UNION TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION

WORKSESSION MINUTES – October 14, 2014

Meeting held at James M. Caulfield Administration Building, 2369 Morris Avenue, Union, New Jersey at 7:00 p.m. on October 14, 2014.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL: Mr. David Arminio, Dr. Guy Francis, Mr. Richard Galante, Mr. Thomas Layden, Mr. Steven Le, Mr. Vito Nufrio, Mr. Francis Perkins, President, and Mr. Angel Salcedo

ABSENT AT ROLL CALL: Ms. Lois Jackson

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

Ms. Conti led the board and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Damato read the statement required under the “Open Public Meetings Act” a copy of which is on file in the office of the Secretary.

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

Superintendent's Report - Mr. Tatum said that next Tuesday, October 21st the annual New Jersey ASK Perfect Score Recognition Ceremony will be held at 5:30 p.m. at the Union High School auditorium. He said that student in grades 2 through 8 will receive certificates of recognition for achieving a “perfect score” of 300 on the NJASK assessment. Mr. Tatum said that over the past four years, the district has seen an increase in the number of students who have received a perfect score in either reading or mathematics. He said that in 2011 there were 137 students; in 2012 there were 131 students; in 2013 there were 218 and in 2014, 209 students will receive the honor. Mr. Tatum said that some students have achieved this level of recognition in both reading and mathematics and many of them have had a perfect score more than once. He said that parents are invited to attend the ceremony and light refreshments will be served at its conclusion. Mr. Tatum hoped that all board members could be present to support the academic success of these students.

Mr. Tatum said that there has been a lot of controversy over the past two days about the President’s visit tomorrow afternoon. He wanted to comment that the purpose behind the abbreviated schedule for tomorrow really is to facilitate getting students home on buses safely before roads are closed in the district. Mr. Tatum said that dismissal times will be as follows: Jefferson School will dismiss at 1:45 p.m. (which is 30 minutes prior to the regular dismissal time); Burnet and Kawameeh will dismiss at 2:05 p.m.; all elementary schools will dismiss at 2:30 and the high school will be dismissed at its regularly scheduled time of 2:35 p.m. He said that the district is under the understanding that at approximately 3:40 a large portion of the streets surrounding the five points will start to be closed off. Mr. Tatum said that he received correspondence today which indicated what particular streets were being closed and the district’s regular dismissal times would not facilitate getting everyone home in time.

Mr. Nufrio said that he had heard that Secret Service could be stopping vehicles in the area and perhaps the district can insure that any drivers who go into the area have identification to prove that they are employees of the Board of Education. Mr. Tatum said that there was a meeting held yesterday which was attended by Dr. Lishak and Ms. Calderone, the Director of Transportation; he said that Sgt. Christie from the Union Police Department has insured the district that all buses will be permitted to go through detoured routes. He did not think there would be any problems at all.

Mr. Tatum said that the district was just informed about this event over the weekend and he felt that the district was prepared for this event.

Mr. Nufrio said that he applauded Dr. Lishak and Mr. Tatum for coming up with the dismissal schedule. He said that it will ensure that the students will have almost the entire school day for instruction. Mr. Tatum said that he will be sending out another message tomorrow as the first message which was sent was not clear and there have been some changes to the message as well.

Mr. Perkins said that this is an event to which there is attached a certain amount of sensitivity with respect to security. He said that the district and the administrators in the district have spent a lot of time and effort in meeting with the police department over the years to discuss a number of matters, including security drills, etc. Mr. Perkins said that he is proud of the relationship that the district has developed with the police department and he really appreciated the police department’s cooperation with the district when we need them.

Dr. Francis asked if the public would be allowed to get close to the area and if streets are closed to vehicles, does that mean that there will not be pedestrian traffic allowed in the area. Mr. Perkins said that he had no idea about that. Mr. Damato said that there will be a “frozen” zone set up.

Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Perkins indicated that the following minutes would be approved at next week’s meeting: (1) August 5, 2014 - Planning Session; (2) August 19, 2014 - Regular Meeting; (3) August 19, 2014 - Executive Session; (4) September 3, 2014 - Special Meeting; (5) September 9, 2014 – Worksession and (6) September 16, 2014 – Regular Meeting. He requested that the board members review the minutes and if there were any corrections they should be communicated to Mrs. Ditri before the regular meeting.

Education/Student Discipline Committee

Dr. Francis presented the Education/Student Discipline Committee resolutions.

Mr. Arminio asked about all the new classes that were being established. Ms. Conte said that these are replacement/support classes for class resource.

DISCUSSION ITEM:

Health and Wellness Proposal with Retail Dietitian (Burnet Middle School and ShopRite of Union) – Ms. Conti said that a large part of the thanks for this new program goes to Mr. Salvatore, the principal of Burnet Middle School. She said that ShopRite brought to his attention a program that certainly could be utilized in the classes that use the Community Based Instruction approach using pre-vocational and life skills. Ms. Conti said that this is a health and wellness proposal with a retail dietitian from ShopRite. She said that a lot of the students that are in the Community Based Instruction Program also have already gone out to Stop and Shop and they have already utilized supermarket skills and retail spending. Ms. Conti said that this program will develop nutrition and culinary skills. She said that during week one of the program the dietitian will come to visit Burnet Middle School; an introduction of ShopRite will be presented as well as indicating what a retail dietitian does; the students will identify different food groups and the objectives then would be that the students would be able to describe what ShopRite was; was the retail dietitian does in the grocery store and they will be able to identify the five food groups along with three foods in each of those groups. Ms. Conti said that this was important because the students would be building on those skills each week.

Ms. Conti said that during week two the students will visit the store on Route 22 in Union; the students will have a tasting tour through the ShopRite of Union (she said that there will be an in-house/out of school field trip and make sure that any student allergies are covered). Ms. Conti said that the students will have to identify which food groups are found in which departments of the store and they will have to taste and describe five different groups in the grocery store.

Ms. Conti said that during week three, the dietitian will return to Burnet Middle School and introduce the students to food safety principles. She said that the students will be able to identify the four pillars of food safety and introduction to basic cooking skills. Ms. Conti said that the students will be able to identify components of a recipe, accurately measure ingredients in both dry and liquid format and follow the steps of a recipe.

Ms. Conti said that during week four, the students will go back to the store and they will receive an introduction to food shopping. She said that the students will compare unit pricing, select better values, learn the process of food shopping, use a shopping list to “map out” a plan, use food safety skills while shopping and go through the checkout process.

Ms. Conti said that during week five the students will visit the store again and they will be given a $50 budget in the form of a gift card which will be provided by ShopRite and the students will be given one hour to shop for the groceries on their list. She said than the dietitian will return to Burnet Middle School and using the ingredients the students purchased the day before, the dietitian will help students in making recipes that they will then serve or sell to the staff.

Ms. Conti said that this program will teach functional skills such as math, reading, health and it will help the students’ generalized skills in real life settings.

Mr. Salcedo asked if this program would be open to all students in the school. Ms. Conti said that she was sure that the program could be expanded, but right now it will only be offered to a select group of students. She said that she could see it being offered to many different classes because ShopRite is looking to expand its relationship with the school system.

Mr. Nufrio said that in the district that he formerly worked in had a junior ShopRite in the school. He said that it was initiated by ShopRite for students to learn all the skills related to the store up to cashiering. Mr. Nufrio said that this was primarily for the special education students. He said that this was a regular program that the students would attend and receive a grade for. Mr. Nufrio said that the district did not have to provide any additional funds other than the initial set up the ShopRite and he was mentioning this because maybe this was something that this district could look into. He said that the product that was in the ShopRite was sold within the school by staff, students and parents. Mr. Nufrio said that this program was very successful. Ms. Conti said that the special education students in the district as they get older are trained to do more specific job duties at other work sites. She said that if students show interest in a specific area, she likes to have a job coach get them involved in that area. Mr. Nufrio said that many students did internships before they graduated and after graduation, by recommendation of the teacher and the special education department, depending on the student’s handicap, they were employed at ShopRite. Ms. Conti said it is the goal of the district to ensure that after graduation students can be as independent as possible and this is something that the district would like to explore.

