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 9, 2026 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.

Mrs. Scott-Hayden called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:
Ms. Dicxiana Carbonell, Mr. Michael Cohan, Mrs. Elsie Conteh-Mackey, Mrs. Guida Faria, Mr. Ronnie McDowell, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Mr. Greg Nasta, Ms. Chastity Santana, Mrs. Kimberly Scott-Hayden

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:
None

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:
Dr. Gerald Benaquista, Ms. Marissa McKenzie, Mrs. Yolanda Koon

ALSO PRESENT:
Mr. Christopher Buggy, Esq.

Mrs. Minneci 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:

Minutes will be approved at the Board's regular meeting.

Communications:

Communications are part of personnel and operations.

Ms. Santana asked that when an outside organization uses the district facilities, that the organization indicate what the service is that will be taking place. Mr. McDowell indicated he would have an answer for the Board by next week.

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

Mrs. Scott-Hayden - thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting and said 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.

Susan Lipstein – indicated that in her opinion it was a mistake to let the librarians go and she hopes that the State will tighten the law and also that there will be a change in the funding formula so that the district can receive more funding. She informed the Board that now there is inequity between our district and other districts who still have librarians. She asked if there was a plan, when will there be a posting and what will the salary be? She indicated that teachers will not be able to fill the gap for the librarian. She asked that the plan be shared with the public; otherwise, the district will not be following the law.

Ann Margaret Shannon – she asked that Reg-1 be placed on hold. She indicated that there were only 10 meetings in 5 years regarding this. She expressed her concerns concerning this regulation – no single assignment, 60% of grade; not sure why all students will receive modifications, retakes, etc.

Dr. Benaquista indicated that there were over 20 meetings and many teachers were involved and came up with this regulation; it was a collaborative effort.

Luisa Baez – indicated that the salaries are missing from the contracts under personnel and that other administrations are considering freezing salaries. Union is top heavy, instead of teachers, why not assistant superintendents; fewer administrators. She also indicated that the UTEA will accept stipends to do retakes.

Kathleen Bruns Meyers – indicated it was a tough day for the school family of Livingston Elementary School and rough time for many people today.

She advised the administration and Board about the issues at the playgrounds and what is being left on the picnic tables. She indicated it was great to see everyone use it but unfortunately people don't care.

Virginia Jeffries – advised the Board that in 2024 the Township approved a 5-year rental agreement for the administration offices at 855 Lehigh Avenue and that this was not properly passed. She also indicated that it was not in the budget and asked what the cost is and who occupies that space?

Alex Bakogianni – indicated that he reviewed the financials and the district is $15 million in the red and $8 million goes to Hannah Caldwell. He alleged that the failure to address the mold and the district's inactions caused this issue. He also indicated that third party resources need to be used for out-of-district students; every cut to the classroom is a cut to our students and money needs to be redirected to the classrooms.

Board President Scott-Hayden asked for a moment of silence for our student Olivia Belloso and her family.

Superintendent's Report:

Superintendent's presentation will be at next week's meeting.

Education/Student Discipline Committee Resolutions:

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

E-1. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT OF HIB

Superintendent's Report of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the period May 20, 2026 to June 9, 2026, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes (*no vote required; for reporting purposes only*).

E-12. APPROVE UPDATE TO 2025-2026 SCHOOL CALENDAR

Approve update to 2025-2026 school calendar, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

E-14. APPROVE CONTINUATION OF SUSPENSION AND HOME INSTRUCTION

Approve continuation of suspension and home instruction for students #266543, #285026, #285024, #266593 from the general education program; students to return for the 2026-2027 school year.

DISCUSSION:

The change in E-12 was the addition of a half-day on June 10th for high school students only because of testing.

AYE: Ms. Carbonell, Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Conteh-Mackey, Mrs. Faria, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. Nasta, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott-Hayden
NAY: None
ABSTAIN: None MOTION CARRIED

All other resolutions will be presented and voted on at the next Board meeting.

Fiscal and Planning Committee Resolutions:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolution was moved by Ms. Santana, seconded by Mr. McDowell, 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. Faria, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. Nasta, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott-Hayden
NAY: None
ABSTAIN: None MOTION CARRIED

All other resolutions will be presented and voted on at the next Board meeting.

Operations/Technology Committee Resolutions:

No resolutions are being approved this evening; resolutions will be presented and voted on at the next Board meeting.

Personnel Committee Resolutions:

Dr. Benaquista indicated that P-7, P-12, P-13, P-14 will be discussed in executive session and voted on thereafter.

