

TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION  
WORKSESSION MINUTES – January 11, 2022

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, January 11, 2022 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. Williams called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

Dr. Guy Francis, Ms. Marissa McKenzie, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Mrs. Nellis Regis-Darby, Ms. Chastity Santana, Ms. Kimberly Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Mary Lynn Williams

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mrs. Yocasta Brens-Watson (arrived 7:02 p.m.), Mr. John O’Shea

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr. Christopher Buggy, Esq.

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

Mrs. Brens-Watson arrived at meeting (7:02 p.m.).

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

Mrs. Brens-Watson read the district’s mission statement.

MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Moved by Ms. Santana, seconded by Mrs. Minneci, that the Board go into Executive Session at 7:04 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: matters of litigation, the Ionta/Lowery and personnel matters.

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: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci,  
Mrs. Regis-Darby, Ms. Santana, Ms. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

The Board returned to public session at 7:59 p.m.

Comments from Public on Resolutions in **BOLD** only:

Mr. Stephen Le stated O-3a – the motion to rescind the adoption of the Code of Ethics from the reorganization meeting; then O-3b which would then take out the two clauses in the Township’s Code of Ethics which is “to behave toward my fellow board members with the respect due their office- demonstrating courtesy, decorum and fair play at all public meetings and refrain from inappropriate conduct in public meetings and in making public statements, refraining from any disparagement of any fellow board members” – based on Mr. Taylor’s opinion of last week, a board of ed can go above and beyond what is in statute regarding a Code of Ethics. Decorum and respect are very important values to this board. This board should be going above and beyond what is in statute. I ask that this board votes down the rescission and keep the Code of Ethics as previously adopted last week.

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes will be approved next week.

Communications:

Communications are part of personnel.

Superintendent’s Report:

Dr. Taylor stated next week he will be giving an update on the State of the health of the district; an update on what he has been doing and what he plans to do in the next six months; he will ask Dr. Baskerville to spotlight students from Franklin – these are students that fly under the radar and we will give them a certificate; student liaisons will give us an update; there will be a presentation by our auditors, and he will share his biannual report on HIB cases and will give a comparison between years 2019-2020 and 2021-2022, not last year because of COVID it doesn’t represent the true number of cases.

Education/Student Discipline Committee Resolutions:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolutions were moved by Mrs. Scott-Hayden and seconded by Mrs. Minneci for adoption:

E-1. AFFIRM SUPERINTENDENT’S DETERMINATION OF HIB

Affirm the Superintendent’s determination of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the periods December 15, 2021 to December 21, 2021, in accordance with the appended to the minutes.

**E-1A. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT OF HIB**

Superintendent’s Report of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the period December 21, 2021 to January 11, 2022, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes (*no vote required; for reporting purposes only*).

**DISCUSSION:**

None

**AYE:** Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci,  
Mrs. Regis-Darby, Ms. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams

**NAY:** None

**ABSTAIN:** Ms. Santana

**MOTION CARRIED**

Mrs. Scott-Hayden presented the Education Committee agenda.

**DISCUSSION:**

None

**Fiscal and Planning Committee Resolutions:**

Ms. Santana presented the Fiscal Committee agenda.

Mrs. Minneci and Dr. Francis agreed to ask Mrs. Koon could explain F-1, F-2, F-3. It is a big help to new board members.

