

TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION  
WORKSESSION MINUTES – April 16, 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, April 16, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. at the Administration Building, 2369 Morris Avenue, Union, New Jersey pursuant to the notice sent to each member. Action was taken.

Ms. Santana called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

Ms. Dixiana Carbonell, Mr. Michael Cohan, Mrs. Elsie Conteh-Mackey, Mr. Ronnie McDowell, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Mr. Greg Nasta, Ms. Chastity Santana, Mrs. Kimberly Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Mary Lynn Williams

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

None

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Dr. Gerald Benaquista, Dr. Gretel Perez, Mrs. Yolanda Koon

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr. Lester Taylor, Esq.

Mr. McDowell led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. McDowell 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 Mrs. Scott-Hayden, seconded by Mrs. Williams, that the Board go into Executive Session at 7:03 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; residency

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, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Minneci,  
Mr. Nasta, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams, Ms. Santana

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

The Board returned to public session at 8:32p.m.

Ms. Santana apologized to the public for the delay and going forward executive session will start at 6:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes will be approved next week.

Communications:

Communications are part of personnel.

Comments from Public (on resolutions and all other matters):

Jill Hall stated the Union High School is in need of additional nurses. They only have one. Policy 5111 regarding teachers able to bring their own students – she still has reservations about it.

Ann Margaret Shannon stated she wanted to remind the Board that during the last contract negotiations, paraprofessionals and substitutes should be employees of the district. It is better for the kids and the district.

Kristen Nunes stated thank you Dr. Benaquista regarding the ESS employee – you were very responsive in getting things straight.

Kimberly Viola – CAST – read an email she wrote to Dr. Benaquista regarding CAST using district facilities (O-5-discussion item on agenda).

Superintendent's Report:

Superintendent's Report will be presented next week, along with student liaisons and Schneider Electric – ESIP program presentation.

Mrs. Koon introduced Laura DiGeso, the District Food Service Coordinator.

Laura DiGeso updated the Board on meal debt:

- April 2023 - \$212,680.85 – outstanding meal balance
- April 2024 - \$270,418.32 – outstanding meal balance
- Building administrators have been reaching out to parents about their children's meal debt

- Students cannot buy snacks if they are in debt
- Parents are notified on Genesis of outstanding debt
- 84 families are on a payment plan
- 46% of students qualify for free and reduced
- Attendance at every open house to assist parents to fill out applications
- Encourage parents to use auto replenish
- Parents can restrict students food
- Debt recovery service
- 1500 accounts have outstanding balances

Presentation appended to minutes.

Dr. Benaquista stated that we need to have in person meetings with the families that have large outstanding balances to see what is going on.

Ms. Santana asked if the “waiver” button on Genesis could be removed so that parents would have to fill out the application.

#### Education/Student Discipline Committee Resolutions:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolution was moved by Mr. Cohan, 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 March 20, 2024 to March 26, 2024, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

#### DISCUSSION:

None

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**

Mr. Cohan reported the following resolution:

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

Superintendent’s Report of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the period March 27, 2024 to April 16, 2024, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes (*no vote required; for reporting purposes only*).

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

#### DISCUSSION:

None

Fiscal and Planning Committee Resolutions:

Ms. Carbonell presented the Fiscal and Planning Committee agenda.

DISCUSSION:

Ms. Carbonell asked for safety reasons that there be restraint in students and teachers travel out of state or country.

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolution was moved by Ms. Carbonell, seconded by Mrs. Williams 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, Mr. McDowell, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. Nasta, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams, Ms. Santana

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Operations Committee Resolutions:

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

O-2. APPROVE FAMILY HOUSE FOR SCHOOL/FAMILY CONNECTION – FRANKLIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Approve Family House for School/Family Connection – PBSIS event on April 25, 2024 at Franklin Elementary School gymnasium from 6-8 p.m., including Food Trucks (Certificates of Insurance provided), in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

DISCUSSION ITEM:

O-5. REQUEST FROM C.A.S.T. TO USE DISTRICT FACILITIES

Request from Community Actors’ Student Theatre (CAST) to use district facilities, during the month of July (for rehearsals) and August 1, 2 and 3 for performances.

DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Minneci asked if the auditorium will be ready. Dr. Benaquista stated he would work with CAST and let them use what is available.

It was decided that the discussion item would be added to next weeks agenda for vote.

Personnel Committee Resolutions:

Mrs. Minneci presented the Personnel Committee agenda items P-1 through P-5.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

P-6. APPROVE EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT- ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

Approve Employment Contract for Marissa McKenzie, as Assistant Superintendent, for the 2024-2025 school year, subject to approval by the Executive County Superintendent, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Taylor stated that the revised contract will reflect to grant tenure from 1 day to 120 days. The original contract was submitted and approved by the Executive County Superintendent and the revised contract will be submitted to the Executive County Superintendent for review and approval.

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

NAY: Ms. Carbonell, Mr. McDowell

ABSTAIN: Mrs. Minneci

MOTION CARRIED

Policy Committee:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and the Policy Committee, the following policies were moved by Mrs. Williams, seconded by Mrs. Scott-Hayden for **FIRST READING**:

POL-1. APPROVE POLICY 5111 – ELIGIBILITY OF RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT STUDENTS (M)

Approve Policy 5111 – Eligibility of Resident/Nonresident Students.

POL-2. APPROVE REGULATION 5111 – ELIGIBILITY OF RESIDENT/NONRESIDENT STUDENTS (M)

Approve Regulation 5111 – Eligibility of Resident/Nonresident Students.

**DISCUSSION:**

Mrs. Minneci stated thank you for the revisions; it is now tuition based. Mr. Cohan stated that this will be reviewed annually to reset the tuition rate.

**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. She stated that there were residency hearings today and the Board will vote next week once we receive the decisions of the families.

**Technology Committee:**

Mr. McDowell stated that Genesis was down for a day. Dr. Benaquista stated it did cause some impact so the input date for teachers has been extended. Mrs. Conteh-Mackey stated that the community should know when Genesis is being updated.

**Approval of Bills:**

Bills will be approved next week.

**Unfinished Business:**

Mrs. Scott-Hayden stated she had asked that the policy committee to review the policy regarding adding comments to the end of the meeting. Mrs. Williams stated it will be discussed at the next policy committee meeting.

**New Business:**

Mrs. Minneci stated that Hannah Caldwell Elementary School is sponsoring an autism event on Saturday.

Mrs. Scott-Hayden stated there is a program called Imagine. It helps people with grief. It is free for children and adults. She will bring information to next week's meeting so it is available to the community. Dr. Benaquista stated he would like to bring them in to speak with the community.

Ms. Santana informed the community that two realignment meetings have been scheduled for April 27 and May 4<sup>th</sup> at the administration building, 9:30 a.m. and the public is invited.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Mr. Cohan, seconded by Mrs. Williams, that the meeting be adjourned at 9:42 p.m.

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

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

*Yolanda Koon*

YOLANDA KOON  
BOARD SECRETARY

