

UNION TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION
WORKSESSION MINUTES – APRIL 8 , 2014

Meeting held at James M. Caulfield Administration Building, 2369 Morris Avenue, Union, New Jersey at 7:00 p.m. on March 11, 2014.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL: Mr. David Arminio, Ms. Susana Cooley, Mr. Richard Galante, Ms. Lois Jackson, Mr. Thomas Layden, Mr. Vito Nufrio, Mr. Francis Perkins, President, and Mr. Angel Salcedo

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL: Dr. Guy Francis

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

Mr. Layden 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.

DR. FRANCIS ENTERED THE MEETING AT 7:05 P.M.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Perkins said that the minutes will be considered for adoption at the regular meeting. He asked that the board review the minutes and if there are any changes, alterations or corrections they should be made known before the meeting.

COMMUNICATION:

Mr. Damato said that all communication was reviewed and directed to the appropriate committee for action.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Martin said that this past weekend, the National JROTC Championships took place in Louisville, Kentucky and the Union High School JROTC students received first place honors in the Arms Drill category. He said the high school JROTC students had received the second place national trophy twice before but this year they took top honors in the nation. Dr. Martin said that there are 1750 schools throughout the United States that offer a JROTC program and the top 40 of these schools sent students to compete in last weekend's championships. He

said that this was an outstanding accomplishment; he congratulated Colonel Jose Torres and 1st Sergeant Gerald Schmiel and the Union High School JROTC students who performed so well.

Dr. Martin said that during the past two weekends, Union High School Performing Arts Company presented Miss Saigon. He said that those who saw the production know that it was spectacular and continued the Union High School PAC's tradition of excellence. Dr. Martin congratulated Assistant Musical Director Melissa Abate, Choreographer Jennifer Williams, Musical Directors James Moser and Laura Muller and Director James Moser. He said that the students did a wonderful job and he wrote a letter to them on behalf of himself and the board of education congratulating them.

Dr. Martin said that the Community Service Program at Union High School is having a busy spring. He said that this is a program that was brought into existence last year by the Board of Education and is continuing to do great things. Dr. Martin received a letter from Ms. Brady, one of the teachers at Union High School who spearheads events for Community Service which stated: *"We ran the March into Fitness Program again at Club Metro. Students paid \$5 and participated in a Boot Camp Workout. We were able to raise \$400 for the recipient of the "Taste of Union" benefit."* Dr. Martin said that Ms. Brady went on to say: *"Student Council ran a dodge ball tournament that helped raise money for a Union High School Alumnus who had suffered a traumatic brain injury. The students wore green to support the cause and earned Community Service hours. We were able to raise about \$1,200 and the family was incredibly appreciative. Students helped serve at Applebee's which was another fundraiser for the "Taste of Union" recipient. The students helped during the Resource Fair at the high school. They entertained the younger children, playing with them and giving them 'fake' tattoos. We were able to invite Ken Daneko, a retired New Jersey Devil, to the high school to talk about his struggles with alcohol. Students who paid a dollar were able to write Mr. Daneko a 'thank you' letter. All of the money that was raised went to the D.A.R.E. program. Students helped volunteer at the PTA Tricky Tray at the Westwood in Garwood. They were recognized with certificates for their hard work and finally, at the student-faculty basketball game, students paid \$1 to purchase an "arms length" of tape to see if they could tape security officer Johnny to the wall. We raised about \$400 which was donated to Races for Faces and Ron Lateiner's grandson who suffered facial deformity."* Dr. Martin congratulated Johnny Desrosiers, security guard at the high school, for doing that.

Dr. Martin said that in the community service events that he just spoke about, the Resource Fair was mentioned. He wanted to recognize Nicole Ahern who is the Supervisor of Guidance for organizing the event for the second year in a row.

Dr. Martin said that also in the community service events, the PTA Tricky Tray at the Westwood was mentioned. He wanted to thank the Union High School PTA for once again organizing this fundraiser; it is an annual event that is always very successful. Dr. Martin said that all of the proceeds from this event come back to the high school students in the form of scholarships.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON RESOLUTIONS ON THE AGENDA

Mr. Perkins said that the board would entertain comments from the public on resolutions upon which action is to be taken this evening. The resolutions are F-8, F-15, O-4, O-5, O-6, O-7, O-8, O-9, P-1 and P-2. There were no comments from the public regarding these resolutions.

EDUCATION/STUDENT DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE

Dr. Francis stated that the committee met earlier in the evening. He reviewed the first six items listed on the agenda and asked Mr. Arminio to review E-7 which has to do with the 2014-2015 school.

Mr. Arminio said that there were three possible calendars for the next school included in the backup for resolution E-7. He said that Draft 1 has three imbedded snow days to be utilized throughout the school year without affecting the end of year dismissal until reaching day four; at that time days would have to be added to the school year. Mr. Arminio said that in addition, the district would add in five professional days as half days of school for students and full days for the faculty. He said that one full day of professional development still remains on the calendar in order to meet the contractual obligation of fifteen (15) hours of professional development for the school year. Mr. Arminio said that any snow day not utilized during the school year would be added to the Memorial Day weekend.

Mr. Arminio said that the difference between Draft 1 and Draft 2 and 3 is that in Draft 1 school would be open on Election Day and there would be a full day of school on that day. He said that Draft 2 follows the same design as Draft 1 with the exception that schools would be closed on Election Day for all students and faculty. Mr. Arminio said that the reason for the school closing is prompted by the concerns with security during an election day. He said that in many schools, classrooms are used by the public for voting and the amount of people entering the school is heavy on the November election day. Mr. Arminio said that Mr. Ardito submitted a letter listing seven reasons why it would not be a good idea to open school on Election Day. He said that Draft 2 follows the same design as Draft 1 but any snow day not utilized during the school year will be added to the Memorial

Day weekend. Mr. Arminio said that the schedule is listed on the bottom of Draft 2. He said that Draft 3 is exactly the same schedule as Draft 2 (meaning that students are off on Election Day in November) with the exception of the use of unused school days from the school year will be used as follows: Day 1, moving the dismissal date of June 22 to June 19. Mr. Arminio said that if the district has the possibility, graduation would be moved to June 19th, a Friday, which would be better than having graduation on June 22nd, a Monday. He said that the two remaining days would be adjusted around the Memorial Day weekend. Mr. Arminio thought that Draft 3 made the most sense out of the three possibilities. He said that the board had between now and April 29th to look over the three drafts to decide which one they thought was best.

Mr. Perkins asked if there was a recommendation from the administration as to which draft was preferred. Mr. Arminio said that there have been no official recommendations. Mr. Perkins thought that whatever suited everyone involved was okay with him.

Mr. Damato said that the calendar which incorporated Election Day as a regular school day is a problem for district security. He said that there are people going in and out of the building and that is really why school is has been closed for the past few years. Mr. Damato said that having the students in the buildings creates a problem in controlling the flow of people coming in and out of the schools they way it would like. Mr. Arminio said that Mr. Ardito did specify that as one of the reasons in the letter which he submitted.

