

TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES – February 15, 2022

NOTICE OF MEETING:

TO ALL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS:

The regular meeting of the Board of Education of the Township of Union was held on Tuesday, February 15, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. at the Union High School Library, 2350 North Third Street, Union, New Jersey pursuant to notice sent to each member.

Mrs. Minneci called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

Dr. Guy Francis, Ms. Marissa McKenzie, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Mr. John O’Shea, Mrs. Nellis Regis-Darby, Ms. Chastity Santana, Mrs. Kimberly Scott-Hayden

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:

Mrs. Yocasta Brens-Watson (arrived 7:45 p.m.), Mrs. Mary Lynn Williams (arrived 7:20 p.m.)

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Mr. Eric Lee, Esq., Mr. Christopher Buggy, Esq.

Dr. Francis led the Board and audience members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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.

Dr. Francis read the district’s mission statement.

MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Moved by Mr. O’Shea, seconded by Ms. McKenzie, that the Board go into Executive Session at 7:08 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: student matter; ongoing litigation matter.

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: Dr. Francis, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. O’Shea,
Mrs. Regis-Darby, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott-Hayden

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

The Board returned to public session at 8:15 p.m.

COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC ON RESOLUTIONS:

None

Approval of Minutes:

Moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Mrs. Scott-Hayden, that the following minutes were adopted:

1. December 14, 2021 – executive session
2. December 14, 2021 – worksession
3. December 21, 2021 – regular meeting

DISCUSSION:

None

AYE: Mrs. Brens-Watson, Dr. Francis, Mrs. Minneci, Mr. O’Shea, Mrs. Regis-Darby,
Mrs. Williams

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: Ms. McKenzie, Mr. O’Shea (#1, #2), Ms. Santana
Mrs. Scott-Hayden

MOTION CARRIED

Communications:

REQUEST FOR LEAVE – BRENNAN

Request for paid medical leave from Theresa Brennan, special education teacher-Union High School, February 7, 2022-March 24, 2022.

REQUEST FOR LEAVE – ARRIETA OCASIO

Request for paid child rearing leave followed by unpaid FMLA/NJFLA (concurrently) from Tatiana Arrieta Ocasio, art teacher-Union High School, March 21, 2022-October 24, 2022.

REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF LEAVE – GREEN

Request for extension of unpaid FMLA from Ruth Green, paraprofessional-Battle Hill Elementary School, through February 4, 2022.

REQUEST FOR LEAVE – HRDINA

Request for paid medical leave from Sharon Hrdina, library media clerk-Connecticut Farms and Hannah Caldwell Elementary Schools, December 14, 2021-March 11, 2022.

REQUEST FOR LEAVE – IOVINE

Request for paid child rearing leave followed by unpaid FMLA/NJFLA (concurrently) from Elise Iovine, teacher-Livingston Elementary School, January 19, 2022-June 19, 2022.

REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF LEAVE – PARKHURST

Request for extension of unpaid non FMLA/non NJFLA child rearing leave from Jennifer Parkhurst, school counselor-Connecticut Farms Elementary School, through May 31, 2022.

REQUEST FOR LEAVE – PATRICCO

Request for paid child rearing leave followed by unpaid FMLA/NJFLA (concurrently) from Elena Patricco, teacher-Livingston Elementary School, March 28, 2022-June 30, 2022.

REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF LEAVE – SIDERMAN

Request for extension of unpaid non FMLA leave from Jason Siderman, special services teacher-Union High School, through June 30, 2022.

REQUEST FOR LEAVE – VISIOLI

Request for FMLA/NJFLA leave from Kevin Visioli, language arts teacher-Burnet Middle School, April 25, 2022-May 6, 2022.

REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF LEAVE – WHITLEY

Request for extension of paid medical leave from Suzanne Whitley, social studies teacher-Union High School, through April 18, 2022.

LETTER OF RESIGNATION – PARDO

Letter of resignation from Gregory Pardo, teacher-Jefferson School, effective March 22, 2022.

LETTER OF RETIREMENT – RAPKE

Letter of resignation, for the purpose of retirement, from Angela Rapke, 10-month secretary-Burnet Middle School, effective March 1, 2022.

LETTER OF RETIREMENT – STRUMPF

Letter of resignation, for the purpose of retirement, from Susan Strumpf, school psychologist-Union High School, effective July 1, 2022.

REQUEST FOR LEAVE – DAMATO

Request for unpaid FMLA from Laura Damato, Principal-Jefferson School, January 31, 2022-March 31, 2022.

REQUEST FOR INTERMITTENT LEAVE – MULVANEY

Request for intermittent unpaid FMLA/NJFLA leave (concurrently) from Elizabeth Mulvaney-special education teacher-Union High School, February 1, 2022-June 30, 2022.

REQUEST FOR LEAVE – OSTY

Request for paid medical leave from Kimberly Osty-Vice Principal-Union High School, February 1, 2022-April 8, 2022.

REQUEST FOR LEAVE – PEINS

Request for FMLA/NJFLA leave from Jeffrey Peins, IT engineer-IT Department, February 11, 2022-March 16, 2022.

REQUEST FOR LEAVE EXTENSION – ROBERTS

Request for extension of unpaid non-FMLA/non-NJFLA child rearing leave from Monica Roberts, school counselor-Livingston Elementary School, through June 30, 2023.

REQUEST FOR LEAVE EXTENSION – WOJCIK

Request for extension of paid medical leave from Karen Wojcik, 12-month secretary, special services/Hamilton, new return date March 1, 2022.

LETTER OF RESIGNATION – CAYETANO

Letter of resignation from Michelle Cayetano, school nurse-Kawameeh Middle School, effective April 7, 2022.

LETTER OF RETIREMENT – DiGIOVANNI

Letter of resignation, for the purpose of retirement, from Kathy DiGiovanni, Principal-Hannah Caldwell Elementary School, effective April 1, 2022.

LETTER OF RETIREMENT – LEVANT

Letter of resignation, for the purpose of retirement, from Mary Levant, part-time school bus assistant-Transportation Department, effective February 28, 2022.