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

P-15. APPROVE JOB DESCRIPTION – MANAGER OF SAFETY, SECURITY, EMERGENCY OPERATIONS AND COMPLIANCE

Approve Job Description – Manager of Safety, Security, Emergency Operations and Compliance, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

Dr. Benaquista indicated that P-15 is a reclassification of the position to include additional positions, duties and therefore will replace the previous job description. The position will be posted and to be filled by the start of the new school year.

AYE: Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Conteh-Mackey, Mrs. Faria, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. Nasta, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott-Hayden
NAY: Ms. Carbonell
ABSTAIN: None MOTION CARRIED

All other resolutions will be presented and voted on at the next Board meeting.

Policy Committee:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and the Policy Committee, the following policies were moved by Mr. Cohan, seconded by Mrs. Faria, ***FIRST READING***:

POL-1. POLICY 2624 - GRADING SYSTEM

Approve Policy 2624 – Grading System

REG-1. REGULATION – GRADING SYSTEM

Approve Regulation 2624 – Grading System

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Cohan indicated the policy/regulation were reviewed and updated to comply with instructional program. There is nothing in the policy/regulation that takes away the discretion of a teacher. It will create consistency between the schools. He informed the Board that pre-k to grade 2 will now use standard base grading; this may be implemented in other grades but not at the high school level.

Mrs. Faria indicated that this policy supports students, reassessments support students, teachers are here to support students, and administration is here to support teachers. She believes that 11 days to grade papers is too long. She thanked the administration for moving in the right steps. She indicated helping a student and asking for a stipend is offensive and this coming from a person who has zero contact with students.

Board members had questions concerning why with technology does it take 11 days to grade and asked who the key players were who took part in the updates to the policy/regulation. Dr. Benaquista indicated that there was good collaboration and mix of people. He will provide that information at the next meeting.

Ms. Santana indicated that she had invited Mrs. Faria to sit in at the policy committee meeting for collaboration. Mr. Cohan indicated the policy/regulation needs to be adopted so that it can be implemented by September.

It was stated that you need to come to the table with solutions; if you come with a problem, come with a solution.

Residency Committee Resolutions:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. Minneci reported on the following residency information:

For informational purposes only (no vote required): The following totals are as of the May 19, 2026 Board meeting (2025-2026 school year):

	Total	Elementary	Middle School	High School
Students Removed:	0	0	0	0
Students Transferred	19	8	3	8

DISCUSSION:

Ms. Santana - we have done a lot of work with residency; there is a process and the district does a thorough job.

Mrs. Minneci - if you know anyone who is attending our schools and does not live in town, to please call the Board office.

Board members had discussion concerning the process of residency, cost savings, reporting students and investigations.

Approval of Bills:

Bills will be approved at the next Board meeting.

Unfinished Business:

Ms. Carbonell – asked what provisions were made for the students and teachers on this difficult day. Dr. Benaquista indicated that support is available to both students and teachers.

Mrs. Faria asked that during this difficult time, we need to consider if seniors are ok with taking the final exams.

New Business:

Ms. Santana – the Prom was last Thursday – we have great kids in Union and making great decisions – they had Olivia's memory there.

Dr. Benaquista reported on the volleyball team – they are State Champions, the #1 seed and very proud of them.

Mrs. Faria – attended the UHS spring concert and it was a great show. She also attended the APEX awards, and it was a full house – this was for 4th grade to high school students who had a 5 on the NJSLA. Teachers were there to support our students and students appreciate that. There were over 460 students. Congratulations to the students, families, teachers and administration.

Ms. Carbonell – Memorial Day Parade – she gave a shout out to Principal Bossard and Vice Principal Starr, the ROTC and all the students who attended. She also attended a vigil for the Belloso family.

Mrs. Minneci indicated the signage at Union High School is lit up.

Mrs. Conteh-Mackey – senior prank day – they hired a mariachi band to follow the principal and vice principal – it was on Tik Toc.

MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Moved by Mr. Cohan, seconded by Mrs. Faria, that the Board go into Executive Session at 8:24 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. Conteh-Mackey, Mrs. Faria, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. Nasta, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott-Hayden
NAY: None
ABSTAIN: None MOTION CARRIED

The Board returned to public session at 11:09 p.m.

MOTION TO RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION:

There being no further business before the Board, it was moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Ms. Santana, that the Board return to public session at 11:09 p.m.

AYE: Ms. Carbonell, Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Conteh-Mackey, Mrs. Faria, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. Nasta, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott-Hayden
NAY: None
ABSTAIN: None MOTION CARRIED

Dr. Benaquista advised the Board that the personnel items P-7, P-12, P-13 and P-14 that were originally to be approved this evening will be on next week's Board agenda for vote.

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 11:011 p.m.

All present voting YES MOTION CARRIED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Yolanda Koon

YOLANDA KOON
BOARD SECRETARY