

**BOARD OF EDUCATION  
UTICA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SPECIAL MEETING – THURSDAY OCTOBER 6, 2022 – 5:30 P.M.  
Administration Building – 929 York Street – Kernan School**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Joseph H. Hobika, Jr., Presiding; Robert Cardillo, Tennille Knoop, Don Dawes, Danielle Padula, James Paul, Dave Testa

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT: Bruce Karam, Steve Falchi, Don Gerace, Esq., Kathy Hughes, Michele LaGase, Haylee Lallier, Andy Lalonde, Teresa Mathews, Ed Simpson

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**Public Comment to the Board of Education  
(None)**

President Hobika, Jr. called the Special Meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. After the Pledge of Allegiance, Board Clerk Kathy Hughes conducted Roll Call. All members of the Board of Education were present.

President Hobika, Jr.: I understand that we have some guests tonight. We have the Art Club, Proctor Art Club and the Environmental Club from Proctor High School.

The Art Club Advisor, Christina Hopkins, introduced some members of the Club, as well as the Environmental Club Advisor Andrew Boyd.

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**Presentations**

**Special Education Update – Edward Simpson, Administrator for Special Education Services**

Mr. Simpson provided an update to Board Members on Special Education.

**Questions from Board Members:**

President Hobika, Jr.: How many clerical do you have working at the present time?

Mr. Simpson: Currently right now we have 5. One clerical is out until after Thanksgiving for medical. I have 2 clerical that are processing meetings.

President Hobika, Jr.: How many do we need total to really be able to dig out from under where we are?

Mr. Simpson: We would need once the person from the medical leave comes back, we would need 5 clerical.

President Hobika, Jr.: 5 clerical?

Mr. Simpson: Yes. We do have a temp hired and she's working out really well. Both myself and Mrs. Falchi and the other administrator over there are processing and doing finalizing and doing the paperwork as well. Our secretaries are staying late and we're getting this done.

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President Hobika, Jr.: I'm kind of wondering whether or not we can implement some kind of program where if there are some retired Special Education TA's or Special Education Teachers that had some time on their hands and wanted to come in and work so that we could catch everybody up. Is that something that we might be able to accomplish.

Mrs. LaGase: I have a second temp coming.

President Hobika, Jr.: I know it's a temp, but having some people that know their way around the system would be helpful right?

Mrs. LaGase: We can take a look at retired staff members that have utilized the management system and have entered the data. That's the most important thing. That training takes time, and we can't afford that time, so we need people that have access to the system and where to put the data. Mr. Simpson and I can work on looking at some retired staff members in a timely manner.

President Hobika, Jr.: Ok.

Mrs. Padula: Is there a job posting?

Mrs. LaGase: Yes.

Mrs. Padula: So that will be posted?

Mrs. LaGase: Yes.

President Hobika, Jr.: How many Special Education Teachers and TA's are we missing at this point in order to have a full complement?

Mrs. LaGase: In order to have a full complement of teaching staff Donovan I believe is 3; JFK (I'd have to look at the numbers) but I think it's 1; Proctor is 2 right now teachers. TA's I can give you an email with an exact update because I can place who is in your Report tonight in buildings.

President Hobika, Jr.: Here's my thought. Maybe prior to the October Board Meeting you could provide us with a written update so that we have it in the packet so if anybody has any questions, they can formulate them.

Mrs. LaGase: Sure.

Mrs. Padula: If you have any new hires, you can just put like pending.

Mrs. LaGase: I'll put them in as a tentative placement.

Mr. Paul: I've spoken to quite a few individuals in our district, and I've got a few questions to be honest with you. I'll just start with the first one. Once a referral is submitted, how long does it take before consent for testing is mailed to the parents. Is there a way that the building who referred the student for services is made aware the referral was accepted and consent was mailed out?

Mr. Simpson: Once consent gets mailed, it goes into the Clear Track system for everybody to see. Once we get consent back, it gets uploaded as an attachment.

Mr. Paul: How long before it's actually mailed though?

Mr. Simpson: Not very long. Once I get it and I approve it, it usually takes about 5 business days.