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Taylor introduced Mr. Malanda, principal of Kawameeh Middle School and he will introduce a very special student that is being spotlighted tonight.

Mr. Malanda introduced Leonardo Marino and stated:

“Dr. Taylor asked me to identify a student who has the qualities of an all-around outstanding student while doing so in an unassuming way. Kawameeh is full of wonderful kids who go above and beyond each and every day. It would be easy to provide a long list of KMS students who stand out for their exceptional qualities and contributions to our school. I discussed many students with my staff as we tried to identify a student to recognize for this program. Throughout those discussions, one name kept coming up on a consistent basis. Leonardo Moreno was the topic of many of our conversations. Across the board, his teachers praised his academic ability, his character and his friendliness.

Leo entered our school system from another town during the pandemic in 2020. He did not have the opportunity to make friends and participate in classes

the traditional way because school was virtual. Leo did not let this hinder his growth as a student. He adapted to the situation and thrived. When speaking with his 6th grade teachers this year, they described him as follows:

He consistently shows an interest in learning and performs well maintaining an A average in all classes. He is highly self-motivated. He is kind, personable, intelligent. He goes out of his way to help his peers in class and in the hallways. He is funny and loves to joke. He is an all-around great kid

Leo is all of these things, but you wouldn't necessarily know it because of his quiet and humble nature.

For these reasons, we have chosen Leo for this chance to "stand out" because he normally "flies under the radar."

Mrs. Koon stated per statute, districts need to be audited once a year. She introduced Mr. Zimmerman and Mr. Korecky from Suplee Clooney, the district auditors to present the results of our June 30, 2021 audit.

Mr. Korecky stated this is the presentation for the June 30, 2021 audit that was filed a couple of weeks ago because we were waiting on information from the State's Department of Education. You received two reports – one is the annual comprehensive financial report and one is the management report. Both reports are required by the State Department of Education on a yearly basis. When we come into the office we do a series of audit procedures and the results are in these reports.

The first is the auditor's management report which is supported by the audit manual of the State Department of Education. It is not only a financial audit but a compliance audit. There are 15 different areas for example payroll, insurance, student activity funds, payment of claims and things like that. This is where your recommendation would be.

We do have one formal recommendation this year that we will read into the record. Under food services, page 12, it is a recommendation; it is a good thing, the cafeteria did very well operational wise, you made money. If you have "net cash resources", the State wants you to spend the money on cafeteria operations. The recommendation is that the appropriate action be taken to ensure the "net cash resources" does not exceed three months average of expenditures. That was a good thing because the federal government gave you a lot of money and all the meals were free this year so you had excess revenue in operations and you didn't have enough time to spend it. The State is asking you to spend the excess money on the cafeteria operations and that is the only recommendation.

The second report is the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report – this is where the financial statements are and how you did operational wise. There is a lot of information – financial and demographics. The one schedule I ask everyone to look at is the "C" schedule. It starts on page 83. It is a statement of budgetary comparison. It gives you detailed revenue realized and appropriations spent. It also acts as a profit and loss. You did well this year –

ended the year with \$15,273,000 in surplus; however, it is broken down to several components. Year end encumbrance - \$575,000; CFRA \$17,000; reserved unemployment – the unemployment came into the cafeteria; capital reserve \$1,362,002; maintenance reserve \$950,000; emergency reserve \$725,000; excess surplus – over your 4% - \$1,692,000; excess surplus – current year \$1,284,000 and your unreserved fund balance – your 4% - you got extra State aid, you didn't spend money this year because of COVID – your free and clear balance of unreserved 4% and 2% - so it increased at it is at \$7,274,00 for a total \$15,273,000. You have enough reserves on hand.

Eric Zimmerman – he is the audit manager – he ran the day-to-day operations at the district.

Dr. Francis stated I just received my packet in the mail today and I haven't had a chance to look at it. Mr. Korecky stated if you have any questions, speak with the BA and she can get in touch with us. Dr. Francis stated I was hoping in the future we could get it earlier because we have to vote on it tonight.

Mr. Zimmerman stated the report was ready now, otherwise it would have been the next meeting. It is affecting all the districts in the State. Any questions, we can answer.

Mr. O'Shea stated the capital reserve account, we did very well this year. Is that a one time hit, or will we see that every year? Mr. Korecky stated you should get at least one more payment on that.

Mr. O'Shea stated the cafeteria account, we are cutting into the deficits. Mr. Korecky stated no you have excess money and you have to speed it.

Mrs. Koon stated you all should have received your books on Friday. We had them delivered to yourself plus they were posted online on Friday. Ms. Santana stated I received mine and I'm down the road from you Dr. Francis.

Mr. Korecky stated I would like to thank the Board and the administration for the cooperation and courtesy they extended to us through the audit. We appreciate your business. The auditor's presentation can be viewed on the district's website.

Dr. Taylor presented the Standardized Data Assessment Report; same can be viewed on the district website.

Dr. Taylor stated according to State code I am required to report to the Board and the community the results of the standardized test data. I do so with reservation because I don't put a lot of stock in standardized test results for various reasons. I don't think they measure accurately the intelligence and learning capacity of a child. I do think that standardized tests can tell us something about curriculum, instruction on some level and maybe some trends among students.

The Start Strong data and iReady data is appended to the minutes and uploaded to the Superintendent's Corner on the district website. Start Strong data this year – that breaks out according to our students race, ethnicity, learning challenges and the iReady data is the test assessment data from the internal assessment we use. The iReady data and the Start Strong data do tell us a few things about our district needs. I have been working with Dr. Perez and her curriculum directors – we look for things we all can agree on.

Standardized testing can help us look for gaps in the way we are working with students from different backgrounds – learning challenged, IEPs, disenfranchised students, students with different ethnic and racial backgrounds. If anything, we can determine from the standardized test data – we need more to support our disenfranchised students. I'm talking about a child who doesn't come with the same opportunities as their peers – either because of family, other circumstances, personal challenges, health challenges – these are often students that are not given the same enfranchisement as their peers.