Fiscal and Planning Committee:

Mr. Layden said that the committee met earlier in the evening and he presented the agenda items.

Mr. Damato said that the bond refunding resolutions are very similar to refinancing the mortgage on a house when the interest rates drop. He said that the bonds have a call feature which allows the district to pay them off without a pre-payment penalty and refund the bonds. Mr. Damato said that it is particularly cost effective for the district to do it. He said that the district will be saving about $50,000 per year for the next ten years. Mr. Damato said that the district is proceeding with the refunding procedure and he thought that the sale of the bonds would take place sometime in January. Mr. Vieira said that the current rate is 5% and the district’s financial advisors are saying that it can be lowered to about 2%. He said that there are some fees involved approximately $100,000. Mr. Damato said that there are fees of issuance and fees for the financial advisor services but all of these fees are factored before the district comes up with a present value savings and the present value savings is what will be seen in the form and sale resolution. He said that the $50,000 per year for ten years is the amount after all the fees have been accounted for. Mr. Damato said that there are significant fees such as bond counsel fees, financial advisor fees and auditor fees. He said that even though the district’s audit is just being completed now, the auditors must do a special report which is included in the official statement. Mr. Damato said that the auditors must also issue an opinion about the financial health of Union Board of Education.

Mr. Nufrio asked if the fees are for processes that are mandated by the State. Mr. Damato said that the district must follow every scenario that the State lays out for us. He said that in the refunding of a bond issue, there are certain requirements that must be fulfilled. Mr. Damato said that not every attorney can issue a bond opinion; it must be done by a bond attorney who is listed in the official bond attorney registry. He said that this is a very select group for a very specialized field. Mr. Damato said that the district must hire the people who specialize in this type of transaction because the district will get a much better rate on the bonds and when buyers look at the bonds and see an opinion from a law firm that is a recognized bond counsel, they have more comfort about the tax exempt status of those bonds. He said that the bonds have a tax exempt feature so that the buyer of the bond would not have to pay income tax on the interest earned on the bond. Mr. Damato said that all of the opinions must be in conformance with the law and the code to enjoy the tax exempt status. He said all of the procedures must be done with 100% certainty before the actual bond sale is completed.

Mr. Nufrio asked how certain was Mr. Damato that the bonds would be purchased. Mr. Damato said that there are not many things that he can guarantee as the board’s attorney but he would guarantee that the bonds will be purchased. He said that there is an insatiable market for tax exempt debt. Mr. Damato said that he did meet with a financial advisor that provided the district with a proposal and it was mentioned that if the bond is less than 10 million, the bonds will be “bank qualified” which means that a bank, investment company, etc. can buy the bonds and get the tax exempt status. He said that they always do this after the first of the year because they have new limits that they receive on the first of the year. Mr. Damato said that this means there will be a lot more bidders and that is why he would like to arrange so that the bond sale is in January and he felt the district would get a very favorable rate because there are so many more bidders in the market trying to get a piece of the debt. Mr. Nufrio said that he assumed these were ten (10) year renewable bonds. Mr. Damato said that they were ten year bonds.

Mr. Arminio asked Ms. Conti if there was any chance that the district would not receive the grant referred to in resolution F-15. Ms. Conti said that it looked promising but she has told the organization offering the grant that she had a specific process to follow. She said that there has been a preliminary review of the grant application and the grantor is very happy with it, from the feedback that she has received.

Operations Committee:

Mr. Layden presented the agenda items for the operations committee.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Rental Fee Waiver Request from Holy Spirit School for use of school gymnasiums for their 2014-2015 sports program – Mr. Layden said that he understood that this waiver has been granted in the past. He said that Holy Spirit will only be charged for utilities and custodians, if necessary.

