

NOTICE OF MEETING:

TO ALL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Township of Union will be held on August 28 2013 at 4 p.m. at Jefferson School, 155 Hilton Avenue, Vauxhall, NJ 07088

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Township of Union was held at Jefferson School, 155 Hilton Avenue, Vauxhall, NJ 07088 at 4 p.m. on August 28, 2013 pursuant to notice sent to each member.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL: Mr. David Arminio, Mrs. Linda Gaglione, Mr. Richard Galante, Mrs. Versie McNeil, and Mr. Francis Perkins

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL: Ms. Susana Cooley, Dr. Guy Francis, Mr. Thomas Layden and Mr. Vito Nufrio

Mr. Perkins called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Mr. Vieira led the board and audience members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON RESOLUTIONS ON THE AGENDA

None

EDUCATION/STUDENT DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE

Moved by Mr. Arminio, seconded by Mr. Galante that the following resolutions be adopted:

E-1. ELIMINATE BEHAVIORAL DISABILITIES CLASS – WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The committee recommends and I so move that the Board eliminate a Behavioral Disabilities, Self-contained class at Washington Elementary School effective September 9, 2013 in accordance with the information appended to these minutes.

E-2. ESTABLISH BEHAVIORAL DISABILITIES CLASS – CONNECTICUT FARMS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

That the Board establish a Behavioral Disabilities, Self-contained class at

Connecticut Farms Elementary School effective September 9, 2013 in accordance with the information appended to these minutes.

DISCUSSION:

None

AYE: Mr. Arminio, Mrs. Gaglione, Mr. Galante, Mrs. McNeil and Mr. Perkins

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION WAS CARRIED

FISCAL AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Moved by Mrs. Gaglione, seconded by Mr. Arminio that the following resolution be adopted:

F-1. AMEND RESOLUTION APPROVING FY 14 NCLB FUNDS

That the board amend resolution F-11 approving FY14 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) funds on August 20, 2013 to include August 26, 2013 as the submission date of this grant to the New Jersey Department of Education.

DISCUSSION:

None

AYE: Mr. Arminio, Mrs. Gaglione, Mr. Galante, Mrs. McNeil and Mr. Perkins

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION WAS CARRIED

MS. COOLEY ENTERED THE MEETING AT 4:16 P.M.

OPERATIONS COMMITTEE:

Moved by Mr. Galante, seconded by Mrs. McNeil that the following resolution be adopted:

O-1. APPROVE WAIVER OF FEES FOR USE OF CLASSROOM AT HANNAH CALDWELL – TOWNSHIP OF UNION RECREATION DEPARTMENT

That the board approve waiver of fees for use of one classroom at Hannah Caldwell Elementary School by the Township of Union Recreation Department from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m., one day per week for the period October 1st 2013 through May 20th, 2014 in connection with Recreational Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities (ROID) Grant in accordance with the information appended to these minutes.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Perkins asked Mr. Damato to comment on this grant. Mr. Damato said that the Recreation Department submitted a proposal for a grant. He said that there is a match of funds required and he understood that the municipality would be supplying the match. Mr. Damato said that Ms. Conti has consulted with Mr. Magliacano and his staff

in an effort to try to get a good quality program off the ground. He said that the program will be geared toward special education children that have classifications.

Ms. Conti said that she spoke to Mr. Magliacano and she offered any assistance she could from the Special Services Department in writing the grant. She said that Mr. Magliacano said he would contact her if he had any questions. Ms. Conti said that she looked forward to working with Mr. Magliacano and his department. Mr. Perkins asked Ms. Conti if she had any concerns that the board should be concerned about. Ms. Conti said she had no concerns at this time.

Mrs. Gaglione said that in Mr. Magliacano's letter, it stated that he would be working with Ms. Conti on this project and that Ms. Conti would act as an advisor to the program. She wanted to make sure that it does not end up being under Ms. Conti's responsibility to make sure that the program is running properly. Mrs. Gaglione said that just because the district is giving the Recreation Department to Hannah Caldwell School, it does not mean that the district is also granting Ms. Conti's time on the whole project. Mr. Perkins said that it was his understanding and he asked Ms. Conti if it was her understanding as well. Ms. Conti said it was her understanding that if there were any questions, she would be of assistance. She said that she did not attend the technical assistance session.

- AYE: Mr. Arminio, Ms. Cooley, Mrs. Gaglione, Mr. Galante, Mrs. McNeil and Mr. Perkins
 - NAY: None
 - ABSTAIN: None
- MOTION WAS CARRIED