He also thinks that standardized testing data can help Dr. Perez and her team understand where our curriculum is lacking. I have seen that there are major gaps in the kindergarten through senior year curriculum continuum. I have had teachers in a room with a chart that shows all the skills that we are supposed to be teaching kids and what we are actually addressing in curriculum and what we are not. I call it curriculum audit; some people call it curriculum mapping. It helps us identify the big holes and where we can improve curriculum. I do not think the standardized test data is a reflection of an individual's intelligence or capacity to learn because there are plenty of studies that show that standardized tests are bias towards certain groups of students. Also we have all different types of intelligence and it is called multiple intelligence. Some people are not good at test taking but are good at building things or artistic and standardized testing does not test that. Standardized tests don't give kids the opportunity to show what they know.

I will briefly share with you what Dr. Perez, Dr. Cohen, Mrs. Hutchinson and I took away when we looked at this data (see data appended to minutes and on district website). Start Strong is the State's standardized assessment that we use. It categorizes a child as being right there, needing some support or needing a lot of support. The kids that need a lot of support we would provide RTI intervention, instruction support in the classroom. What I see is our ELL students and our special education students are not performing nearly as well as all the other students. Students with different ethnic and racial backgrounds are not so far apart in their needs. Our black, white, Asian, Hispanic and multi-race students – the gap is not nearly as wide between those general education students, the native English speaking students and their peers. The gap is not nearly as wide among the ELL, special ed and other students. If you use this as a broad measure of the general deficiency might be – they all have trouble with math and struggling with science – STEM subjects.

iReady is an internal assessment we use. It is an adaptive assessment. Kids take the test at a computer and the test adapts the sophistication of the subsequent question according to how the child answered. Generally, educators find that those types of assessments are more authentic than the simple assessments the kids took for the State. Regardless, it is showing us a lot of the same things that the Start Strong showed us.

Dr. Perez will take a deeper look at the curriculum and now we will try to deal with some of the gaps. We take away that the ELL and special ed students are falling farther behind than their peers. All the kids are struggling in math and science. Proposals – we need to take a look at the nature of the curricular we are exposing our special needs and ELL students. My assumption is the curriculum is not as rigorous as those we are exposing our general ed students. This is the primary case for inclusion. There has always been this debate on whether we should create more self-contained classes or put them in the mainstream general education. That is why I believe so strongly about inclusion and give them a lot of support – class support, paraprofessional and providing professional development to our faculty that are working with special need students and ELL students. There is a lot of work behind this and it will take a couple of years of professional support to get there.

We need to take a good look at our math and science curriculum.

We had four HIB cases reported since the last Board meeting – two were confirmed and two were not.

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated that's for discussing the data. There are students that are not where they are supposed to be but we still have that 13% that is doing something right so it would be nice to highlight that one core that they are meeting. We still have a lot of work to do. We are meeting our standards. I would like you to highlight the negative and the positive in the district.

Ms. Santana stated happy you said something about inclusion and bringing ELL and special ed, involved in general education; that is where we even out the playing field. I appreciate that. We have a lot of work to do with curriculum and I'm here to support you. Our children need us to step up the game. I hope others on the Board that do know about it can speak to it and how the district directs us to give the kids what they need. With the HIB reports, we do have detention and Saturday detention, I invite you as the Superintendent to instruct our principals – what are we doing during this detention time. Are they just sitting there and reading books?

Mrs. Brens-Watson stated the issues with the curriculum, I want to acknowledge Mrs. Darby, she has been screaming about this for years. We heard it at last week's meeting. We had this conversation on why are we voting on this particular curriculum that is inadequate. I'm glad you are here and this is what you are going to change. We have had this low standard in terms of curriculum that needs to change.

Dr. Taylor stated we are only as good as the people who we bring in to help us. Between my two Assistants and the new Directors of Curriculum, I'm really feeling good. Dr. Perez does have a lot of things to show. In Friday's Superintendent report, you will see some of that work she is doing. She is identifying. She has drilled deep into the differences between our schools. She even has a list of the afterschool programs that are being offered at each different school. Dr. Perez and the two Directors have been having hours of conversations about curriculum.

Mrs. Brens-Watson stated we have members on this Board that understands this better than others. Dr. Taylor stated we have four.

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. *Agenda item reported on February 8, 2022 worksession (Report of HIB January 19-February 8, 2022)*

E-1A. AFFIRM SUPERINTENDENT'S DETERMINATION OF HIB

Affirm the Superintendent's determination of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the periods January 19, 2022 to February 8, 2022, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

E-1-1. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT OF HIB

Superintendent's Report of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) for the period February 8, 2022 to February 15, 2022, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes (*no vote required; for reporting purposes only*).

E-2. APPROVE CURRICULUM

Approve the following curriculum, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes:

1. Computer Literacy – Grade K
2. Computer Literacy – Grade 1
3. Computer Literacy – Grade 2
4. Computer Literacy – Grade 3
5. Computer Literacy – Grade 4
6. Computer Literacy – Grade 5
7. Computer Literacy – Grade 6
8. Computer Literacy – Grade 7
9. Computer Literacy – Grade 8
10. Gifted & Talented – Grade K
11. Gifted & Talented – Grade 1
12. Gifted & Talented – Grade 2
13. Gifted & Talented – Grade 3
14. Gifted & Talented – Grade 4
15. Gifted & Talented – Grade 5

E-3. APPROVE LOCATIONS FOR EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR

Approve Hannah Caldwell Elementary School (July 2022) and Hamilton Building (June 27, 2022-August 31, 2022) for Extended School Year Program (ESY), ESY services, CST testing and/or home instruction.

E-4. APPROVE SCHOOL CALENDARS

Approve school calendars for years 2022-2023, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

E-5. APPROVE STUDENT SAFETY DATA SYSTEM REPORT

Approve the Student Safety Data System Report (formerly Violence and Vandalism Report) (SSDS) for period one (September 1-December 31, 2021) of the 2021-2022 school year, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: Mrs. Regis-Darby (E-2)

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Fiscal and Planning Committee Resolutions:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolutions were moved by Mr. O’Shea, seconded by Mrs. Minneci, for adoption:

F-1. TREASURER’S REPORT

That the Treasurer’s Report dated January 31, 2022 be accepted.

