

**UNION TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION
WORKSESSION - JANUARY 09, 2007**

Meeting held at James M. Caulfield Administration Building, 2369 Morris Avenue, Union, New Jersey 07083

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL: Mr. Gary Abraham, Mrs. Judith Axelrod, Mrs. Linda Gaglione, Mr. Steven Helmstetter; President, Mr. Anthony Manochio, Mrs. Versie McNeil, Mr. Francis Perkins, Mr. Steve Ruhl and Mrs. Judy Salazar

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL: None

ADMINISTRATIONS PRESENT: Dr. Theodore Jakubowski, Mr. Gregory Tatum, Mrs. Barbara Lombardi, Ms. Karen Dunn, Mr. James Damato and Mr. Anthony Magliacano

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Helmstetter at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Damato led the Board members and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Damato read the statement required under the "Open Public Meetings Act," a copy of which is on file in the office of the Secretary

Mr. Helmstetter asked each board member to review the minutes of the Worksession of December 12, 2006, the Executive Session of December 12, 2006, the Regular Meeting of December 19, 2006 and the Executive Session of December 19, 2006 for action at next week's meeting.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Mr. Helmstetter asked if the communication items were reviewed and referred to the appropriate committees. Mr. Damato replied "yes" and said that all of the communication items are listed under the Personnel section of the agenda.

EDUCATION/STUDENT DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE

Mrs. Axelrod stated that the committee met earlier in the evening and presented the Education/Student Discipline Committee resolutions. Mrs. Axelrod stated that the committee had several questions regarding the back up to the

EDUCATION/STUDENT DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE

Marching Band trip which was listed as resolution E-3. She asked Dr. Jakubowski if arrangements for this trip have already been made in view of the dates that were contained in the letter. Dr. Jakubowski said that after the board had determined in September that it would not allow the band to go on a trip out of the country, he told Mr. Rago that the board had decided that if the band went on a trip within the continental United States, the board had no problem in approving such a trip. He said that Mr. Rago had thought that he had submitted this letter earlier and the trip had already been approved by the Board. Dr. Jakubowski said that there may still be some changes of individuals who will be chaperones for this trip. He said that he is meeting with the high school and middle school principals about security people being allowed to go on field trips. Dr. Jakubowski said he was not so sure that he should allow security people to go on trips and be away from the school buildings for four or five days. Mrs. Axelrod said that one of the chaperones on the list, Ms. Williams, is now the SAC coordinator at the high school and she did not know if it was a good idea to have this person away from the school for a number of days either. Dr. Jakubowski said that he had spoken to a number of people about this issue. He said that if Ms. Williams were to go on the trip, she would not require a substitute. Dr. Jakubowski said that no one at the high school was overly concerned with Ms. Williams being away for four or five days because there are guidance counselors and social workers in the building who could handle problems that might arise. Mrs. Axelrod stated that the resolution should be revised slightly to indicate that the cost of the chaperones is a budgeted item. Mr. Abraham wanted to know if Ms. Graham and Ms. Sheridan, two of the chaperones listed, were employees of the district. Dr. Jakubowski said that Ms. Graham was an employee and Ms. Sheridan is not. He stated that Ms. Sheridan has worked with the band for a number of years. Mr. Abraham said that he knew that the nurse listed was also not an employee of the district and he remembered that on a previous trip a nurse, who was not an employee of the district, also attended. Dr. Jakubowski stated that Ms. Hall takes her sister, who is a nurse, as a chaperone when she goes on her annual field trip.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Mid-year planning session – Dr. Jakubowski said that in February there is only one scheduled board meeting because of President's weekend recess. He said that he had looked at February 24th as a possible date to schedule a mid-year planning session. Dr. Jakubowski said that this date is a Saturday and he felt by that date he would have at least enough information regarding the budget that the board would be able to discuss it as a group. He also thought that by

EDUCATION/STUDENT DISCIPLINE DISCUSSION ITEMS

that time he would be able to give the board an update of the new administrative team at Union High School and the board should be able to make some decisions as to posting and how to move forward. Dr. Jakubowski said that he felt the budget would be the biggest issue to be discussed. He said that he would also like to have the board discuss the renovation of the back of Hannah Caldwell and he thought that it might be a good idea to invite Mr. Potter to speak to the board regarding this issue. Dr. Jakubowski felt that this would make an ideal site for the administrative offices. He said that he has reached out to certain people and he has been advised that the Union Chamber of Commerce is looking to move out of the offices where they presently are and would be willing to pay rent as would the U.T.E.A. and he felt that these were things to talk about. Mr. Perkins said that there may be issues with the leasing of public property to entities which are not other public agencies. Mr. Damato said that this does not mean it cannot be done but there would be restrictions. Mr. Perkins said that it would probably have to be bid out. Mr. Damato agreed. Dr. Jakubowski said that he felt the administrative offices needed to move to a new space and he that the back of Hannah Caldwell would offer much needed space. Mr. Helmstetter asked if the meeting would be held at the administration building. Dr. Jakubowski said yes. Mr. Abraham said that the regular meeting was scheduled for the high school and asked if Dr. Jakubowski wanted to change the location to the administration building. Dr. Jakubowski said that the regular meeting would be at the high school because this will allow it to be televised but the planning session would be held at the administration building. Mrs. Gaglione asked if the meeting would be in the morning. Dr. Jakubowski said that it should be over by noon.