Mr. Paul: Once you get it and approve it.

Mr. Simpson: Correct.

Mr. Paul: So how long does it take after you get it?

Mr. Simpson: That depends on when we get the consent back, but usually if we don't hear anything within 7 days the liaison at the Special Education Office will start making phone calls to get the consent. If we still don't get consent after a few times and she logs these, we enlist the help of the buildings.

Mr. Paul: With you being so short staffed right now is that still accurate?

Mr. Simpson: It is accurate, because the liaison that's her job.

President Hobika, Jr.: We need some horsepower under there. There's no question that we need some horsepower under the hood here. We need some people to try to address any backlog that we might have and any slow down that there might be because we don't have enough people working. You know what I'm saying?

Mr. Paul: I hear you.

President Hobika, Jr.: We need to actually convert from hearing it to try and come up – even if we have to think outside the box, we need to fix the problem right now.

Mr. Paul: I get that, but my concern is still the Special Education Department and what we're seeing right now, our district is seeing and whether or not they're being addressed accurately and in a timely fashion.

President Hobika, Jr.: I understand, and I agree with you that we probably aren't as efficient as we should be. The question that's going to come up is we didn't discover that we have not been efficient; it's not for lack of effort on people's parts, it's from lack of personnel that we need to dig out from under, get the machine rolling, and moving down the road. I think that's one of the reasons why we've been having Mr. Simpson come in because he's working hard, the people that are working for him are working hard. There's just not enough people and we need to fix that.

Mr. Paul: Mr. Hobika, I got a different picture from our first meeting. I was under the impression that we were fully staffed, and we were doing well when the school year started from a Special Education standpoint, and I don't find that to be the case now. I don't know if that's because we lost staff. I don't know where the disconnect is, but I do know that that's not the same that I heard initially when Mr. Simpson came the first time.

President Hobika, Jr.: Yes.

Mr. Paul: Why don't we do it this way Mr. Simpson. I will send you an email with the questions that I have, and you can get back to me with the answers and we won't further this meeting.

Mr. Simpson: Yes sir.

Mr. Paul: Thank you.

Mr. Testa: I would like to ask it was mentioned about people that were retired. In the near future, I'm sure we're going to have some people I know of a few people that are talking about retiring. It could be a shortage again, maybe a couple of secretaries or maybe even a teacher. These are positions like in your department alone I know how hard it is to draw people to come. The pool is not out there. With all the hiring around our area, we have to try to find a better way of trying to get people in. My concern basically is when the people retire like they have a month to go to retire, I would love to see somebody come in and get trained by that person, especially in your department. We desperately need the knowledge of that person who has been here maybe 20, 30 years or 15 years. Especially in Special Education – that's an area we have to try to help in any way that we can. I appreciate maybe giving us an idea of how many people (maybe Mrs. LaGase too) maybe teachers that are going to be retiring. Maybe if we hit the problem before they retire and try to put positions in ahead of the game.

Mr. Paul: Are Social Workers authorized to chair CSE Meetings?

Mr. Simpson: Yes, they are.

Mr. Paul: Social Workers are authorized?

Mr. Simpson: And trained.

Mr. Paul: And trained. All of them?

Mr. Simpson: All of them except for the new ones who are scheduled to be trained October 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Paul: Thank you.

Mr. Simpson: You're welcome.

President Hobika, Jr.: Before I get moved onto Haylee. The New York State School Board's Association's Annual Business Meeting is going to be held virtually on Monday, October 17<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m. We need a designee to be the voting delegate. Is there anybody that would like to be the voting delegate this year?

Mrs. Padula: I will do it.

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**Budget Status Report – Haylee Lallier, Treasurer**

Ms. Lallier reported, "Not a lot has changed since the last meeting. We did receive a September payment from the city from collections through August 31<sup>st</sup>. And the new balances are for the 2020-21 school year around 680,600. And, for the 2021-22 school year, around 1,079,900 dollars."

Mr. Paul: Haylee, how much was that payment (or those payments)?

Ms. Lallier: They split them between the 2 years. The total payment was for \$81,800.

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Mr. Paul: Thank you.