Mr. Nufrio said that he pointed out at the last meeting that ultimately all recommendations should come from the Superintendent but he thought that other administrators should have input as well. He said that before the board tried to "hammer out" the schedule, he thought that Dr. Martin would be better advised to speak with the staff, central and building administrators for a consensus to make a final decision. Dr. Martin said that he would be happy to do that and contact the board to let them know where the administration stands on the calendars.

DISCUSSION ITEM:

Fundraising on Edison School – Mrs. Moses, Principal of Connecticut Farms School – Mr. Nufrio said that the item was placed on the agenda after speaking with Mr. Damato and Mr. Perkins. He said that on Thursday evening he and Dr. Francis attended an educational forum at Jefferson School. Mr. Nufrio said that Mrs. Moses was also in attendance and he spoke to her about sensitivity of children, etc. because basically the forum had to do with what district's do to address the Amistad Law and to promote sensitivity with children. He said that he also commented on how children can easily be traumatized with certain events and

he indicated that his niece, who is a teacher, teaches in the Edison school that was destroyed by fire a few weeks ago. Mr. Nufrio said that the trauma that the students at that school and staff have experienced is a mess. He said that Mrs. Moses indicated that she was concluding a fundraiser for the same purpose. Mr. Nufrio said he was glad that Mrs. Moses was doing this as he had heard other districts in the state had done something. He complimented Mrs. Moses for bringing this issue to her students. Mr. Nufrio asked Mrs. Moses to go into more detail of what the students at Connecticut Farms School did.

Mrs. Moses said that schools are held accountable for more than just scores in language arts, math and science. She said that students are seeing many social changes in society such as natural disasters, extreme weather, social threats, a lack of respect and tolerance for others, family arrangements and residential stability, to name a few. Mrs. Moses said that some of the changes in society have serious impact on students learning, academically, socially and emotionally. She said as an educator, she tries very hard to respond in effective ways to help children deal with these issues or with the concerns that they have about some of the issues in society.

Mrs. Moses said that when she heard about the fire in James Monroe School in Edison the first thing that came to her mind that the school was like a home for its students and staff because of the amount of time spent at school. She said that as an administrator, she does speak with many parents who ask her to speak to their child about their behavior at home because they behave well at school and she does communicate with parents about these issues.

Mrs. Moses said that at the Principal's meeting with Dr. Martin, Dr. Lishak and Mr. Tatum, Mr. Hoyt asked what the district was going to do for the Edison school that was destroyed. She said that everyone agreed that something had to be done. Mrs. Moses said that a "pajama day" was brought up and she thought that this would be a good idea. She said that, with the understanding that all of the schools would be doing this, there was "Pajama Day" at Connecticut Farms School and the students were very excited about this. Mrs. Moses said that the students did understand that they should care about their community and how important education is for children. She said that her school collected \$1,372. Mrs. Moses said that this fundraiser encouraged all children to be more caring and as an educator she strongly believed it was her duty to help to ensure that children grow up to be caring adults and productive citizens. She said that this fundraising event had relevance for the students.

Mr. Perkins said that he was sure Mrs. Moses was aware of the effort in the district to promote service and it has become a requirement for students to complete 20 hours of community service in order to graduate. He said that this is clearly the kind of thing that the district want to inculcate as part of the

community, that Union is a place where people care about their neighbors and people who are in need; he said that this activity fits perfectly into that and it is an admirable effort. Mr. Perkins said that the children from Edison are no less traumatized than students of any other school that is suddenly taken away in a natural disaster such as a hurricane. He said that the tragedy in Edison was caused by someone who otherwise cared about the students, with a careless cigarette.

Mr. Nufrio thanked Mrs. Moses for bringing this to the full board. He said that he was mindful that any action taken by the district must be approved by the board. Mr. Nufrio said that he asked Mrs. Moses if she would take the "point" on anything that the district does.

Mr. Nufrio said that the students from James Monroe Elementary School are presently being housed at the Middlesex County College and they are "sardined" because there is only so much space that the college can spare. He said that Edison Board of Education was trying to work out some arrangement with St. Cecilia's parish but that seems to be waning because the school building requires extensive repairs which would bring the rental fee to a ridiculous amount. Mr. Nufrio said that Edison is looking at a tunnel with a very small "light" at the end of it and anything that has been received, will receive or will continue to receive will go for a good effort.

Dr. Francis asked what would happen if something like this happened in Union; he asked if the district had insurance on the schools. Mr. Damato said that all schools are insured for the "replacement" cost value and contents. He said that the biggest problem would be to figure out a place where the students could be moved to if the district loss the use of a school building for any length of time. Mr. Damato said that there was no insurance for that. He said that there was some talk when the board discussed evacuation sites, the district has located areas where students can be moved to temporarily but that does not work for extended periods of time. Mr. Damato said that Dr. Lishak and Dr. Martin have been working on the alternatives.

Mr. Perkins asked Mrs. Moses where the money collected would be going? Mrs. Moses said that she had her secretary call the Superintendent's Office in Edison and she asked if the district was in need of items such as paper, pencils, books, etc. Mrs. Moses said that she was advised that Edison does not have any room to store any more supplies. She said that the Superintendent's Office was questioned what about funding? Mrs. Moses said that she was advised that funds could always be put to good use. She said that it was decided that \$3 would be

collected from each child and they would be allowed to wear their pajamas to school for one day. Mrs. Moses said that any money must be sent to the Edison Board of Education and she was going to speak to Mr. Vieira to see what the best way to do that would be.

Mr. Perkins asked what other principals have said or done in connection with this fundraising effort. Mrs. Moses said that every principal is doing some type of fundraiser in their school to support the cause. Mr. Nufrio said that other districts have already made donations to Edison but any donations sent should be forwarded to the Edison Board of Education and so that the money does not somehow get redirected somewhere else.

Mr. Layden said he wanted to commend Mrs. Moses for this fine undertaking. He said that it sets a great example for the students in Union as far as caring for others. Mr. Layden said that the district was truly fortunate to have a principal such as Mrs. Moses in the school district.

FISCAL AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Moved by Ms. Jackson, seconded by Mr. Salcedo that resolutions F-8 and F-15 be adopted:

F-8. PRE-APPROVE DISTRICTWIDE STUDENT FIELD TRIP DESTINATIONS AND PURPOSES

That the Board 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 these minutes.

F-15 APPROVE SUBMISSION OF GRANT APPLICATION – 2014 SAFETY GRANT PROGRAM – NEW JERSEY SCHOOLS INSURANCE GROUP ERIC NORTH SUBFUND

That the board approves the submission of grant application for the 2014 Safety Grant Program through the New Jersey Schools Insurance Group's ERIC NORTH sub fund for the purposes described in the application in the amount of \$43,711 for the period July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Arminio asked Mr. Damato to explain what ERIC NORTH was. Mr. Damato said that the district buys its workers' compensation insurance through ERIC NORTH which is run by the New Jersey Schools Insurance Group. He said that it is a pool of school districts that get together to purchase insurance; he said that by pooling together, the districts get a better rate on their insurance in certain categories. Mr. Damato said that ERIC NORTH has done extremely well over the last ten years and they have extended grants to the districts who

participate in this sub fund. He said that the district has gotten similar grants in the past but this is the largest amount so far. Mr. Damato said that the funds can only be used for safety and security purposes and it requires no match from the local district. He said that he had a conversation with Dr. Lishak and she has developed the purposes for the grant; Mr. Vieira put together the budget and he will be completing the grant application. Mr. Damato said that he did not want to expound on the exact uses of the funds in public because they are security measures designed to protect students.