F-2. SECRETARY’S REPORT

That the Secretary’s Report dated January 31, 2022 be accepted.

F-3. CERTIFY TREASURER’S AND SECRETARY’S REPORT

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23-2.11(a), I certify that as of January 31, 2022 no budgetary line item account has obligations and payments (contractual orders) which in total exceed the amount appropriated by the district Board of education pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:22-8 and 18:22-8.1.

/s/ Yolanda Koon
Yolanda Koon, Board Secretary

Dated

Pursuant to N.J.A.C.6A:23-2.2(h), we certify that as of January 31, 2022 after review of the secretary’s monthly financial report (appropriations section) and upon consultation with the appropriate district officials that to the best of our knowledge no major account or fund has been over-expended in violation of N.J.A.C. 6A:23-2.2(d)3 and that sufficient funds are available to meet the district’s financial obligations for the remainder of the fiscal year. This certification is solely based on the information provided by the School Business Administrator and Board Secretary and is assumed by the Board to be correct.

F-4. APPROVE APPROPRIATION TRANSFERS

Approve appropriation transfers in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

F-5. APPROVE LIST OF CONTRACTS/PURCHASE ORDERS

Approve the attached list of contracts and/or purchase orders pursuant to the requirements of N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-5 (bid exceptions to requirement for advertising) and 18A:18A-10(a) (purchase through State agency; procedure), in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

F-6. APPROVE DISTRICT WIDE TRAVEL AND RELATED EXPENSES

Approve district wide travel and related expenses pursuant to the requirements of N.J.S.A. 18A:11-12, N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-7 and Board Policy File Code 6471 and in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

F-7. PRE-APPROVE DISTRICTWIDE STUDENT FIELD TRIPS

Pre-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.

F-8. APPROVE LIST OF 2021-2022 STATE CONTRACT VENDORS

Approve the amended list of the 2021-2022 State Contract Vendors pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-10(a) (purchase through State agency; procedure) to facilitate schools' purchasing, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

F-9. APPROVED LIST OF CONTRACTS/PURCHASES (STUDENT ACTIVITY)

Approve the attached list of contracts and/or purchases pursuant to the requirements of N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-5(21) (paid by funds raised by or collected by students), in accordance with the information appended to the minutes:

School	Account/Department	Vendor/Description	Amount
Union High School	46/Key Club	NJ Key Club – Key Club district convention, registration and housing	\$5,114.00 (not to exceed)
Union High School	2033/Music/Marching Band	DeMoulin Brothers & Co. – pay invoice for flags received-fall of 2021	\$1,230.74
Union High School	2033/Music/Marching Band	Lone Star Percussion – purchase carts for marching band front ensemble	\$3,500.00 (not to exceed)
Union High School	2033/Music/Marching Band	Sweetwater – purchase electronics and carts	\$8,500.00 (not to exceed)
Kawameeh Middle School	17/Music	Music in the Parks – chorus students to attend competition in May	\$2,516.00
Union High School	1010/Athletics	UHS/SAA – to restore online deposit	\$1,500.00 (not to exceed)

F-10. APPROVE 2021-2022 OUT-OF-DISTRICT STUDENT PLACEMENT LIST

Approval be given to amend the 2021-2022 out-of-district student placement list, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

F-11. APPROVE FUNDRAISERS

Approve the following fundraisers, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes:

Event Name	Date	Purpose
Selling Chocolate	March 14-April 29, 2022	UHS/Softball – to raise funds to purchase items for softball program
Chipotle	March 16, 2022	UHS/Softball – to raise funds to purchase items for softball program
TGIF Restaurant	March 24, 2022	UHS/Softball – to raise funds to purchase items for softball program
T-Shirt Sale/Dance Event	April 1-May 30, 2022	UHS/Dance Club – to raise funds for donation to St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital and Team Campbell Foundation
Union Yearbook	February 15-April 1, 2022	UHS/Baseball – to raise funds for the baseball program
BSN Sports/clothing site	February 15-March 15, 2022	UHS/Baseball – to raise funds for baseball program
BSN Sports/Go Fund Me	March 8-May 1, 2022	UHS/Baseball – to raise funds for baseball program
Sponsor-a-Day Calendar	March 1-March 31, 2022	UHS/UHSPAC – to raise funds for UHSPAC spring production
Community Basketball Game	March 26, 2022	UHS/Senior Class – to raise funds for Senior Class of 2022
Pie-A-Staff Member	April 2022	UHS/Senior Class – to raise funds for Senior Class of 2022
Button Sale	March 1-March 31, 2022	UHS/National Art Honor Society – to raise funds for the NAHS and to celebrate Youth Art Month

F-12. ACCEPT DONATIONS

Accept the following donations, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes:

From	For Use By	\$/Item
Bottling Group LLC-FSV	Union High School	\$327.50
Lifetouch National School Studios	Union High School	\$61.35
American Water	Township of Union Board of Education	\$933.00
Lifetouch National School Studios	Hannah Caldwell Elementary School	\$573.57 \$2,147.95

F-13. APPROVE RESOLUTION/AGREEMENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION SERVICES – UCESC

Approve Resolution/Agreement for Participation in Coordinated Transportation Services with the Union County Educational Services Commission (UCESC) for the 2022-2023 school year, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

F-14. APPROVE TUITION RATES – UCVTS

Approve tuition rates with the Union County Vocational-Technical Schools (UCVTS) for the 2022-2023 school year, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

F-15. APPROVE TUITION RATES AND FEES – UCESC

Approve tuition rates and fees with the Union County Educational Services Commission (UCESC) for the 2022-2023 school year, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

F-16. APPROVE CONTRACT – COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Approve additional Service Contract with the State of New Jersey, Department of Human Services, Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, for educational services for students in the district for the 2021-2022 school year, in accordance with the non-public information appended to the minutes.