Rental Fee Waiver Request from St. Michael’s School for use of Union High School Track/Field from on Fridays from March 6th through May 29th, 2015 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. – Mr. Layden said that he did not remember the district getting this request in the past. Mr. Damato said that St. Michael’s will be using the track and they have never made this request in the past. He said that he spoke to Ms. Ionta last week and she said that she had no conflicts during that period of time. Mr. Damato said that if a conflict arises, St. Michael’s was advised that they would have to cancel their track and field for whatever event was scheduled at Union High School. He said that Ms. Ionta recommended that this item be put on the agenda for the regular meeting.

Mr. Salcedo said that he had a question on the usage of the track; what if a child from St. Michael’s gets injured while running on the track; who would be liable? Mr. Damato said that if the facts of how the injury occurred for example if there was a crack in the track surface which caused the student to trip and fall or there was something on the track and the track was not properly maintained which caused the injury, the district would be liable for the maintenance issue. He said that the district requires all renters to present an insurance policy in a format which has been approved by the district’s insurance broker which names the Union Board of Education as an additional insured party. Mr. Damato said that this means that the insurance that the renter provides is primary and the first to pay on any claim. Mr. Salcedo asked if there was a way to put something in place where a renter, if they are getting a waiver of rental fees, also signs a full liability statement to take full responsibility for whoever is brought in by the renter. He said that he wanted to protect the district as much as possible. Mr. Salcedo said that this might deter renters from requesting rental fee waivers and generating income to the district. Mr. Perkins said that he was not sure if the liability posture changes whether someone is paying rent or not paying a rental fee. Mr. Damato said that Mr. Salcedo’s question points out the difference between having an actual rental agreement with a “hold harmless” clause in it. He said that the old form of rental agreement that the district had, did have such a clause contained in it. Mr. Damato said that he was not 100% familiar with how SchoolDude is organized but it was a good suggestion to consider.

Rental Fee Waiver Request from Crossroads Christian Fellowship for use of Battle Hill Gymnasium during the months of January, February and March, 2015 for volleyball/basketball program – Mr. Layden said that this group has used district facilities in the past and he did not have a problem with this request. Mr. Arminio asked how the district will know what dates they want to use the building. Mr. Vieira said that the group must enter the dates on SchoolDude and get the request approved by the principal of Battle Hill School.

Mr. Nufrio said that earlier today he spoke to Mr. Damato regarding resolution O-2 which refers to the contracts with the Y.M.C.A. for before and after care in the schools. He said that this conversation centered on issues that arose last year pertaining to how that program was experiencing difficulties. Mr. Nufrio said that he was concerned how the district was going to address the concerns. He said that Mr. Damato did receive a letter from the Y.M.C.A. detailing how they were going to attempt to rectify or correct the errors. Mr. Nufrio said that subsequently, there were discussions in one of the committees as to perhaps reassessing the program and perhaps absorbing the program into the district and utilizing certified district individuals so that the children will get the best possible service in either the before or after care situation. He hoped that this issue would be revisited at some point. Mr. Nufrio thought that the U.T.E.A. would be glad to hear that the district was offering other possible revenue for staff members. Mr. Nufrio said that the primary objective would be to afford students certified instruction as opposed to non-certified instruction. He said that the fees that parents who utilize this program are asked to pay would have to be assessed. Mr. Nufrio said that the sooner the board acts on this, the better. He said that he was hearing some disturbing “rumors” that all of the obvious problems were addressed by the Y.M.C.A. but the not so obvious ones were not or how well spent the time or quality of instruction or supervision that is provided. Mr. Perkins said that this is an appropriate topic for consideration; he felt that the education committee would be the best committee to discuss this issue.

Personnel Committee Resolutions:

Mr. Galante said that the committee met and he presented the agenda items for consideration.