AYE: Mr. Arminio, Ms. Cooley, Dr. Francis, Mr. Galante, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Layden, Mr. Nufrio, Mr. Salcedo and Mr. Perkins
 NAY: None
 ABSTAIN: None

MOTION WAS CARRIED

Ms. Jackson went through the other fiscal resolutions which would be voted on at the regular meeting.

Mr. Perkins asked Mr. Damato to speak about the Margaret Fekete Fund. Mr. Damato said that he was contacted about fifteen (15) years ago by an attorney from Red Bank who said that he had a client who had lots of money and she wanted to leave it to the Union Board of Education. He said that the attorney drew up a trust. Mr. Damato said that in the trust, Ms. Fekete left the income from the trust to her two brothers, who were in nursing homes at the time. He said that in the years after Ms. Fekete died, both of her brothers also died. Mr. Damato said that the Union Board of Education is now the beneficiary of the Trust which is being held in Wells Fargo Bank. He said that the corpus of the Trust is about \$1.3 million and the district will be getting the income from the Trust forever. Mr. Damato said that the district will be giving out scholarships based upon the income of the trust in perpetuity. He said that for the first year there will be two (2) four-year scholarships awarded in the amount of \$5,000 per year given to two students who will be pursuing a degree or matriculate toward a degree in education and become teachers. Mr. Damato said that probably next year the amount of the scholarship will be \$6,000 or \$7,000. He said that this is a tremendous opportunity for a student. Mr. Damato said that a tribute needs to go out to Margaret Fekete. He said that he has been trying to get information about Ms. Fekete and all he really knows about her is that she was a teacher in the Union School System for a long period of time and the only thing that Ms. Fekete wanted when her attorney first contacted him was that the district send her periodic letters about what was going on in Union, which he did do. Mr. Damato said that whoever is the recipient of this scholarship is extremely fortunate to get that type of scholarship.

Mr. Arminio asked if the committee has set up criteria for the receipt of the scholarship. Mr. Damato said that the only thing that he communicated to the high school was what the intent of the Trust was; in other words, the scholarship had to be awarded to a student who would be matriculating toward a degree in education to become a teacher and the student had to get their degree in four years. He said that this is in the terms of the trust. Mr. Damato said that there must be two scholarships awarded every year. He said that a committee at the high school chose the recipients. Mr. Nufrio asked if the amount was stipulated by Ms. Fekete. Mr. Damato said that the amount is based upon the income of the Trust. Mr. Nufrio asked if there was supposed to be an additional amount added to the Trust. Mr. Damato said that the additional amount, which was about \$300,000 was added. He said that there were some problems with how the trust was administered and Wells Fargo had to recoup all of the money.

OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

Moved by Mr. Layden, seconded by Ms. Cooley that resolutions O-4 through O-9 be adopted:

O-4. APPROVE RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF GRANT AGREEMENT – ELECTRICAL UPGRADES AT UNION SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

That the board approve resolution "authorizing execution and delivery of the Grant Agreement" in connection with Electrical Upgrades at Union Senior High School; DOE Project # 5290-050-14-1001; SDA Project # 5290-050-14-G2SX; Grant # G5-5913; Total Project Cost - \$1,846,615; Grant Amount \$738,646.

O-5. APPROVE DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY FOR SUPERVISION OF SCHOOL FACILITIES – ELECTRICAL UPGRADES AT UNION SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

That the board approve delegation of authority to School Business Administrator for supervision of the School Facilities Project - Electrical Upgrades at Union Senior High School; DOE Project # 5290-050-14-1001; SDA Project # 5290-050-14-G2SX; Grant # G5-5913; Total Project Cost - \$1,846,615; Grant Amount - \$738,646.

O-6. APPROVE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF GRANT AGREEMENT – HVAC UPGRADES AT WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

That the board approve resolution "authorizing execution and delivery of the Grant Agreement" in connection with HVAC Upgrades at Washington Elementary School; DOE Project #5290-140-14-1002; SDA Project # 5290-140-14-G2SY; Grant # G5-5914; Total Project Cost - \$1,232,395; Grant Amount - \$492,958

O-7. APPROVE DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY FOR SUPERVISION OF SCHOOL FACILITIES PROJECT – HVAC UPGRADES AT WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

That the board approve delegation of authority to School Business Administrator for supervision of the School Facilities Project - HVAC Upgrades at Washington Elementary School; DOE Project #5290-140-14-1002; SDA Project # 5290-140-14-G2SY; Grant # G5-5914; Total Project Cost - \$1,232,395; Grant Amount - \$492,958

O-8. APPROVE COOPERATIVE PRICING AGREEMENT – HUNTERDON COUNTY EDUCATIONAL SERVICES COMMISSION

That the board approve Cooperative Pricing Agreement with Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission in accordance with the information appended to these minutes.

O-9. ACCEPT PROPOSAL FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CSE FILE CLOSEOUT AT HANNAH CALDWELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL – OMEGA ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, INC.

That the board accept proposal from Omega Environmental Services, Inc., 280 Huyler Street, South Hackensack, New Jersey to provide environmental case file closeout at Hannah Caldwell Elementary School in an amount not to exceed \$7,400 in accordance with the information appended to these minutes.

DISCUSSION:

None

AYE: Mr. Arminio, Ms. Cooley, Dr. Francis, Mr. Galante, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Layden, Mr. Nufrio, Mr. Salcedo and Mr. Perkins

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION WAS CARRIED

Mr. Layden reviewed the other resolutions that will be voted on at the regular meeting.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Moved by Mr. Galante, seconded by Mr. Nufrio that resolution P-1 and P-2 be adopted:

P-1. APPROVE PERSONNEL ACTIONS

That Personnel Actions be approved in accordance with the information appended to these minutes.

P-2. AMEND SUBSTITUTE LISTS

That the Board amend Substitute/Home Instruction List; Substitute Custodians, Substitute Cafeteria/Playground Aides, Teacher Assistants and Secretaries for the 2013-2014 school year in accordance with the information appended to these minutes.

DISCUSSION:

None

AYE: Mr. Arminio, Ms. Cooley, Dr. Francis, Mr. Galante, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Layden, Mr. Nufrio, Mr. Salcedo and Mr. Perkins

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION WAS CARRIED

Mr. Galante reviewed the remainder of the resolutions that would be voted on at the regular meeting.

Mr. Arminio said that the backup for resolution P-1 that is to be voted on at the regular meeting indicates that there are four stipends for the Burnet School Play. He wanted to know how the payment amounts were arrived at. Mr. Vieira said that the stipends are negotiated. Mr. Armino said that he looked in the contract and there are no stipends listed for the middle school play. He said that the amounts approved for the Kawameeh show were much less than those which are listed for the Burnet show. Mr. Arminio thought that the stipends for the two middle school plays should be the same.

