

UNION TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION  
WORKSESSION MINUTES -- MARCH 10, 2015

Meeting held at James M. Caulfield Administration Building, 2369 Morris Avenue, Union, New Jersey at 7:00 p.m. on March 10, 2015.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL: Mr. David Arminio, Dr. Guy Francis, Mr. Richard Galante, Mr. Thomas Layden, Mr. Ronnie McDowell, Mr. Vito Nufrio, Mr. Angel Salcedo and Mrs. Nancy Zuena

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL: Ms. Lois Jackson

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Arminio at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Nufrio led the board 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.

Pat Ditri introduced Diane Cappiello to the Board Members as her replacement.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Arminio stated that the minutes listed on the agenda would be approved at next week's meeting.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Mr. Arminio stated with respect to communications everything is there that he thinks is important and he will certainly make any comments next week especially a couple of the resignations for purposes of retirement if you look at F-2.

Mr. Nufrio stated that he will make comments next week also.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Mr. Tatum said there is no Superintendent's Report; however, discussion in detail next week.

Mr. Tatum was happy to announce that the testing of this week has resumed. The matter regarding the PARCC test is still somewhat under investigation. Two announcements went out last week regarding the status of testing in the district. The

fact that we had State representatives here the second day and that part of the glitch was met with traffic, what we call a "dos" attack and the third thing was a general traffic and downloading of the test all as combined with that issue. He also stated that we learned since this happened last week that our district was not the only district in the State of New Jersey that this happened to. We realized that there were 2 or 3 other districts which they were kind enough to contact us and share the issues they had which were very much similar to what the district is going through and one district was Manalapan and one other district and they too were under what they call a "dos" attack which was the ironic part so that it was not so uncommon as we all thought. However, the good news is that our firewalls actually blocked any infiltration of data. A parent emailed me last night about that and I felt comfortable that after the meeting with the State we were in pretty good shape with respect to our data being compromised or any of our security information being compromised that our firewalls actually did their job. But for the last 5 days we have been underway and testing has resumed without any real glitches; there was some minor issues this past Friday at the high school and they were simply a matter of web browsers – something very simple that was resolved in the matter of minutes. Mr. Tatum stated he was happy that the testing is underway.

Mr. Tatum said that next week about the district re-registration. This is the year that we will be taking re-registration again and we have particular grade level targets that we will talk about in the Personnel Committee and probably continue to talk about the same grade levels unless the board has other input in terms of grade level that they think we may need to target. Mr. Tatum stated he will announce that next week.

Mr. Tatum stated he was happy to announce that letters have gone out. Mr. Le just told me that he did get a letter from the Planning Committee and Mr. Tatum stated he hopes to get this committee together; hopefully the last Thursday in the month of March and we hope to get ourselves going as far as the direction of some new programs and really dissecting what the needs of the district are.

Mr. Tatum said finally next week we will also have highlights from around the schools and the good news that has been going on and speak about the "Jump Rope for Heart Program" that Connecticut Farms insisted that he attend that morning and take photos and the students are very excited and he knows this is a worthy cause.

Mr. Tatum said that is what is all ahead for next week and even though he did not have a Superintendent's Report tonight; this concludes his report.

Mr. Arminio said that he looks forward to next week and he said that he will have the sports ready to go.

#### EDUCATION/STUDENT DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE

Dr. Francis presented the Education/Student Discipline Committee agenda.

Mr. Arminio asked if there were any questions and/or comments. There were none. Mr. Arminio stated that next week will be "consent agenda". Mr. Arminio stated he would like to move items E-1 through E-4 unless there is one of them you want to point out that we exited several students.

#### DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Proposal from Millennium Strategies' Grants Consultant for grant writing services.

Dr. Francis' stated we spoke about hiring a grant writer – we put that on the shelf; however not the idea. Dr. Lishak contacted Millennium Strategies which is a grant writing group located in Caldwell, New Jersey and Millennium proposed on how to collect moneys from grants. One way was providing a retainer contingency type basis with a fee of \$1,000 per month for 12 months and they would provide the district with a list of different types of grants (facility, education, public grants) available and the steps on how to obtain the grants itself. There were 2 options with that – (1) instead of writing our own grants, Millennium would write the grants – there is an additional fee of \$95/hr. There is a cap on the retainer fee and hourly fee of \$42,000/year; (2) if we had our own staff to write grants – Millennium would show us what we need to do to obtain the grant and that would be included in the \$1,000/per month. Millennium would provide the information of what grants are available to us. Millennium has given us a list of schools that have obtained grants (Fairfield B/E, Roselle B/E and Linden B/E).

Mr. Nufrio asked if this is a recurring fee and it's an annual renewal and it's not a long-term contract. Dr. Francis said it was an annual renewal and he also stated that it was less than hiring someone full time with benefits.