F-17. ACCEPT ANNUAL COMPREHENSIVE FINANCIAL REPORT AND MANAGEMENT REPORT

Accept the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (CAFR) and the Auditor's Management Report, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes (*auditors will present report to the public at the regular meeting on February 15, 2022*).

F-18. ACCEPT CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN (CAP)

Accept the Corrective Action Plan for Single Audit Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2021, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

F-19. APPROVE UPDATED BUDGET CALENDAR

Approve updated budget calendar, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

F-20. APPROVE INCREASE IN PURCHASE ORDER WITH TECHNOLOGY FOR EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION CONSULTING

Approve an increase to P.O. #22-00906 with Technology for Education and Communication Consulting Incorporated to provide the following evaluations for district students: assistive technology evaluations and augmentative communication evaluations for the 2021-2022 school year (from \$7,000.00 to \$20,000.00; additional funds are required to meet district student's needs) [Account #11-000-219-320-01-19].

F-21. *For informational purposes only – vote not required.* List of legal services for the 2021-2022 fiscal year, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

F-22. APPROVE INCREASE IN PURCHASE ORDER WITH PETER FALLON, ESQ.

Approve an increase to P.O. #22-00899 with Peter B. Fallon, Esq. to provide services for independent investigations of affirmative action complaints at an hourly rate of \$180 per hour (increase from \$5,000 to \$10,000; additional funds needed for legal fees for affirmative action investigations) for the 2021-2022 school year.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: Dr. Francis (F-17), Mrs. Regis-Darby (F-19)

MOTION CARRIED

Operations Committee Resolutions:

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

O-1. APPROVE SECURITY DRILL/BUS EVACUATION REPORTS

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:41-1 and P.L. 2009, Chapter 178, approve the following security drill and bus evacuation reports for the 2021-2022 school year, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

O-2. Agenda item approved on February 8, 2022 worksession (healthcare provider-AETNA)

O.3. APPROVE EI ASSOCIATES TO AMEND LRFP

Approve EI Associates to make a Major Amendment to the Long-Term Facility Plan (LRFP) and submit amendments for the district's LRFP to the New Jersey Department of Education; in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Personnel Committee Resolutions:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolutions were moved by Ms. McKenzie, seconded by Mrs. Brens-Watson, for adoption:

P-1A. *Agenda item approved on February 8, 2022 worksession (personnel – new hires)*

P-1A-1. PERSONNEL ACTIONS – NEW HIRES

Personnel Actions-New Hires be approved in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

P-1B PERSONNEL ACTIONS – EXTRA PAY

Personnel Actions-Extra Pay be approved in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

P-1C PERSONNEL ACTIONS – TRANSFERS

Personnel Actions- Transfers be approved in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

P-2. APPROVE SUBSTITUTE LISTS

Approve Substitute Lists for the 2021-2022 school year in accordance with the information in the hands of each Board.

P-3. ACCEPT LETTERS OF RESIGNATION/RETIREMENT

Accept letters of resignation/retirement from the following staff:

Name	Position	Location	Eff. Date	Reason	Notes-approvals are subject to contractual notice to be given accordingly
Gregory Pardo	Teacher	Jefferson	3/22/2022	Resignation	Adequate contractual notice given
Angela Rapke	10-month secretary	BMS	3/1/2022	Retirement	Resignation date accepted
Susan Strumpf	School psychologist	UHS	7/1/2022	Resignation	Adequate contractual notice given
Michelle Cayetano	School nurse	KMS	4/7/2022	Resignation	Adequate contractual notice given
Kathy DiGiovanni	Principal	Hannah Caldwell	4/1/2022	Retirement	Adequate contractual notice given
Mary Levant	P/T bus assistant	Transportation Department	2/28/2022	Retirement	Resignation date accepted

P-4. APPROVE LEAVES

Approve leaves for the following staff:

Name	Position	Location	Leave Dates	Leave Type	Notes
Theresa Brennan	Special education teacher	UHS	2/7/2022-3/24/2022; return date: 3/25/2022 (tentative)	Paid medical leave	
Tatiana Arrieta Ocasio	Art teacher	UHS	3/21/2022-10/24/2022	Paid child rearing leave followed by unpaid FMLA/NJFLA (concurrently)	FMLA/NJFLA (concurrently) not to exceed 12 weeks
Ruth Green	Paraprofessional	Battle Hill	Through 2/4/2022; return date: 2/5/2022	Extension of unpaid FMLA	FMLA not to exceed 12 weeks
Sharon Hrdina	Library media clerk	Connecticut Farms and Hannah Caldwell	12/14/2021-3/11/2022	Paid medical leave	FMLA/NJFLA (concurrently) not to exceed 12 weeks
Elise Iovine	Teacher	Livingston	1/19/2022-6/19/2022; return date: 6/20/2022	Paid child rearing leave followed by unpaid FMLA/NJFLA (concurrently)	FMLA/NJFLA (concurrently) not to exceed 12 weeks
Jennifer Parkhurst	School counselor	Connecticut Farms	Through 5/31/2022 Return date: 6/1/2022	Extension of unpaid non FMLA/non NJFLA child rearing leave	FMLA/NJFLA previously exhausted. Org. leave began 4/6/2021
Elena Patricco	Teacher	Livingston	3/28/2022-6/30/2022	Paid child rearing leave followed by unpaid FMLA/NJFLA (concurrently)	FMLA/NJFLA (concurrently) not to exceed 12 weeks
Jason Siderman	Special services teacher	UHS	Through 6/30/2022; Return date: 9/1/2022	Extension of unpaid non FMLA leave	FMLA previously exhausted. Org. leave began 9/17/2021
Laura Damato	Principal	Jefferson	1/31/2022-3/31/2022 Return date: 4/1/2022	Unpaid FMLA	FMLA not to exceed 12 weeks
Elizabeth Mulvaney	Special education teacher	UHS	2/1/2022-6/30/2022	Intermittent unpaid FMLA/NJFLA (concurrently)	FMLA/NJFLA (concurrently) not to exceed 12 weeks
Kimberly Osty	Vice Principal	UHS	2/1/2022-4/8/2022 Return Date: 4/11/2022	Paid medical leave	
Jeffrey Peins	IT engineer	IT Department	2/11/2022-3/16/2022	FMLA/NJFLA leave	FMLA/NJFLA (concurrently) not to exceed 12 weeks