Mr. Perkins said that if there is not sufficient backup by the regular meeting, then the items will be tabled. He asked if Mr. Vieira could reconcile this issue. Mr. Damato stated that perhaps Mr. Capodice had some information or could ask someone who may have been involved in negotiating these stipends years ago. He said that he had a recollection that these stipends were discussed but he was not sure why they were never added to the contract. Mr. Arminio said that the next time the contract is negotiated the stipends contained must be cleared up because they are very confusing.

POLICY COMMITTEE

Mr. Arminio presented resolution POL-1 which was policies in series 6000.

Mr. Arminio said that all of the series 6000 policies are contained in the backup. Mr. Perkins said that he was prepared to do that along with the corrections that he has for each policy. He said that POL-1 is the entirety of the

policy for the district with regard to education/instruction. Mr. Perkins said that he did take the time to review and read every single policy. He stated that he appreciated what Mr. Arminio and Mr. Damato are doing to review the policy manual. Mr. Perkins said that he did not understand why the regulatory scheme in the states and in the country doesn't just say that you should incorporate the law by reference and the districts don't have to go and adopt another policy that reads the same as the statute or regulation that orders you to do it. He said that typically the regulation will say each school district in the State of New Jersey is required to adopt policies which reflect the law and the regulations goes through and lays out all of the details.

Mr. Perkins said that there are some interesting things contained within these policies. He asked Mr. Arminio if all of the policies were obtained from School Boards Association. Mr. Arminio said that the templates were received from School Boards and they were changed to fit the district. Mr. Perkins said that one of the things that he recalls reading is the "naming of the holidays"; he said that Washington's and Lincoln's birthdays are listed as holidays and there is no mention of Presidents' Day along the way. He said that there is no listing of the recognition of John Barry Day which is required by statute. Mr. Perkins said that he did not know of any school district in New Jersey that knows who John Barry is let alone recognize him but nonetheless, it is one of the statutory requirements in the State of New Jersey. He said that there are a multitude of those and what he proposes to do is to extend to Mr. Arminio, Mr. Damato, Dr. Martin, Dr. Lishak and Mr. Tatum a summation of all of the things like that which he found in these policies. Mr. Perkins said that his reading of the policies and the requirements of the Department of Education regulation which denominates the religious holidays to be observed in school districts throughout the state are that the religious holidays should be listed so that people in the district know when they are. He said that his recollection of the list is that there are over one hundred religious holidays. Mr. Perkins said that he did not know that the district can impose a "religious" test to ask someone to prove that they are a certain religion. He said he supposed that it was possible for a student to get 100 excused absences in the school year by merely saying that he or she is observing a particular holiday from the Commissioner's list. Mr. Perkins said that there are those anomalies in the law that the board should address. He said that he did not have strong personal feelings about these things, they are just things that come up.

Mr. Nufrio said that while the board was speaking of recognition of individuals he felt that Margaret Fekete was a New Jersey native that left an endowment that is terrific and he would submit that the board consider at least a plaque to put at Union High School to identify who Ms. Fekete was; the mere fact that she taught in the district and since her money is going to be given to students who will become teachers, it would be nice to have something memorializing who she was. Mr. Damato said that he absolutely agreed.

Mr. Arminio presented resolution POL-2 which dealt with staff use of internet social media networks and other forms of electronic communication. He said that this policy was also contained in the back up materials. Mr. Arminio distributed information to all the board members. He said that it contained reports and use of Facebook for educators. Mr. Arminio said that he was a strong proponent for item A-1 in the policy. He felt that everything else in the policy was "cut and dry" and anyone with a little common sense would agree with 99% of the policy but A-1 is the sticking point because it says "Teachers may not list current students as friends on networking sites." Mr. Arminio said that if the board looks at the information which he passed out to them, everyone indicates that teachers should not be personal friends with students on a personal site. He said that there are at least ten social media sites for educators in which teachers and students can interact, get homework assignments, ask questions, have forums where students can interact with students and with the teacher on media sites to go over things that they did not understand in class and for teachers and coaches to communicate with students without being "friended" on a personal page. Mr. Arminio said that social media can be good for education and to further the education of the students but there has to be a line drawn. He thought that A-1 could be changed to read "Teachers are strongly encouraged not to . . . or "will be drawn and quartered if they become friends with students" or something that says the district is not forbidding it but is strongly discouraging it. Mr. Arminio said that he did know that there were teachers in the district that are friends with students and he thought that was wrong. He said that he did not think that a teacher should be texting back and forth with a student but the Softball Team is using a site where the coach gets a "fake" phone number and all of members of the team can send texts to that phone number and the coach texts them through that phone number to advise if practice is changed or called off. Mr. Arminio said that it takes no time to set up the site with each player and this way there is no direct link with the teacher or coach and they can communicate with the students. Mr. Salcedo said that his daughter's teacher has such a site set up with the students that also communicates with the parents. Mr. Arminio said that all teachers in the district have been trained in "Catapult" which is a site that allows teachers to communicate with parents. He said that there is no reason why a teacher needs to communicate directly with a student on their "personal page".

Mr. Nufrio said that in order to insure a little bit more vigilance and cooperation, he did not think that the word "encouraged" should be used. He thought that this type of communication should be "prohibited". Mr. Nufrio said that any other communication mechanism that the district feels is safe, is fine. He said that he thought the board can set the policy to say the district absolutely will not permit such communication.

Mr. Perkins said when he first read about teachers texting students he said why not but there are issues of the law. He said that there is an article in the most recent issue of *New Jersey Lawyer* which discusses the use of social networking within the school context.

Mr. Perkins said that he went through this policy fairly carefully and came to the conclusion that the district could say to teachers "behave yourselves and act professionally and don't engage in conversations with students or others which are inappropriate." He said that it was his concern that he would not want to fail to take advantage of the educational usages of social media. Mr. Perkins said that each year at the School Boards Convention there are presentations by educators from other districts and from other places on the use of social media in education whereby they may well violate some of the provisions that are set out in this proposed policy. He said that after reviewing this policy, he was not smart enough to figure out how to write the policy so it really works. Mr. Perkins said it was his suggestion that this policy be something that is reviewed each year by the education and the technology committees, so that it can continually be updated to take advantage of social media in the schools. Mr. Arminio said that policies can always be changed from year to year and this policy does indicate that it will be distributed annually to all staff members.

Mr. Perkins said that this is a very dynamic area and he thought that an annual review would make sense. He said that the district will find out from experience what works and what doesn't work. Mr. Perkins said that he also suggested getting feedback from the teachers and others in the classroom about the restrictions.

Mr. Damato said that he and Mr. Arminio have not had a chance to sit down and discuss this policy. He said that since it is a model policy that is put out by School Boards it might be good for the policy committee to sit and talk about it before it is adopted. Mr. Damato said that there are some significant First Amendment issues involved in this as there is with all speech, whether it be in or out of school, and those are the concerns that he wanted the board to be aware of. He said it never becomes an issue until the district tries to enforce the policy and the constitutional rights and claims becomes an issue.

GRIEVANCE/NEGOTIATIONS COMMITTEE

Mr. Damato said that the first item listed on the agenda was a memorandum of agreement with the Principals, Supervisors and Directors. He said that their negotiations have been resolved and the memorandum is ready to be reviewed and ratified by the board. Mr. Damato said that this memorandum has already been ratified by the Association based upon the tentative agreement which was reached a month or so ago.

