

**TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION  
ORGANIZATION MEETING MINUTES  
JANUARY 4, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.**

**NOTICE OF MEETING:**

**TO ALL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS:**

The organization meeting of the Board of Education of the Township of Union was held on Thursday, January 4, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. at the Union High School Library, 2350 North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Union, New Jersey pursuant to the notice sent to each member. Action was taken.

Mrs. Yolanda Koon, the Board Secretary, called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Mrs. Koon facilitated the meeting until the Board President is selected. The Board President will proceed with facilitating the rest of the meeting.

Mrs. Koon led the Board and audience members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Senator Cryan administered the oath of office to the newly elected Board members:

1. Michael Cohan
2. Elsie Conteh-Mackey
3. Ronnie McDowell

**PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:**

Ms. Dixiana Carbonell, Mr. Michael Cohan, Mrs. Elsie Conteh-Mackey, Mr. Ronnie McDowell, Ms. Marissa McKenzie, Mrs. Nancy Minneci, Ms. Chastity Santana, Mrs. Kimberly Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Mary Lynn Williams

**ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:**

None

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:**

Dr. Gerald Benaquista, Dr. Gretel Perez, Mrs. Yolanda Koon

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Mr. Christopher Buggy, Esq.

Mrs. Cappiello read the district's mission statement.

Mrs. Koon read the statement required under the "Open Public Meetings Act" that adequate notice was published in The Union County Local Source, The Star Ledger and/or Tap into Union, posted in the Administration Building and the Clerk's Office of the Township; a copy of which is on file in the office of the Board Secretary.

Mrs. Koon stated the Board's attorney will provide the process for the nomination of office of presidency.

Mr. Buggy stated that any Board member can nominate a candidate and a second is not required. Voting will take place by verbal roll call vote after the nominations are closed. When more than one person has been nominated, the Board will vote on candidates in the order in which they were nominated. If no candidate receives a majority vote of the Board present, the procedure will continue until someone receives a majority vote. If the Board is unable to do so, the meeting will be adjourned and the Executive County Superintendent will appoint individuals to those positions.

#### ORGANIZATION:

Mrs. Koon called for nominations for the Office of President.

Moved by Ms. McKenzie that Chastity Santana be nominated for the Office of President

#### ROLL CALL:

AYE: Ms. Carbonell, Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Mackey, Mr. McDowell, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Ms. Santana, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Ms. Santana assumed the chair of Board President.

Ms. Santana thanked everyone for entrusting her in this role. She stated she has a vision and so does the Board for change, growth and improvements. To grow Union to be where it needs to be and laying the groundwork for the future Farmers. She stated that we will work cohesively.

Ms. Santana called for nominations for the Office of Vice President.

Moved by Mrs. Minneci that Ms. Carbonell be nominated for the Office of Vice President.

#### ROLL CALL:

AYE: Ms. Carbonell, Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Mackey, Mr. McDowell, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams, Ms. Santana

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Ms. Carbonell stated that she is looking forward to working with the Board and the community. She thanked the community for entrusting the Board and we will work together for our students.

Ms. Santana spoke about Ms. Vernell Wright who was a former teacher/department supervisor/principal of the school district and who passed away on December 23, 2023. Ms. Santana asked for a moment of silence.

**COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC (on resolutions and all other matters):**

Ann Margaret Shannon stated UTEA President, Happy New Year. She stated she is excited, appreciates the new faces and feels a positive presence and looking forward to making great strides in the future.

David Arminio stated congratulations and there is an event this Sunday at the Caldwell Parsonage.

**ADOPT NJSBA CODE OF ETHICS**

Moved by Ms. McKenzie, seconded by Mrs. Minneci, that the Board adopt the School Code of Ethics for the 2024 Calendar Year:

WHEREAS, each School Board Member is responsible to read and become familiar with the Code of Ethics for School Board Members; the Code of Ethics became part of the School Ethics Act on July 26, 2001. Questions about the Policy should be directed to the District Board Secretary. If the Board Secretary is unable to answer the question, you may be directed to the School Ethics Commission from whom you may request an advisory opinion; and

WHEREAS, the following Code of Ethics for Board Members, pursuant to district Policy 0142, is set forth as a guide to conflict-of-interest situations and unethical activity for Board Members.