PLANNING SESSION DISCUSSION

Mr. Perkins said that he knew some members of the board felt that this portion of the meeting should be open ended and he had no particular difficulty with that. He wanted to note that over the course of the last month or so, events have occurred in the district and about the district which have concerned him. Mr. Perkins said that he has written e-mail messages to every member of the board and should that cause any difficulty in the Open Public Meetings Act, clearly the e-mails will be retained, the board secretary has copies of every one of them and they can be included within the record of this meeting by reference. He said that it is his belief that this will satisfy the Open Public Meetings Act. Mr. Perkins said that the other comment that he has with regard to the conduct of this meeting is that the board will end this meeting at 5:30 p.m. He said it was 4:18 p.m., the board was at Jefferson School and the formal event of the opening of Jefferson School would be taking place at 7 p.m. Mr. Perkins said that there will be tours of the school starting at 6 p.m. He said that in order to accommodate those who are interested in seeing what has been done at the school, the meeting will end no later than 5:30. Mr. Perkins said that should this be a problem for anyone and for purposes of the record, the board is always available and he encouraged anyone who had comments or concerns to e-mail the board secretary or members of the board. He said that over the course of the last few weeks, the board discussed, among other things, a situation at Union High School, the performance ratings as most recently reported in the

magazine *Inside Jersey*. Mr. Perkins said that he has raised a question about the size of the high school and about accommodating students who have special abilities including those that are limiting as well as those that are creative and go beyond the ordinary course of the curriculum. He said that he sent to everyone on the board a segment from YouTube that talked about the fact that there was not "average" student and that the district ought to be considering that. Mr. Perkins said that it seems to him that there is a lot that the board can talk about but he did not expect that there would be solutions to any of these things. He felt that the principal goal, from his point of view, is that the board continue to keep the school district running; that the district continues to provide as quality of an education as it possibly can with the resources that it has to the children are committed to its charge and that the district seeks ways to improve the schools in every way that it possibly can. Mr. Perkins said that looking at the mission statement of other organizations that statement is sufficiently ambiguous and vague enough to include a whole bunch of stuff but he invited commentary from other board members on what each board member sees as an issue or some informal discussion can be generated. He suggested that the process be kept open-ended at the end of this meeting and make it a continuing process throughout the school year.

Mr. Arminio said that the board needs to make some long range plans as Mr. Perkins suggested but his suggestions were vague at best. He said that he thought the board needed to make or establish some goals that can be attained by the end of the school year; for instance: (1) By June of 2014 the board will have made a decision on what to do with Hamilton School. Mr. Arminio said that it will enable the board, on that date, to say whether the goal has been met or not; (2) By January of 2014, the policy manual will be completed. He said that this is an attainable goal. Mr. Arminio said that this would be two things that the board could say had established specific goals that can be achieved by the end of the year. He said that perhaps the board would have two or three more goals from other board members and central office such as raising the test scores and looking good in *Inside Jersey*. Mr. Arminio said that the board can't do much about what their opinion is except meet their expectations on what criteria they used to establish their grading system.

Dr. Martin said that he has had extensive discussions regarding this issue and Dr. Lishak has made an extensive study of this. Dr. Lishak said that from the article itself, she was not able to find out any information from the author and it was stated that the information used in the article was based on standardized test scores (only, math and language arts, not science) and it did include the scores on the SAT's over a period of four years. She said that Union scored a "D" in the article. Dr. Lishak said that she looked at some of the districts that were listed at "C" and Union's scores on standardized testing were actually higher than some of the scores that scored a "C"; the reason for that was that Union's numbers have grown so much over the last four years. She said that Union make it first big "jumps" in years one and two compared to a few of the other schools who scored a "C", they did not have scores that were as high but they started out much lower and therefore they made consistently higher jumps percentage-wise over the course of the four years. Dr. Lishak said that it is very hard to determine how

they came up with a "D" for Union when Union's scores are actually higher than some of the schools that got higher grades. She said that the study was done by the author of the article and it was his own formula.

Mr. Perkins said he did not purport to have a solution to this by the time the meeting was over but he wanted the board to have a discussion about how would the board respond to this article if, in fact, the board responds to it at all. He said that his gut tells him that not only should the board respond, but the board should respond vigorously and "take this guy on." Mr. Perkins understood that the author was not an educator and he has no education background. He said that there are a lot of good things happening in the district that this author did not count in this article. Mr. Perkins felt that he painted a "horrible" picture of Union and it was done unfairly. He said that the Superintendent of Westfield took exception very publically and said that this was not the way you look at a school. Mr. Perkins said that the income of the parents has a correlation to student performance and that is consistent.

Mr. Arminio suggested that the board write the author a letter and establish a dialogue with him and say "you don't know what you're talking about." He said he did not know if this would backfire or not but perhaps the district could send something to all the parents in the school system. Mr. Arminio did not know how many parents read the article and know that the district got a "D" on that particular person's report card. He said that the letter should explain why it shouldn't be a "D". Mr. Perkins said that he agreed because he was surprised at how many people actually knew about this article.

DR. FRANCIS ENTERED THE MEETING AT 4:28 P.M.

Mr. Perkins said that the circulation of *Inside Jersey* is very limited. He said that Mr. Arminio had a very valid point by saying not to deal with this issue and just look at the high school deal with issues present there. Mr. Perkins said that he wondered if the high school was too large and is the reduction of the enrollment at the high school an option. He wondered if the district should consider building yet another high school. Mr. Perkins said that he did not think that you should just discount an idea because it was something that nobody wanted to do or it was too hard. He commented another option would be to move the 9th grade out of the high school. Mr. Perkins asked what could be done within the high school to make the product "look better". He said that the high school had one of the best performing arts programs in the State and that is something to talk about.