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### Superintendent's Report

Mr. Karam presented his Superintendent's Report dated October 6, 2022 for Board approval.

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: **(None)**

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**FOR ACTION:****Volume LVII****Report No. S – 62****SUBJECT:****Application for Extended Field Trip**

Authorization is requested of the Board of Education to approve approximately one hundred twenty-five (125) Columbus Elementary School students to travel to the Stanley Theatre in Utica, NY to attend Bluey, the Musical on Wednesday, March 29, 2023. Bluey, the Musical will allow students to make text-to-world connects through literature and the arts.

Supervision of these students will be provided by Michael Pagliano, Teacher, Lori Chiarello, Teacher Assistant, Lianne Nimey, Teacher, Mary Teresa Mezzanini, Teacher Assistant, Audrea Rinaldo, Teacher, Nicole Woolheater, Teacher Assistant, Connie Zelsnack, Teacher, Joann DiNardo, Teacher Assistant, Hannah Smith, Teacher, Joany Marquez, Teacher Assistant, Emily Liggins, parent, Rebecca Nix, parent, Tieren Hotaling, parent, Enisa Bajrektarevic, parent, Alexis Hubbard, parent, and Jennifer Soto, parent.

This trip was reviewed and approved by Elizabeth Gerling, Principal at Columbus Elementary School and Steven Falchi, Administrative Director of Curriculum & Instruction K-12.

**FOR ACTION:****Volume LVII****Report No. S – 63****SUBJECT:****Application for Extended Field Trip**

Authorization is requested of the Board of Education to approve approximately one hundred twenty-five (125) Columbus Elementary School students to travel to the Fort Rickey Discovery Game Park/Zoo located in Rome, New York on Wednesday, June 7, 2023. Each class will attend five (5) animal stations on a rotating schedule supervised by the Teachers/Teacher Assistants, and chaperones. Students will use their five (5) senses to explore/observe over two hundred (200) animals. They will discover animal habits and learn how to interact with animals in a kind and gentle way.

Supervision of these students will be provided by Michael Pagliaro, Teacher, Lori Chiarello, Teacher Assistant, Lianne Nimey, Teacher, Mary Teresa Mezzanini, Teacher Assistant, Audrea Rinaldo, Teacher, Nicole Woolheater, Teacher Assistant, Hannah Smith, Teacher, Joany Marquez, Teacher Assistant, Connie Zelsnack, Teacher, Joann DiNardo, Teacher Assistant, Emily Liggins, parent, Rebecca Nix, parent, Tieren Hotaling, parent, Enisa Bajrektarevic, parent, Alexis Hubbard, parent, and Jennifer Soto, parent.

This trip was reviewed and approved by Elizabeth Gerling, Principal at Columbus Elementary School and Steven Falchi, Administrative Director of Curriculum & Instruction K-12.

**FOR ACTION:****Volume LVII****Report No. S – 64****SUBJECT:****Application for Extended Field Trip**

Authorization is requested of the Board of Education to approve approximately one hundred twenty-five (125) Columbus Elementary School students to travel to the Utica Fire Station located at 1501 Mohawk Street, Utica, NY on Wednesday, October 12, 2022 and Thursday, October 13, 2022. Students will tour the fire house and learn about fire prevention and what to do in the event of a fire.

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Supervision of these students will be provided by Michael Pagliaro, Teacher, Lori Chiarello, Teacher Assistant, Lianne Nimey, Teacher, Mary Theresa Mezzanini, Teacher Assistant, Audrea Rinaldo, Teacher, Nicole Woolheater, Teacher Assistant, Connie Zelsnack, Teacher, Joann DiNardo, Teacher Assistant, Hannah Smith, Teacher, Joany Marquez, Teacher Assistant, Emily Liggins, parent, Rebecca Nix, parent, Tieren Hotaling, parent, Enisa Bajrektarevic, parent, Alexis Hubbard, parent, and Jennifer Soto, parent.

This trip was reviewed and approved by Elizabeth Gerling, Principal at Columbus Elementary School and Steven Falchi, Administrative Director of Curriculum & Instruction K-12.

