

UNION TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION
WORKSESSION MINUTES – JANUARY 13, 2015

Meeting held at James M. Caulfield Administration Building, 2369 Morris Avenue, Union, New Jersey at 7:00 p.m. on January 13, 2015

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL: Mr. David Arminio, President; Dr. Guy Francis, Mr. Richard Galante, Ms. Lois Jackson, Mr. Ronnie McDowell, Mr. Vito Nufrio, Mr. and Mrs. Nancy Zuena

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL: Mr. Thomas Layden and Mr. Angel Salcedo

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

Mrs. Zuena 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.

Mr. Damato confirmed that all communications were up to date and that they had been referred to appropriate committees for consideration.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mr. Tatum said that there will be a PARCC Information Session on Thursday, January 22nd at 7 p.m. at the Union High School Library. He said that the session is designed to provide parents with general information regarding PARCC scheduling and requirements. Mr. Tatum said that information pertaining to the PARCC contents for language arts and math was provided in previous district workshops. He said that a power point presentation as well as practice test sites can be located on the district's website under the PARCC tab.

Mr. Tatum said that the students and faculty at Kawameeh Middle School created a video called "Shake it Off" for a "no hate" initiative which actually found itself on YouTube and to date it has had over 11,000 people view the video. He said that he had the opportunity to see the video and it was quite good. Mr. Tatum said that it was also featured on Channel 11 News. He commended the administration and faculty for putting this video together.

Mr. Tatum said that at the regular meeting next week a report that is required by law to advise of the number of bullying incidents that occurred from September through December 2014.

Mr. Arminio said that he had spoken to the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent about next week's meeting. He said that next week he is going to ask, if everyone agrees to it, that there be a "consent" agenda. Mr. Arminio said that he thought Mr. Perkins was trying to go in that direction. He said that a consent agenda means that he will ask for someone to move the resolutions contained in the particular committee agenda. Mr. Arminio said that the mover of the resolutions would simply say, "I move items 1 and 2 in the education committee" it would then be seconded. He said that the people who attend the meetings have the agenda in front of them and the public can also access the agenda on-line. Mr. Arminio said that every person that he has spoken to that watches the meetings on television say that they can either not hear the person reading the resolution, the speech is too mumbled or they stop listening all together because they cannot follow it. He said that if the board just does the consent agenda, which many other districts do, the board would save time and also not have to go through the tedium of reading each item. Mr. Arminio said that this can be discussed further under the New Business portion of this meeting. He said that this format is used in a lot of Town Meetings and it is used by many boards of education. Mr. Nufrio said that he would only request that any specific personnel matter should be cited separately and it should not be part of the consent agenda because the individuals need to be individually spoken about. Mr. Arminio said that if there is a resolution that the mover wants to discuss, it can be discussed separately.

EDUCATION/STUDENT DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE

Dr. Francis reviewed the items on the agenda.

FISCAL AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Ms. Jackson reviewed the items on the agenda.

Mrs. Zuena asked why Burnet Middle School does not go to Forest Lodge for an 8th grade trip and Kawameeh Middle School does. Mr. Arminio said that is what the school decided on with its Student Council. He said that the trip to Forest Lodge started with a Pennsylvania trip about 25 years ago and when the Pennsylvania trip became too expensive, the group started going to Forest Lodge. Mr. Arminio said that he did not know why Burnet does not go on such a trip, it may be that they are not able to raise the money to go on the trip. He said that the students at Kawameeh pay for the trip themselves by fundraising. Mrs. Zuena asked if the students at Burnet could be offered the opportunity to do more fundraising and have such a trip. Mr. Arminio said that it would be up to the principal.

OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

Mrs. Zuena reviewed the items on the agenda.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Arminio asked if the use of Hamilton School by the Union Police Department will be for practice drills. Mr. Damato said that they are essentially will be doing special services teams or S.W.A.T. drills inside the school. Mr. Nufrio asked if there was a time frame that they would be using the facility. Mr. Damato said that the drills are being done in the evening hours and the Police Department will work around whatever schedule the district institute. He said that the board will be considering options for the use of Hamilton School shortly and if the board decides to rent out Hamilton School to a school starting on July 1st, then the Police Department knows that they will no longer be able to use the building. Mr. Damato said that the Police Department has used other buildings in the district to do the same type of drills and because they have things set up for the drills and it is hard to dismantle and more equipment and that is why they wanted to be able to use one school for an extended period of time. He said that the Police Department is in the process of looking at options for the continued use of Hamilton School and they are 100% flexible with whatever the board decides. Mr. Nufrio asked if there was a custodial staff that is keeping Hamilton maintained. Mr. Wiggins said that he does have regular building checks done at Hamilton School and someone is there for approximately two hours per day. Mr. Nufrio asked if it was someone's responsibility to close up the building after the Police Department leaves. Mr. Wiggins said that was the case.

DISCUSSION ITEM:

Request from Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority regarding waiver of rental fees for use of Union High School on March 14th, 2015 for Youth Symposium – Mr. Damato said that this was a request to use several classrooms, the gym and the cafeteria for a Youth Symposium that is being run by the Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority. He said that this group is requesting a fee waiver for the event. Mr. Damato said that in the past only for organizations like Union Police Department or the Recreation Department would the board provide a full fee waiver; he said that other organizations pay the rental fee plus utility surcharge and other fees. Mr. Arminio asked if church groups pay utility fees. Mr. Damato said that if the groups are using the facilities during a time that there is a custodial staff present, the group does not have to pay for custodians but if they are using the facility on the weekend, they must pay the custodial fees. He said that there are already other activities going on in the high school on the date requested by district students. Mr. Nufrio asked what the Youth Symposium was about. Mr. Damato said that there was a letter submitted which outlined the event. He said that the request is at a time when the high school is already being heavily used and he was not sure if this group could be fit in. Mr. Arminio asked if we could just notify the group that its request cannot be filled because of conflicts. Mr. Damato said that we can contact the group and advise that it cannot be approved by the board this month because of conflicts and it can be reconsidered next month. He said that this will not be added as a resolution for next week.

Mr. Nufrio asked what the symposium was about. Mr. Damato said that it was different issues that were geared toward girls aged 6 to 13. Mr. Nufrio said that if this was approved, how would they get the information to students. Mr. Arminio said that the group would do their own publicity of the event.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Mr. Nufrio reviewed the items on the agenda.

Dr. Francis said that resolution P-1 lists three residency investigators that are being hired. He asked how many people applied for this job and how many were interviewed. Mr. Tatum said that he actually interviewed four or five individuals out of about a dozen people who applied. He said that he tried to find people that had experience doing either police work or investigative skills. Mr. Tatum said that out of the three that were recommended, two of them are really outstanding. Dr. Francis said that there is a salary difference between the individuals; was that based upon experience. Mr. Tatum said it was. He said that he tried to fix the hourly rate a little less than those people who have been around for a long time to keep it fair.

Mr. Nufrio asked how many investigators did the district currently have. Mr. Tatum said that the district has three and plus the new people, there will be a total of six investigators. Mr. Benaquista said that there is one additional person that is being considered for employment, but all of the paperwork on that individual has not been received by human resources. Mr. Tatum said that would make a total of seven investigators. He said that investigator staff is being built back up because prior to this there were five investigators. Mr. Tatum said that two people left the position. He said that the board has to keep in mind that the type of investigations that the district is trying to conduct sometimes require two investigators to be out on the same case at the same time. Mr. Tatum said that sometimes students are coming from other towns everyday but they have all of the "proofs" to say that they live in Union. He said that only having three investigators does not allow coverage in a case like that. Mr. Tatum said that the investigators only get paid for the hours that they work.