Mr. Perkins said that he spoke to the Mayor earlier this evening about the STEM program and he told the Mayor that the district was talking about instituting a STEAM program (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) and the Arts part of it was really important. He said that the Arts are not measured anywhere.

Ms. Cooley said that she agreed with Mr. Arminio and she did not believe that the district should stay quiet. She said that maybe parents did not read the article but there is a lot of negative talk going around the town about the middle schools and the high school. Ms. Cooley said that this is one of the things that gave her the strength to

become a board member because she wanted her own children to go through Union High School and she didn't think there was anything wrong with the high school; it was all of what you make of it. Ms. Cooley said that there have been a lot of changes that have happened within the last couple of years and she felt that the district was moving in the right direction; things cannot be changed overnight. She thought that the district needed to show how the test scores are changing; how the attendance and the behavior of the students is changing. Ms. Cooley said that the Marching Band just came back from camp and she was told by one of the adults who was at the camp, that the band is a really good group of students and there were no issues. She said that the district has the resources. Ms. Cooley said that the board should write a letter to stated that the district did not deserve the "D" grade that it received and explain the boards point about it.

Mr. Galante said he agreed that the district did not deserve a "D". He said that he thought the author was from left field with the article. Mr. Galante said that when he read the article he felt that the gist of the article dealt with the magnet schools outdoing the district schools. He said that students that attend the magnet schools must be "brainiacs" to be accepted there. Mr. Galante said that the perception of the high school has been a thorn in his side for years. He cannot see why it is there. Mr. Galante said that he felt it started with parents who pull their children out of the public schools before they enter the middle school and the high school.

Mr. Perkins said that he spoke to someone who was planning on sending his son to Seton Hall Prep at a cost of \$16,000 per year. He said that he advised this person since he was a Union resident, why not send his son to Union High School and bank the tuition money to use toward college costs. Mr. Perkins said that this person commented that Union High School had a "reputation". He said he asked whether the person had ever been in the high school. Mr. Perkins said that the person answered that he had not. He advised him to go to the high school; speak to the principal and observe the students as they go about their business during the school day. Mr. Perkins said that the students at Union High School are "by and large" really good kids; they are polite and they treat each other well. He said that everything that he hears about the high school is really positive.

Dr. Martin said that he felt a letter should be written and the district should defend itself. He said that he thought the letter should also be sent to the parents. Dr. Martin said that he felt this will put "wind in the sails" of the faculty, parents and the community. He said that one bright side to this, everyone that he has spoken to is fired up to show that Union High School is a great school. Dr. Martin said that he has spoken to many students. He said that the district did learn that the SAT's are one of its points of weakness. Dr. Martin said that not enough students are taking the SAT in his opinion for two reasons: (1) it costs money to take the test (approximately \$75) and this is a problem for some families and (2) the culture of the high school for some reason isn't that you must take the SAT. He said that in most high schools when you hit sophomore year, everyone takes the PSAT to get ready for the SAT in junior year and take it numerous times in order to get the highest score possible. Dr. Martin said that the district needs to learn a lesson from this. He said that part of the reason the district got

a "D" was that not enough of our students take the SAT and of the students who take the SAT, the scores are not as high as they should be. Dr. Martin said that the district has to take "its licks" and go after it. He said that Dr. Lishak has arranged that all students now take the PSAT in sophomore year as their standardized test; he said that many high achieving high schools do it that way. Dr. Martin said that it was not done in the past but it will be done now and it will make a difference. He said that he has been in constant communication with Mr. Perkins about the business of what the district will do to get more students to take the SAT. Dr. Martin said that he may bring to the board's attention the possibility of the district paying for students to take the SAT or maybe just augment the cost for students who are serious about taking the SAT or maybe the district should just encourage and educate parents of the importance of the SAT. He said that this issue has to be addressed.

Dr. Martin said that he sat with all administrators yesterday and went through the test scores. He said that the test scores at the high school were the best test scores because they hit the state target. Dr. Lishak said that mathematics score was 74% and the district actually did not meet its target on that test but the scores still increased as they have every year in the past four years. Dr. Martin said that four years ago only 50% of the students at Union High School passed the math portion of the test and last spring that number went up to 74%; he asked if that this was absolutely still not good enough but when you think of the growth credit must be given where credit is due. Dr. Martin said a lot of the credit goes to Jason Mauriello and the administrative team who have worked with the faculty; lots of credit goes to the faculty to get on board and help students get those scores. Dr. Martin said that in language arts the story is even better; he said that four years ago the scores were in the 60% range and now the scores are 91%; he said that this includes special education students. He said that this was outstanding. Dr. Martin said that this was a strength that we had to give ourselves credit for.

Dr. Martin said that there are many good things happening at the high school but where there are weaknesses, the board cannot put on their rose colored glasses; they must be addressed.

Mrs. McNeil said that over the summer she has the opportunity to speak to many students who attend the high school, both male and female. She said that a lot of them were afraid of the "numbers" saying that the high school is overcrowded and intimidating. Mrs. McNeil said that they did mention that it is very strict and they enjoy the environment. She said that of course there are some behavior problems but overall these students love going to the high school.