**FOR ACTION:**

**Volume LVII**

**Report No. S – 65**

**SUBJECT:**

**Application for Extended Field Trip**

Authorization is requested of the Board of Education to approve approximately forty-one (41) King Elementary School students to travel to the Pumpkin Junction in Sauquoit, NY on Monday, October 17, 2022. Students will participate in fall activities (go on a hayride, choose a pumpkin, walk through a corn maze, enjoy cider and donuts), and focus on social-emotional learning while being in the real world.

Supervision of these students will be provided by Katy Kennedy, Teacher, Kelly Grimes, Teacher, Esmeralda Huskic, Teacher Assistant, Lindsay Walsh, AIS Facilitator, Meredith Bruno, Librarian, Venette Morrison, Parent Liaison, and Gina Cromer, Teacher Assistant.

This trip was reviewed and approved by Jennie Sikora, Principal, King Elementary School, and Steven Falchi, Administrative Director of Curriculum & Instruction K-12.

**FOR ACTION:**

**Volume LVII**

**Report No. S – 66**

**SUBJECT:**

**Application for Extended Field Trip**

Authorization is requested of the Board of Education to approve approximately forty-three (43) King Elementary School students to travel to the Pumpkin Junction in Sauquoit, NY on Tuesday, October 18, 2022. Students will go on a hayride, choose a pumpkin, walk through a corn maze, enjoy cider and donuts, and focus on social-emotional learning while being in the real world.

Supervision of these students will be provided by Valerie LaBella, Teacher, Kristin Miller, Teacher, Erica Ciccone, Teacher, Lindsay Walsh, AIS Facilitator, Meredith Bruno, Librarian, and John Deater, Security.

This trip was reviewed and approved by Jennie Sikora, Principal, King Elementary School, and Steven Falchi, Administrative Director of Curriculum & Instruction K-12.

**FOR ACTION:**

**Volume LVII**

**Report No. S – 67**

**SUBJECT:**

**Application for Extended Field Trip**

Authorization is requested of the Board of Education to approve approximately forty-two (42) King Elementary School students to travel to the Pumpkin Junction in Sauquoit, NY on Thursday, October 20, 2022. Students will go on a hayride, choose a pumpkin, walk through a corn maze, enjoy cider and donuts, and focus on social-emotional learning while being in the community.

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Supervision of these students will be provided by Tammy Filletti, Teacher, Jennifer Karam, Teacher, Paige DelGrego, Teacher, Lindsay Walsh, AIS Facilitator, Meredith Bruno, Librarian, Venette Morrison, Parent Liaison, and Gina Cromer, Teacher Assistant

This trip was reviewed and approved by Jennie Sikora, Principal, King Elementary School, and Steven Falchi, Administrative Director of Curriculum & Instruction K-12.

**FOR ACTION:**

**Volume LVII**

**Report No. S – 68**

**SUBJECT:**

**Application for Extended Field Trip**

Authorization is requested of the Board of Education to approve approximately fifty-four (54) Jones Elementary School students to travel to Savicki Farms located in Clinton, NY on Monday, October 3, 2022. Students will go on a hayride, choose a pumpkin, and walk through a corn maze. It will teach the students about farm activities and provide fall-themed enrichment.

Supervision of these students will be provided by Holly Toomey, Teacher, Jeff Friedel, Teacher, Carrie Crandall, Teacher, Melissa Sawanec, AIS Facilitator, Ashley Klump, Teacher Assistant, Elham Wassel, Teacher Assistant, Russell Milano, parent, Kara Evans, parent, Korrin VanNort, parent, Jesrubie Rodrigues, parent, Fie Roeijen, parent, Candace Goff, parent, Tianna Testa-Hartlieb, parent, Patrick Morrissey/Dielle Whiteley, parents, and Lindsay Torchia, parent.

This trip was reviewed and approved by Tricia Hughes, Principal at Jones Elementary School and Steven Falchi, Administrative Director of Curriculum & Instruction K-12.