Mr. Manochio asked if the board would be paying for the twelve chaperones listed on resolution E-3. Dr. Jakubowski said that it was a budgeted item. Mr. Manochio asked if the individuals who were not employees were covered in the event that they are injured. Dr. Jakubowski said that the individuals are required to sign up at the volunteer office and they are considered "visitors". Mr. Damato said that they would not be covered under workers' compensation. Mr. Perkins asked if these individuals have protection under the Tort Claims Act. Mr. Damato said that they would have to notice the board under the Tort Claims Act like any other claimant. Mr. Perkins asked if individuals would have protection. Mr. Damato stated that they would because they are acting as an agent of the board.

FISCAL AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Mrs. Gaglione said that the committee had met and discussed the resolutions on the agenda. She presented the Fiscal and Planning Committee agenda. Mrs. Gaglione stated that the committee discussed the investments and the difference in the interest rates and how the board goes about choosing a bank.

OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

Mr. Abraham stated that the committee met and discussed the two resolutions on the agenda. He presented the Operations Committee agenda. Mr. Damato said that he had been in negotiations with one of the contractors who did work on the seven schools bond project. He said that there were a few issues that had to be resolved with this contractor and the contractor would be submitting a Change Order which indicated that the board owed the contractor no additional money. Mr. Damato hoped that the paperwork for this Change Order would be received by Friday and if it was, he would like to add a resolution to the regular meeting agenda to be voted on by the board next week. He said this would allow the matter to be settled once and for all.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Mr. Manochio stated that the committee had met with the Superintendent and discussed the resolutions listed on the agenda. He presented the Personnel Committee agenda. Mrs. Gaglione stated that the back up material for P-3, item (c) requested a "leave of absence" and it was listed on the agenda as a resignation. She said that she did not see any reason why the board should grant a leave of absence for the individual. Dr. Jakubowski said that the individual in question has moved to a position at the Fire Department in town and there is a probationary period of so many days for that position. He believed that this was the reason the letter was written in this way. Dr. Jakubowski said that it was the individual's intent to ask for a leave of absence, without pay. Mrs. Gaglione said she personally did not think that the board should grant a leave of absence because someone has gone to another job. She asked if there would be a replacement hired to take over this job. Dr. Jakubowski said that he was not going to replace the position with someone other than a teacher, because he wants to start an "in school" suspension program at Kawameeh and he would be transferring a teacher to that position. Mrs. Gaglione said that the amount of time that an individual puts into a district doesn't necessarily guarantee a position because they have left. Dr. Jakubowski

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

said that was correct. He said that the board has historically allowed individuals to take leaves of absence without pay. Dr. Jakubowski said he did not have a problem if the board did not want to grant the leave. Mr. Manochio asked if this position would be included in next year's budget because if not, there would be no guarantee that the position would be available if the individual decided to come back. Dr. Jakubowski said that there would probably be two security positions budgeted for in next year's budget at Kawameeh. Mr. Manochio asked how the board should interpret this request. Dr. Jakubowski stated that the individual is no longer working for the district but if in five months he came to me and said, "I am looking for a job in security" and the job was still open, Dr. Jakubowski said that he would re-hire the individual because he was doing a nice job. Mrs. Gaglione said she did not have a problem if that was the case but she felt that the board was leaving itself wide open. Dr. Jakubowski said that to grant the leave would mean that the board would have to take the individual back anytime within the one year period if he decided to do that. He said that if the board did not want to approve this request, he would reach out to the individual to let him know that the board would not approve a leave of absence. Mrs. Gaglione said it was alright with her if the resolution was changed to indicate that it was a leave of absence rather than a resignation. She said that if this individual is asking for a leave of absence from a security guard position when that person comes back it would have to be for a "security guard" position. Mr. Perkins said that it would also assume that position was still available. Dr. Jakubowski stated that when an individual is on a "leave of absence" it breaks the successiveness and if this individual were to return, he would go to the bottom of the seniority list and if security personnel were to be riffed, he would be the first to go. Mrs. Gaglione asked if there was tenure for a security guard. Dr. Jakubowski said that there was no tenure and seniority rules were followed out of courtesy. Mr. Helmstetter asked that the agenda be amended to reflect that Michael J. Scanlon, Jr. be approved for a one year leave of absence rather than a resignation.