Mr. Nufrio asked what a Master Technician was. Mr. Wiggins said that this does not have anything to do with the maintenance department, he said that these are the individuals who control the lighting for the plays and other activities in the auditoriums.

Approval of Bills

Mr. Perkins said that the payment of bills would be approved at the regular meeting next week.

Unfinished Business

Mr. Arminio said that at the August Planning Session the board developed goals and he thought that the board needed to prioritize and formalize the goals. He suggested that the board discuss the goals at the next worksession. Mr. Arminio said he recalled that only one of the goals, namely what to do with Hamilton School, was given a timeline but all of the others were not. He said that the board should pick out two or three goals and prioritize them. Mr. Arminio said that the goals should be adopted as “official” goals at the November regular meeting so that the board can proceed with them.

Mr. Tatum said that he had recommended at the August Planning Session that the February Planning Session be a benchmark to take a look at where the board is with the goals that were set in August and that were prioritized as goals for “year one”. He said that this would allow the remainder of school year to be used to develop a secondary plan to do whatever is necessary to achieve the goals by the end of the school year and prior to July 1st. Mr. Tatum thought that it was a good idea to have a discussion at the November worksession. He said that the district has worked on many of the goals set in August but the next step is necessary.

Mr. Nufrio said that his comment had to do with the collection of money for the school in Edison that burned. He said that he, Mr. Vieira, Mr. Tatum and Mrs. Manochio met recently to review this matter and to hear Mr. Nufrio’s requests regarding finalizing the actual numbers and how the money was or was not distributed. Mr. Nufrio said that he knew there were school supplies collected from families that were forwarded to Edison and he also learned that several of the principals took it upon themselves to forward the monies that their school may have collected. He said that there was still an outstanding amount of money being held in district accounts. Mr. Nufrio said that the former Superintendent did not execute the plan properly because he did recall a meeting at which the principal of Connecticut Farms School attended and spoke to the board about how the initiative had begun and how it was continuing. He had hoped that the former Superintendent would have taken charge, collected all of the money and perhaps included in a meeting agenda the presentation of these funds formally as a district but that did not happen. Mr. Nufrio said that he is still waiting for one final piece of information and perhaps at the next meeting, the board can decide how the remainder of the funds can be sent to Edison.

Mr. Tatum said that there has been a dollar amount determined. Mr. Nufrio said that there is still one aspect of this that Mrs. Manochio was trying to retrieve. He said that he would ask Mrs. Manochio to forward the information to all of the board members and administrators and then it can be discussed how the money will be presented. Mr. Perkins said that this is not money that was budget for Union. Mr. Vieira said that the money was raised through student fundraisers and the money is presently in student activity accounts. Mr. Perkins asked how much money is involved. Mr. Vieira said that in total there was approximately $4,000 collected and there is still about 50% of that in student activity accounts in the district. Mr. Nufrio said that the fact that the money was raised by students in the district, the funds should not have been dealt in the way it was dealt but there was no direction given to principals by the former Superintendent. He said that the students and the parents need to get some resolve as to how the money was distributed and to whom. Mr. Perkins asked if there was any question of wrongdoing with regard to the funds. Mr. Nufrio said there was not.

Mr. Salcedo asked if there was a protocol in place on what would happen if there was a student found in the district who was infected with Interovirus. Mr. Tatum said that the first thing to be done would be to alert the Township’s Health Officials and he would get Mr. Wiggins and the maintenance staff into the school to insure that the building was sanitized. He said that at that point it would be up to medical professionals to determine what the next move would be with the particular student. Mr. Tatum said that it would also be assessed if any other students had any symptoms of the particular illness. He said that in previous years the district has had situations where there has been flu and virus outbreaks when a certain number of students have been sent home with the same symptoms, the procedures are initiated. Mr. Tatum said that the fact that the present viruses are so contagious and “deadly”, the district would probably need the support of health officials. He said that the Supervisor of Nursing would be involved in the process for the safety of all of the students in the district. Mr. Tatum said that he did not know if the protocol was written down in a particular policy, but this has been the procedure that has been followed in the district over the past few years.