Mr. Arminio asked if there was a time frame with respect to signing a contract. Mr. Nufrio stated that Dr. Lishak said that the committee needs to "vet" this company via the district's they are currently serving and he suggested that the committee concur about that and perhaps Dr. Lishak may want to be in contact with the school board association to see if there are any little glitches that they may have discovered with this company. The school board association has resources and they have also offered workshops which you need to pay for (lesser fee) – maybe we can use their information via a phone call or to get together with them to "vet" this company as best as possible make sure they are on the "up and up" and not just taking money and providing very little.

Mr. Tatum stated that this is not the only alternative we are looking at. Mr. Tatum stated that he knows a person who has actually done this kind of work and have brought in substantial dollars to their school district and who is now retired and can work as a consultant and maybe we will be able to converse in the language as to how you write a grant. He also stated that we will review this a little more and not rush into this and enter into a contract and then find out this was not the appropriate avenue to take. In fact Dr.

Lishak pointed out in looking at the companies many are not New Jersey based. This company is New Jersey based. We have been speaking about this since last August about the need to apply for more funding and I would like to see funding coming to the district not just "fly by night" companies – somebody who could put together something for us and get us some funding for more programs for students and some improvements in our facilities and whatever else we decide to undertake.

Mr. Nufrio asked that other alternative option can you expand on what it might cost to consider that other individual? Mr. Tatum stated that he had not spoken to that person about the fees; however, he would like to maybe bring this person in front of the board to speak about some of the actual dollars that have been received etc. It may be the cheaper route – but we have the option of using the service to solicit the grants; maybe the other person could charge us a writing fee and using the combination of both. It will depend what our needs are and what we can budget for it.

#### FISCAL AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Mr. Salcedo presented the Fiscal and Planning Committee agenda.

Mr. Vieira stated the following with respect to the proposed budget. The average increase for homeowner in Union will be \$83 and the tax rate will increase 2%. The budget has been balanced without any layoffs in personnel. Moving forward it will get harder because our salaries and benefits are increasing about \$3 million per year. Our tax level is only increasing \$1.6 million per year. We can only cut non-salary expenditures for so long without having to layoff – this is something to consider moving forward into the 2016-2017 year.

Mr. Arminio asked if at the next meeting same will be stated. Mr. Vieira stated that on April 29, 2015 we have the public hearing and same will be stated.

Mr. Tatum asked if the travel expense maximum is with respect to employees, with respect to professional development, etc. Mr. Vieira replied yes.

Mr. Nufrio asked about the expense in F-11 with respect to the classrooms to be built at Burnet Middle School and how many classrooms will be built. Mr. Vieira stated 5. Mr. Nufrio stated that was a lot of money and how did we get the amount of \$825,000. Mr. Damato replied that it is an estimate we received from the architect and that estimate is a couple of years old. Estimate includes wall, heating, electrical, fire alarms. Mr. Nufrio asked to see the work-up on this estimate to justify the \$825,000. Mr. Nufrio also stated that if we are getting this dollar amount from the architect, maybe we need a new architect. Mr. Damato replied that the architect's estimates are generally good and he gave us the electrical estimate on Union High School and I would never have imagined that the electrical bids would come in at \$1.4 million to upgrade the electrical system. Mr. Damato said that all projects go out to bid and we always

pick the lowest bidder; that is State law. The bids for the classrooms have not gone out for bid yet. The amount from the architect is an estimation. Mr. Salcedo stated that this is what the architect thought this project would possibly cost? So he probably put the largest case scenario. Mr. Arminio wanted to know if the bidders know how much is budgeted for this project? Mr. Nufrio says it's public because it is on our agenda. Mr. Vieira replied that we don't have a choice because whenever we make a withdrawal from Capital Reserve we have to have a resolution. The County can't approve the budget without the resolution. Mr. Arminio stated that we will vote on this next week. Dr. Francis asked if we approve the \$825,000; do we still have to approve the contractor. Mr. Arminio stated that this money is budgeted and then the bid will go out and when bids are received, any moneys lower than the budgeted amount will go back into the Capital Reserve.

#### OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

Mr. Layden presented the Operations Committee agenda.

Dr. Francis asked why the electrical bid is so much money. Mr. Wiggins stated that the switch gear needs to be replaced, change all transformers at 5 substations, rewire all the wiring to those substations, trench hundreds of feet and put in all new electrical poles from here all the way down to the high school; there is a lot of infrastructure work. This was the lowest bid and we had bid it once before and the bids came out too high. Mr. Damato said that the specs and plans are available for review. The lowest bid on the original bid request was for \$1.8 million. We asked the architect to go back and change the specification and to remove things that were on the wish list. There were alternates that came in for an additional \$300,000-\$400,000. For additional panels that were on the wish list, may not necessarily be undertaken because we don't have that amount of money to spend on this particular project. This project is not something that you see. The set-up we have now needs to be upgraded; it has out lived its useful life. Mr. Wiggins stated that it is becoming a dangerous situation. Mr. Nufrio asked if this is one subcontractor. Mr. Damato stated that it is an electrical contract/construction subcontract. No electrical is subcontracted.