Dr. Jakubowski said that Ms. Dunn and Mr. Vieira have completed interviewing for the part-time accountant and there will be a recommendation made at the regular meeting with the position to become effective as of February 1st. Mr. Helmstetter asked if there were many applicants. Ms. Dunn said there were not too many. Mr. Perkins asked where the person was going to work. Dr. Jakubowski said that there would be an area would be partitioned off in the foyer. He said that this is one of the reasons why the board must seriously consider renovation to the back of Hannah Caldwell.

APPROVAL OF BILLS

Mr. Helmstetter stated that the bills would be approved for payment at the regular meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mr. Tatum reported to the board regarding the updating of the district's telephone system. He stated that he has been in contact with two vendors and has set up with meetings with each of them to discuss their systems. Mr. Tatum said that he believed that there may also be one or two other vendors that he could reach out to in order to come up with an informed decision for a new telephone system. He said that he met with Dr. Jakubowski to talk about what the district is looking for in a new system.

Mrs. Gaglione said that she remembered discussing repairs to be made at the side entrance to the high school near the rock. She said that the blacktop is uneven and water accumulates in front of the doors when it rains. Mr. Magliacano said that it would have to be a capital project. Mrs. Gaglione said that there are four doors at this entrance and in front of two of the doors, whenever it rains, there is a puddle which does not allow use of the two doors. She was concerned not only that the children were walking through water but if the puddle freezes. Dr. Jakubowski said that this should be included as one of the capital projects in next year's budget.

Dr. Jakubowski stated he thought the board should be award that there is a new program called NJSmart which is used to track students throughout the State. He said that it will take a considerable amount of time to update all students to get all the information in place to be sent to the State. Dr. Jakubowski said that it has become apparent that the district still needs to take a hard look at the technology department. He said that there are four individuals in the department at this time and there are well over 900 computers in the district. Dr. Jakubowski said that the technology department works very hard but it is becoming more difficult to get everything done. He felt that other districts of a comparable size to Union have technology departments which are doubled in size of the one in our district. Dr. Jakubowski said that there is no room in this building for the four people who presently are in the IT department.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Dr. Jakubowski once again stated that he wanted the board to move forward with the renovation to the back of Hannah Caldwell for use by the administrative offices. He felt that by this time, next year, the offices could be located there and the board would be able to hold its regular meetings at that location which has handicapped accessibility. Dr. Jakubowski said that if the new law that the governor is talking about goes into effect, the increase in next year's budget would be capping at the tax levy, it will not be enough to pay salaries for the next school year because the district's salary increases are higher than a 4% increase on the tax levy. He said that if there is any money left from the bond, he urged the board to go ahead to renovate the back of Hannah Caldwell. Mr. Perkins said that he thought Union was in better shape than most school districts in terms of the cap increase on tax levy versus increase in salaries. Dr. Jakubowski said that the district did have a very good salary settlement.

NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Jakubowski said that he would be taking a much more aggressive approach in terms of meetings. He said that he has set up a meeting with the guidance department at the high school to discuss the question of class rank and getting students into honor classes. Dr. Jakubowski said that he felt all parents should know that if they thought their students were deserving of something, they have the right to see someone at the high school to discuss the matter. He said that he would also start to have meetings on a regular basis with the vice principals. Dr. Jakubowski said that it was his goal to have consistency in all buildings and he was trying to work on an approach that is consistent in all areas. He thought that the two new individuals who have taken over principal positions are adjusting very nicely. Dr. Jakubowski said that the individual who took over Staff Development is very excited about it and she will also continue to teach her Honors English classes. He said that the person who will replace Gale Fortunato as English Supervisor, at least temporarily until the board decides what they want to do about Supervisors, will continue to teach her Honors classes. Dr. Jakubowski said that he has hired a long term substitute to pick up the slack of the other classes between these two individuals. He said that he has moved someone who was a classroom assistant at Burnet up to Union High School to take over Mrs. Rago's classes and Mrs. Rago will continue to teach her last period class. Dr. Jakubowski said that he found a certified person who will be taking over as a classroom assistant at Burnet to work with a wheelchair bound student.

NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Jakubowski thought that the article that appeared in the Star Ledger a few weeks ago was a nice article for the community to be considered a "timeless town" but there are some things he wished people would not have said. He said that to imply that the "one of the reasons the town's demographics are the way they are is because a lot of students do not attend district schools" is an inaccurate comment. Dr. Jakubowski said he thought it was because Union had a large senior population, etc. that the school population may be a little different. He did not want people to imply that students do not go to Union High School because they do not believe they can get a good education.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Ms. Ciampi wanted to know whose home instructions were given as referred to in resolution P-6. Dr. Jakubowski stated that the instructor goes to the child's home to give instruction. Dr. Jakubowski said that the district was using the Morris Union Jointure Commission to provide this service but they are presently having problems getting individuals who are certified. He said that when he saw that the student was not getting the full five hours which they were entitled to, he reached out to one of our teachers who was certified and asked her if she would be willing to do the home instruction, she said she would. Dr. Jakubowski said that he has even asked this individual if she would be willing to do more home instruction next year if the district could find a replacement for her for during the day. He said that the district has hired an individual as a full time home instructor receiving a regular teacher's salary and she is working with four special education students on her own schedule. Ms. Ciampi thought that the resolution should be changed to make that clear and she thanked Dr. Jakubowski for his explanation. Ms. Ciampi stated that she agreed with Dr. Jakubowski when he indicated that students receive an excellent education at the high school. She said the only reason her son did not attend the high school was because the population is too large and it was his choice to attend a smaller school. Ms. Ciampi said that the Administration Building does not oblige people who have physical handicaps and she wanted to know what the board planned on doing before it moves to the new building to give those individuals to attend public meetings. Mr. Damato said that the board has made accommodations in the past for handicapped individuals. Ms. Ciampi said that there is not a handicapped restroom in the building. Mr. Damato said that was true and the restroom has its limitations, but he said there have been individuals in the building, on many occasions, who were wheelchair bound and they are helped in and out of the building. He said that it was not by any stretch of the imagination the right way to go and that is why the board wants to proceed with the renovation at Hannah Caldwell. Mr. Helmstetter said that the administration building would remain the way it is, until the administrative offices can be moved to the new facility.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Mr. Donnarumma agreed with Dr. Jakubowski that the district's schools provide an excellent education. He wanted to know with regard to E-3, if 120 students attend the trip, how many chaperones would be required. Dr. Jakubowski said that usually there are ten students to one chaperone. He said when students go on an overnight trip, it is better to have a better ratio of students to chaperone. Mr. Donnarumma asked if a nurse would be accompanying the students. Dr. Jakubowski said that one of the chaperones, who is not an employee of the district, is a nurse and she will be attending the trip. He said that this individual does work with the Marching Band. Mrs. Axelrod said that the nurse is one of the twelve chaperones. Mr. Donnarumma asked if the individuals listed in Personnel Committee resolutions P-1 and P-2 are spread out throughout the district. Dr. Jakubowski said that when new individuals are hired it depends on where there are openings as to where they are placed. He said that those individuals on the substitute are sent where they are needed. Mr. Donnarumma asked if the board was in negotiations at this time. Dr. Jakubowski said that not all negotiations have been completed. He said that the board is right now negotiating with the custodial/maintenance workers, who have worked half a year without a contract and Mr. Damato has been working on it. Dr. Jakubowski said that negotiations are also ongoing with the part-time transportation workers. He said that the teachers' and administrators' association contracts will expire in 2008. Mr. Donnarumma asked if these were all separate contracts. Dr. Jakubowski said that they were. He said that the district has been able to get the district's associations to settle their contracts for very reasonable settlements. Dr. Jakubowski said that with what the governor is proposing even those settlements are more than what the district will be able to increase the tax levy by, if the cap goes to 4% on the tax levy. Mr. Donnarumma asked what happened to the money which the district got back from the state. Dr. Jakubowski said that the \$600,000 which was received will be used to off-set out-of-district tuition costs. He said that this line item was under budgeted in order to balance the budget. Dr. Jakubowski said that this is the reason that the district is trying to bring more and more special education students back into the district in an attempt to provide them with a good education and even though this is still costly, it is not as costly. Ms. Dunn said that the majority of where the costs are coming is the pre-school handicapped programs. She said that there are approximately 13 students on the district's referral list at this time that need placement. Ms. Dunn said that pre-school students are students that cannot be anticipated when the budget is being prepared. Dr. Jakubowski said that the district's pre-school program is presently being monitored and Ms. French is very much concerned. He felt that the costs for the pre-school

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

program are going to continue to grow to a point where it will handicap other programs in the district. Mr. Donnarumma asked what offices the district is going to relocate to another location. Dr. Jakubowski said that the Central Office will be moved to the back of Hannah Caldwell because there is more space and it will enable the district to have room for the Director of Special Services to have an office there; offices for the supervisors; board of education meetings could be conducted there and it will be handicapped accessible.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

There being no further business before the board it was moved by Mr. Ruhl, seconded by Mr. Abraham that the meeting be adjourned at 8:00 p.m. All present voting yes.

Respectfully submitted

JAMES J. DAMATO
BOARD SECRETARY