Mr. Wiggins said that both he and Ms. Ionta have spoken to the Health Department and the Health Department has a developed a procedure that has been distributed to all building principals in the district. Mr. Perkins said that he and Dr. Lishak have discussed the district’s emergency reaction procedures. He said that they have also met with Township and County Officials regarding emergency situations. Mr. Perkins said that the district should review the protocols with the Health Department and formalize the protocols. He said that this is an ongoing process. Dr. Lishak said that if there was a medical issue in one of the schools, the first call would be to the Health Officer in the town and the Health Officer would immediately enter the school and the direction would come from his office as the controlling official. Mr. Perkins said that the Health Officer would immediately take control and they have authoritative control of such a situation. Mr. Nufrio said that after the building has been sanitized, the Health Officer would do an inspection and if that person deems there is still a risk, they can shut down a school; that decision would not be made by the school district. Mr. Perkins said that the powers of the Health Officer are extraordinary. Mr. Tatum said that the most recent direction from the Health Department was when the Swine Flu reappeared a few years ago. He said that there was quite a bit of direction from the Township Health Officials and there were several meetings held during that time to determine what the procedures would be followed.

New Business

Mr. Arminio said that the Union High School Girls’ Cross Country Team placed second in the Conference Cross Country meet earlier in the afternoon.

Comments from the Public

Mrs. Lipstein said that with regard to resolution E-9 which refers to Charter School Tuitions which total approximately $127,000. She said that it might be a good idea to get in touch with some of the parents of these students to inquire as to why they are sending their children to Charter Schools, to see why the district is losing them.

Mrs. Lipstein said that Mr. Arminio mentioned that at the August Planning Meeting there were goals set by the board. Mr. Arminio said that the board did establish goals and he thought that they should now be prioritized and formalize the most important from the list of goals and give those target dates. Mrs. Lipstein asked if there was any community input into the goals of any input from supervisors or principals. She said that she was not able to be at the August Planning Meeting. Mr. Tatum said that there were several staff members present at that meeting and there was input from them and their input was well received. Mrs. Lipstein said that Mr. Tatum might want to have a meeting with some input so that the goals can be expanded. She said that is the way 24 carat gold boards operate. Mr. Galante said that there were members of the community present at that meeting. Mrs. Lipstein said that the community should be advised that the board has several goals and perhaps they would want to give input or have other ideas. She said that she thought it was very good that the board has planning sessions. Mr. Tatum said that the district principals have been made aware of some of the goals and he hopes to establish a districtwide planning committee which is one of the goals. He said that there will be community input. Mrs. Lipstein said that the board should let people know what will be discussed at the planning sessions.

Mrs. Lipstein said that she felt the idea of having in-house staff involved in before and aftercare at the schools is a great idea. She said that this could also serve as a form of enrichment that could be available to everyone in the community. Mrs. Lipstein said that as was seen in the past, parents really want enrichment programs before and after school; she said that they were willing to pay for it. She said that maybe this could be a use of Hamilton School to provide enrichment programs before and after schools.

Mrs. Lipstein asked if the board’s technology committee has met recently. Mr. Salcedo said that the committee has not met recently.

Mrs. Lipstein said that she noticed there was going to be a special board meeting on Thursday. She wanted to know what the subject of the meeting was. Mr. Perkins said that the board would be discussing personnel matters. Mrs. Lipstein asked if the meeting concerned the Superintendent search. Mr. Perkins said that was why the meeting was being held. Mrs. Lipstein asked if a Superintendent would be chosen on Thursday. Mr. Perkins said that the board would be conducting interviews. Mrs. Lipstein asked when the board planned to choose a Superintendent. Mr. Perkins said that will happen when the board is in a position to know. Mrs. Lipstein said that was a very vague answer. She asked how many people were being interviewed. Mr. Perkins said that three candidates were being interviewed; all of the candidates have requested that their identities remain confidential. Mrs. Lipstein said that in some communities, the final candidate, before they are appointed, speaks to the public. She said that the community has been feeling that they are not part of the school system and things are done in a manner that appears to be not as open as the community would like.