Mr. Damato said that G-2 is a specific grievance involving a specific member of the U.T.E.A. He said that the member signed off his approval on settlement of the grievance. Mr. Damato said that there was a previous meeting of the grievance committee on this matter and the grievance committee resolved the grievance.

APPROVAL OF BILLS

Mr. Perkins said that the bills would be presented for payment at the regular meeting of the board.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mr. Arminio said that he wanted to speak about Middle States Evaluation but he would speak about it next week. He distributed some information to the board members to be reviewed before the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Francis said that on April 3rd the Tri-City Branch of the NAACP in conjunction with several community based organizations held a forum at Jefferson School with Dr. Parker, the Superintendent of Summit Board of Education; Dr. Davino, Superintendent of Springfield Board of Education and Dr. Martin addressing concerns in all three districts; both he and Mr. Nufrio attended. He said that some of things that were discussed were the Amistad curriculum; achievement gaps, the Common Core Curriculum and also district hiring practices. Dr. Francis said that the Amistad curriculum and district hiring practices were of concern to all in attendance. He said that it seems in Union there is a large minority population but that is not reflected in the teachers.

Mr. Perkins said that it was his understanding that the Amistad Commission exists within the Department of Labor and the vice chairperson is someone from the Department of Education. He did not think there was a specific curriculum but he knew that the district did cover a significant amount within the existing curriculum. Dr. Francis said that Dr. Martin did mention the things that are covered in the district, a lot of which is based in history later on in the educational process. He said that the concern was that maybe some of this material could be presented to students at the elementary level so that students can learn just as they learn about Christopher Columbus, etc. so that children can understand the things that affect African-Americans.

Mr. Nufrio said that although Dr. Martin quickly touched upon U.S. History I as the starting point for addressing much what is embedded in the curriculum that addresses the Amistad Law. He said that it is also fair to say that he did not know exactly what was in the curriculum in the lower grades, but he had a short conversation with Dr. Martin earlier concerning this, he said it was not intended to skip over but because the district is not addressing anything at the lower grades perhaps what the district needs to hear in the future, what exactly the lower grades do embed within their curriculum and if it is not sufficient, the district needs to look at it more carefully and be a little more thorough about it. Mr. Nufrio said that he was left a little bit aghast at some of the responses but at this point he could only say that he would have liked to have heard more from the others in attendance. He said that Union is probably doing more than the other districts were doing. Mr. Nufrio said that the district was at a good point but it could be at a better point, obviously but the idea of the forum was to bring together ideas and he thought what came out of the forum was that the district was doing some things, the district can do more and the district is definitely doing more than other districts.

Mr. Perkins said that he agreed that many students and adults are woefully ignorant of the things that happened in our history that makes us who we are today and would give them a much better understanding of life in the United States today. He said that these are the kinds of things that children ought to know but the time that the district spends in teaching is often on the administration side is away from what the district is trying to do. Mr. Perkins said that he would like to explore what the district can do going forward.

Mr. Salcedo asked if the Amistad curriculum mostly history based or does it break out into other subjects. Dr. Francis said that they would like it to be interdisciplinary. Mr. Nufrio said that what the district has to keep in mind is the maturity of the children based on the grade level and it would be a "sprinkling" of information, at best, at the lower grades because they have not reached the level to absorb all that occurred without being stunned or have shock therapy at that point. He said that it has to be done properly, with a lot of caution and not intending to leave anything out but it has to be done at each grade level with the right intention in terms of how does the district sensitize students. Mr. Nufrio said that Mrs. Moses did it brilliantly in sensitizing students to feel empathy for students who had lost their school. He felt that Dr. Lishak and Mr. Tatum should consult with Dr. Martin to see how the district can best disseminate the information grade by grade so that when students get to U.S. History I, it does not come as a shock to students because they did not get enough information in the lower grades. Mr. Nufrio said that it must be done in stages. Dr. Martin said that to be fair to the district faculty, there are many appropriate level discussions that take place in the elementary schools about this sensitive topic. He said that there is room to

improve and grow and that is part of the reason in defining why there is an achievement gap and there has been an achievement gap for 200 years. Dr. Martin said part of it is understanding, empathy and education. He said that any school district that would stand up and say that it does enough is fooling themselves; there is always room for growth. Dr. Martin said that the elementary schools do work with the topic appropriately with the students at their level.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Ms. Detjen, said that she was a parent of a high school student and also a teacher at Kawameeh Middle School. She said that she had questions and comments regarding the minutes of the Special Meeting that took place on March 1, 2014. Ms. Detjen read from the minutes:

"Mr. Vieira said that the positions that are being cut are positions that the district feels are no longer needed; some of the classes that are currently running will be cut for the next school year. Dr. Lishak said that after doing a review of numbers over the past three years, the district has seen a drop in world language classes in the middle schools. She said that the students in the middle school are put into a cycle world language class in the sixth grade and in seventh grade. Dr. Lishak said that in the eighth grade, students have the opportunity to choose the language that they would like to study. She said that most students are choosing Spanish first; second would be French and third would be German. Dr. Lishak said that with the numbers of students taking German and French, the district actually could run both of those programs with one less German teacher and one less French teacher. She said that when students don't take German in eighth grade, that is affecting the number of students in the high school that take German as well. Dr. Lishak said that it was her intent to possibly move one of the German teachers out of the high school and move two of the world language teachers in the middle schools; one French and one German and the district will still be able to cover the number of students that are requesting foreign language."

Ms. Detjen said that later on in the minutes, it states: *Ms. Cooley asked about the world language teachers. Dr. Lishak said that she had three positions that are being cut that are not retirements.*

Ms. Detjen said that if the district was looking at numbers from the last three years; she appreciated the efforts of the board members and their volunteerism and she knew that it was hard to keep track of everything that has gone in the past three years; but if the district is just looking at numbers in the

past three years what has changed as part of the electives in the past three years, so many of the middle school electives have gone up to the high school and the middle schools now have double math and double English at all three grade levels in the middle schools. Ms. Detjen said that many electives have been given up at the middle school level. She said that in eighth grade students are forced to choose from an elective band or chorus, which would be for a full year or a half year of technology and art or a language. Ms. Detjen said that in the past where there were two elective blocks a student was able to take a language and band or chorus. She said that obviously the numbers are going to drop because students are forced to choose between the two. Ms. Detjen said that this does not mean that there is less interest in the world language areas.