Mr. Nufrio asked who supervises the investigators and how does the board know, in fact, that the hours they submit are valid, justified and actual done. Mr. Tatum said that he supervises the investigators as he has been doing for a number of years and he is the only that signs off on the timesheets for these individuals. He said that the hours submitted do coincide with the cases that they work on. Mr. Tatum said that the only person who works a few more hours because she comes into the office and does some of the paperwork with Mrs. Hubbard is Mrs. Schmidtberg but she is also doing investigations in the field. Mr. Nufrio suggested that Mr. Tatum delegate this duty to someone since Mr. Tatum is now the Superintendent. Mr. Tatum said that it was part of his job as Assistant Superintendent and he has continued to do it. He said that perhaps down the road he would delegate this duty to someone else.

Mr. Arminio asked if there was money budgeted for these new hires. Mr. Vieira said that there was money budgeted.

Dr. Francis asked Mr. Tatum how much of what he was doing as Assistant Superintendent was he still doing now. Mr. Tatum said that he was still doing a good deal of the work he was doing. He said that Dr. Lishak has picked up some of the investigations and Mr. Benaquista is now the Affirmative Action Officer and is doing the affirmative action cases. Mr. Tatum said that he was still taking care of residency and homeless matters as well as some of the elementary curriculum and is still supervising six principals and doing their evaluations.

Mr. Nufrio said that he wanted to stress that the evaluations of the administrators are essential so that the district knows exactly what is going on. He said that these evaluations should be done in a timely manner. Mr. Nufrio said that is why it might be a good idea for Mr. Tatum to shed some of the work that someone could do. He said that evaluation is what makes the district go around and go forward. Mr. Tatum said that he still does a lot of work with parents and disciplinary conferences.

LEGAL COMMITTEE

Mr. Nufrio reviewed the agenda item.

Mr. Arminio suggested since the board had new members, that this matter be discussed in Executive Session. Mr. Damato said that the backup for this resolution was given to all board members but if the board would like to discuss the matter, it can be done in Executive Session. Mrs. Zueno said that she would like to review the case before she votes on it next week.

APPROVAL OF BILLS

Mr. Arminio stated that the bills would be approved next week.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mr. Arminio said that the JROTC won first place at a competition in December at Delsey Regional High School. He said that last year this group won a national JROTC tournament and hopefully this year they will win it again.

Mr. Arminio said that next week the board will have an official statement that will be made at the meeting regarding PARCC testing. He said that the Superintendent's Office will be sending every board member a copy of the statement and they can make any comments to Mr. Tatum before next week. Mr. Arminio said that many people have been asking at board meetings about the board's position; he said that the position will be stated publically at the regular meeting next week. He said that he did not think that the board could create any type of resolution about the PARCC because it is a state test, but the board can have a "position".

Mr. Arminio said that the board will have a Planning Session meeting on Saturday, February 7th from 8 to 11 a.m. He said that this will be posted tomorrow. Mr. Arminio said that the board will discuss short and long term goals. Mr. Vieira said that the budget will also be discussed.

Mr. Arminio said that on January 14th the Union County School Boards Association has a "meet and greet" at Orange Avenue School in Cranford starting at 6 p.m. He said that he was attending.

Mr. Arminio said that on January 24th there will be a meeting concerning PARCC at Kean University East Campus on North Avenue in Elizabeth, NJ. He said that he would also be attending this workshop. Mr. Arminio said that he did not know what would be discussed at this event. Mrs. Zuena thought that a sample of the PARCC would be able to be accessed by people in attendance. She said that there would also be speakers.

Mr. Arminio said that he was going to ask Mr. Tatum to show a short video of Senator Menendez praising boards of education and the work that they do at next week's meeting. Mr. Nufrio said that he would send the link for this video to Mr. Tatum. He said that the video not only praises boards of education but it is a little bit of a history of boards of education and how they got started. Mr. McDowell said that the state is celebrating the 100th anniversary of New Jersey School Boards Association.

Mr. Arminio asked if anyone had comments or questions regarding the idea of a "consent agenda" for future meetings. He said that at several of the other board meetings that he attends, this procedure is utilized. Mr. Nufrio said that his former district used this procedure.

Mr. Arminio said that he was also informed that before the meetings start on television, to either make sure that they are either away from the microphone or that the microphone is off because people at home can hear bits of conversation.