Mrs. McNeil said that with regard to the SAT, she said what the district is doing is excellent by making it mandatory for all sophomores to take the PSAT but once they take the PSAT, what happens if the student has a low score; is the guidance counselor watching the numbers and advising students that they should take a Prep course to do better on the SAT. Dr. Lishak said that all tenth graders are taking the PSAT; all ninth graders are taking the PSSS test which is the prerequisite for the PSAT and is in the same format and then students take the SAT. She said that the district is also putting in

place tutoring sessions in the form of a Prep class. Dr. Lishak said that there is already a Prep class in the high school but the district will also be offering Saturday test preps. Mrs. McNeil asked how this information is being communicated to parents. She said that guidance counselors should take the initiative to make sure that the students, who may or may not want to think about college in ninth grade but should. Mrs. McNeil said that the guidance counselors are the ones that actually monitor the students' growth. Dr. Lishak said that Mrs. Ahern is spearheading the entire movement and she has made arrangements that in the first three days of attendance in the high school, assemblies will take place and students will receive information. She said that parents have also been invited to attend Parent Information Nights for college and information will be distributed at that time. Dr. Lishak said that this is the first year that the district will be offering Saturday SAT prep courses. She said that information will be disseminated to parents through reverse 911 calls and the guidance counselors have been instructed that they will meet with each of their students and include SAT information, information on the waiver if a student is not able to afford the test and once the students' test scores come back, where they need to go from there. Dr. Lishak said this will be put in place for the upcoming school year.

Mrs. McNeil said that regarding the numbers at the high school she felt that the district needed to do a survey to see where the numbers are, if there is a possibility that the district needs to look for additional classroom space because a few of the students that she spoke to did indicate that the school was intimidating. She said that she has not had the opportunity to go to the high school during the school day to see how the halls are and the size of the classrooms; she said that this is something that the board should consider.

Mr. Perkins said that was a concern that he has heard from a lot of people. He said that the building is really crowded. Mr. Perkins said that he did a little research about why the 9th grade was put back to the high school. He said that there used to be Burnet and Kawameeh Junior High Schools, grades 7, 8 and 9 and then because there was an issue with the space in the lower grades in the elementary school buildings, it was determined to put the 9th grade in the high schools, make the junior high schools middle schools and that was the event that caused the district to look for the building that became Hannah Caldwell Elementary School.

Mr. Arminio said that was correct. He said that the elementary schools became crowded; the fifth graders were moved to Central-Five; sixth graders went to the middle school and the ninth graders went to the high school. Mr. Arminio said he did not know if that overcrowding has been relieved. He said that back in the 70's there were almost 900 students in each class at the high school. Mr. Arminio said because of rooms that are taken away for computer labs and for special education classes; it has diminished the number of classrooms that are for general population students. He said that he has been in the high school many days during the passing of classes and he has not been knocked down or stepped on once.

Mr. Perkins thought that Hamilton School might be used as elementary school and the high school issue will in large measure dictate what the board thinks about the use of Hamilton School.

Mrs. Gaglione said that she has been in the school district for years, having spent seventeen years in the elementary schools with her own children and she was able to observe the changes that took place in the town and in the schools. She said that seventeen years ago there was always an issue of parents talking about only keeping their children in public school through middle school, moving or seeking private schools; that has always been the same. Mrs. Gaglione said that what she has seen in the past few years is that parents push their children out to private schools and those children are coming back to the high school because they are not happy leaving all of their friends and they are finding out that they can probably get a better education at the high school rather than other locations that they are going to. She said that some families have moved out of Union and have moved back to Union to get their children back into the high school. Mrs. Gaglione said that some of the problem with Union High School is perception. She said that she believed that the district should try to increase grades and scores but what she sees with taking the SAT is that people cannot afford college anymore. Mrs. Gaglione said that there has been a decrease in the amount of students that were graduating and going on to higher education. She said that there was a time when she even wrote to Rutgers and other colleges telling them about the decline that she was seeing and she still believed this was the case. Mrs. Gaglione said that many students who cannot afford to go to college so there is no reason to take the SAT. She said that there are many students from Union High School that go to county colleges and a lot of times when you go to a county school, you do not have to take the SAT. Mrs. Gaglione said that if the SAT is not necessary, why should students "waste" the money to take the test. She said that there are many students in the high school that should be going to some type of "technical" school after graduation because they learn better by doing things. Mrs. Gaglione said that tuition for technical schools is very costly as well and students cannot afford that either. She said that she felt Ms. Ahern in the guidance department will do a better job in directing students on where they can go. Mrs. Gaglione said that she believed in the past the guidance department that "guided" the students to give them help on where they had to go or how to succeed in going to college if they could not afford it.

Mrs. Gaglione said that the district needs to keep instilling in the students that they can succeed; that average is not okay and that they should study hard to achieve their goals. She said that she sees a lot of students who have graduated who are struggling to get jobs and she sees a lot of students who graduated from college that are also struggling to get jobs. Mrs. Gaglione said that when students go to college, are in debt when they graduate and cannot find a job their siblings are saying, "Why should I go to school?" "Why should I go to college?" when those that have graduated cannot get jobs. She said that this is something that the district has to figure out and to get better at.