Ms. Detjen said that even if she was not one of the "cuts" she was here tonight for the program. She said that when the curriculum was changed to the double math/double English, she was asked to create a curriculum guide for sixth and seventh grade cycle. Ms. Detjen said that she would like more prior knowledge so that she could re-do the curriculum guide before September. She asked if there could be a discussion about where the sixth grade cycle was going to go; what would be the replacement elective if the middle school electives will be combined or there will be a commuting teacher and get down to one eighth grade class. Ms. Detjen said that if she was the commuting teacher and she was teaching two elective courses in seventh grade at Kawameeh, two elective courses in seventh grade at Burnet and one French I eighth grade level at each middle school, even if the schedule could be all three in each middle school in the morning and the afternoon with a prep, commuting period and a lunch, what happens if she did a superb job next year and students at both middle schools want to take French in eighth grade; will it still be limited to only one class at each school. She wanted to know if there was any other consideration for the cuts besides numbers. Mr. Perkins asked if Ms. Detjen wanted an answer to these questions right now. Ms. Detjen said that she would like to be a part of the discussion. Dr. Lishak said that the curriculum guide that Ms. Detjen wrote will not change for next year. She asked Ms. Detjen if she wanted to adjust the curriculum guide. Mr. Perkins asked Ms. Detjen to have this conversation with Dr. Lishak offline. He said that he appreciated and understood Ms. Detjen's concerns but this is a "chain of command" type of discussion which should not take place at a board meeting. Dr. Lishak said that the district does not want to eliminate the world language program in any way, shape or form; however, the district cannot continue to keep a world language program running when students for whatever reason either due to a schedule, their choice is not a couple of the languages that are being offered. She said that Mr. Nufrio made a wonderful suggestion and she intended to pursue it and that was to send out a

survey to find out what languages would students be interested in taking. Dr. Lishak said that maybe it is time for the district to talk about adding different languages into the curriculum. She said it was not about eliminating the program but it was about providing students the opportunity to take the language that they are truly interested in.

Ms. Detjen said what about the opportunity for students who want to take a language and an elective. Dr. Lishak said that was a different issue. Mr. Perkins asked that Dr. Lishak meet with Ms. Detjen to discuss the matter.

Ms. Detjen asked when would she know if her position is being "cut" and what the program would be. Dr. Lishak said that once the budget is officially approved by the board on April 29th. Ms. Detjen said that those who will be cut will find out then but when will teachers know what they will be teaching for the next school year. Dr. Lishak asked when Ms. Detjen normally found out what she would be teaching for the next school year. Ms. Detjen said that commuting between schools is a little different than if someone is assigned to one school for the entire day. Dr. Lishak said that this issue has already been discussed with the Department Supervisor and once the budget has been approved, then the assignments can go out.

Ms. Columbie handed out a letter to all board members which she read as follows:

"I am a proud resident of Union for 18 years, have had 2 children go through the school system since Pre-School and one more, a Sophomore at the High School.

I'm a local business owner, taxpaying, law-abiding citizen with a deep concern for our children's future.

I'd like to start by reading the mission statement of the Township of Union Public Schools listed on the district's web site:

The Township of Union Board of Education believes that every child is entitled to an education, designed to meet his or her individual needs, in an environment that is conducive to learning. State standards, federal and state mandates, and local goals or objectives, along with community input, must be reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that an atmosphere of learning is both encouraged and implemented. Furthermore, any

disruption to or interference with a healthy and safe educational environment must be addressed, corrected, or when necessary removed in order for the district to maintain the appropriate educational setting.

I'm here to specifically discuss the High School Graduation Ceremony "Tradition". Last Spring I spoke to a few leaders of our School system and it's almost Graduation time again, yet nothing has been done regarding this matter.

My one son – who graduated from Union H.S. last year in June of 2013 was a 5th Year Graduate. Being a 5th Year Graduate in the town of Union apparently excludes these graduates from walking in their High School Graduation. They've met all the class credits criteria to graduate yet their Diplomas given to them during school in a simple manila envelope and they are robbed of a once in a lifetime experience of walking their High School Graduation Ceremony.

This is an injustice that needs to be addressed and corrected. I'm here to speak for these kids, for these young adults . . . rather than being respected for preserve ring instead of dropping out of school they are chastised and neglected to experience walking in their High School Graduation and their Diploma just given to them with no leather cover, just in a plain manila envelope. I repeat this to let it really sink in . . .

It's a devastating experience to be denied the right for a 5th year Graduate to walk in their Graduation Ceremony, it's disrespectful to them and it is a tradition that needs to be changed for this year's graduation and the subsequent years. Let's remember the Mission Statement . . .

Where is it in written law that these young adults cannot walk their Graduation Ceremony? The only answer I received last year was that it was "Tradition", no one in the Union School System-NOR in Trenton could provide me with any written documentation.

Let me pose a question, why do people want to become teachers and administration in the school system in the first place? Is it just a job – OR – is it your obligation to do your best to educate them, along with the parents. Isn't it also the parents and the teachers responsibility to – TEACH – that if they persevere and work hard, they have the opportunity to gain reward . . . they learn not to give up. Isn't the Graduation Ceremony the biggest Scholastic reward a child could receive, why would you take that away from them? Don't you see that's breaking down their confidence instead of building their character? What are we trying to do? It is our obligation to build them up – not break them down! To give them a sense of accomplishment and encouragement that they CAN succeed and deserve to be praised and allowed the "one in a lifetime High School Graduation Ceremony". Let's remember the Mission Statement. . .

Why do we willingly continue to disrespect the children who unbeknownst to US, have some kind of issues that forced them to have to finish school after the 4 years? Why are they treated like all their efforts mean nothing? They're just being thrown out into society feeling disgruntled and disrespected, no high self-esteem backed by their educators. What kind of society do we expect?

YOU know better than I what the statistics are for H.S. drop-outs in the Union School System . . . I know for a fact that a lot of these drop-outs have left the system because of lack of respect and proper guidance.

Why is this being allowed to happen?

We have special classes for "Special Needs Children" That's wonderful and I'm not downplaying the importance of such. I'd like to point out however that the title itself is a misnomer. EVERY child has "Needs". Every child deserves to be treated with respect. Isn't the School system the one who holds classes and seminars about "Anti-Bullying"? I'm here to stand up for these young adults and demand for them to be respected and not denied the Honor of walking in their High School Graduation Ceremony.

My son, in particular, who Graduated last June, went to Night School WHILE he was in day school, also went to Summer School – he worked very hard to make sure he accrued the credits necessary in order to Graduate. The teachers and school

administration have no idea what he was going through and why he fell behind. Nor do you know the circumstances that forces any other student to go into their 5th year. I say that I know for a fact, when these are not respected and nurtured, that's when you lose them.

Getting back to the point I made about "Bullying". Last June, the Seniors were called to the Auditorium the morning of Graduation for the rehearsal. ALL SENIORS. My son, being a 5th year Graduate included. He approached Mr. Gibbons who has not started the rehearsal yet, to ask him what he should do? Was he walking, if not where should he go? Mr. Gibbons answered him in a rough manner and tried to ignore him. Julian asked him again what he should do – at that point Mr. Gibbons said he didn't have time for him and proceeded to call Security and had Julian escorted out of the school – totally embarrassing him in front of the whole Senior class. As soon as I found out I tried to reach him, he wasn't available, I then spoke to Dr. Martin who then was able to get me in touch with Mr. Gibbons. Long story short, Mr. Gibbons claims my son was belligerent – I asked to see the video and at this point am still waiting. I am angry and upset that my son was embarrassed in front of all his peers, especially on such an important yet devastating day – for asking a simple question. I am still waiting and expecting to see the video . . . moving on . . .

To conclude – again I repeat – it is a huge injustice to deny any child at any year from walking their Graduation Ceremony and receiving their diploma in a well-respected cover.