Monica Roberts	School counselor	Livingston	Through 6/30/2023 Return date: 9/1/2023	Extension of unpaid non-FMLA/non-NJFLA child rearing leave	FMLA previously exhausted. Org. leave began 9/17/2021
Karen Wojcik	12-month secretary	Special Services/ Hamilton	Return date: 3/1/2022	Extension of paid medical leave	Org. leave began 3/1/2022

P-5. *Agenda item approved on February 8, 2022 worksession (student teachers/internships)*

P-5A. APPROVE STUDENT TEACHERS AND INTERNSHIPS

Approve student teachers and internships for the 2021-2022 school year, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

P-6. APPROVE JOB DESCRIPTION – TRANSITION COORDINATOR

Approve Job Description for Transition Coordinator, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

P-7. APPROVE UPDATED AFFIRMATIVE ACTION OFFICERS – 2021-2022

Approve updated Affirmative Action Officers for the 2021-2022 school year, at no cost to the district, as follows: Gerry Benaquista and Vincent Rettino, as Affirmative Action Officers; Lauren Walker as Assistant Affirmative Action Officer and Benjamin Kloc as Affirmative Action Officer for classroom practices.

P-8. APPROVE UPDATED 2021-2022 HOURLY RATES LIST

Approve updated 2021-2022 Hourly Rates List, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

P-9. APPROVE JOB DESCRIPTION – IT PHYSICAL SECURITY AND OPERATIONS TECHNICIAN

Approve Job Description for IT Physical Security and Operations Technician, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

P-10. APPROVE JOB DESCRIPTION – IT SECURITY PHYSICAL AND OPERATIONS MANAGER

Approve Job Description for IT Security Physical and Operations Manager, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: Mrs. Regis-Darby (P-1A-1)

MOTION CARRIED

Policy Committee:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and the Policy Committee, the following policies were moved by Ms. Santana, seconded by Mrs. Minneci, for adoption:

POL-1. BYLAW 0142 – BOARD MEMBER QUALIFICATIONS, PROHIBITED ACTS AND CODE OF ETHICS

Approve Bylaw 0142 – Board Member Qualifications, Prohibited Acts and Code of Ethics, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

POL-2. POLICY 3125 – EMPLOYMENT OF TEACHING STAFF MEMBERS

Approve Policy 3125 – Employment of Teaching Staff Members, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

POL-3. POLICY 8420 – EMERGENCY AND CRISIS SITUATIONS

Approve Policy 8420 – Emergency and Crisis Situations, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: Dr. Francis (POL-1), Mrs. Regis-Darby (POL-1)

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Residency Committee Resolutions:

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

R-1. APPROVE LIST OF STUDENTS REMOVED FROM ROLLS

Approval be given to amend the list of students removed from the rolls [two (2) students exited the month of January 2022 (2 from elementary) or a total of twenty-one (21) students for the 2021-2022 school year] who are not domiciled in this school district, in accordance with the non-public information appended to the minutes.

R-2. APPROVE TO REMOVE STUDENT

Approval to remove student #308119 from the attendance rolls as the student has been determined to be ineligible to attend the Township of Union Public Schools as a resident student.

R-3. APPROVE TO REMOVE STUDENT

Approval to remove student #300071 from the attendance rolls as the student has been determined to be ineligible to attend the Township of Union Public Schools as a resident student.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Approval of Bills:

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and moved by Ms. McKenzie, seconded by Mrs. Scott-Hayden, that the Board concur with the bills listed in the permanent bound register appended to these minutes and be ordered for payment.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Unfinished Business:

Mrs. Regis-Darby stated thank you to the attorneys for the answers to my questions; two cases and I’m going to send it to Dr. Taylor and ask he send to the attorney to look at it.

Dr. Francis stated a parent has been coming to our meeting every month – what is the status of the policy for transportation for a road that may be considered hazardous. We need to do our job as Board members with the Superintendent and maybe the Town and address this. Ms. Santana stated as Chair for the Policy Committee, nothing is falling on deaf ears; we are working on it and please allow me to do the work on my part. Mrs. Regis-Darby stated please look at paragraphs #2 and 3 of that policy – there is language from front door to school building or nearest entrance. Ms. Santana stated thank you for that information. We did discuss that in our meeting.

I heard about the delays on the gym floor at the high school. Dr. Taylor stated Mrs. Koon and I were both there and I was angry and frustrated and now in action mode. The floors were demolished and the supplier provided warped floors. Mr. Loessel did bring in the vendor. Mrs. Koon stated the wood was defective. The company was called and they owned up to it and pulled all the wood up. Company will absorb the cost. Mrs. Santana asked what is the timeframe? Dr. Taylor stated we do know the floors won’t be done by spring.

Dr. Francis stated keep in mind previous graduations have been in the gym. Dr. Taylor stated Ms. Ionta has had to reschedule games.

New Business:

Mrs. Minneci stated I am following Ms. Nunes – so many wonderful things are happening and congratulations to our kids – in elementary, high school – programs and sports. Look at our social media platform to see all the great things going on.

Mrs. Williams stated we will be walking on a resolution.

Moved by Mrs. Williams, seconded by Mrs. Scott-Hayden, that the following resolution be adopted:

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE REINSTATEMENT OF STUDENT

Approve to reinstate Student No. 256574 to the general education program under the terms and conditions established by the Superintendent, on or before February 28, 2022.

DISCUSSION:

None

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Dr. Taylor stated there is someone in this room that is solely responsible for social media and that is Ms. Nunes. Great job, thank you.

