

**TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION
ORGANIZATION MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 6, 2022 – 7:00 p.m.**

NOTICE OF MEETING:

TO ALL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS:

The organization meeting of the Board of Education of the Township of Union was held on Thursday, January 6, 2022 at 7:00 p.m., pursuant to a notice sent to each member. In person and via Zoom.

Mrs. Yolanda Koon, the Board Secretary, called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. She will facilitate the meeting until the Board President is selected. The Board President will proceed with facilitating the rest of the meeting.

Mrs. Koon led the Board and audience members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

At this time we have special guests to administer the Oaths of Office to our newly elected Board members. Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver will administer the oaths to Marissa McKenzie and Kimberly Scott-Hayden and Senator Joseph Cryan will administer the oath to Chastity Santana.

Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver administered the oaths of office to the newly elected Board members – Ms. Marissa McKenzie and Mrs. Kimberly Scott-Hayden.

Lieutenant Governor Oliver stated congratulations; to Marissa, Kimberly and Chastity, I want you to know NJSA 18A is the bible. If you follow 18A and work with your colleagues on the Board, you will have smooth sailing representing the students of Union.

Senator Cryan administered the oath of office to the newly elected Board member – Chastity Santana. Congratulations.

NEWLY ELECTED BOARD MEMBERS:

1. Marissa McKenzie
2. Chastity Santana
3. Kimberly Scott-Hayden

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mrs. Yocasta Brens-Watson, Dr. Guy Francis, Ms. Marissa McKenzie, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Mr. John O’Shea, Mrs. Nellis Regis-Darby, Ms. Chastity Santana, Mrs. Kimberly Scott-Hayden and Mrs. Mary Lynn Williams

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

None

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Dr. Scott Taylor, Mr. Gerald Benaquista, Mrs. Yolanda Koon

ALSO PRESENT:

Lester Taylor, Esq., Christopher Buggy, Esq.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT STATEMENT:

Mrs. Koon read the Open Public Meeting Act Statement.

MISSION STATEMENT:

Mrs. Cappiello read the district's Mission Statement.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON RESOLUTIONS:

None

Mrs. Koon stated at this time we will have our attorney provide the process for the nomination of office of presidency.

Mr. Taylor stated congratulations to the newly elected Board members. Just as an order of protocol, the first order of business today is for the Board to elect officers pursuant to Title 18A. You are mandated to elect a president and vice president this evening. If for any reason you do not, the Executive County Superintendent has the authority to do so for you.

Pursuant to your Bylaws – 0152 – “Any member may place a member’s name in nomination; a second is not required. Election for each office will be conducted by a vote when the nominations for that office are closed. The candidate receiving a majority vote of the members of the Board present and constituting a quorum will be elected to office.” Voting will take place by a role call vote after the nominations are closed. If and when more than one person has been nominated for either office, the Board will vote on the candidates in the order in which they were nominated.

In the event that no candidate reaches a majority vote, the members of the Board present and constituting a quorum, the procedure shall continue until someone receives the majority vote. Any questions? No questions asked.

ORGANIZATION:

Mrs. Koon called for nominations for the Office of President.

Moved by Mrs. Minneci that Mrs. Williams be nominated for the Office of President.

Mrs. Koon called for other nominations. No other nominations; the nomination floor is closed.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. O'Shea, Ms. Santana,
Mrs. Scott Hayden, Mrs. Williams
NAYES: Dr. Francis, Mrs. Regis-Darby
ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Mrs. Koon stated congratulations and please take your seat.

Mrs. Williams assumed the chair of Board President.

Mrs. Williams stated thank you fellow Board members and read the following statement:

“I want to start by saying I am truly humbled and honored by this appointment and I thank you for your trust and faith in my leadership abilities as Board President.

I would also like to welcome our three newly elected Board members: Marissa McKenzie, Chastity Santana and Kimberly Scott-Hayden. You three ladies bring a wealth of professional experience, knowledge, passion, and energy to the Board. We are going to need that because we have a lot of work to do.