**DISCUSSION:**

Mrs. Koon explained that by statute we are required to provide our financials every month. F-1 is the Treasurer’s Report is the cash balances, and shows Fund II, 20 (grants), 30 (capital projects), 40 (debt service), 60 (food), 90 (salary and agency). F-2 is the Secretary’s Report and is comprised of financials – balances sheets – assets, liabilities, owners’ equity, expenditure reports (they need to always be in the positive) and revenue reports - income. F-4 is transfers – when hiring, etc. sometimes you have to adjust the budget lines, so the accounts aren’t in the red. F-5 are purchase orders for copyright material. F-6 is for St. Michael’s (our nonpublic school in Union) spending plan for technology initiative program through the UCESC and they are purchasing iPads. F-7 is the approved student field trips. F-8 are the State contract vendors list, this is a living document and changes monthly, the district can use these approved vendors for purchases. F-9 is the coordinated transportation agreement with Warren County Special Services School District for special education. F-10 is the out-of-district placement list. The numbers have increased from 140 to 145 and fluctuates – it is a big item in our budget - \$13 million. F-11 are fundraisers in the district. F-12 is the purchasing manual which states our procedures – it is updated to reflect new Board members. F-13 is the comprehensive annual financial report and F-14 is the corrective action plan from the auditors. Dr. Taylor and I will be meeting with the auditors on Friday for an exit conference. I do know we have one finding – for food service. Because of the pandemic and supply issue, statute tells us we shouldn’t have profit of more than three times the monthly expenditures and we exceeded that. It is a good problem and put the purchase order in, but because of supply chain issues, it didn’t make it by the end of

June 30<sup>th</sup> and we may experience that again this year. I'm meeting with the food service department this week so we can go out to bid early and use up some of the funds. Every year the auditors come in to present their findings to the public. F-15 is a list of our running legal fees.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated F-4 – the \$440,000 – what line item does that come from? Mrs. Koon stated that is a wash. Ida damaged our gym and we got an estimate to replace that and the insurance issued us a check for \$440,000 so we put the purchase orders through. We had to remove the floors and we will have new floors installed.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated F-14 – there is no back up; will we have the data by next week. Mrs. Koon stated we will get that on Friday from the auditors.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated there is only one recommendation. Mrs. Koon stated I believe there are other insignificant recommendations – things that we can do better but anything that they have to report – he only mentioned the one. An example of a minor recommendation is for our food service department, when we receive funding from the Department of Agriculture, they have been putting it in the general fund and then we do a transfer in food service; now it will go directly to food service.

When I came, we had a lunch debt of \$385,000 and board agreed that over a period of three years we would be able to use the general fund to pay down the outstanding debt - \$81,000 for three years is what we will be doing. We knew \$17,000 would not be able to be collected because they were seniors, and they are gone. We were focusing on \$60,000 and so far we collected \$25,000. This is a bonus year because all lunches are free and we are trying to reach out to parents that owe \$25-\$75 which were the bulk of the population of outstanding debt. Next year it will no longer be free.

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked do we have data on how many households did submit a lunch application this year – that affects our Title I funding? What has been done to get parents to be in compliance? Mrs. Koon stated we do have that data – Meg Berry handles that and she can give us that data. This year we gave away two computers and that will be an ongoing initiative to get people to fill out the lunch applications. It is not just for lunch but other funding and grants. We want to set up a table at the open houses with Chromebooks to assist parents to fill out applications.

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked will we remain a three Title I district or moving towards a four school Title I district? Dr. Taylor stated Maureen has applied for more of our schools to be schoolwide for Title I funds.

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked how do we move to a place where it is not just building wise – where we can become more districtwide and use those fundings at other schools? Mrs. Koon stated she was not sure of the formula. Dr. Taylor stated I'm not confident that we would be districtwide. Maureen Guilfoyle will be making a presentation about the ESSER III funds and that will be a great opportunity to ask questions about Title I.

Ms. Santana stated prior to you coming Mrs. Koon, you inherited that and during COVID and now there really hasn't been any debt to add to that. Do we have anything in place so we don't go back to that? Mrs. Koon stated monitoring and we have to set a threshold. Do you want to feed kids up to 5-10 days before we start setting up letters, global calls to parents; we tried to promote that parents can go on Genesis and pay on their kids accounts. We would like to go cashless. Following up with schools is key; not to get this debt get out of hand. Do you have suggestions?

Ms. Santana stated if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. We should always feed our children. Something concrete needs to happen, once you have a dollar debt something is going out. We won't be charging until September, so we have months to get something on board. Mrs. Koon stated we are not fully utilizing our computer system. The POS system we have should be able to set a threshold to say if any kid is a dollar over, automatically send out a letter or text. We have to make sure we have the correct address, cell phone numbers, the principals have to be involved. We have to stay on it and monitor it.

