important to acknowledge staff and neighbors who have served; thank you for your service.

Mrs. Minneci – Sgt Schemel was honored today; it was a beautiful ceremony. Our Pre-K students made cards for the veterans.

Mrs. Faria – it is a great pleasure to work with this Board. The girls' varsity soccer team made it to the States – they played their hearts out and never gave up.

Ms. Carbonell – tonight was all positive; thank you all.

MOTION TO RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION:

There being no further business before the Board it was moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Mrs. Scott-Hayden, that the Board return to public session at 10:11 p.m.

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

[Mr. Cohan had left the Board meeting at 8:45 p.m.]

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

E-8. APPROVE SUSPENSION – STUDENT

Approve continuation of long-term suspension for student #266593 from the general education program.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Mrs. Faria, that the meeting be adjourned at 10:13 p.m.

All present voting YES

MOTION CARRIED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Yolanda Koon

YOLANDA KOON
BOARD SECRETARY

