

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
 UTICA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
 REGULAR MEETING – NOVEMBER 21, 2023 – 4:00 P.M.
 Administration Building – 929 York Street – Kernan School**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Joseph H. Hobika Jr, Presiding; Danielle Padula, Robert Cardillo, Donald Dawes, Tennille Knoop, James Paul, Jason Cooper

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT: Dr. Kathleen Davis, Acting Superintendent, Joseph Shields, Esq., Charles Symonds, Esq., Steve Falchi, Mike Ferraro, Sara Klimek, Andre Paradis, Trina Falchi, Pam Smoulcey, Kathy Hughes

◆◆◆◆◆
Public Comment to the Board of Education
 None

◆◆◆◆◆

President Hobika, Jr. called the Regular Meeting to order at 4:20 p.m. After the Pledge of Allegiance, Board Clerk Kathy Hughes conducted roll call. All members of the Board of Education were present.

◆◆◆◆◆

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Davis, Acting Superintendent presented the Superintendent's Report dated November 21, 2023 to the Board of Education for approval, with an additional page, page P.

President Hobika, Jr. asked the Board Members if there were any items that needed clarification before a motion was made on the Consent Agenda. At this time, he polled Board Members:

Mr. Dawes Page 4

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT	SPECIAL MEETING	NOVEMBER 21, 2023
--------------------------------	------------------------	--------------------------

		PAGE #
FOR ACTION		
S – 175	Memorandum of Agreement between the Utica City School District and the Utica Teachers' Association – Part-Time Targeted Assistance Teachers	1
P – 23	Resignations	3
	Unpaid Leave of Absence	3
	Changes of Status	3
	Resolution for Probationary Appointment – Cindy Wiley, Teacher Assistant	4
	Appointments	4 – 7
FOR INFORMATION		
P – 24	Resignation	8
	Unpaid Leave of Absence	8

FOR ACTION:

Volume LVIII

Report No. S – 175

SUBJECT:

**Memorandum of Agreement between the
Utica City School District and the Utica Teachers’
Association – Part-Time Targeted Assistance
Teachers**

Authorization is requested of the Board of Education to approve the Memorandum of Agreement between the Utica City School District and the Utica Teachers’ Association to hire part-time Targeted Assistance Teachers for the 2023-2024 school year at an hourly rate of \$50.00, effective November 14, 2023.

FOR ACTION:

Volume LVIII

Report No. P – 23

SUBJECT:

Resignation

Administrative

It is recommended that the following resignation be accepted:

Shawna Fleck

Director of Testing and Planning
Effective: December 15, 2023
Reason: Personal
Notification Received: November 14, 2023

FOR ACTION:

Volume LVIII

Report No. P – 23

SUBJECT:

Resignation

Administrative

It is recommended that the following resignation be accepted:

Corinna Pelkey

CSE Chairperson
Effective: December 13, 2023
Reason: Personal
Notification Received: November 14, 2023

FOR ACTION:

Volume LVIII

Report No. P – 23

SUBJECT:

Unpaid Leave of Absence

Teacher Assistant

It is recommended that the following unpaid of leave of absence be approved:

Lance DeCarlo

Teacher Assistant – Special Education
Hughes Elementary School
From: December 5, 2023
To: December 12, 2023
Reason: Personal
Notification Received: November 17, 2023

FOR ACTION:

Volume LVIII

Report No. P – 23

Proctor High School
Effective: Spring 2024
Index: \$6,669

Walter Savage

Girls Assistant Varsity Track
Proctor High School
Effective: Spring 2024
Index: \$5,187

Trey Szatko

Boys Jr. Varsity Baseball
Proctor High School
Effective: Spring 2024
Index: \$2,786

Angelina Mancuso

Girls Jr. Varsity Softball
Proctor High School
Effective: Spring 2024
Index: \$2,786

Edwin Singleton

Boys Modified Baseball
Donovan Middle School
Effective: Spring 2024
Index: \$1,990

William Robertello

Boys Modified Lacrosse
Donovan Middle School
Effective: Spring 2024
Index: \$2,237

FOR ACTION:

Volume LVIII

Report No. P – 23

SUBJECT:

Appointments

Coaching – Spring 2024

It is recommended that the following coaching appointments be approved:

Giuseppe Battista

Boys Modified Track
Donovan Middle School
Effective: Spring 2024
Index: \$1,990

Courtney Siciliano

Girls Modified Track
Donovan Middle School
Effective: Spring 2024
Index: \$3,705

Daniel Bougourd

Boys Modified Baseball
Kennedy Middle School
Effective: Spring 2024
Index: \$3,705