Mr. Nufrio thanked Mr. Tatum for taking the time to respond on a Sunday evening to an e-mail which he intended him to see on Monday morning. He said that it was to point out that the district's website is not current. Mr. Nufrio is aware that Ms. Hart will be out for awhile due to a broken ankle but he hoped someone will be assigned to post items and make changes on the website. Mr. Tatum said that he would take care of it.

NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Lishak said that during the education committee meeting earlier this evening the meeting that was held in December with regard to examining the criteria for Honors, Advanced Placement and Gifted and Talented classes was discussed. She said that after tonight she will be holding a meeting with teachers who attended on how the

district will make the change. Dr. Lishak said that for placement in Honors, Advanced Placement and Gifted and Talented, this year, the district will not consider the standardized test score because the scores will not be returned to the district in time; this year they will just be eliminated. She said that for the following year (201-2016) the district will make changes and even though the criteria will still be the same, the district will not consider the standardized test scores, the district will amend the criteria so that there will still be a "three of four" that must be met. Dr. Lishak said that once the criteria is agreed upon, it will be posted on the website and all board members will receive the information prior to it being posted. She said that students who apply this year for the 2015-2016 school year will follow the criteria that the district has in place now with the exception of no use of a standardized test score because they have not been received in time. Dr. Lishak said that for the 2016-2017 school year, the new criteria that will be put in place will still not consider the standardized test score and the criteria will be amended.

Dr. Lishak said that another thing which was proposed (not for this year) the district is considering eliminating the mid-term and the final exams because district students are taking a mid-term, the PARCC, the second administration of the PARCC for end of year and then the final exam. She said that the district is considering establishing a CEMPA so that at the end of each marking period, students would be given an exam but the exam focuses on that particular marking period and the student will receive a grade for this assessment and the grade will be counted into the student's marking period grade but will also show separately on the student's report card so that parents are aware of the results. Dr. Lishak said that a number of school districts have discussed removing the mid-term and final exams because it is a awful lot of stress on the students as they are always looking forward to taking an assessment. She said that this will allow students to be assessed to see where they are in the marking period.

Dr. Lishak said that the teacher group that she met with is very anxious to hear what the board's decision is on these changes. She said that she will e-mail the board with the details and if anyone has any questions or comments they can contact her. Dr. Lishak said that she hoped to meet with the teacher group before the end of January. Mr. Arminio said that he knew some of the districts in the area have already gotten rid of mid-term and final exams. Mr. Nufrio said that testing is a scheduling nightmare and he applauded the teachers for the undertaking. He said that he applauded more so the supervisors and the administrators for putting it all together. Mr. Nufrio said that even though it has not been put together yet, the plan is being worked on; he said that the lower grades might not be as much of a nightmare but the high school is a nightmare. He said that as a former educator and administrator, he knew that it will be a lot of work and the students also have to be on the page because along with the scheduling, the attendance factors become prominent and coverage is also difficult.

Mr. Vieira said that the Department of Education released the 2015 budget calendar and he wanted to give the board dates of when things will be due. He said that the 2015-2016 school budget must be submitted to the Executive County Superintendent by March 20th. Mr. Vieira said that at the March 17th board meeting, the board will approve the submission of the budget to the Executive County Superintendent. He said that after the county approves the budget, there must be a public budget hearing which must be done between April 24th and May 7th. Mr. Vieira said that he discussed dates with Mr. Damato and it was proposed that the public hearing take place on Wednesday, April 29th with Thursday, April 30th in the event that the April 29th meeting had to be cancelled.

Mr. Arminio asked when the State lets the districts know about their state aid. Mr. Vieira said that the Governor will release the state aid figures at the end of February but he said that he was building the budget assuming a 2% increase in the municipal tax levy, which would be a \$1.6 million increase and also assuming that the state aid will be "flat" (no increase). He said that presently the district receives \$30 million in state aid, which is one quarter of the budget. Mr. Nufrio asked Mr. Vieira to translate the 2% increase into what each household can expect to pay. Mr. Vieira said that it would be an approximate increase of \$73 per household.