**FOR ACTION:**

**Volume LVII**

**Report No. S – 69**

**SUBJECT:**

**Application for Extended Field Trip**

Authorization is requested of the Board of Education to approve approximately one hundred twelve (112) Watson Williams Elementary School students to travel to Savicki Farms located in Clinton, NY on Thursday, October 13, 2022. Students will go on a wagon ride, walk through a straw and corn maze, and go pumpkin picking. The students will learn about harvesting food, the life cycle of a plant, map reading, weight and measurement, and be provided with fall-themed enrichment.

Supervision of these students will be provided by Leona Miller, Teacher, Debra Clark, Teacher, Kristen Cunningham, Teacher, Dawn Wheeler, Teacher, Isabella Mancuso, Teacher, Trista Knapp, Teacher, Shandi Digamus, Teacher, Christy Cannistra, Teacher, Christy Battinelli, Teacher, Elaina Pacini, Teacher, Rachel Nash, Teacher, Yvette Giraldo, Teacher Assistant, Amy Nanna, Teacher Assistant, and Latessa Brown, parent. This trip was reviewed and approved by Cheryl Minor, Principal, Watson Williams Elementary School and Steven Falchi, Administrative Director of Curriculum & Instruction K-12.





**FOR ACTION:****Volume LVII****Report No. P – 7****SUBJECT:****Appointments****Teacher Assistant**

It is recommended that the following appointments be approved:

Vanessa Dingle  
7355 Charles Road  
Rome, NY 13440

Teacher Assistant – Special Education  
Jones Elementary School  
29 hours per week  
Effective: October 11, 2022  
Salary: \$18.00 per hour  
Education: G.E.D., Proctor High School  
Experience: Direct Support Assistant, Central New York  
Developmental Disabilities Services Office (DDSO)  
Rome, NY  
1/16 to 1/20

Oneal Esty  
745 Herkimer Road  
Utica, NY 13502

Teacher Assistant – ISS  
King Elementary School  
29 hours per week  
Effective: Retroactively on September 28, 2022  
Salary: \$20.00 per hour  
Education: Graduate of Queens Academy  
Experience: Teacher Assistant, King Elementary School  
Utica, NY  
9/14 to 8/22

Jasmine Harrison  
1570 Neilson Street  
Utica, NY 13501

Teacher Assistant – Special Education  
Proctor High School  
29 hours per week  
Effective: October 6, 2022  
Salary: \$18.00 per hour  
Education: A.S, Mohawk Valley Community College  
Experience: Nurse Aide, Nurse Connection Staffing  
Albany, NY  
8/18 to present

Tiernen Hotaling  
1237 Laura Street, Floor 2  
Utica, NY 13501

Teacher Assistant – Special Education  
Hughes Elementary School  
29 hours per week  
Effective: October 17, 2022  
Salary: \$18.00 per hour  
Education: M.S., Grand Canyon University  
Experience: Teacher Assistant, Neighborhood Center  
Utica, NY  
2/20 to 12/21

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**FOR ACTION:**

**Volume LVII**

**Report No. P – 7**

**SUBJECT:**

**Appointments**

**Teacher Assistant**

It is recommended that the following appointments be approved:

Amanda Melendez  
420 Briarcliff Avenue  
Utica, NY 13502

Teacher Assistant – Special Education  
Jefferson Elementary School  
29 hours per week  
Effective: Retroactively on October 3, 2022  
Salary: \$18.00 per hour  
Education: Graduate of Proctor High School  
Experience: Home Health Aide, Aliah Home Care  
Utica, NY  
6/22 to present

Desiree Rivera  
755 South Street  
Utica, NY 13501

Teacher Assistant – Special Education  
Conkling Elementary School  
29 hours per week  
Effective: Retroactively on October 3, 2022  
Salary: \$18.00 per hour  
Education: Graduate of Richmond Hill High School  
Experience: Teacher Assistant, Children’s Beginnings  
Syracuse, NY  
8/22 to present

Fatima Shehadeh  
47 Sauquoit Street  
Whitesboro, NY 13492

Teacher Assistant – Special Education  
Kernan Elementary School  
29 hours per week  
Effective: Retroactively on September 29, 2022  
Salary: \$18.00 per hour  
Education: A.S., Amman College  
Experience: Substitute Teacher Assistant, Utica City  
School District, Utica, NY  
9/18 to present