Mrs. Gaglione said that as far as overcrowding at the high school, she has been in the high school many times during the changing of classes, and she has never felt intimidated; she has never had a problem with that. She said that her daughter is very "petite" and she never felt intimidated but everyone is different. Mrs. Gaglione said that some students do better in a smaller environment and some have no problem in a larger environment. She said that this was for the parent to decide. Mrs. Gaglione said that there are "bottlenecks" when students are passing classes but they are not as bad as some people make them out to be.

Mr. Perkins asked Mrs. Gaglione how many years she has been on the board. Mrs. Gaglione said that she has been on the board for 9-1/2 years. Mr. Perkins said that he believed in 9-1/2 years Mrs. Gaglione has never said something that he was in such complete agreement with. He said that his point of disagreement with Dr. Martin is should the district accept as a given that all students must take the SAT to satisfy some "jerk" who writes an article in *Inside Jersey* magazine or does the board agree with the statement that "there are no such things as average students" and the CORE curriculum is designed around an individual who does not exist. Mr. Perkins thought that there was not enough opportunity for individuals to express themselves and learn in other environments. He said that there is a lot more to education than this and the district will not force students to take SAT's, who otherwise would not take that test, don't have any interest in taking the SAT's and don't have the money to take the SAT's. Mr. Perkins said that someone may rank the district as whatever, but who is the district really trying to satisfy. He said that it seemed to him, the district must satisfy its constituents, the people who have moved to the community because of its school system. Mr. Perkins said that if the people who send their children to Union Public Schools are satisfied, then he was satisfied. He said that the Star Ledger can write whatever it wants and he felt that the district can do a better job of touting its high school to the good things that the board has just talked about. Mr. Perkins said that he was discounting the fact that ultimately the district can come up with some scheme to increase the view of some people who don't know what they are talking about because somehow that makes sense. He said no one wants to read that our district has a "D" rated school. Mr. Perkins said that the board knows that this is not the case. He said that the district does a great job. Mr. Perkins said that the person who wrote the article is not an educator and he misapplied the metrics that he used to base his article on. He said that we can give him examples of what the district can and is doing in this district to teach students and that the district has an arts program that is outstanding and that is an important part of education. Mr. Perkins said that rather than bending to someone else's point of view of what the district ought to be doing. He said that if the district makes enough noise it becomes an issue on a statewide basis and he did not believe that Union was alone as a school district if it does that. Mr. Perkins said that the board should sit down and discuss seriously what a "thoughtful" response to this would be.

Dr. Martin said that the reading that he has been doing from economists and sociologists suggests that if someone does not have a college degree in the future, you will be more limited than ever before because the prospects are more limited than ever before. He said that there are just not those "jobs in the middle" anymore such as manufacturing jobs. Dr. Martin said that the economy seems to be dividing into "haves

and have not's". He said that for the "haves" there are plenty of opportunities because of technology but unfortunately the "have not's" tend to be in service industries, which do not offer a lot of money by way of salary and it is hard to make a successful career there. Dr. Martin said that he is hearing and reading that like never before school districts should do whatever they can to equip their students to get a college degree. He said that the way the colleges work, many colleges look at grades but they also look at SAT scores. Dr. Martin said that he did not think it was a waste of time or money or a bad thing to equip students and give them opportunities to take standardized tests, to counsel the students on their importance but also he felt the district could do a better job on counseling student that if they begin their higher education in a county college, they can go on to state colleges who have very fine scholarship programs that he felt the district should investigate more so that if a student comes from a family that does not have a lot of means and the student goes into a county college for two years and then can get into a state school and get a scholarship, a student can get their BA even if a student comes from a family that does not have a lot of money. He felt that the guidance department should do a better job of getting that across to students so at least they know they have that option. Dr. Martin said that if they chose to go to a technical school or in a different direction that is okay but the district needs to do a better job of educating students and parents about the college path.

Mr. Perkins said that Bill Gates, Steve Jobs and Brian Williams were all college drop outs. He said that there are people who are becoming multi-millionaires as teenagers because of their creativity. Mr. Perkins said that he believed the district had some of those people in the school district who are not the least bit interested in going to college. He said that while college, on average, is the key to success, it isn't necessarily so and what the district should want to do is equip people to become good and responsible citizens who can be self-reliant. Mr. Perkins said that the district should want students to know that their abilities are going to be appreciated. He felt that there are some students who really don't want to take the SAT and they should not be forced to do so because the district needs these scores "in the numbers" that someone is looking at to see what percentage of people take the SAT. Mr. Perkins felt that this the type of discussion that he felt the board should have because there are students in the district who are musicians, artists or who are creative in any number of ways who would really do "poorly" on the SAT's and how can the district capitalize on that. He was suggesting that the district take a step in reforming education in America. Mr. Perkins said that as an engineer he found out that by changing any part of the system, you are changing the entire system. He said that even though the board can do a real lot in Union, New Jersey; it seemed to him that the board could do something to bring attention to this issue. Mr. Perkins said that it is a ripe issue and everyone has heard the President's comments on the affordability of college; he felt it was a national disgrace in his point of view.