Dr. Taylor stated we need to keep feeding the children, unless the Board disagrees, a real meal, not a cheese sandwich.

Mrs. Williams stated there was a suggestion, prior to you coming on, that we find someone that specifically focuses on following up and sending out the letters and take some of the pressure off the principals. Mrs. Brens-Watson stated you don't need a person for that. It is an automated system. If you have to verify addresses, what does that mean in terms of enrollment, when students are being enrolled, aren't we verifying addresses? Mrs. Koon stated junk in is junk out. We need to make sure what is in Genesis is accurate so food services pulls that information from our main data base. Mrs. Brens-Watson stated that is a bigger issue verifying the information. We should address that. If the data is unreliable, everything else is unreliable.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated I think we are going down a hole we have been down many times. There are systems in place. Take a look at the policies and the regulations that are in place. There are policies in terms of what should be done when kids go over a threshold. There are clear directives as to what building principals are supposed to do. The problem is when there is no follow through and accountability. That is the direction that we as Board members should be looking to go to. The solutions are already there and they are fair. We have to put the pressure on Dr. Taylor that he is holding the people accountable for the follow through. If you don't follow through, nothing is going to be done.

Mrs. Brens-Watson stated my concern is creating a new position. We already have issues in terms of budgetary problems. Mrs. Koon stated we are paying a stipend to a person. Mrs. Brens-Watson stated I have expressed my concerns of where our money is going in terms of salaries for people. Any time I hear a new position, it raises a flag in my head. We can automate the sending of the letters. If that means cleaning up our data, clean it up.

Ms. Santana stated I echo what Mrs. Regis-Darby said; that \$335,000 you inherited it from prior administration. It is holding you accountable to hold others accountable. There is

policy and there is practice. We have to put it into practice so we don't go back to \$335,000. Don't let us be here next year that there is an \$80,000 deficit because we are giving our kids food. Mrs. Koon stated the Board did approve to resolve that \$263,000 with local funds to at least clear that. We are working on cleaning that up.

#### Operations Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Minneci presented the Operations Committee agenda.

Moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Mrs. Regis-Darby, that the following resolution be adopted:

#### O-3a. APPROVE TO RESCIND RESOLUTION ADOPTING CODE OF ETHICS

Approve to rescind the resolution adopting the Code of Ethics by the Board at its reorganization meeting of January 6, 2022.

#### DISCUSSION:

Dr. Francis stated this came from what I talked about at the reorganization meeting. I was saying that the Code of Ethics is set already in Statute 18A. It doesn't matter what we as a Board decides to add to the language or not. What we are held to is 18A:12-24.1. Mr. Le spoke about going above and beyond. It is up to you whether you want to rescind it or not. I'm only held to 18A; I'm not held to Union's adoption of the extra language. I wanted to bring to Mrs. Koon's attention that you have in the package received what was on the wall – the Code of Ethics; which was different than what was on the agenda. You can say whatever you want.

Mrs. Williams stated that is fine; that is the language taken from 18A. Dr. Francis stated there was additional language. It is nice to have decorum but sometimes we lose decorum. Mrs. Williams stated past history there has been some horrible behavior on this Board and it needed to be addressed. I'm sorry if you have a problem with upholding decorum and respect and professionalism because you are saying you are only held to 18A but I think as a Board we can agree that we need to behave better in public. We need to respect each other; there needs to be decorum. I get what you are saying but all of us need to be held accountable with all of the language that was put in the resolution we passed last week. You are right, our vote is our vote. We can speak our voice, speak our truth and vote the way we feel we should.

Mrs. Brens-Watson asked O-3b has the added language? Mrs. Koon stated O-3b took out the language – that mirrors the statute. The attorney recommended we remove it and then put it back on. If they do choose to add language, we can do it another time after discussion.

Mr. Buggy stated the agenda last week stated you were approving NJSBA 18A:12-24.1 – what is now O-3b is the text of 18A:12-24.1. Last week was all the language in the Statute plus additional language.