Mr. Vieira said that the district could raise the municipal levy by more than 2% based upon a calculation in the law for excess increases in health care costs which is called "bank cap". He said that the district would be able to raise more than \$1.6 million by \$2 million which is in "bank cap". Mr. Vieira said that this is subject to discussion. Mr. Nufrio asked if this money would have to be replenished. Mr. Vieira said that this is not a "reserve" account, it allows the district to increase the levy but once the funds are used, the district cannot use that "bank cap" again. He said that this money has to be raised through the tax levy.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Mrs. Frazier suggested that the Sigma Gamma Rho sorority be advised that they can use another building in the district for their event. She said that their request peaked her interest because the subject of social media awareness was mentioned. Mrs. Frazier said that the biggest problem with conflict and bullying has to do with social media. She said that the weekends are horrendous and by Monday morning there are so many arguments based on things that were posted on twitter or facebook. Mrs. Frazier said she thought this was a good thing to bring up to the students. Mr. Arminio said that this group can be advised that there are other buildings that might be available.

Mr. Frazier said that with regard to the statement on PARCC, he asked if the Association could be provided with a copy prior to next week's meeting. Mr. Tatum said he would do that.

Ms. Hall said that she had nothing against this Sorority but many of the things that this group hopes to address at their event will be part of the district's health/resource fair which will take place at the end of March at Union High School. She said that Mrs. Ahern from Union High School is in charge of this event. Ms. Hall said that with regard to social media, she said that she had a wonderful presenter on this subject who speaks about cyber-safety. She said that this person has been in the district several times and he has programs geared toward students and parents. Ms. Hall said that he should come back every year because social media sites change constantly. Mr. Nufrio asked where the person was from. Ms. Hall said that his company is called *Always Connected* and he has appeared on many television shows. She said that Kawameeh Middle School was the first school that he ever came to and if she calls him, he will come. Ms. Hall said that this individual is a detective in the Summit Police Department and he has traveled all over the world to speak on this subject.

Ms. Lipstein wanted to confirm that January 22nd would be the PARCC information session that the district is holding at Union High School starting at 7 p.m. She asked what age group this would cover. Dr. Lishak said that it will cover grades 3 through 11 but anyone can attend.

Ms. Lipstein asked that the statement that the board will be presenting next week regarding the PARCC be put out prior to the meeting. Mr. Arminio said that he would not be doing that. Ms. Lipstein asked if he was doing it this way because the board would not be voting on the issue. She said that she felt the public might have some questions and concerns. Ms. Lipstein said that when the board presents a resolution it is discussed and voted upon but this will only be a statement. She said that this is an important document because parents have been asking about the PARCC for months. Ms. Lipstein said that it would be her suggestion that people have a chance to look at the statement prior to the meeting so that if there are concerns, the board may want to adjust its position.

Ms. Lipstein said that with regard to P-4, the backup indicated that this was a program that would take place at Livingston School. She wanted to know why it was not available to everyone in the district. Dr. Lishak said that this is a professional development workshop that was decided to be presented to staff at Livingston School by the school improvement panel.

Ms. Lipstein asked if each school had a school improvement panel. Dr. Lishak said each school has a panel and each school can choose what subjects they want to cover in their professional development workshops. She said that there is money in the budget for each school; some funds are provided by the NCLB grant. Ms. Lipstein said that she questioned why this would only be done in one school because it may be something that would be beneficial to the entire district.