Comments from the Public:

Brenda Rivera stated I want this Board to know how frustrating it is to come here since September. I think I stated in everyway possible how much my family needs this. It was approved years ago. My older kids benefitted from it. We are in the midst of a pandemic; no parent is going to give my kid a ride. My younger daughter has always walked to school – Washington, Kawameeh. It is impossible for my daughter to walk from five-points – it is not safe. We have had to make work arrangements. We leave early 2-3 times a week. I had to get an attorney to write a letter to this Board. Maybe hearing it from a legal expert for this Board to pay attention to my request. I feel there is a lack of regard. I’m not getting an email or call, nothing from this Board and it is very frustrating. We are lucky to have jobs. I have to come to this Board for a bus pass. I am not asking you to create a new route for my daughter. I’m just asking for an empty seat. They have walked two blocks to get a bus that is near my home. It is not going to cost you anything. We shouldn’t be here six months later asking for something that my family has been granted. I sure hope to hear from this Board. This is urgent and serious. At this point I don’t care what the district does, I feel that the Board has done so little to pay attention to my request. It is hard to see anything positive. This Board has done little. I hope to hear from you soon.

Mrs. Brens-Watson stated it is not that we are not listening; as a parent we hear you – the system is slow. I cannot respond directly to your emails and tell you what I think should happen.

Ms. Santana stated as the Policy Chair, it falls on my lap and I hear you, I see you and I understand your frustration and the lack of process.

Mrs. Williams stated we do care and we are listening.

Monica (via Zoom) stated a parent here in Union and I do support mask optional choice. I'm here in solidarity for the mask optional choice for kids in school. My kids were so disappointed to hear that our Town wanted to send out a survey when surrounding towns like Springfield, Millburn, Kenilworth and many others that our friends and family reside in decided optional in March. To have these kids wait so long to know, with the possibility of "no" as an answer, while others rejoice is further hurt and psychological stress on these children. We all remember the joys of school days that we had. Let's allow them that same joy and freedom to experience that without them being yelled out to pull their masks up. They get to do recess, gym, lunch, sports, after school programs with no masks. I ask to please work together to make the full school and classrooms mask optional. I have three kids in three schools in Union. I have lived here for 16 years. Each with their own experiences. As one son intelligently put it, the masks were the first line of defense and seeing the full effects of masks on their babies – here are the ABCs of what we are seeing – A is for anxiety, B is breathing difficulties, C is for connection or lack thereof. I urge to search it and watch it – Quinn from Middletown. Elementary grade child hysterically crying, her mom recorded "What's wrong?" – "I could not hear my friend" she said, "I could not understand what she was saying, she couldn't hear me with the wall up mama – I have headaches every day". E is for eczema – which my daughter is currently suffering – a patch on her face where the mask is. F is fungal infection – my son at 5 years old suffered around his mouth. I had to keep him home for a week so it would air out and heal. These are just a few of the painful examples. The one that broke me the most was yesterday, my daughter came home to tell me – there was a kid at school that had to go to the nurse – he never takes his mask off, at lunch he shoves his food under his mask. These kids are strong but they are not o.k. Let's work together for mask optional. Thank you.

Dr. Taylor stated I know some people are concerned about the survey. I want to make it clear to the Board – the reason for the survey – it was to get a pulse on what the community feels. Newark has already declared that they will require masks and there are other towns with mandatory mask wearing. I want to know what we as a community wants. That is one piece of several pieces the district needs to consider make a decision. I need to consult with the Board, consult with the Department of Health. What impacted me was this testimony and that the timing should be accelerated. I am willing to consider working faster on the decision. February 28th is my target date but I'm willing to work faster. A lot of things are going into this decision making. I will tell you I have 3300 responses to the survey and it is pretty split down the middle about mask wearing. There are people in this community who will be upset no matter what decision the district makes. I have to make an informed decision. I will heed your concern and move faster.

Susan Lipstein (via Zoom) stated as president of the Education Foundation – reminder that grant applications are due March 15th and thanks to the community for their support for the past fundraiser at Cozi Corner. Personally, I received information this week about the passing of Sadel Hersh. She was a long-time Union resident and passed away on February 1st at the age of 90. I met her 20 years ago when I was asked by members of the League of Voters to help them work on a program called “Kids Voting”. It was approved by the Board and the Township of Union. Students would go to the polls with their parents to vote. There was a separate table for students so they could cast votes. It was a very positive experience for the kids and the way for students to learn early on the importance of voting and being an educated voter. Good things don’t last forever. The program has not be in effect in quite a few years. She was the president of the Union Women’s League of Voters and she always believed in the importance of an educated and informed voter. As we look at curriculum and our Town, these are important things to think about for our children and making sure everyone in our community gets the information they need for candidates for election.

Cathy Jakositz read the following statement:

“This is a carbon dioxide meter. It is set to go off at 900 moderate air quality level which can cause mild respiration.

Only 13 states have mask mandates. 37 states have their students and staff living with COVID and their numbers of cases are not increasing. So science appears to be working in those states and their children are living as children should, without fear. Fortunately, I do not live in fear because I have faith and comfort in God and the peace that comes with it. I believe our children deserve to have peace and comfort as well.

Masks do not prevent viral transmission of the covid virus. M95 masks are designed to screen out 95% of particles that are 0.3 microns or larger – covid is 0.1 microns in size which renders them ineffective. Not only is it not helping, masks are harming us. It is increasing CO2 levels and decreasing oxygen levels, which increases inflammation and illness. Decreased oxygen levels can inhibit the CD4 T cell (lymphocytes) which can lead to infection. The increased use of masks leads to headaches, I personally can attest to this along with my students routinely stating that they cannot concentrate since they have a headache. Masking is causing psychological harm which affects social skills. There has been an increase in speech delay in children; one therapist stated that she has seen a 364% increase in referrals from doctors and parents, commenting that it is very important for children to see your face and watch your mouth. Numbers in the Autistic population are finding Autism symptoms skyrocketing according to speech therapists, not only in children with Autism but also children who are not on the spectrum since they are not making any word attempts and not communicating with their families due to the faces being covered by masks. Speech therapists have coined the term, covid delayed due to face coverings being the primary cause of children’s speaking skills being seriously impaired.