Mrs. Lipstein asked if the board expected to appoint a new Superintendent in November or December. Mr. Perkins said that was speculative. Mrs. Lipstein thought that Mr. Perkins should not answer a question like that speculatively when it was as important as a Superintendent. She said that the board should know when they are going to hire someone and getting no answer, is not an appropriate answer to the public. Mrs. Lipstein said that she felt the public had a right to know that the board was interviewing people and when the board expects to hire them. She said that other districts keep the community apprised of what is going on and she did not think that the “closed” communication has helped the district in any way, shape or form.

Ms. Hall said that with regard to the aftercare, as much as she would love to see this program be instruction, and she thought it was a direction to go in, she said that this program is 1-1/2 hour before school and 3 hours after school. She said that if the district is looking at a contracted teacher to staff this program, that would be an extraordinarily long day and there are a lot of obstacles to that.

Ms. Hall said that with regard to the public health issue, when her son was in kindergarten there was a meningitis outbreak in his class and things were mobilized very quickly and even though it occurred over a weekend she did receive calls from the classroom teacher and building principal to advise what the course of treatment would be. She said that there may be something written about what happens in such an emergency situation that the board might be able to refer to.

Ms. Hall said that she wanted to mention that the Boys’ Soccer Team beat Dayton on Saturday afternoon 3-2 in penalty kicks. She said it was a very exciting game.

Ms. Hall said that last week was a Week of Respect and all the schools in the district had a variety of events and programs during the week. She hoped that Mr. Tatum would elaborate on this at the regular meeting next week. Mr. Tatum said that he had received information from all of the schools about the Week of Respect and he will be sharing that information next week.

Mr. Nufrio said that he wanted to assure Ms. Hall that all aspects of the before and after care will be explored thoroughly as to whether it is viable, whether it is something that can transition into something else. He said that it was his recommendation that a committee be convened and all the possibilities be explored. Mr. Nufrio said that all the pros and cons will be taking into consideration. He said that this came about because he was somewhat unnerved and disturbed at hearing that the quality of the time spent was not as good as it should be. Ms. Hall said that she felt these were very important conversation to have but she also thought that little children needed to play sometimes. Mr. Perkins asked Mr. Nufrio if the comments were made by people who thought that the district was running the program. Mr. Nufrio said that they knew that the program was not being run by the Board of Education. He said that he did explain that this was a contracted program with the Y.M.C.A. but they already knew that. Mr. Nufrio said that these people were unnerved from what they were hearing from their own children or possibly from the teachers who stay in the building after school hours. He said that they were valid complaints.

Ms. Darby asked what the protocol for opting out of the PAARC test; what are the consequences, if any, for the students; what is the time period for administration of the test and what does the district have in place as backup plan in case the internet goes down during the administration of the test. She also wanted to know what the mandates were concerning students who had I.E.P.’s. Dr. Lishak said that if parents are interested in opting out of the PAARC exam, they must contact, in writing, the school principal and let the principal know the student is opting out of the test. She said that there will be no repercussions to a student who does not take the test; it will not affect them as it does not appear anywhere. Dr. Lishak said that as far as issues with the internet, the test is designed that it goes into a filter and if at any time the internet were to go down, the student would not lose any information or their place on the test. She said that there are accommodations that are listed in the PAARC manual and if there is an accommodation that is appropriate for the student, that would be discussed in an I.E.P. meeting with the Child Study Team. Dr. Lishak said that it will be a decision that is made by the parents and the Child Study Team what accommodations are appropriate; they will be written into the I.E.P. and they will be administered during testing. Ms. Darby asked what if the I.E.P. meeting was not going to take place for three or four months. Dr. Lishak said that the parent has the right to request an I.E.P. meeting for the purpose of the PAARC test accommodations.