Our children are suffering. There is no other way to describe what every child from pre-k through 12 have had to endure these past 22 months. They have been deprived of any sense of normalcy and they haven't had a voice or a choice. All the decisions have been made for them. It is imperative they feel they can trust the decision makers.

In the past, there has been some extremely poor examples of how Board members treat one another and how professional adults conduct themselves in public. There has been name calling, personal attacks, profanity. If you read our code of ethics, this behavior quite frankly is unethical. The lack of respect, the lack of decorum and the lack of ethics is unacceptable and will no longer be tolerated. That is not what we are here for. Our children are in crisis.

As a Board there can be only one priority, to ensure the health and well being of our children. We must support each other, our Superintendent, our Assistant Superintendents and every employee of this district.

In closing, I offer thanks and a deep appreciation for this honor. I am excited and look forward to everyone working collaboratively, respectfully and ethically on behalf of our children. These are extraordinary times and we have an extraordinary amount of work to do. Our children are in crisis. We have to mend the fracture, roll up our sleeves and get to work.”

Mrs. Williams called for nominations for the Office of Vice President

Moved by Mr. O’Shea that Mrs. Minneci be nominated for the Office of Vice President.

Mr. Taylor called for other nominations. Mrs. Brens-Watson wanted to nominate Mrs. Regis-Darby but she declined the nomination.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. O’Shea, Ms. Santana,
Mrs. Scott Hayden, Mrs. Williams

NAYES: None

ABSTAIN: Dr. Francis, Mrs. Regis-Darby

MOTION CARRIED

Mrs. Minneci assumed the chair of Vice President.

Mrs. Minneci stated thank you for your support. I’m anxious to continue my work on the Board and look forward to working with all of you, especially our new members. Thank you for putting your time in. Let’s go get them.

ADOPT NJSBA CODE OF ETHICS

Moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Ms. Santana, that the Township of Union Board of Education adopt the School Code of Ethics for the 2022 Calendar Year:

WHEREAS, each School Board Member is responsible to read and become familiar with the Code of Ethics for School Board Members; the Code of Ethics became part of the School Ethics Act on July 26, 2001. Questions about the Policy should be directed to the District Board Secretary. If the Board Secretary is unable to answer the question, you may be directed to the School Ethics Commission from whom you may request an advisory opinion; and

WHEREAS, the following Code of Ethics for Board Members is set forth as a guide to conflict-of-interest situations and unethical activity for Board Members.

18A:12-24.1 CODE OF ETHICS FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

- a) I will uphold and enforce all laws, state board rules and regulations, and court orders pertaining to schools. Desired changes should be brought about only through legal and ethical procedures;
- b) I will make decisions in terms of the educational welfare of children and will seek to develop and maintain public schools which meet the individual needs of all children regardless of their ability, race, creed, sex or social standing;
- c) I will confine my board action to policymaking, planning and appraisal and I will help to frame policies and plans only after the board has consulted those who will be affected by them;
- d) I will behave toward my fellow board members with the respect due their office--demonstrating courtesy, decorum and fair play at all public meetings and in all public statements;

- e) I will refrain from inappropriate conduct in public meetings and in making public statements, refraining from any disparagement of my fellow board members or others on a personal, social, racial or religious basis;
- f) I will carry out my responsibility, not to administer the schools, but, together with my fellow board members, to see that they are well run;
- g) I will recognize that authority rests with the board of education and will make no personal promises nor take any private action which may compromise the board;
- h) I will refuse to surrender my independent judgment to special interest or partisan political groups or to use the schools for personal gain or for the gain of friends;
- i) I will hold confidential all matters pertaining to the schools which, if disclosed, would needlessly injure individuals or the schools. But in all other matters, I will provide accurate information and, in concert with my fellow board members, interpret to the staff the aspirations of the community for its schools;
- j) I will vote to appoint the best qualified personnel available after consideration of the recommendation of the superintendent;
- k) I will support and protect school personnel in proper performance of their duties;
- l) I will refer all complaints to the superintendent and will act on such complaints at public meetings only after failure of an administrative solution.

