

TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION
WORKSESSION MINUTES – June 11, 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, June 11, 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. Nancy Minneci, Mr. Greg Nasta, Ms. Chastity Santana

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mrs. Elsie Conteh-Mackey (6:21 p.m.), Mr. Ronnie McDowell, Mrs. Kimberly Scott-Hayden (6:20 p.m.), Mrs. Mary Lynn Williams (6:01 p.m.)

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Dr. Gerald Benaquista, Mrs. Yolanda Koon

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr. Christopher Buggy, Esq.

Mrs. Minneci led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. Minneci 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 6:03 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 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. Minneci, Mr. Nasta, Mrs. Williams, Ms. Santana

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

The Board returned to public session at 7:02 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes will be approved at the regular meeting of the Board.

Communications:

Communications are part of personnel and operations.

Comments from Public (on resolutions):

Mrs. Lipstein asked P-9 - job description – is this a new position, is it replacing someone, how does it fall in the hierarchy and what is the salary? Mrs. Lipstein was advised that if she had any questions regarding the job description to email Mrs. Koon and/or Dr. Benaquista.

Virginia Jeffries reminded the community about the Open Public Meetings Act. She stated our hand out agenda is confusing because online it is numbered, and the paper copy is alphabetic. She also suggested that people should send their email to the district and then come to the meeting and read it.

Superintendent's Report:

The Superintendent's Report will be presented at the June 25th regular meeting.

Education/Student Discipline Committee Resolutions:

Mr. Cohan reported on the following agenda item:

E-1. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT OF HIB

Superintendent's Report of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the period May 22, 2024 to June 11, 2024, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes (*no vote required; for reporting purposes only*).

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

E-1A. AFFIRM SUPERINTENDENT'S DETERMINATION OF HIB

Affirm the Superintendent's determination of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the periods May 15, 2024 to May 21, 2024, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

E-9. APPROVE RIDER FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL SERVICE CONTRACTS

Approve Rider for Public School Service Contracts for access to virtual education programs and courses, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

None

AYE: Ms. Carbonell, Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Conteh-Mackey, Mrs. Minneci,
Mr. Nasta, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams, 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-11. APPROVE REINSTATEMENT OF STUDENT

Approve reinstatement of student #240567 to the general education program effective June 12, 2024, subject to the parameters discussed in executive session.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

E-12. APPROVE REINSTATEMENT OF STUDENT

Approve reinstatement of student #256501 to the general education program effective September 1, 2024.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

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

DISCUSSION:

Ms. Santana stated E-4 – Comprehensive Equity Plan – equity is a big thing and we are committed to do so much.

Mrs. Scott-Hayden stated when we look where we were – we have a lot of work to do. We need to make an effort to have PD for all – ESP, certificated staff and administration. HR needs to make sure we are equitable in hiring and to make sure that employees understand what is expected of them. When people leave the district, collect our items, terminate emails and find out why they are leaving.

Emergency exits for the handicapped – the district needs to make sure we are in compliance. We have identified what is needed and will work to make these changes.

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 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: Ms. Carbonell, Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Conteh-Mackey, 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:

Mr. Cohan asked for an update on Burnet Middle School. Dr. Benaquista stated on Monday morning a pipe burst at Burnet Middle School. Our employees worked together and the plumbers turned off the water and replaced the piping. Clean up was started and an outside remediation company was called and came in to start the remediation. The remediation company

has set up dehumidifiers and fans. BMS has been half-days because the cafeteria is not available. The fire department and board of health were called and we received approval so hopefully the students will be able to return full-day on Thursday but it will depend on the moisture levels.

Mrs. Scott-Hayden stated thank you to all who assisted and please highlight them in your Superintendent Report this month.

Dr. Benaquista added that in a crisis, we all come together. Ms. Santana stated Dr. Benaquista was right there and he always shows up.

Personnel Committee Resolutions:

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

P-9. APPROVE JOB DESCRIPTION – MANAGER OF SCHOOL-BASED CLINICAL SERVICES

Approve Job Description – Manager of School-Based Clinical Services, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

Dr. Benaquista stated the district will transition mental health to in-house. Someone needs to oversee the counselors, so we needed to update the qualifications. This is for all students, not just special education.

Mrs. Scott-Hayden stated that as you build this hopefully there will be wraparound services – in school and outside support at home so we can assist our families.

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolution was moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Mrs. Scott-Hayden, that the following resolution be adopted:

P-13. APPROVE TRAVEL AND RELATED EXPENSES – CA LMI SUMMER INSTITUTE

Approve travel and related expenses pursuant to the requirements of N.J.S.A. 18A:11-12, N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.8, 5.9 for the CA LMI SUMMER INSTITUTE – Building Bridges, Fostering Authentic Partnerships in San Diego, California (June 23-27, 2024) for Board members and Administration, at a cost not to exceed \$12,000.00 - for registered Board Members/ Administration: Vincent Rettino, Director of Personnel, Yvonne Lorenzo, Vice Principal, and Board Members Michael Cohan, Nancy Minneci, Kimberly Scott-Hayden.

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Mackey asked to be removed from the list of attendees

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

NAY: Ms. Carbonell

ABSTAIN: Mr. Cohan (self), Mrs. Minneci (self),
Mrs. Scott-Hayden (self)

MOTION CARRIED

Policy Committee:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following policies were moved by Mrs. Williams, seconded by Mr. Cohan for **FIRST READING**:

POL-1. POLICY 1140 -AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAM (M)
Approve Policy 1140 – Affirmative Action Program.

POL-2. POLICY 1523 COMPREHENSIVE EQUITY PLAN (M)
Approve Policy 1523 – Comprehensive Equity Plan.

POL-3. POLICY 1530 – EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES (M)
Approve Policy 1530 – Equity Employment Opportunities.