Mrs. Regis-Darby asked was the additional language a board directive. Mrs. Koon stated it was a cut and paste error. Mrs. Regis-Darby stated members of the Board are held to 18A:12-24.1. Mrs. Koon stated correct and the Board has an opportunity, if they choose, as a group to add.

Dr. Francis stated it doesn't matter – I don't have to vote on this, it is a formality. In the end, if I get bad advice from Mr. Buggy and I do it, the ethics commission is going to hold me accountable for what they have.

Ms. Santana stated the way that I see it, the 18A that we all are held to, it is like a Toyota, we are guaranteed this, that wording that I saw is like a Lexus and I'm always going with a Lexus. That is my terminology.

AYE: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Mrs. Regis-Darby

NAY: Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Ms. Santana, Ms. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION FAILED

Since resolution O-3a failed, O-3b – approve of Code of Ethics, was not voted on.

#### DISCUSSION:

Ms. Santana stated O-1 – I have things that need to be added. Do I do it now or closed session? Mrs. Minneci stated this is the time. Mrs. Regis-Darby stated anytime we talk about security and bus issues, especially when it comes to our kids, we never discuss it in public session. Mr. Buggy stated we can move to executive session and then come back or talk about it next week. Mrs. Koon stated you want to add additional procedures or information?

Mrs. Williams stated send it as a question. Dr. Taylor stated email me and Yolanda and we can get back to you. If you have further concerns, bring it back up next week.

Ms. Santana stated it is a step in the NJSBA manual. They ask us to do it, we don't do it and I would like us to do it. Mr. Buggy stated send it to Dr. Taylor.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated O-2 – what is in place? What happened? Mrs. Koon stated O-2 for pre-k – pertaining to spaces in our school and some of our pre-k's are in rooms that are not fully compliant so every year the State allows the district to apply for a waiver to mediate that.

#### Personnel Committee Resolutions:

Ms. McKenzie presented the Personnel Committee agenda.

#### DISCUSSION:

Dr. Taylor stated whenever I recommend a hire of a member of the leadership team, I like to provide additional information. These higher-level positions require more vetting than faculty. Dr. Cohen is our new director of STEM. I'm happy he modeled the process that I used to hire Dr. Perez. He had a total of 32 candidates – 16 from outside the district and 16 from inside the district. Jeremy and his crew interviewed 20 candidates – 12 inside; 8 outside. First round included supervisors, directors, then we had six candidates move forward to the next round. The third round was narrowed down to 4 candidates who were 2 internal and 2 external. Then Gerry and I interviewed the finalists and that is how we came up with the recommendation for Will Eckert. He is a respected teacher. He was the UTEA head rep in the building so he had leadership experience. Served as the Title I building coordinator and worked with Maureen

Guilfoyle; he was a summer school coordinator. It was not an easy decision because there were two very strong candidates. What put Will over the top was his knowledge of institutional history which I think is very important. He also had the capacity of thinking ahead of what we can do to elevate our work. He is bright, articulate and references checked out and told us that is a team player and a strong candidate and came out on top.

Ms. McKenzie asked are we moving him prior to whomever is going to replace him or is he being held for a period. Dr. Taylor stated we will not vacate his position until we know we can fill it. That might take 30 days; depends on the contract language of the candidate that I'm meeting with tomorrow via Zoom.

I will always ask Board members to join me in the final round process when we have Assistant Superintendent positions opened. Hopefully we won't have one for a while. We have a solid group right now.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated I know these are your recommendations, in terms of portfolio of success – the people you are recommending to move from interim to permanent, are you confident that these are what the district needs in those particular buildings to support the ecosystem that is within those buildings? Dr. Taylor stated this is the first supervisor position that I'm recommending. I am the most removed from this process. Because I have two directors of curriculum, Dr. Cohen and Mrs. Hutchinson, who wasn't involved in this case, she is the ELA/humanities person, who I am really confident – who know my vision and the vision of district. I am confident he went through this process with great fidelity. Dr. Cohen is our rockstar and he expects other people to be rockstars. I say that without equivocation. I genuinely believe he did a great job vetting the candidates.