Ms. Lipstein said now that the district has seven residency investigators, how many students are removed due to their investigations. She said that she knew it was a complicated process and she wondered if anyone had a handle on how many students have been exited. Mr. Tatum said that there is an agenda item on each month that specifies how many students were removed from the rolls during the previous month. He said that over the last few years the district has operated with fewer people and unfortunately the situations have become more and more complicated with the influx of potential homelessness and a multitude of other situations. Mr. Tatum said that in order to do a thorough investigation sometimes it requires that two investigators work on the same case, at the same time. Ms. Lipstein said that she knew there was a process to remove a student who is not a resident. Mr. Damato said that there is an endless stream of appeals that can be taken. Mr. Tatum said that one thing he can say without any reservation is that the people who the district generally discover that they are not domiciled in Union, usually don't give the district a fight as far as trying to stay. He said that in most cases a transfer card is issued and the families go willingly. Ms. Lipstein said that there is a perception that there are a lot of students who attend Union Schools that do not live in Union. She said she knew that the district was doing the best that it could do with regard to investigations when reports are received. Mr. Tatum said that he thought the public would be surprised at the number of hours that are actually spent on residency alone. He said that there is a lot of time and energy spent on each case and it really is an exhaustive process.

Ms. Lipstein said that she was sorry to hear about Ms. Hart's injury and she hoped that someone would be a backup person during her absence to work on the website. She said that there is a calendar on the home page of the district website, but it is empty. Ms. Lipstein said that it would be helpful if the calendar would list all of the activities that are occurring in the district so that the public knows what is happening in the district.

Ms. Lipstein said that with regard to having a "consent agenda", she understood that reading all of the resolutions is very boring and people don't always understand the procedure. She said that many people do not understand how the board works and they don't know that the agenda is posted on a website and they don't attend the meetings. Ms. Lipstein said that she felt it was important that all of the words of the resolutions should be known even if they are boring and mundane. She said that the district might want to think about improving the microphones that are used at the meetings. Ms. Lipstein said that it is frustrating when you are watching the meeting on the television and they cannot hear what is going on at the meeting. She said that for the board's credibility and professionalism, the sound system should be improved, so that the district's best face can be presented.

Ms. Sharp said that she was speaking at the chairperson of the U.T.E.A. negotiation committee. She said that she was getting a little frustrated. Ms. Sharp said that both teams spent many hours negotiating an agreement that was "agreeable" to both sides which was not an easy thing to do. She said that a Memorandum of Agreement was signed. Ms. Sharp said that the UniServe Rep. made up all of the salary guides and they were sent to the district at least three weeks ago. She said that all that had to be done was that the salary guides had to be reviewed by Central Office and then advise Mr. Huk that they were acceptable. Ms. Sharp said that the Association wants to have a ratification meeting and put the contract to bed. She said that it is only a two year contract and by the time it is settled, one year is almost over and negotiations will begin again. Ms. Sharp said she did not see what the holdup was. Mr. Vieira said that Mr. Clarke, the board's counsel, has been on vacation for the past week and as soon as he returns, he will review the guides. Ms. Sharp said that Mr. Huk left for a one week vacation today. Mr. Vieira said that he has communicated with Mr. Clarke and he does have some issues about the distribution of the money on the salary guides. Ms. Sharp asked that as soon as Mr. Clarke returns from vacation that Mr. Vieira contact him so that the matter can be resolved.

Mr. Le said that at the last worksession there were discussions about the policy manual being posted on the website. He asked if it was still the board's position that this would be happening. Mrs. Ditri said that there was a delay due to Ms. Hart's absence. Dr. Lishak said that she would be having a meeting tomorrow with Central Office staff to discuss how to handle Ms. Hart's situation and there will be a plan put into place.

MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION

Moved by Mr. Nufrio, seconded by Ms. Jackson that the Board go into Executive Session to discuss personnel and legal matters without the presence of the public in accordance with the provisions of *N.J.S.A. 10:4- 2b*. 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 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.

AYE:	Dr. Francis, Mr. Galante, Ms. Jackson, Mr. McDowell, Mr. Nufrio, Mrs. Zueno and Mr. Arminio
NAY:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

MOTION WAS CARRIED

THE BOARD RETURNED TO PUBLIC SESSION

MOTION TO ADJOURN

There being no further business before the board, it was moved by seconded
by that the meeting be adjourned.

AYE: Dr. Francis, Mr. Galante, Ms. Jackson, Mr. McDowell, Mr. Nufrio,
 Mrs. Zuena and Mr. Arminio

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION WAS CARRIED

Respectfully submitted,

JAMES J. DAMATO
BOARD SECRETARY