**CODE OF ETHICS FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS**

- a) I will uphold and enforce all laws, state board rules and regulations, and court orders pertaining to schools. Desired changes should be brought about only through legal and ethical procedures;
- b) I will make decisions in terms of the educational welfare of children and will seek to develop and maintain public schools which meet the individual needs of all children regardless of their ability, race, creed, sex or social standing;
- c) I will confine my board action to policymaking, planning and appraisal and I will help to frame policies and plans only after the board has consulted those who will be affected by them;
- d) I will behave toward my fellow board members with the respect due their office-- demonstrating courtesy, decorum and fair play at all public meetings and in all public statements;
- e) I will refrain from inappropriate conduct in public meetings and in making public statements, refraining from any disparagement of my fellow board members or others on a personal, social, racial or religious basis;
- f) I will carry out my responsibility, not to administer the schools, but, together with my fellow board members, to see that they are well run;

- g) I will recognize that authority rests with the board of education and will make no personal promises nor take any private action which may compromise the board;
- h) I will refuse to surrender my independent judgment to special interest or partisan political groups or to use the schools for personal gain or for the gain of friends;
- i) I will hold confidential all matters pertaining to the schools which, if disclosed, would needlessly injure individuals or the schools. But in all other matters, I will provide accurate information and, in concert with my fellow board members, interpret to the staff the aspirations of the community for its schools;
- j) I will vote to appoint the best qualified personnel available after consideration of the recommendation of the superintendent;
- k) I will support and protect school personnel in proper performance of their duties;
- l) I will refer all complaints to the superintendent and will act on such complaints at public meetings only after failure of an administrative solution.

The board shall see that all members of the board receive training in understanding and adhering to this code of ethics and shall discuss it annually at a regularly scheduled public meeting. Each member shall sign documentation that he/she has received a copy of it and has read and understood it.

**DISCUSSION:**

None

**ROLL CALL:**

AYE: Ms. Carbonell, Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Mackey, Mr. McDowell, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams, Ms. Santana

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

**MOTION CARRIED**

**ADOPT ROBERTS RULES OF ORDER**

Moved by Ms. Carbonell, seconded by Mrs. Williams, that the Board approve to adopt Roberts Rules of Order as the official procedure manual to be used to conduct meetings for the 2024 calendar year.

**DISCUSSION:**

None

**ROLL CALL:**

AYE: Ms. Carbonell, Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Mackey, Mr. McDowell, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams, Ms. Santana

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

**MOTION CARRIED**

**APPROVE MEETING NIGHTS**

Moved by Mr. Cohan, seconded by Mrs. Minneci, that the Board approve the schedule of committee meetings, work sessions and regular meetings be adopted in accordance with the schedule, appended to the minutes; and be it further moved that copies be posted in the

Administration Building and with the Township Clerk and that copies be sent to the Star Ledger and the Union County Local Source for publication.

**DISCUSSION:**

None

**ROLL CALL:**

**AYE:** Ms. Carbonell, Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Mackey, Mr. McDowell, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams, Ms. Santana

**NAY:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**MOTION CARRIED**

**APPROVE POLICY MANUAL**

Moved by Mrs. Mackey, seconded by Mr. McDowell, that the Board approve the Policy Manual of the Township of Union Board of Education presently in effect be hereby readopted.

**DISCUSSION:**

None

**ROLL CALL:**

**AYE:** Ms. Carbonell, Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Mackey, Mr. McDowell, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams, Ms. Santana

**NAY:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**MOTION CARRIED**

Upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following policies were added to the agenda and moved by Mrs. Scott-Hayden, seconded by Mrs. Williams, for first reading:

**POL-1. POLICY 0142 -BOARD MEMBER QUALIFICATIONS, PROIBITED ACTS AND CODE OF ETHICS (M)**

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

**POL-2. POLICY 8454 – MANAGEMENT OF PEDICULOSIS**

Approve Policy 8454 – Management of Pediculosis, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

**DISCUSSION:**

Dr. Benaquista stated Policy 0142 – this policy references “two years after a members retirement, resignation or removal from Board membership”. The State statute is “6 months” and therefore, would like to update the policy to be in compliance with the State statute.

Policy 8454 – this policy does not match the district’s Medical Plan Handbook and therefore will be updated to comply with the handbook.

ROLL CALL:

AYE: Ms. Carbonell, Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Mackey, Mr. McDowell, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams, Ms. Santana

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

**APPROVE DESIGNATION OF OFFICIAL NEWSPAPERS**

Moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Ms. McKenzie, that the Board approve adoption of the formal resolution appended to the minutes designating (a) the Union County Local Source and the Star Ledger as newspapers to receive notice of meetings and (b) Tap Into Union as the electronic newspaper to receive notice of meetings and fixing charges for notices to the public meetings in the amount of \$60 for 2024.