#### Residency Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Minneci presented the Residency Committee agenda.

#### DISCUSSION:

None

#### Approval of Bills:

Bills will be approved next week.

#### Unfinished Business:

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated the ESSER Funding – we used it to establish employment for teachers; we know it is only for two years. How are we being proactive? The community will come out again if there is anticipation of layoffs and cuts. What are we doing to be proactive in our budget so we can make sure what we have in place, will be able to continue for the 2022-2023 school year? You don't have to say now because I know you will be looking at the budget but I wanted to bring this to your attention.

ARP money – Dr. Taylor have you considered using some of that money for COVID 19 testing in our school buildings? Can we use that for testing? Mrs. Koon stated ARP is the ESSER III – it was the administrations decision last year to use ESSER funds to sustain



approximately 14-16 employees that were due to be laid off. Right now we are working on the budget; we have been having budget meetings with the principals but we will have to look at line items. We are hoping we can capture some savings through attrition, resignations and things of that nature. It is still early on in the phase. We always have this challenge; we only get the 2% tax levy cap and that is \$1.9 million. We have 3-4 unions that we have going through negotiations.

We met with our healthcare brokers and we are looking at ways to consolidate certain services. We have to look at our true needs; looking to consolidate; looking at special education, transportation and we know the biggest item is personnel. We need to analyze our needs.

Dr. Taylor stated I think the Board and the community needs to have some insight on how this process is unfolding. Today was the first day we starting meeting with our building people and we have meetings all week. I sat down with Yolanda and asked her to create three sets of documents – one was the proposed budget and we looked at three elementary schools today. The second document was the current year budget that showed how much money was incumbered or spent already out of each line and what the balance is and then last year's budget. The purpose was for Yolanda and I to see how much we actually spend on a yearly basis on a particular line and see if it is necessary to keep putting that same amount of money on that line. We need to find inefficiencies and putting it in our fund balance to offset the cuts next year. I think we could have done a better job in the past on how many faculty and support staff we need for all of our classes.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated Dr. Taylor, in terms of the NJSLA, I know you have to present that to the district – when will that be and give the community some update. In terms of SEL, and how important that work is, we need to do a better job with the SEL piece within the district. I know you sent a message out before the holidays that you would start incorporating different methods and different people to start that hard work with the students that are out of district – that is important for our community to hear that piece of work. I receive many messages on that SEL piece and what can the community do to support the schools because they see the need. I don't want the community's help to go unnoticed. Dr. Taylor stated I already put together the presentation that looks at all our standardized tests and you will get it on February 15<sup>th</sup> – comparison of our internal assessment data using the iReady instrument so that you can see trends. I am not a believer that standardized assessment data is a true authentic measure of students' progress but I do think we can look at trends.

SEL – tomorrow I'm having a SEL summit – 10 counselors, SAC – meeting with me to figure out how we can carve out a half day or a full day – at least once a month – put aside academics and focus on interpersonal skill development. I will focus on the five competencies regarding SEL. I will report back to the Board on the outcome.

Dr. Francis stated last month we talked about the transportation policy regarding designating a route to be hazardous; I'm just bringing it back up. Mr. Taylor had said we shouldn't tie the hands of the superintendent on voting on trying to have a route designated as a hazardous route. I think Dr. Taylor's concern was financial – adding more bus routes or more drivers. I'm not too sure but most important is for Dr. Taylor to consult with the Town. We

have the new Board members here. That night we all agreed that it was a hazardous route, but we needed to discuss it with the Town. It is a bridge near 22 and Chestnut. I think safety is more important than the finance. At this point then Dr. Taylor can show us hard data showing that how much it is really going to add to our expenditure. You are going to have to spend money. If an IEP is warranted and requires transportation, you can't say we can't give it to you. Our kids have needs. Ultimately it is the safety. It may not cost us anything. I want us to move forward and have the Town look at it.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated I did look at the policy and I think the policy committee and the attorney should look at paragraph one and two – where it states language “from the nearest door to the entrance of the school for elementary” but for high school the wording is different and I don't want it to come across that it is discriminatory and try to figure out that language so we are fair to all the kids.