Researchers at Brown University found that mean IQ scores of young children have tumbled as much as 22 points since the mandates, as well as verbal, motor and cognitive performance have all suffered as a result from face masks and children being kept away from others. Educational expert Zak Ringelstein, a PhD in education from Columbia and founder of an educational and development program for helping children-deemed that forcing children to wear face masks was causing psychological trauma. Ringelstein went on to state that ‘masks and social distancing induce trauma and trauma at a young age is developmentally dangerous, especially for children who are experiencing trauma in other parts of their lives’. Neurological research demonstrated that kids who experience this type of fear and trauma at a young age undergo structural and functional restructuring of their brain’s prefrontal cortex, resulting in emotional and cognitive processing problems. Ben Franklin said, ‘Those who prefer safety to freedom deserve neither’.”

Joseph Ippolito read the following statement:

“Tonight, I would like to speak regarding Governor Murphy's most recent decision to lift mask mandates, effective March 7th of this year.

Eleven years ago, my wife and I sat in a hospital room waiting for the birth of our first son. We were so delighted that we decided to meet in a similar hospital room almost three years later to see our second son be born. And, since three times is a charm, we set another meeting date in a similar hospital room almost seven years later, where we welcomed our third.

Each time my wife Anna and I experienced the birth of each blessing, we both realized and understood that from those days forward, taking care of each of our boys would remain the number one priority, regardless of the circumstances.

Over the past couple of years, my family has sat quietly and respectfully, following these tyrannical medical mandates that have proven to do nothing- although deaths and cases have thankfully declined- we are still told that our children MAY still have to wear these masks. For those that disagree with this, it sure does not sound as if our children are being granted the right of the pursuit of happiness.

I have waited too long- I will not sit while my children remain masked, constantly breathing germs and bacteria that have formed inside the masks, for most of seven hours, five days a week. I refuse to sit while my children remain masked in an establishment that is supposed to teach the students about freedom, not strip them of it at such a young age. I will not sit and wait for another checkpoint and hope that another opportunity arises when WE can vote on whether my children have to wear masks. No offense, but you do not have the right to tell me what to do in terms of my childrens' health. Similarly, I have no

right to vote, instruct, or criticize you about the health of your children and choices you make about it.

That two weeks to flatten the curve is long gone and we know how that science went. It is time for me to stand up and speak for the mouths that have been covered for nearly two years. Are we trusting the science or what? Are we allowed to question science? How is Union's science different from nearby school districts? We have followed the governor this far, why do we question his choice now?

Look, I understand that people are still scared, and that's ok- but understand this, my friends- just because you agree with the mask mandate, does not mean that you are choosing for your children to wear them- the mandates have TOLD you how to handle the health of your children. Choosing only exists if choices are an option.

This is a virus and like others it cannot be cured. When I have taken my children to the doctor in the past and a virus has been determined to be the cause of illness, all we could do as parents was let the virus run its course for 7 to 9 days while hydrating.

Currently, there are available treatments, vaccines, and therapeutics to assist in the effort against this weakening, yet, incurable virus. When speaking to people with differing opinions, most agree that we are in a better position to move forward, now that the fear factor has been removed for most.

My wife did not endure over two years of pregnancy, days of painful labor, and weeks of childbirth recovery, while still making sure everything else in the house went smoothly- just to have other people take a survey and make medical decisions for OUR children. I have changed too many diapers and applied too many band aids to sit idle at this time. None of you will be there that next time my wife and I will have to make a medical decision about OUR children. Why is this case different?

Today, I stand up for not only those that oppose our children wearing masks, but for the rights and freedom of choice, when it comes to the health of all children within the district.

If we are so concerned about the social emotional well being of our children, let's take this opportunity to help them.

I thank you for your time.”

Dianna Canton read the following statement:

“Last week Governor Murphy announced that the Executive Order requiring masks to be worn in school will expire on March 7th. This is a huge step in the right direction towards normalcy for our kids.

As my colleague Cathy has just cited in her speech, it has always been a known and proven fact that masks are ineffective against viruses. Cloth and surgical masks that all of us have been wearing on a daily basis DO NOT protect us.

The physical and physiological damage has already been done to ourselves and to our children. I have personally seen many people develop chronic headaches, rises in blood pressure, breathing problems, asthma issues, etc... All due to the masks. Enough is enough!

Thankfully, most school districts in the state of NJ are already moving towards eliminating the mask mandate. They understand how masks are affecting us all and are swiftly making the right decision. I have a growing list in front of me showing 171 school districts in the state of NJ that have already publicly announced their decision on this matter. Out of those 171 school districts, 166 of them stated that wearing masks will now be optional.

I am here today imploring you to please consider making masks optional for Union and become the 167th district to get on board! It should be up the individual to make the best choice for themselves and their children!”

Ms. Santana stated we hear you, we have work to do and thank you for your comments.

Lydia Franco (via Zoom) stated I have an alternative view on the mask mandate. I am grateful to hear and encouraged that Dr. Taylor is taking a rationale, thoughtful and informed approach in making his decision relating to the mask mandate. There really isn't a reason to make a decision in a hurry. You have heard from some folks with their personal experience and I can also share my own. We have been supporters of masks for our family. Our children have not had any problems wearing a mask nor their friends. My children are not miserable or having difficulty with health issues or doing well in school. I just want to say their different experiences and as Dr. Taylor said there is a 50/50 split. I think it is important to listen to alternative views and the Town. Survey families for their consensus. I do think it is important that we look at masks as a health issue and not a political issue. Thank you.

MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Mrs. Brens-Watson, that the Board go into Executive Session at 9:45 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: ongoing litigation.

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, Mr. O'Shea,
Mrs. Regis-Darby, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

The Board returned to public session at 10:46 p.m.

Mr. O'Shea left meeting at 10:28 p.m. (during executive session).

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Dr. Francis, seconded by Mrs. Brens-Watson, that the meeting be adjourned at 10:49 p.m.

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

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

YOLANDA KOON
BOARD SECRETARY