Nathan Deban

Boys Modified Lacrosse
Kennedy Middle School
Effective: Spring 2024
Index: \$1,990

Daniel Clark

Boys Modified Track
Kennedy Middle School

Effective: Spring 2024
Index: \$2,636

Joshua Schreppel

Girls Modified Softball
Kennedy Middle School
Effective: Spring 2024
Index: \$1,990

Jenna Bellair

Girls Modified Track
Kennedy Middle School
Effective: Spring 2024
Index: \$2,636

FOR ACTION:

Volume LVIII

Report No. P – 23

SUBJECT:

Appointments

**Extra-Curricular – TA
Winter Sports – Indoor
Track**

It is recommended that the following Extra-Curricular – TA Winter Sport appointments be approved:

LaToya Hamell

Special Education Teacher Assistant for
Indoor Track
Effective: Retroactively on November 13, 2023
Salary: \$20.40 per hour

Kevin Morales

Special Education Teacher Assistant for
Indoor Track
Effective: Retroactively on November 13, 2023
Salary: \$18.36 per hour

FOR ACTION:

Volume LVIII

Report No. P – 23

SUBJECT:

Appointment

Transportation

It is recommended that the following appointment be approved:

Gloriana Munoz
1561 West Street
Utica, NY 13501

Substitute Bus Driver
35 hours per week
Salary: \$20.50 per hour
Effective: November 27, 2023

FOR INFORMATION:

Volume LVIII

Report No. P – 24

SUBJECT:

Resignation

It is recommended that the following resignation be accepted:

Kellie Edwards

School Monitor (Security)
District-Wide
Effective: November 9, 2023
Reason: Personal
Notification Received: November 13, 2023

FOR INFORMATION:

Volume LVIII

Report No. P – 24

SUBJECT:

Unpaid Leave of Absence

Teacher Assistant

It is recommended that the following unpaid of leave of absence be approved:

Christine Mathis

Teacher Assistant – Special Education
Kennedy Middle School
From: November 6, 2023
To: November 17, 2023
Reason: Medical
Notification Received: November 7, 2023

Mr. Paul made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda and seconded by Mrs. Padula.

There being no further discussion, **motion approved 7-0.**

THIS CONCLUDES THE CONSENT AGENDA.

Mrs. Padula made a motion and it was seconded by Mr. Cardillo.

FOR ACTION:

Volume LVIII

Report No. P – 23

SUBJECT:

Appointments

Coaching – Spring 2024

It is recommended that the following coaching appointments be approved:

David Guido

Boys Varsity Baseball
Proctor High School
Effective: Spring 2024
Index: \$6,669

Stephen Strife

Boys Assistant Varsity Baseball
Proctor High School
Effective: Spring 2024
Index: \$5,187

James Caswell

Boys Varsity Lacrosse
Proctor High School
Effective: Spring 2024
Index: \$6,669

Robert Heinrich

Boys Assistant Varsity Lacrosse
Proctor High School
Effective: Spring 2024
Index: \$3,132

Michael Zaloom

Boys Varsity Tennis
Proctor High School
Effective: Spring 2024
Index: \$3,163

Jerome Tine

Boys Varsity Track
Proctor High School
Effective: Spring 2024
Index: \$6,669

LaSharr Hamell

Boys Assistant Varsity Track
Proctor High School
Effective: Spring 2024
Index: \$3,132

Mr. Dawes: I want to just say this; we're ignoring a guy that coached for 15 years in the District. That bought his own hats and, in some cases, his own pants for his uniform for years, that was done back when we had no money. I'm not so sure everything I've heard is true because I talked to him, his story is a little different and obviously I talked to him and I talked to both sides. I won't vote for him, I won't vote for that page at all.

There being no further discussion; motion passes 6-1 (Mr. Dawes – No)

THIS CONCLUDES THE SUPERINTENDENTS REPORT IN ITS ENTIRETY.