Mrs. Williams stated this was initially brought up because of the section of sidewalk that was dug up and the kids had to either walk around or cross. What they did was they made a new crosswalk and put-up new signals. They had an officer out there that was observing the area. His report back was he only saw two children that day and a couple of adults. The other thing was he said that the kids are smart and following directions and keeping themselves safe. The sidewalk issue should be resolved by now. It was to be done in two weeks and one of the weeks the kids were out of school and now they are out of school again. So this issue should be resolved.

The other thing was the COVID pandemic and it wasn't financial at that point. We had bus drivers and routes that were being cancelled because of COVID. When we talk about keeping our kids safe, that is something that needs to be considered also. Dr. Taylor stated we have general staffing issues with bus drivers. We are down two bus drivers and anticipate three retirements going forward. It is an issue across the country. Mrs. Koon stated the State did waive the “under the hood” so that part of the CDL test is being waived for a short period of time.

Ms. McKenzie asked is our pay rate comparable to our neighboring district? Mrs. Koon stated not really, that is another issue that Dr. Taylor said we will see how we can figure that out.

Ms. Santana stated the social emotional learning – I want to put this out there – this pandemic is trauma; it is not linear. My concern with SEL is that we disconnect in thinking that we are through it in 2020 and in 2023 we are good. This is going to be generations of children. When we think about SEL, this shouldn't be a seminar or class, it should be injected into every fiber of a school district. We do need to work on policy; thank you Mrs. Regis-Darby for pointing that out.

Mrs. Scott-Hayden stated SEL and trauma part, that is very important because people had trauma before COVID. Our staff and students are coming back to school with trauma issues that weren't addressed prior to COVID and now it is exasperated and we need to make sure that we are providing the opportunities and mechanisms that are needed for our students and for our staff. If we are not having empathy for our staff members, they can not come before our students

and be their best or the children come to school and give their best. We have to address the social emotional learning and the trauma part. As a Board we need to make sure we are doing what we need to do and making sure it is happening on both fronts. Whether we institute through policies, programs and partnerships.

#### New Business:

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated prior to this we had executive session at 6 p.m. and then meeting at 7 p.m. Today we had executive session at 7 and then 8 p.m. for the worksession. It is late for members of our community. What was the rationale for moving it to 7 p.m.? Mrs. Williams stated moving it from 6 because a lot of the new Board members couldn't get here and I can't be here for executive session at 6 p.m. In terms of today, it was really a miscommunication between Dr. Taylor and myself. Moving forward we will start the meetings at 7 p.m. and if we need to go into executive we will but unless it is a personnel issue that we need to discuss prior to voting, we will be holding our executive sessions after the meeting.

Mrs. Brens-Watson stated I would like for us as a Board to adopt an orientation for new members. It is also recommended by the NJSBA. A year ago I was confused about what was happening and there was no one to explain to me in a clear/concise way. I think it is important for us. Do I make a recommendation? I think we really need to adopt an orientation for our new members. We do it for new employees so why not new Board members.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated that goes through the Governance training. Mrs. Minneci stated I think she is talking about customizing it to the Township. Mrs. Brens-Watson stated for us to understand how our meetings are run, what are the procedures, where to look for information, who to contact when you have questions. This is for us. Not every district runs the same way.

Ms. Santana stated I just said this to Mrs. Koon. Mrs. Koon stated me and Dr. Taylor can work together and make that happen in some form or fashion.

Mrs. Brens-Watson stated we are an educational organization; create a curriculum; just do it. It is key to ensuring when people come on board we understand our rights and responsibilities. NJSBA came to our meeting and spoke to us about ethics and procedures. I believe every opportunity to talk about ethics is a good thing. Mrs. Williams stated we do ethics training every year.

Mrs. Brens-Watson stated Mrs. Cappiello – does your hand hurt. Notes and meetings – not every word needs to be recorded. I want to read the minutes but I don't want to spend two more hours reading a meeting. Mrs. Koon stated the purpose of the minutes is to capture the actions of the Board not verbatim. We are working on that. We do want to capture actions/accommodations.