Mrs. McNeil said that she was hearing that the board needs to make sure its educational system in high school that students are aware that they should take the SAT's because sometimes a student's maturity level does not kick in until they get to

college. She believed that everyone should be afforded the opportunity and the board needs to make sure the school system, the schools, the guidance counselors, the teachers and the principals are making sure that all students and parents are aware of the opportunities that are available.

Mr. Perkins said that he agreed that every student who wants to go to college should be afforded that opportunity. He was suggesting that the students who do not take the SAT's because they are going to go to Union County College or they are going into the service or do other government service projects. Mr. Perkins said that while ultimately you may say that it is a matter of attitude, you don't stop when you leave high school but if a student wants to go to a County College for a couple of years and doesn't think they are prepared to take the SAT then go and do it but the district will pay for it. He said that he and Dr. Martin have had discussions about the Academies and parents paying tuition to attend these programs and there are families in the community who cannot afford the price to take the SAT. Mr. Perkins said that people would be surprised how close to the margin many families that we know are. He thought that if the district was willing to pay and it can convince a student to take the test but what happens to the students who really is not equipped to take the test. Mrs. McNeil said that is why there are preparation programs. Mr. Perkins said that not everyone will score well on the SAT. Mrs. McNeil said he was right but she wanted to make sure that everyone had the opportunity.

Dr. Martin said that the fact that 91% of the district's juniors passed language arts on the state standardized test, which is a challenging test, is not that far from the SAT. He said that 91% of the students passed the test but there are far fewer students taking the SAT's and he did not think that the district had a massive amount of students who were not equipped intellectually to handle the SAT. Dr. Martin said that the standardized test scores have been going up from year to year. He commented that even if a student is going to county college, wouldn't it be better for the student to take the SAT in high school because the knowledge is fresh in their mind so that when students are applying for junior and senior year of college after county college the student will have high SAT scores in their background. Dr. Martin said that the district owes it to its students to ask questions and have discussions so that the students are in the best possible position for their future.

Mr. Perkins said that he would be interested in hearing Dr. Francis' ideas on this issue. Dr. Francis said that he did attend Union High School and he graduated in 1988. He said that he always felt that Union was a good school system. Dr. Francis said that the district had two US Presidents' visit the school and he felt that it was really a Blue Ribbon School System. He said that he has been away from school for awhile but from the time he graduated until today, how did it go down and why is the district working its way back up. Mr. Perkins said that back in the day when President Bush came to Union and distributed the Academic Presidential Fitness Awards, the district was not taking standardized tests and the scores were not ranked around the state as they are now. He said that he understood that the private schools are not either. Mr. Perkins said that Dr. Caulfield was very good at public relations and when Union became the Presidential Model School District in the country there was a lot of hype but he did not feel that the

district has changed that much since then in his perception. Dr. Francis asked how many of the students that he went to school with went on to college and what were the SAT scores at that time. Mr. Perkins said he did not know what it would take to do some tracking of graduates, but some Union High School graduates have gone on to really outstanding things and some graduates that have wound up in jail but so has every other school in the country including some of the elite private schools. He said that his two sons went on to competitive college educations and did well and they have pointed out the benefits of having gone to a school like Union High School both academically and socially. Mr. Perkins said that his sons have commented that they were socially better able to handle the college situation than the students who went to the college prep schools.

MR. NUFRIO ENTERED THE MEETING AT 5:08 P.M .

Ms. Conti said that her daughter also went through the Union School System and she frequently remarks how she benefited going through the school system. She said that one of the reasons her daughter made a decision to stay at Union High School because of the range of programs that are available at the high school and you can't get in the other schools and in smaller settings. Ms. Conti said that her daughter also commented that when she went to college she was more prepared than some of the other students around her that were attending college because of the social experiences that she had in a larger district. She said that academically her daughter felt very prepared when she went on to college. Ms. Conti said that the programs at the high school are very rigorous and she felt that the Union School System was truly a family experience. She said that she worked at the high school and she can tell everyone that the students are polite; they go out of their way to help other students who may have challenges and she could not ask to be working in an environment with kinder more generous people. Ms. Conti said that she truly believed in the town and first and foremost the educational system.

Mr. Nufrio said that he was a realtor and he saw some very obvious discrepancies of the "mean house/home value" that were assigned to the districts in the article in question. He said that the article was correlating the "values" to the "grade given". Mr. Nufrio said that he always questions a grading system that does not present the substance by which it was graded and when a comparison was done to home values that were so obviously wrong. He said that being a realtor he has become pretty good at knowing values in the various areas of the state and this article listed numbers that were really out there. Mr. Nufrio said that he thought that if the writer of this article could make those kinds of errors, think what other mistakes he made. He said that when Union was compared or shown to have a lower grade than another district that is widely known as one of the worst districts in the state but they came out with a higher grade. Mr. Nufrio said that he thought that after 40 years he knew the educational values of districts throughout the state. He said that New Jersey ranks up there with many states in the country.