Mrs. Lipstein asked what the criteria was for gifted and talented students. Dr. Lishak said that there is a criterion for gifted and talented students and a criterion for honors. Mr. Perkins said that there was a link on the Board’s website that gives information regarding this issue. He said that Mrs. Ahern was planning parent information meetings. Dr. Lishak said that there are presently three PAARC parent workshops that are scheduled with actual dates. She said that there will be a PAARC parent workshop for grades 3 through 5 on November 20th at Washington School at 6 p.m.; grades 6 through 8 at Kawameeh Middle School on November 10th from 6 to 7:30 p.m. and grades 9 through 11 at Kawameeh Middle School on November 13th from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Dr. Lishak said that Ms. Conti is also going to provide a parent workshop in Special Services mostly to discuss things like accommodations and that will also happen in the month of November. She said that the exact date will be posted on the district’s website.

Mr. Arminio asked if there was a letter being sent to all parents regarding the PAARC test. Dr. Lishak said that the district has not sent out anything except for general information. She said that any information that is being released by the State is being posted on the district’s website. Dr. Lishak said that new information is being released by the State.

Ms. Darby asked what happened to the data from the students who piloted the PAARC test last school year. Dr. Lishak said that the district did not receive the data from the State; the test was not piloted for the district to receive the data, it was piloted so that the company that was running the PAARC throughout the country would see how the students handled the technology and see what questions were found most difficult. She said that no district that piloted the test was provided any feedback or test scores.

Dr. Lishak said that all parents of students at the high school received an e-mail through Nonviance and it is posted on the district’s website. She said that the State has released new graduation requirements and as far as PAARC is concerned, if a student opts out of the PAARC test, there are a number of alternatives that can be used to finish the graduation requirements.

Ms. Darby asked if the high school students had to take PAARC and HSPA. Dr. Lishak said that HSPA will no longer be given. She said that there were a number of different ways that scores can be provided such as through the SAT, the Acuplacer, the ATC, etc. Ms. Darby asked if that was posted on the district’s website. Dr. Lishak said that it was.

Dr. Francis asked if there was a fee associated with the alternate tests. Dr. Lishak said there was. Dr. Francis asked if the parents were responsible to pay for the tests. Dr. Lishak said that was correct. She said that if a student wants to, they can take PAARC English – grades 9 through 11; end of course Algebra I, Algebra II or Geometry – there are no costs for these tests. Dr. Lishak said that another way the State is allowing is through the Acuplacer which is also free and is administered through the County College. She was not sure about the military test but the SAT and the ATC are tests that must be paid for. Dr. Lishak said that the State has also released that they are looking at accepting the PSAT and if that is an option, the district provides the PSAT to all 10th and 11th grade students at no cost. Mr. Le said that there was one more system called Portfolio. Dr. Lishak said that as of now, the State has not provided the direction on what Portfolio is asking for. She said that if a student opts not to take the PAARC in either the Language Arts or the Math section, the student can take the SAT critical reading or math and the student must score 400 in each section; the ACT reading or math and get a combined score of 16; the ASVAB (military test) and get a combined score of 31; the Acuplacer in the writing portion – score must be an 8 and the math, elementary Algebra the score must be 76. Dr. Lishak said that as far as the Portfolio, she said that this is only an appeals based option and if a student did not meet the requirements with any of the other tests, the student would have to put together a portfolio but the State has not determined what is acceptable to be included in the Portfolio to date.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

There being no further business before the board, it was moved by Mr. Galante, seconded by Mr. Arminio that the meeting be adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

AYE: Mr. Arminio, Dr. Francis, Mr. Galante, Mr. Layden, Mr. Le, Mr. Nufrio, Mr. Salcedo and Mr. Perkins

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None MOTION WAS CARRIED

Respectfully submitted

JAMES J. DAMATO

BOARD SECRETARY