◆◆◆◆

Continuing Business

President Hobika, Jr.: I'm going to make a statement on behalf of the Board. This morning Utica City School District Superintendent, Bruce Karam, who is currently on leave, was indicted by the Oneida County District attorney on five counts, including Corruption of Government in the Third Degree, Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, Public Corruption, as well as shared counts of Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree and Public Corruption with former Utica City School District Board of Education President Louis LaPolla. While both Mr. Karam and Mr. LaPolla are entitled to their day in court, we recognize that the bond of trust between the Utica City School District and our community has been violated. We, the current Board of Education deeply regret this breach and extend our sincere apologies to our students, staff, parents and community. We continue to cooperate with the ongoing investigations into Mr. Karam and Mr. LaPolla and we will defer to the District Attorney and other law enforcement regarding the ongoing legal proceedings. We will provide timely updates to ensure our community remains informed. We, the Board of Education want to ensure the Utica community that since Mr. Karam was placed on administrative leave by this Board in October of 2022, we've taken aggressive and proactive steps to overhaul our administrative operating structure, hire necessary staff, and overall implement guardrails and protective measures to ensure the type of egregious and an illegal misconduct outlined in the indictment doesn't happen in our District in the future. In July of this year, we hired Acting Superintendent Dr. Kathleen Davis, who with more than 41 years of experience in education, has provided essential guidance while examining our operating structure and has made decisive recommendations for improvements moving forward. We have installed a new administrative leadership team in the Grants and Finance offices. We have hired a new general counsel, Ferrara Fiorenza PC, out of East Syracuse, New York, and also hired a new public relations specialist to facilitate communications with the public and ensure transparency. We have secured The Firm Mengel, Metzger, and Barr to conduct the internal audit and risk assessment. We continue to engage in a yearly external audit as required by law. We have restructured our internal auditing team to include a full-time claims auditor who will also oversee inventory control and updates to our databases. This shift will allow for an in-depth look at all claims, payroll, inventory, and compliance and inheritance to our Board of Education policies. We have hired a new accountant with 22 years of experience, including time in the State Comptroller's Office. We are currently working with the New York State Education Department on our regularly planned targeted monitoring of Consolidated Title Grants. We have also had a scheduled site visit with the State Education Department to review our COVID ESSER Funds. We are in the process of hiring individuals with experience in federal funds management to oversee, distribute, and ensure appropriate use of funds provided by the federal government. Regarding Mr. Karam's employment with Utica City School District, from the moment he was placed on leave in October of 2022, the Board of Education has worked with legal counsel and sought judicial intervention to resolve a dispute regarding the District's ability to terminate its employment relationship with him. The District defeated Mr. Karam and his first lawsuit filed in state court and it was dismissed. The District is awaiting the courts on the motion to dismiss Mr. Karam's second lawsuit filed in federal court. The District filed its own lawsuit requesting that the court declare his purported employment contract void, which would confirm the Board's ability to terminate his employment by a simple majority vote. The District's leadership team will continue to carefully analyze appropriate options regarding Mr. Karam with due regard for developments in the pending litigation and the District's operational needs and goals. We have notified Mr. Karam that we have called a special Board of Education meeting for Monday, November 27, 2023, to address his employment with the Utica City School District. In our unwavering commitment to the education and development of our students, the Utica City School District Board of Education, along with our District leadership team, also recognizes the immense fiduciary responsibility we owe to our taxpayers and community. The trust placed in us is both an honor and an obligation. As we navigate the challenges ahead, we pledge not only to uphold these dual commitments but also to continuously strive for improvement. We are deeply grateful for the community's support and patience during this evolving situation and are dedicated to ensuring that our actions reflect our commitment to do better going forward. Again, we will continue to provide updates as this situation unfolds. We want to thank our many current and former staff members for their courage and commitment to our district with their participation in the ongoing investigations. We also want to thank

law enforcement for their hard work, and we have the utmost confidence that these agencies will do their due diligence to get to the bottom of these various matters and that appropriate parties will be held fully accountable for their actions.

Mr. Shields, Esq.: Good evening my name is Joe Shields, I'm with Ferraro Fiorenza, the District's new legal counsel, general counsel. On behalf of the Board, we want to let the community know that we understand your curious about the situation and have lots of questions. The Board is committed to transparency during this process. The statement which Mr. Hobika read contains all the information that we know at this time. The District has limited information relating to the criminal indictments and given the pending investigations and pending litigation matters involving the district and Mr. Karam, the District and Board of Education members or staff will not be answering questions at this time while these are pending. If you seek additional information regarding the criminal complaints please contact the Oneida County District Attorney's office and the New York State Comptroller's office and their investigators. On behalf of the District's currently leadership, we would like to again express our appreciation for the hard work and the investigative efforts by the Oneida County District Attorney's office and the New York state Comptroller's office thank you.

◆◆◆◆

New Business

None

◆◆◆◆

Communication

None

◆◆◆◆

Adjournment

Mr. Cardillo made a motion to adjourn the November 21, 2023, Special Meeting; seconded by Mrs. Padula.

The November Special Meeting was adjourned at 4:29 p.m.

There being no further discussion; **motion carried 7-0.**

Respectfully transcribed and submitted,

STEPHANIE LYNESS
Assistant Board Clerk