The board shall see that all members of the board receive training in understanding and adhering to this code of ethics and shall discuss it annually at a regularly scheduled public meeting. Each member shall sign documentation that he/she has received a copy of it and has read and understood it.

DISCUSSION:

None

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. O’Shea, Mrs. Regis-Darby, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott Hayden, Mrs. Williams

NAYES: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

ADOPT ROBERTS RULES OF ORDER

Moved by Mr. O’Shea, seconded by Mrs. Scott-Hayden that the Board approve the adoption of Roberts Rules of Order as the official procedure manual to be used to conduct meetings for the 2022 calendar year.

DISCUSSION:

None

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. O’Shea, Mrs. Regis-Darby, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott Hayden, Mrs. Williams

NAYES: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVE MEETING NIGHTS

Moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Mr. O’Shea that the Board approve the schedule of committee meetings, work sessions and regular meetings be adopted in accordance with the schedule, in the hands of each board member; and be it further moved that copies be posted in the Administration Building and with the Township Clerk and that copies be sent to the Star Ledger and the Union County Local Source for publication.

DISCUSSION:

None

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. O’Shea,
Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott Hayden, Mrs. Williams

NAYES: None

ABSTAIN: Mrs. Regis-Darby

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVE POLICY MANUAL

Moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Mrs. Brens-Watson that the Board approve the Policy Manual of the Township of Union Board of Education presently in effect be hereby readopted.

DISCUSSION:

None

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. O’Shea,
Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott Hayden, Mrs. Williams

NAYES: None

ABSTAIN: Mrs. Regis-Darby

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVE DESIGNATION OF OFFICIAL NEWSPAPERS

Moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Mrs. Scott-Hayden that the Board approve the adoption of the formal resolution in the hands of each board member designating (a) the Union County Local Source and the Star Ledger as newspapers to receive notice of meetings and (b) Tapinto Union as the electronic newspaper to receive notice of meetings and fixing charges for notices to the public meetings in the amount of \$60 for 2022.

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Minneci asked if Tapinto Union could be added to this resolution so that we have an online news service. Mr. Taylor stated that if there were no objection to the mover or any member of the Board, the resolution would be amended to add Tapinto Union as the online news service and voted on at the same time. The Open Public Meetings Act requires that at least two newspaper

be designated but there is no problem with more than two. Is it without objection? Dr. Francis stated you just want to add it. Mrs. Minneci stated there is no cost. I think the community looks at Tap and I think it is another avenue for the rest of the community to know when our meetings are or if they change. Mr. Taylor stated since it is without objection, the resolution will be amended to add Tapinto Union as a third designated newspaper.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. O’Shea, Mrs. Regis-Darby, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott Hayden, Mrs. Williams

NAYES: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVE DESIGNATION OF INTERNET WEBSITE FOR OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION

Moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Mrs. Brens-Watson approve the adoption of the formal resolution designating the Township of Union Board of Education's internet website (www.twpunionschools.org) for official notification pursuant to the New Jersey local unit pay-to-play law, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

None

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. O’Shea, Mrs. Regis-Darby, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott Hayden, Mrs. Williams

NAYES: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVE DESIGNATION OF DEPOSITORIES FOR FUNDS OF THE TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION (School Activity Funds)

Moved by Mr. O’Shea, seconded by Mrs. Minneci that the Board approve designation of Connect One Bank, Investors Savings Bank, Wells Fargo Bank and Unity Bank as depositories for funds of the Township of Union Board of Education as currently maintained, in accordance with the list appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

None

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. O’Shea, Mrs. Regis-Darby, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott Hayden, Mrs. Williams

NAYES: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVE AUTHORIZATION OF DEPOSITORY BANKS TO HONOR AND CHARGE ACCOUNTS OF TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION

Moved by Mrs. Brens-Watson, seconded by Mr. O’Shea that the Board approve authorization of the following depository banks to honor and to charge the accounts of the Township of Union Board of Education and all Board of Education checks and drafts bearing the stamp or perforation commonly known as a facsimile signature of the Treasurer of School Monies and the President of the Board of Education and that checks and drafts of the various Board of Education accounts be signed by the designated officers, in accordance with the list appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

None

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. O’Shea, Mrs. Regis-Darby, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott Hayden, Mrs. Williams

NAYES: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVE AUTHORIZATION TO SCHOOL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR TO APPROVE PAYMENT OF BILLS BETWEEN MEETINGS

Moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Mr. O’Shea that the Board approve authorization to the School Business Administrator to approve payment of bill(s) between Board meetings on an as needed basis, in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:19-4.1 for the 2022 calendar year.

DISCUSSION:

None

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. O’Shea, Mrs. Regis-Darby, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott Hayden, Mrs. Williams

NAYES: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVE EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT – PEREZ

Moved by Mrs. Regis-Darby, seconded by Dr. Francis that the Board approve the employment contract of Gretel T. Perez, Ed.D., as Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment and Funded Programs, for the 2021-2022 school year, approved by the County Superintendent; appointment previously approved by Board on November 16, 2021, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

Ms. Santana stated she had a question with the employment contract item; it was approved on November 16, 2021, by a previous Board. Why did it wait until now for this Board to approve it? We just received the contract 48 hours ago and she read it – the contract was cookie cutter. It didn't have any oppositions on the exact contract but it also stated that the County had to also approved it. Did they? I didn't receive any information on it and before I yay or nay something, I would like some information.

Dr. Taylor asked for Yolanda Koon to describe the process and the County Superintendent support of the contract.

Mr. Taylor stated since this is a personnel matter we just want to discuss process in general. If there are any particular questions about the candidate, we should go into closed executive session. Cabinet level officials, superintendent, assistant superintendent, BA – their contracts are subject to review and approval by the Executive County Superintendent. That generally happens first; however, there are circumstances where it can be subject to that approval. So in this instance the question is “has the executive county superintendent approved this contract”. Mrs. Koon stated it was approved by the County yesterday.

Mr. Taylor stated the second part of your question was “if this was approved on November 16, 2021 by the Board”? Mrs. Koon stated the position was approved. Mr. Taylor stated the position was approved but not the contract and that is why it is on the agenda. I will also add that a board of ed, municipal council, county commissioners, legislature – they are considered a living body so there may be, especially for the new board members over the next few days or weeks and months, things that started last year but are just coming to the table this year. To the extent that any of the three board members didn't get something in preparation for tonight, it is, I'll use the term “awkward” because technically you are not entitled to certain information, particularly personnel, finance, legal until you are officially sworn in. So there is a gap in information sharing from the election through you taking the oaths of office.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Regis-Darby, Mrs. Williams
 NAYES: None
 ABSTAIN: Mrs. Minneci, Mr. O'Shea, Ms. Santana,
 Mrs. Scott Hayden

MOTION CARRIED**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

Dr. Taylor stated the January date is not working for the Board retreat. My preference would be during the week because the weekend costs more money. It would be nice to be at Kean and there would be no charge. The former business administrator from Plainfield can't make the date we had initially considered. Is February 11th a good date? Mrs. Regis-Darby asked that he send an email to everyone so they can respond.

Dr. Taylor stated he wants to introduce Sandra Paul, Director of Technology, to speak about the new tables. Mrs. Paul stated the white board tables, are for the maker space at the high school, so the students can collaborate with each other and help them be creative. A maker space is an activity for students that is based on five major components which includes empathy – either dealing with something with the community or something dealing with social emotional learning. Now the students can make notes on these tables and brainstorm and have fun on how they would be able to create something that would be for the better of the community.