Dr. Francis said that he has two sons who are in elementary school and he felt that he had "skin in the game". He said that he did not want to have to send his children to another school when they get older because he was paying his taxes and he wanted his children to go to school in Union. Dr. Francis said that he felt that if he could speak out on certain things that he thought could be improved in the school system, this would benefit his children. He said that the district starts testing students in the third grade and it seems that the district tends to focus on how to take a test rather than giving them the basic knowledge about reading, writing and arithmetic so that they can become critical thinkers and solve problems on their own without just trying to score very well on a test. Dr. Francis said that when he was a young student, his teachers taught him the basics and then he had to perform. He said that he did not have a test in third grade but he does remember taking the High School Proficiency Test to graduate. Dr. Francis said that he wanted students to learn the "basics" and make sure that students understand what they need to learn before they move on to the next grade. He said that some students get behind in the lower grades and this continues on through the high school. Dr. Francis said he did not want students to be "just pushed through" the grades.

Dr. Francis said that his older daughter who has already graduated from high school, used to do homework until 9 or 10 at night. He said that he had to help her with many of the assignments and he wondered why he was spending all of this time going over material which should have been gone over during class time. Dr. Francis said that his daughter had commented that there were 8 or 9 periods during the school day. He said that he did not remember having that many when he attended school. Dr. Francis said that the periods are too short (about 30 minutes each) and there is not much teaching time available. He said that the high school does offer a lot and he was not against that but he thought that when it comes to the CORE subjects there should be enough time in the period to learn in school.

Mrs. Gaglione said that over the years she has spoken to many of the football players from the high school because her son was on the team and she would ask them how their math scores were; what were their issues with math; how were they doing; if they were failing, did they think it was the teacher. She said that she agreed that the math period was too short of a time and if a student is taught something during the day, why when it came time to do homework they did not have a clue. Mrs. Gaglione said that the students should be able to ask questions of the teacher during the class so that understood what they were being taught so that the parents didn't have to do it afterschool. She said that double periods of English and mathematics have been instituted at the middle schools and the high school to give more time for instruction. Mrs. Gaglione said that she agreed with Dr. Francis that longer periods are required so that students have the opportunity to ask questions; there cannot be fear in a student's head that there is no time to ask questions or you a "dumb" to ask a question in the classroom. She said that some of these changes were brought about by the State coming in and looking at the middle schools and saying "it's not good enough".

Mr. Nufrio said that Mrs. Gaglione and he were part of the Negotiation Committee and the committee was hoping to modify the lengths of the classes. He said that the periods are quite short right now but it is not as easy as just saying "let's just do it"; there is contractual language that has to be dealt with and resolved. Mr. Nufrio said that the issues can be resolved but it has to be a mutual understanding. He said on the other side of the coin, there are experts in the field who say "I can teach that in 30 minutes, I don't need 45 minutes. Mr. Nufrio said that if the district is going to have the constraints of shorter periods, the district has to strengthen and build on the delivery of the subject matter. He said that a lot of things are being done right now statewide and nationally to do that; workshops are addressing some of these issues where a concept can be taught in ten minutes. Mr. Nufrio said that is the expertise where Dr. Lishak, Mr. Tatum and Dr. Martin will "go to the well" and draw as much from it as possible and share it with the staff so that they become the "experts". He said that he was late to the evening and that was because he was watching President Obama's speech; he said it was very inspiring. Mr. Nufrio said that the President said something about teachers as taking up where Dr. Martin Luther King and others left off; that is continuing to march and the President made references to several categories of work and professions and one of them was teachers. He said that the President said "the teacher who is in the classroom and sees all those students as her own, she is continuing the march." Mr. Nufrio said that it is not just enough to "see them as your own" now you want to teach them everything you possibly can in the amount of time that is allotted, permitted or contractually agreed upon. He said that teachers must become "experts".

Ms. Cooley said that the clusters that were started at the middle schools with the 90 minute math and English periods are a great thing. She said that her daughter was in the Honors classes and not everything is being taught in those 90 minutes. Ms. Cooley said that more than half of the class complained that the teacher would just say "I don't want to hear from you. Don't ask me any questions. Read it; it's in the book." She said that she is a math major and she can try to figure out the work to help her daughter but when she would explain how to do the work, her daughter would say "You're teaching me the old fashioned way. I can't bring this to school. It's not the way that she wants it." Ms. Cooley said that if more than half of the class is having a problem, the parents from that class need to get together and sit down with the principal to address the issue that is occurring in the classroom. She said that at Open House or a Parent/Teacher conference, the teacher will make everything beautiful but then your children comes home and constantly complains about what is going on in the classroom.

Ms. Cooley said that several parents approached her when her daughter was in the fifth grade and asked if she was planning to send her to Burnet. She said that her older daughter went to Burnet and she had no issues there. Ms. Cooley told parents if they had any doubts, they should go to the website and pull up a presentation that Mr. Salvatore made and that should answer your questions about Burnet. She said that there were many good things going on in the middle schools there is no reason why students have to be transferred to private schools.