**FOR ACTION:**

**Volume LVII**

**Report No. P – 7**

**SUBJECT:**

**Appointment**

**Security**

It is recommended that the following appointment be approved:

John Capraro, Jr.  
4310 Middle Settlement Road  
Building G, Apt. 103  
New Hartford, NY 13413

Security Monitor  
District-Wide – not to exceed 29 hours per week  
Effective: Retroactively on October 6, 2022  
Salary: \$17.73 per hour  
Education: Graduate of Proctor High School  
Experience: Substitute Food Service Worker, Utica City  
School District, Utica, NY, 8/22 to present; Security, Utica  
Memorial Auditorium, Utica, NY 1/7 – 12/17

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**FOR ACTION:****Volume LVII****Report No. P – 7****SUBJECT:****Appointments****Transportation/Bus  
Driver**

It is recommended that the following appointments be approved:

Yokaira Salce  
7 Sunnyside Drive  
Utica, NY 13501Bus Driver  
29 hours per week  
Salary: \$24.64 per hour  
Effective: Retroactively on October 3, 2022Philip Snyder  
300 Fairway Drive  
New Hartford, NY 13413Bus Driver  
29 hours per week  
Salary: \$24.64 per hour  
Effective: Retroactively on September 21, 2022**FOR ACTION:****Volume LVII****Report No. P – 7****SUBJECT:****Appointments****Transportation/Bus  
Monitor**

It is recommended that the following appointments be approved:

Yury Guivas  
1668 Steuben Street  
Utica, NY 13501Bus Monitor  
29 hours per week  
Salary: \$16.00 per hour  
Effective: Retroactively on September 26, 2022Benita Diaz-Guerrero  
1612 Mohawk Street, Apt. 1  
Utica, NY 13501Bus Monitor  
29 hours per week  
Salary: \$16.00 per hour  
Effective: Retroactively on October 3, 2022Eliezel Nunez-Jimenez  
1726 Armory Drive, Apt. W21  
Utica, NY 13501Bus Monitor  
29 hours per week  
Salary: \$16.00 per hour  
Effective: Retroactively on October 3, 2022Miguel Ruiz  
1212 Kathleen Street  
Utica, NY 13501Bus Monitor  
29 hours per week  
Salary: \$16.00 per hour  
Effective: Retroactively on October 3, 2022**Mr. Paul made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda, seconded by Mr. Testa.**There being no further discussion; **motion carried 7-0.**

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**THIS CONCLUDED THE CONSENT AGENDA.**

**THIS CONCLUDED THE SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT IN IT'S ENTIRETY.**

President Hobika, Jr.: Before we move onto the next item, I'd like to know – someone raised an interesting point about having a portable weapons detector. The one that the kids go through, and the teachers go through at the various schools. I was wondering if we might want to set one up here so that we know what everyone is experiencing when they're going through the schools.

Mr. Karam: That's a good idea.

President Hobika, Jr.: Ok. Do we need a motion to make that happen?

Mr. Gerace: No, you don't need a motion.

President Hobika, Jr.: Ok.

Mr. Karam: I'll try to get it as soon as I can.

President Hobika, Jr.: Excellent.

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#### **Request for Executive Session**

President Hobika, Jr. announced the Agenda for Executive Session: **Personnel Matter and Litigation.**

**Mr. Dawes made a motion to go into Executive Session; it was seconded by Mr. Paul and carried 7-0.**

The Board of Education entered into Executive Session at 5:25 p.m.

**Mr. Dawes made a motion to come out of Executive Session; it was seconded by Mr. Cardillo and carried 7-0.**

The Board of Education exited Executive Session at 6:55 p.m.

**Mr. Dawes made a motion to adjourn the Special Meeting and seconded by Mr. Paul.**

There being no further discussion, the Special Meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Respectfully transcribed and submitted:

DEBORAH VENNERO  
Board Recorder

October 6, 2022 – 5:30 p.m.

Special Meeting