Dr. Francis stated I notice in the agenda that the resolution we approved for the Code of Ethics, it has additional paragraphs k, l, d, which are not part of the Code of Ethics. I was wondering why the language is different.

Mr. Taylor stated NJSA 18A:12-24.1 which applies to school board members. I can tell you the last two are part of that statute. This is boiler plate language that is part of your policy. Dr. Francis stated (d). Mr. Taylor stated this has already be passed or approved by the Board so technically already adopted but I will double check. It is different from the statute. Dr. Francis stated I think my vote should not be on what is on the agenda but what is statute – not the additional language. Mr. Taylor stated this has already been voted on and a board of education is required by law to adopt the Code of Ethics on an annual basis. To the extent that there was language in the statutes but not in your resolution last year, that did not nullify the board's obligation to comply with the statute. If this has been modified in some way, shape or form, you are still mandated and obligated to comply with the statute. This is not a policy adoption because there is a requirement for two readings for policies to be adopted. This vote tonight was not an adoption or modification to any policy. The intent was to adopt the Code of Ethics; to the extent that this is not verbatim what the statutes says, typographical error, cutting and pasting, dragging and dropping – it can be amended for the next meeting – simple as that.

Dr. Francis stated I want to go on record to say that I would like to withdraw my vote from yes because I feel like I have been misled to vote on language that is not part of the statute. Mr. Taylor stated that can be made part of the minutes but to officially do that, then there would have to be a motion to reconsider and moved and seconded and then vote to approve the motion to reconsider and then revote on this. My suggestion would be that your comments are part of the record this evening, I will double check the statute and this document. To the extent that it was an unintended mistake and the drafting of the document which every month someone points out that a comma is not in the right place, it can be amended and reflected going forward.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mrs. Brens-Watson stated welcome new Board members. I'm looking forward to working with you and congratulations to Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Minneci. I love the idea that everybody is committed to being respectful and creating an environment of impartiality. I have watched you over the past year and I look forward to seeing you do just that and to create an environment on the floor where no one feels left out.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

Ann Margaret Shannon stated happy new year to everyone on the Board. I am very excited to get through COVID and start working together in the new year and in new and better ways. Congratulations to the new Board; welcome to the president and vice president. I feel positive and thank you for your hard work.

Susan Lipstein stated welcome new board members. I have been following the board of education for about 30 years and I look forward to seeing a lot of progress. I think you all understand how important the things that you did tonight are – the Code of Ethics, Roberts Rules of Order which will keep this board functioning smoothly and understanding and following board policies. You have your work cut out for you.

As president of the Township of Union Education Foundation, I want to thank the community for their support in fundraising. It has been a difficult year for fundraising. We do have a nice amount of money to give out. Applications for the grants are due in March. We are looking forward to exciting ideas and hopefully it will be able to be utilized even if we have to go back to virtual learning over the next however; we just don't know in this climate.

I also want to mention a grant was given out to them in 2019 for makers space. That is one thing that the Ed Foundation has always done is to try to stay on the cutting edge; giving teachers a chance to try out new ideas and giving staff a chance to move ahead and we do it and we expect that all matters of the board of education, including our new ones, all are doing the same thing so we can move our district in the right direction. Thank you and good luck.

Kathleen Brunsmeyers stated as a staff member and parent I would like to say welcome to new Board members - congratulations; welcome new Assistant Superintendent; a shout out to all my colleagues – who have been doing a great job this entire year and it has not been easy for anyone, parents, students, staff and we are achieving the best that we can. I will keep all administration in my thoughts and prayers for it is not easy for you too. Happy new year.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Mrs. Regis-Darby, seconded by Mr. O'Shea, that the meeting be adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

<p>AYES:</p> <p>NAYES:</p> <p>ABSTAIN:</p>	<p>Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. O'Shea, Mrs. Regis-Darby, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p>	<p>MOTION CARRIED</p>
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RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

YOLANDA KOON
BOARD SECRETARY