I'd like to point out that College has no time limit on graduation, allows anyone that passes with enough credits to walk their graduation. Why is this not so with High School? It was pointed out to me last year that one of the issues was the uncertainty of putting some kind of time limit as to how many extra years should be included? This is one of the reasons it kept being brushed to the back burner. Well, the answer to me is obvious. There should be no limit.

Of course things should run as usual, still encouraging the students to reach all their credits in 4 years – but those who can't – should still be encouraged, respected and nourished academically to do their best and be their best.

I am asking for a re-evaluation of this Graduation Ceremony "Tradition". I also request to receive in writing an official school Board document where it says 5 year students are not allowed to walk their Graduation Ceremony.

Even though my son was deprived of walking in his H.S. Graduation, I will continue to address this until this unfair "Tradition" has been changed and these 5th year young adult Graduates are allowed to walk and participate in their Graduation Ceremony.

I might or might not know any of this Year's Graduates nor the next fifty years Graduates personally, but this Mom stands proudly behind them 100%.

I am here today on their behalf – respectfully demanding a change that is long overdue. I am asking for you to seek within your hearts how you would want YOUR child to be treated, should they be in this situation. Seek within your heart what the right thing to do would be, and act accordingly.

I'd like to note that Graduation is closely upon us once again-please allow me to know as soon as possible once a decision has been made. Thank you for your time.

Mr. Perkins said that he did receive Ms. Columbie's e-mail message earlier in the day and he did share it with Dr. Martin, Dr. Lishak and others so that they were not hearing her complaint for the first time during the meeting. He said that he has been on the board for almost 20 years and this is the first time that this issue has come up. Mr. Perkins said that if Ms. Columbie were to ask him if this were the policy of the board of education, he would look at her with a blank face and say he did not know. He said that there was a discussion regarding this matter before the meeting this evening. Dr. Martin said that there was a lot of openness to what Ms. Columbie is saying.

Mr. Nufrio said that he had several years experience at his old district with being in charge of commencement exercises. He said that it was always his displeasure to have to call out the names of students during the rehearsals who had not met the state and local requirements for graduation. Mr. Nufrio said that there is a legality attached to the graduation exercise that districts cannot

disregard. He said that Dr. Martin has to present to the President of the Board and certify that all students present at the ceremony have met the requirements of the State and are duly ready and prepared to accept by the body of the board that these students are graduating. Mr. Nufrio said that if that was not in the commencement exercise, it would just be an exercise.

Dr. Lishak said that the issue here is that Ms. Columbie's son became a fifth year student and at the end of the fifth year had reached all of the requirements to graduate. Mr. Nufrio said that would be something that Dr. Martin and the board attorney need to discuss. Mr. Arminio said that he has gone through the entire policy manual and he can say that there is no policy whatsoever regarding fifth year seniors. Mr. Nufrio said that if Ms. Columbie's son had met all of the graduation requirements then Dr. Martin's statement at the beginning of the graduation ceremony would cover that and it would not be a violation of anything. He said that he was sorry that he misunderstood what Ms. Columbie was saying.

Mr. Perkins said that the issue is not on tonight's agenda but Ms. Columbie can be assured that it will be on the agenda on April 29th. He appreciated Ms. Columbie's comments and for bringing the issue to the board's attention.

Mr. Capodice said that his comments at this meeting were surrounding the Association's growing concern for the Central Office of the Board of Education. He said that most recently, some Association members were informed that there was a miscalculation of funds toward their premium payments; they were underpayments, in fact. Mr. Capodice said that this afternoon he sent a communication to the Board of Education requesting records to provide the Association with the total dollar amount or expenditures of district funds used to assist with the district's social security information breach in September including but not limited to the purchase of Lifelock for affected members and also information regarding the total dollar value of money paid by the Board of Education to cover the miscalculations of member contributions toward their health care premiums. He said that he believed it would be absolutely inexcusable to think that these combined amounts might have cost someone their job in either his Association or anyone else in the district. Mr. Capodice said that going back to September, there has been a social security breach from the Central Office some of whose victims were either retired or deceased. He said that there has been an insurance miscalculation and it was also discovered that a former teacher from the high school continued to be covered under district insurance after he had left the district. Mr. Capodice said that this is something that needs to be corrected. He said that there are a number of issues that have come across, mistakes have been made by Central Office and someone needs to

take responsibility for it. Mr. Capodice said that the Board of Education not only owes the members of his Association but all employees; they need to right the ship and they need to be more accountable. He said that what was troubling to him as the leader of the Association as far as the premium payments and miscalculations, members and employees were told that they were "miscalculated" and they had "underpaid". Mr. Capodice asked if some members were having too much taken out of their salary for the premiums; that is also a possibility. He did not think that anyone in the room can say for certain if every single premium contribution taken out of paychecks was correct. Mr. Capodice said that this is a problem. He said that there was an audit done in September or October but he was imploring the Board of Education, at their own cost, to do another one because everyone in the district is thinking "what's going to happen next and how are we going to address it?" Mr. Capodice said that when something happens to a member of the Association that he represents, he will get a call from an Assistant Superintendent or his building principal telling him that there is an "urgent situation that needs to be addressed". He said that he has had situations happen in the district that have still yet to be resolved; social security is one of them. Mr. Capodice said that the board passed a resolution, a corrective action plan was done but no correction as to who was responsible and what has happened to that person; he said that no one has contacted him or the Association or another employee about any professional development that the district said would be done to address these issues to insure these problems would not happen again. He said that he was imploring this board of education to do two things; to announce on April 29th that they will do another audit and come up with a real action plan of how it will address the constant fumbling that seems to be coming out of Central Office. He said that he has known many of the people in the room for a very long time and they have his utmost respect but certainly at some point, the board has to say to itself, when are we going to stop the bleeding and take care of what we know we have to do. He humbly asked the board to consider this before the next board of education meeting.

Ms. Lipstein said that she was representing the many parents that have contacted her about having the Academy program reinstated. She said that the board heard them at the meeting last week talking about how important the Academy program was. Ms. Lipstein said that she knew there were a lot of issues that developed during the fall academy but she really believed that all of those issues can be corrected and they should be corrected. She said that any irregularities can be handled if the board takes corrective action. Ms. Lipstein said that any problems with that program that was so popular that it was almost undone by its success; so many parents wanting their children to attend; that it overwhelmed what the board assumed and its success created a lot of difficulties. She believed that any problems could be corrected by a group of intelligent people which the board members and administrators are, who want to do the best for the students. Ms. Lipstein said that Mr. Nufrio talked a lot about

collaboration in October and she thought that if the board sat down and collaborated, any issues attached with the Academy program can be corrected and resolved and it can continue. She said that she knew there were some issues with book orders; as far as she can tell all of the orders were approved by the Board Administrator and the board and the books are still owned by the district and can be used in the future by students. Ms. Lipstein said that she has heard many times when Suplee Clooney has come up with real irregularities during their annual audit, corrective action is taken to fix the irregularities. She said that she knew that some parents are willing to pay tuition, some choose not to or they cannot. Ms. Lipstein suggested that the district start up a scholarship program a community wide way to raise money, she thought that this was a reasonable alternative and criteria could be developed for those scholarships. She said that there are community members who have said that they are willing to fundraise.