#### Comments from the Public:

Katherine Lewis stated the new director of the spring musical and Union High School. Thank you for appointing me last month. I want to talk about F-12 – purchasing manual. I don't like to air dirty laundry so I like to come to worksessions to talk about issues that I have so we can deal with it without making a public spectacle of things.

Student activities – not really there – there is no clear directions. I took very clear records of what I did, I would bring my receipts and use my tax-exempt form and then I would get reimbursed. I'm being told this is no longer how we do things. Everything has to get a P.O. and there used to be a \$1,000 threshold. This is creating a huge problem. There is no clear directions since 2018. We are told there is a policy but it is no where to be found and receipts will not be reimbursed. We are forced to ask our vendor for things. It is more cost effective if we buy the items. Other districts do not do this because I have worked in other districts.

Mrs. Williams asked Ms. Lewis to send an email to the superintendent and he can report back to us.

Ms. Lewis asked that she finish. The law 6A:23A-16.12 – student activities, is not taxpayer dollars, it is money generated for the student activity. It must be spent on those students in that activity. Whatever money I fundraise for my kids in my theater program, I get to spend on those children in a way that benefits them. That is all we want to do. You have made it so difficult for us to do our job and purchase things. The stipends that we get is \$4-5 an hour when you divide it over the amount of time we do this and they bust our chops to buy batteries because we can't be reimbursed for it. It is hurting our students.

Mrs. Koon stated prior to me coming 7 of the 10 schools had issues on audit findings. I am proud to announce that this year we have zero. Once I became aware of the issues that the district faced. I worked with my team and we put together how we were going to do it. I want everyone to follow the same process. I met with principals and secretaries. We did webinars. In addition, those that were afraid of reconciliation, we made appointments individually with each school and did a one-on-one training. I was present so that everyone who was getting a stipend and/or in charge of student activity understood how to do it. I received recognition and praise from the auditor. I opened my door and there were a few teachers that came a few times so that they fully understood how to handle student activity.

Even though it is student activity and you do raise money for your particular students, there is still a process you have to follow in order to make purchases. Having purchase orders is a legal document. In the past, the district has had some issues with stolen money and things not properly accounted for. Maybe we can have a conversation about certain things you would like to purchase. What does your bylaws says in order for you to purchase for your student activity. Obviously there is room for improvement. We have made good strides. Our accountant meets with them on a monthly basis – the books are due to our office and every month go through those books like an internal audit. I am very proud and this year everyone is doing the same thing. I would like to work with you because I feel we can resolve this.

Kathleen Brunsmeyers stated welcome new Board members and congratulations. Regarding the lunch status – I was one of the people that spoke for years. Working in the schools I would see the balance flash up on the screen and in some schools \$700 balances – that doesn't occur in a month or two – that is like a year. In another school I was in, a notice would go out to parents if there was a slightest balance. My suggestion is for you to look at the schools;

you will know who had a very low balance – find out how they did it. It may take a lot in the beginning but once you get into a habit, it will work out.

Jill Hall stated I wanted to thank Mrs. Scott-Hayden about her comments on the SEL. I want to task this Board to try to find the time to talk about SEL as much as you talk about learning loss. This is my 43<sup>rd</sup> year in public education and I can tell you that the learning loss doesn't mater if you are not dealing with the trauma and the SEL because trauma changes the brain. They are not ready to learn when they are dealing with that trauma. The good news is healing also changes the brain. We experienced two years of collective trauma and we can't move forward with that until it is addressed in a meaningful way across the board – pre-k through 12 – common language, common programs, common resources that are made available for staff, family and faculty. We are moving in the right direction and taking all the right steps but this is not for the here and now, this is now, next year and years to come. This trauma focused initiatives that we need to take with SEL is really vital.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN:**

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Mrs. Regis-Darby, seconded by Mrs. Minneci, that the meeting be adjourned at 9:39 p.m.

AYE: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci,  
Mrs. Regis-Darby, Ms. Santana, Ms. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

**MOTION CARRIED**

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

YOLANDA KOON  
BOARD SECRETARY