Ms. Zuena asked why HIB is under "operations" and not education. Mr. Tatum stated it is operations of the school building so it could go under either. Mr. Nufrio thought it was originally under "education". Ms. Ditri said that it can be changed if necessary.

Mr. Arminio stated that the next is Discussion Items:

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Request for use of Union High School football field by Union County Snapple Bowl All Star Team on the following dates: July 6 from 6 to 8 p.m.; July 7 from 6 to 8 p.m.; July 8 from 6 to 8 p.m.; July 9 from 6 to 8 p.m.; July 13 from 1 to 3 p.m. and July 14 from 6 to 8 p.m.
2. Request for use of Union High School Auditorium and two classrooms on May 2 or May 23 from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. by Rangla Punjab Academy for an Indian Dance Recital

Mr. Arminio asked with respect to Item #1 – are the dates available? Is everything in place? Mr. Viera said yes to all. There are no spectators. Mr. Arminio asked if we were getting paid for its use? Fee waiver was requested by team. Ms. Ditri said it was up to the board.

Mr. Arminio said that Mr. Damato was calling Linda Ionta - it still will be a resolution next week so we can think about it and if we don't give a fee waiver, we can make some money for the district. Discussion resulted with fee could be \$90/hr (\$360/night); Jerry Benniquesta has the insurance. Mr. Arminio said this is a charity event and Mr. Damato said that it is for Children's Specialized Hospital and Lakeview School. Ms. Zuena asked if any of our kids were participating.

Mr. Arminio said this will become a resolution and have Linda Ionta make a presentation or a written statement that this is a good thing. This is a charitable event for the Children Specialized Hospital – we may have kids on the team. Mr. Nufrio said it is a cost to the district because we have to have the guys that need to clean up and hopefully insurance will cover the costs of any damages to the field.

Mr. Damato stated that he did not review the insurance statement. They would normally sign an agreement that would indemnify us in addition to the insurance policy and the insurance policy would help us if we were sued; obviously, if someone gets injured out there at a practice because the field has a rip, we will get sued.

Mr. Arminio asked if anyone had questions on Item #2? Mr. Viera said that he worked up a price and asked Donna Hubbard to send it to the Rangla Punjab Academy and we have not heard from them. The price is about \$6,000 for the high school auditorium and 2 classrooms (for 7 hours).

## PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Mr. Nufrio presented the Personnel Committee agenda.

No comments or questions.

## APPROVAL OF BILLS

Bills will be presented for payment at next meeting.

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

## NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Arminio stated that he will include sports for next week, including Jr. ROTC

Mr. Damato stated that due to the library being set up for the PARCC testing, the next regular meeting will be held at Kawameeh Middle School Auditorium at 7:00 p.m.

## COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Joyce Churus came to see if calendar was approved last month and yes it was and when will it be posted or in our hands. Ms. Ditri said it could be located on the website. Her other question was will the upgrades of the electrical system – will it make the system more efficient? Mr. Wiggins responded not necessarily. Mr. Damato said that we are not doing lighting upgrades. There may be a time for energy conservation/reservations – we have spoken about it a few years back. There is a cost analysis that we could do – but we have to have cash upfront to get the returns at some point in the future. We can revisit this again if you want.

Mary Ellen Patriga, 1152 Snyder Avenue, teacher at Connecticut Farms School. Question about staff development for October – there doesn't seem to be one. We only have November, December, January, February and March – Mr. Tatum said he will look into that because Noreen does that schedule. Ms. Patriga stated that if you have to move one, in November we have 6 days off with the convention – if we can move something to October that would be better. Mr. Tatum said that it may just be an oversight and he will make a note to look into that. If it changes, we will change the calendar – because it would need to be a half-day.

Mr. Damato stated that he just heard from Linda Ionta that Kean College is not charging a fee and our kids are playing in the Snapple Bowl. If you want to change this into a resolution, we can do that.

Mr. Arminio stated that next meeting will be a consent agenda and comments from the public, no comments from us and no answering questions and no use of cell phones during meetings and when we go into Executive Session.

#### MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION

Moved by Mr. Nufrio, seconded by Mr. Salcedo that the board go into Executive Session to discuss the following subject matters without the presence of the public in accordance with the provisions of NJSA 10:4-2(b) student and personnel matters. The board will disclose the discussion conducted during the Executive Session with notice to the public when the disclosure will not result in unwarranted invasion of individual privacy or prejudice to the best interest 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.

AYES: Mr. David Arminio, Dr. Guy Francis, Mr. Richard Galante, Mr. Thomas Layden,  
Mr. Ronnie McDowell, Mr. Vito Nufrio, Mr. Angel Salcedo and Mrs. Nancy Zuena

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION WAS CARRIED

The board returned to public session.

#### MOTION TO ADJOURN

There being no further business before the board in public session it was moved by Mr. Layden, seconded by Mr. Salcedo that the meeting be adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

JAMES J. DAMATO  
BOARD SECRETARY