Ms. Lipstein referred to the minutes of the August 20, 2013 board meeting minutes and on page 22, it says: *"Mr. Perkins envisions that the Academy would be a program that ultimately would be available to any student in the district at the cost of the district."* She said that this may have changed because there were many more students who were interested in the Academy program than the district expected. *"He said that there would be no issue with free and reduced lunch. Mr. Perkins said that when the program is completed, there will be a recommendation from the education committee, who he has asked to study the program and deal with these issues."*

Ms. Lipstein asked if the education committee ever completed the study? Mr. Perkins said that he was not sure if they have the data to do it. Ms. Lipstein said that Mr. Perkins was the one who said that the committee would be doing a study and she assumed that when Mr. Perkins says something, he will do it. She did not feel this was an incorrect assumption to make. Ms. Lipstein said that the committee should be able to find the data.

Ms. Lipstein said that on page 23 of the same meeting minutes, Dr. Martin said *"he gets feedback from the educators"* and he also said that *"maybe there should be a survey taken of the parents of the students who attended the Academy."* She thought this should be done as well because the Academy program is too important to the parents and the taxpayers in the community to go.

Ms. Lipstein said that on October 25, 2013 Mr. Vieira said *"that he would prepare a report indicating what the revenue and the expenses were for the Academy."* She asked Mr. Vieira if he had done that? Mr. Vieira asked if Ms. Lipstein was referring to the 2012-2013 school year. Ms. Lipstein said for the Academy for the fall of 2013. Mr. Vieira said that he did have that report. Ms.

Lipstein said that she would like to see it and she would like to know the total number of students that the district did pay free tuition for and the total number of students who had reduced lunch because there was such an issue about that and what the total cost to the district was. She felt that this was data that the parents who came to the meeting were very interested in finding out.

Ms. Lipstein said that she had a letter from a parent who has asked her about the Academy. She said that this parent started to tell her all of the things that her daughter got out of the Academy program. Ms. Lipstein asked that the parent write a letter to the board and she would be willing to take it to the board. She said that this is a very strong letter and it shows how passionately she cares about having the Academy reinstated. Ms. Lipstein said that the letter was from LaTanya Everett and she writes:

"Good Afternoon. I am writing to express my displeasure with not having an academy this spring. My daughter, Jordan, and I have been with the Academy since its inception. I remember the first day the students showed up looking like shiny new pennies; the boys in their shirts and ties and the girls in their dresses. This brought media to Union to talk about a program of enrichment which was spread over several news channels. It was a new way of addressing the needs of students who otherwise would have not have progressed in the way the program has encouraged them.

When the program began it was to address the needs of those students who needed a hand in improving their NJASK scores . . . "

Ms. Lipstein said that this may be referring to the Saturday Academy as well, which the district did not have this year either.

". . . although voluntary, many of the students needed this additional help. The funny thing is it started one way and evolved another. The students voluntarily decided to come back, time after time, willingly. They were given tools to improve their reading, math and social skills in a way that was both fun and rewarding.

When Jordan began the program she was not the least bit interested in reading outside of whatever homework assignment was given. Through the Academy she not only improved in her reading comprehension, she now reads for herself. She uses her allowance to purchase books both online and in book stores on topics ranging from animals to history. Not to mention, I could never get her into a dress (that's a whole nother story).

Due to the confusion over the Fall academy, Jordan was not able to attend as there was a scheduling conflict. This is her last year at Burnet and she had her heart set on attending the spring academy. As I mentioned earlier, I have been with the Academy since the beginning. Working with Dr. Martin on the trips and preparation and being a valued parent as a part of the program, has been a very rewarding experience. I worked with the last superintendent, who did nothing for this community, and now the board has a person who will put themselves out there with the children and work in their best interest. . ."

Ms. Lipstein said she thought Ms. Everett meant that the board wanted to destroy what every parent feels is the most important addition to our children's educational progress in a long time. She said that she hoped this was not true but that the board really wants to continue the Academy program and they need to be pushed along a little.

Ms. Lipstein said the letter goes on to say ". . . and the board wants to destroy what every parent feels is the most important addition to our children's educational progress in a long time. The board has a responsibility to the community to make sure that the person who is charge of our children is working in their best interest and is of benefit. I think they are falling short of that responsibility. I understand the town may not have funds to pay for this program but when you have parents who are, why kill it? Instead of taking a 'no money, no go' attitude, be proactive and work with the community to assist with raising funds for the program. Every child deserves the opportunity to learn outside of their environment, but not every parent has the means.

We should be looking at ways to keep the program and raise funding, (real funding, not a carwash, no offense). This program has been a benefit for many of the children on the cusp why take it away now? I realize we may have to let spring go, but we should be looking at how we can bring it back for the fall bigger and better. As a parent and ardent fan of Dr. Martin, I would be more than willing to take on any role assigned to assure the program's continues.

To the board, I am just a parent, but I have put many years into the educational system here. I have served as a PTA President for five years. I volunteer to assist parents at the high school with financial aid (I declined payment and requested it go to a scholarship). I have worked with Dr. Martin with enthusiasm at every Academy. I have raised my daughter to Silver Award status in Girl Scouts and my son to Eagle in Boy Scouts and I have worked full-time through it all in the City. So you see, it is in every parent's interest to to have their children receive the best the community has to offer and right now I am not sure it is this board.

Thank you for allowing me to address my concern, but I will have to keep this in mind for the next election."

Ms. Lipstein said that the Academy brings out a lot of passion in people and Ms. Everett is not the only one. She said that there are plenty of parents who are concerned and want the academy to continue. Ms. Lipstein said that she respectfully asked that the board collaborate together and come up with plans for a summer program, which they still have time to do, which was extremely successful and start thinking about what will be done for a fall academy. Ms. Lipstein said that the program is too successful for it to go away and the parents are going to keep asking about it.

Ms. Cuccinello said that she had a question about fundraising. She said that a teacher at Burnet Middle School wanted to do a "raffle" for the Edison School; however, she had two conflicting stories. Ms. Cuccinello said that one is that the school cannot do a raffle because they do not have a license and the other was that if the school was collecting for a family, that a raffle would be permitted. Ms. Cooley said that a raffle requires a gambling license with the Township. She said that the school can collect money for a charity or cause but a raffle is considered gambling. Ms. Cooley said that the school would have to get a gambling license and then file for a permit with the Township.

MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION

Moved by Mr. Galante, seconded by Mr. Nufrio that the Board go into Executive Session to discuss personnel, student and purchase of property 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:	Mr. Arminio, Ms. Cooley, Dr. Francis, Mr. Galante, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Layden, Mr. Nufrio, Mr. Salcedo and Mr. Perkins	
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 Mr. Nufrio seconded by Mr. Arminio that the meeting be adjourned.

AYE: Mr. Arminio, Ms. Cooley, Dr. Francis, Mr. Galante, Ms. Jackson, Mr. Layden, Mr. Nufrio, Mr. Salcedo and Mr. Perkins
NAY: None
ABSTAIN: None

MOTION WAS CARRIED

Respectfully submitted

**JAMES J. DAMATO
BOARD SECRETARY**