POL-4. REGULATION 1530 – EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMPLAINT
PROCEDURE (M)
Approve Regulation 1530 – Equal Employment Opportunity Complaint Procedure.

POL-5. POLICY 1550 – EQUAL EMPLOYMENT/ANTI-DISCRIMINATION PRACTICES
(M)
Approve Policy 1550 – Equal Employment/Anti-Discrimination Practices.

POL-6. REGULATION 2200 – CURRICULUM CONTENT (M)
Approve Regulation 2200 – Curriculum Content.

POL-7. POLICY 2260 – EQUITY IN SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM PRACTICES (M)
Approve Policy 2260 – Equity in School and Classroom Practices.

POL-8. REGULATION 2260 – EQUITY IN SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM PRACTICES
COMPLAINT PROCEDURE (M)
Approve Regulation 2260 – Equity in School and Classroom Practices Complaint
Procedures.

POL-9. POLICY 2411 – GUIDANCE COUNSELING (M)
Approve Policy 2411 – Guidance Counseling.

POL-10. POLICY 2423 – BILINGUAL EDUCATION (M)
Approve Policy 2423 – Bilingual Education.

POL-11. REGULATION 2423 – BILINGUAL EDUCATION (M)

Approve Regulation 2423 – Bilingual Education.

POL-12. POLICY 2431.4 – PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF SPORTS-RELATED CONCUSSIONS AND HEAD INJURIES (M)

Approve Policy 2431.4 – Prevention and Treatment of Sports-Related Concussions and Head Injuries.

POL-13. REGULATION 2431.4 – PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF SPORTS-RELATED CONCUSSIONS AND HEAD INJURIES (M)

Approve Regulation 2431.4 – Prevention and Treatment of Sports-Related Concussions and Head Injuries.

POL-14. POLICY 3211 – CODE OF ETHICS

Approve Policy 3211 – Code of Ethics.

POL-15. REGULATION 5440 – HONORING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT (NEW)

Approve Regulation 5440 – Honoring Student Achievement.

POL-16. POLICY 5570 - SPORTSMANSHIP

Approve Policy 5570 - Sportsmanship.

POL-17. POLICY 5750 – EQUITABLE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY (M)

Approve Policy 5750 – Equitable Educational Opportunity.

POL-18. POLICY 5841 – SECRET SOCIETIES

Approve Policy 5841 – Secret Societies.

POL-19. POLICY 5842 – EQUAL ACCESS OF STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Approve Policy 5842 – Equal Access of Student Organizations.

POL-20. POLICY 7610 - VANDALISM

Approve Policy 7610 - Vandalism.

POL-21. REGULATION 7610 - VANDALISM

Approve Regulation 7610 - Vandalism.

POL-22. POLICY 9323 – NOTIFICATION OF JUVENILE OFFENDER CASE DISPOSITION

Approve Policy 9323 – Notification of Juvenile Offender Case Disposition.

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Williams asked the following be added to section “D” of Policy 9323 – “NJAC 6A-7-1.1(a)”.

Mr. Cohan stated policies 3211/5570/7610 – are important policies and they should be given to staff, coaches and students so they know their responsibilities. Dr. Benaquista stated policies are sent to principals, supervisors, directors.

Mrs. Conteh-Mackey asked how does it get filtered to parents? Dr. Benaquista stated through the Code of Conduct Handbook – parents have to sign off on it

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.

DISCUSSION:

Dr. Benaquista thanked the committee for having the extra meetings and they have done a great job.

Ms. Carbonell stated we need to vet harder and be fiscally responsible.

Mrs. Williams believes re-registration has helped.

Mrs. Scott-Hayden stated we have to thank the investigators for their hard work. Dr. Benaquista stated the Town will also be providing an investigator to assist the district and this year we will also be doing re-registration for out-of-district students, in addition to new registrations.

Approval of Bills:

Approval of bills will be at the regular meeting of the Board.

Unfinished Business:

Mrs. Conteh-Mackey stated we are receiving feedback from the community, and we will need to come back to the Board on curriculum and transition of services. Ralignment is a work in progress and the process will evolve and grow

New Business:

Mrs. Minneci attended a networking event at Battle Hill – there will be a fundraiser at Lagar and it is sponsored by the Town and Rotary Club to support a Union family.

Comments from the Public

Michelle Zatta stated she emailed a petition signed by over 300 parents to the Board and read a statement concerning a meeting she attended with Dr. Benaquista concerning special area classes and any reduction will not increase academics and will increase behavioral problems. A copy of the statement is appended to minutes.

Ann Margaret Shannon stated she wanted to complement everyone who helped out at Burnet Middle School – they did a great job. Dr. Benaquista stated that Ms. Shannon had food available for all the employees helping out.

Maida Chiroso stated she attended the meeting with Dr. Benaquista and multiple parents for 1.5 hours. She stated he targeted the July meeting for the schedules. She asked that the district not reduce the special areas. She also suggested that the principals send you data on attendance, to have coffee with the superintendent once a month, and curriculum team to have monthly meetings with parents. She also discussed issues and concerns.

Kristen Nunes stated a shout out to Donna Restivo and the IT team and also to Anthony Cirella and his team for all that they have done.

Richard D’Avanzo stated the collaboration and communication between the Town and the district is better. All are invited to attend the back-to-school event.

Virginia Jeffries began to speak about personnel and the attorney, Board President and Superintendent asked her not to and Mr. Buggy asked her to put it in an email to Dr. Benaquista. Ms. Jeffries continued speaking and the Board adjourned the meeting.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Mr. Cohan, seconded by Mrs. Conteh-Mackey, that the meeting be adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

AYE: Ms. Carbonell, Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Conteh-Mackey, 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