Mr. Perkins said that he wished there was television coverage for this discussion because he felt it really has been productive and refreshing. He felt that the entire board agreed. Mr. Perkins said that the problem with having 90 minute periods was that 90 minutes of Teacher A and 90 minutes of Teacher B are unequal. He said that a particular student will get all that he or she needs in 15 minutes and some students will not get what they need in 90 minutes. Mr. Perkins said that students are all pushed into the same mold and there are a lot of things that are forgotten. He said that he recently heard a lecture of the absolute importance of sleep. Mr. Perkins asked how many students come home and have to do three or four hours of homework after spending the whole day in the classroom and it is said that "they need the time". He said they did not need the time but they needed the insightfulness. Mr. Perkins said that he and Dr. Martin got into a discussion the other day about what it was that the district trying to do as educators; what is the whole education industry (which is one of the most valuable in the country in terms of dollars) trying to do. He felt that we were trying to educate a nation of people who are self-reliant and can productive. Mr. Perkins said that people from other countries who want to make money usually come to the United States. He said that the creativity that this nation has is one of the goals of education and maybe students don't need to know some of the stuff that they are being tested on. Mr. Perkins said every person can be productive if they find the right "nitch" and one of the principal goals is not to increase test scores but to make sure that the district has round pegs going into round holes and square pegs going into square holes to the extent that it can.

Mr. Perkins said that some of the individual goals such as the use of Hamilton School that Mr. Arminio brought up should continue to be discussed.

Mr. Nufrio asked if there has been anything said about the possibility of extracting the ninth graders from the high school and relocating them. Mr. Perkins said that there was some discussion about that issue before Mr. Nufrio arrived at the meeting. Mr. Nufrio said that the board should not do this as a decision solely based on a few thoughts or comments from the board. He said that it should come from lengthy and very valuable discussions among the administrators. Mr. Nufrio said that it should be a recommendation that the board needs to consider and there should be multiple reasons for doing it. He said that he was the administrator of such a school for about 10 or 12 years and he could make a list of pros and cons but after about 13 years, everything reverted back. Mr. Nufrio said in that district, taking the ninth graders out of the high school did not work and he would like to see all of the reasons "pros" and "cons" before any decision is made.

Mr. Perkins asked if any board members had comments before the meeting was adjourned. Mrs. Gaglione said that the board still has not established any goals. She said that everyone has dedicated themselves to this board. Mrs. Gaglione said that this issue will have to be included in future worksession agendas. She said that this can't keep getting put off. Mrs. Gaglione said that the board "bit off a lot of things over the past couple of years".

Mr. Nufrio asked if the board could consider identifying the goals and attack one at a time each month. Mr. Perkins suggested that the board come up with a goal and he felt that one was talked about tonight and that was how to address the quality of the education in the district, in the high school particularly and by June of 2014, the board will have made a decision on the future of Union High School and whether it will remain a four year school. Mr. Nufrio said that a decision would have to be made much earlier than June, possibly by March of 2014. Mr. Perkins said that the use of Hamilton School is dependent upon the decision that the board makes with regard to the high school. He agreed with Mr. Arminio about completing the review of the policy manual but he did not know how urgent that really was. Mr. Perkins said that the board should make a decision on the high school first before any decisions are made on what to do with Hamilton School. He said that he felt goal number one in this school district was to continue its operation as a school district and fulfilling the needs of the students without catastrophic problems. Mr. Perkins said that any goal that he has often spoken about was the use of the lessons learned from the Hurricane Sandy experience. He said that the district has come a long way but there is still a long way to go. Mr. Perkins said that he and Mr. Wiggins have had many discussions about temporary generators on wheels and what the district will do with the food stuffs in the buildings. He said that everything that he reads is pointing to the area having another catastrophic event within the next few years and the district must be prepared for it. Mr. Perkins said what about the student who is a computer genius; what is the district doing to accommodate that student? He said that the board has to review all of these possibilities and the board needs to come up with some solid decisions. Mr. Perkins said that the goals that have been established by the New Jersey School Boards Association are pretty vague and ambiguous. He said that increasing attendance by students and staff as well increasing performance in the schools are the types of goals that he could live with. Mr. Perkins said that he felt the board needed to be somewhat flexible but it seemed to him what the district does on a daily basis is really important, is very good work and the district does it as well as anybody.

Mr. Nufrio said that he agreed with Mr. Perkins because education is a profession of constant evolution. He said that what you might believe today is going to work by Friday, come Thursday afternoon there is a whole new approach or a whole new philosophy. Mr. Nufrio said that he agreed the board should have attainable goals, identify those, get them done and at the same time the "factory has to keep working" and the board is the "factory manager". He said that if the product doesn't come out and the manager is still working on a goal for next year and if this was a business, it would be bankrupt. Mr. Nufrio said that the board has to identify attainable goals, the more important, pressing issues, those that will directly impact the students, the staff and the community, all others become extraneous goals; not that they are not important but they are superfluous and are not as important as the attainable goals. He said that you can go crazy going thinking about this profession and over the past forty years he has seen more than ten different approaches; some of them were repetitive and yet, they went back and did them, even if they failed the first time.

Mr. Perkins urged the board to keep this discussion going in the future.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

There being no further business before the board, it was moved by Mr. Nufrio seconded by Mr. Galante that the meeting be adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

AYE: Mr. Arminio, Ms. Cooley, Dr. Francis, Mrs. Gaglione, Mr. Galante,
Mrs. McNeil, Mr. Nufrio and Mr. Perkins

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION WAS CARRIED

Respectfully submitted

**JAMES J. DAMATO
BOARD SECRETARY**