DISCUSSION:

None

ROLL CALL:

AYE: Ms. Carbonell, Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Mackey, Mr. McDowell, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams, Ms. Santana

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

**APPROVE DESIGNATION OF INTERNET WEBSITE FOR OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION**

Moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Mrs. Scott-Hayden, that the Board approve the adoption of the formal resolution designating the Township of Union Board of Education's internet website ([www.twpunionschools.org](http://www.twpunionschools.org)) for official notification pursuant to the New Jersey local unit pay-to-play law, in accordance with the information appended to the minutes.

DISCUSSION:

None

ROLL CALL:

AYE: Ms. Carbonell, Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Mackey, Mr. McDowell, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams, Ms. Santana

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

**APPROVE DESIGNATION OF DEPOSITORIES FOR FUNDS OF THE TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION (School Activity Funds)**

Moved by Mrs. Scott-Hayden, seconded by Mrs. Minneci, that the Board approve designation of Connect One Bank, Citizens Bank, Wells Fargo Bank and Unity Bank as

depositories for funds of the Township of Union Board of Education as currently maintained, in accordance with the list appended to the minutes.

**DISCUSSION:**

None

**ROLL CALL:**

**AYE:** Ms. Carbonell, Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Mackey, Mr. McDowell, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams, Ms. Santana

**NAY:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**MOTION CARRIED**

**APPROVE AUTHORIZATION OF DEPOSITORY BANKS TO HONOR AND CHARGE ACCOUNTS OF TOWNSHIP OF UNION BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Moved by Mrs. Scott-Hayden, seconded by Mrs. Minneci, that the Board approve authorization of the following depository banks to honor and to charge the accounts of the Township of Union Board of Education and all Board of Education checks and drafts bearing the stamp or perforation commonly known as a facsimile signature of the Treasurer of School Monies and the President of the Board of Education and that checks and drafts of the various Board of Education accounts be signed by the designated officers, in accordance with the list appended to the minutes.

**DISCUSSION:**

None

**ROLL CALL:**

**AYE:** Ms. Carbonell, Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Mackey, Mr. McDowell, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams, Ms. Santana

**NAY:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**MOTION CARRIED**

**APPROVE AUTHORIZATION TO SCHOOL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR TO APPROVE PAYMENT OF BILLS BETWEEN MEETINGS**

Moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Ms. McKenzie, that the Board approve authorization to the School Business Administrator to approve payment of bill(s) between Board meetings on an as needed basis, in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:19-4.1 for the 2024 calendar year.

**DISCUSSION:**

None

**ROLL CALL:**

**AYE:** Ms. Carbonell, Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Mackey, Mr. McDowell, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams, Ms. Santana

**NAY:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**MOTION CARRIED**

**APPROVE LIST OF FINANCIAL VENDORS**

Moved by Mrs. Minneci, seconded by Ms. McKenzie, that the Board approve the list of financial vendors (including flex-spending, 403(b) companies, etc.) doing business with the Township of Union Board of Education, in accordance with the list appended to the minutes.

**DISCUSSION:**

None

**ROLL CALL:**

AYE: Ms. Carbonell, Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Mackey, Mr. McDowell, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams, Ms. Santana

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None

**NEW BUSINESS**

Mrs. Minneci welcomed the new Board members and congratulated the Board President and Vice President and Dr. Benaquista. Let's have a great year.

Mrs. Williams welcomed the new Board members and stated we have a lot to do but we will do it.

Mrs. Scott-Hayden welcomed the new Board members and congratulated the Board President and Vice President and she is looking forward to working with Dr. Benaquista.

Ms. McKenzie welcomed and congratulated the new Board members and the Board President and Vice President. She stated she is looking forward to serving with the Board.

Mr. Cohan stated he will be fully present for the community, the students and the district. It is a journey of service. He also thanked Senator Cryan, his family, mother and wife.

Dr. Benaquista congratulated the Board President and Vice President. He stated we will continue onward and he is looking forward to the journey together.

Mrs. Mackey stated thank you to all. It has been a journey and for being an advocate for special education students. She stated she is looking forward to working with Dr. Benaquista.

Mr. McDowell stated thank you to everyone for this opportunity and he is looking forward to what we will accomplish. He also stated we have the knowledge and commitment to get things done.



**MOTION TO ADJOURN:**

There being no further business before the Board in public session it was moved by Mrs. Scott-Hayden, seconded by Mrs. Williams, that the meeting be adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

AYE: Ms. Carbonell, Mr. Cohan, Mrs. Mackey, Mr. McDowell, Ms. McKenzie, Mrs. Minneci, Mrs. Scott-Hayden, Mrs. Williams, Ms. Santana

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

*Yolanda Koon*

YOLANDA KOON  
BOARD SECRETARY

