

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the City of Vineland was held Wednesday, March 5, 2008 at 6:34 p.m., in the Board Room, 625 Plum Street, Vineland, New Jersey, pursuant to notice with Mr. Giordano presiding and the following members present: Ms. Arroyo, Mr. Bernardini, Mr. Fanucci, Mr. Franceschini, Mrs. Gavigan, Mr. Snyder and Mr. Ulrich. Absent: Mr. Spinelli.

Also present: Mr. Ottinger, Superintendent, Dr. Figgs, Dr. Gruccio, and Mr. Peters, Assistant Superintendents, Mr. Franchetta, Board Secretary, Mr. DeSanto, Board Solicitor and Ms. Greenfield, Executive Director of Personnel.

Mr. Giordano announced that in compliance with the New Jersey meeting law commonly referred to as "The Sunshine Law," the Vineland Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting.

Flag Salute:

Mr. Giordano said this is a special meeting in regards to the district's 2008-2009 budget.

Mr. Ottinger said the board has a new list of the recommended cuts. He said the budget has to be balanced and submitted to the state tomorrow. Mr. Ottinger is recommending that the budget is approved as is for now.

Mr. Snyder asked if this includes the 2.5 cent tax increase. Mr. Ottinger responded yes this is the same as last week except for the board's recommendation of putting the basic skills teachers back and eliminating the home school liaisons with the approval of a 2.5 cent tax increase.

Mr. Ulrich asked why the home school liaisons were cut from the middle school budgets but not the elementary school budgets. Mr. Ottinger that is a typographical error and all twelve home school liaisons have been cut.

Ms. Arroyo asked if Schedule B is back on for the high school. Mr. Ottinger responded yes. Mr. Giordano asked if Schedule B was put back then what was the compensation for it. Mr. Ottinger said when basic skills teachers were put back in Mr. Franchetta worked out a formula where all three levels would get money back and that is what the high school used their money for.

Mrs. Gavigan asked what the priority is for restoring the basic skill positions back over some of the other cuts that the middle school principals have had to make. Mr. Ottinger said they did not have that discussion and only put the basic skills teachers back in because they were forced to by the board.

Mr. Ottinger said that does not mean that the basic skills positions are not important or those teachers do not do an excellent job. Mrs. Gavigan said she would have preferred for the principals to have control on what was restored. Mr. Ottinger said that is what he tried to point out last week that the principals should have been the people deciding what should be cut. He said the board has the authority to do otherwise.

Mr. Snyder said that last week it was mentioned that the principals had something in mind to make up the difference for the basic skills teachers. He would like to have known what that would have been. Mr. Ottinger pointed out that whenever cuts are made alternative solutions have to be found to provide the same services. He said there were plans in place to accommodate the basic skills teacher cuts if they were made.

Mrs. Gavigan said if the principals feel strongly about making adjustments in their school budget then the board should allow that to happen. Mr. Ottinger said he agrees with Mrs. Gavigan one hundred percent.

Mr. Snyder said the majority of the board members were saying that they would rather see people have hands on with students in the classroom. He personally thinks that was not a good argument because the majority of people that are being cut are hands on people in a classroom especially the LEAP and Quest teachers.

Mr. Fanucci asked what the dollar figure is for those sixteen teachers. Mr. Ottinger said the amount is on the papers that were given to the board.

Mr. Franceschini asked which budget the LPN instructor falls under. Mr. Ottinger said we made plans to put the LPN Program in one of the small learning communities at the high school. He said it was originally put into the high school budget and now we can not do that. Mr. Ottinger said there are discussions going on right now in regards to the LPN Program. We are going to charge tuition and the program will have to finance itself.

Ms. Arroyo asked if people will be able to apply for the federal aid for the LPN Program. Mr. Ottinger said most of the programs at the Adult School are grant funded and Mr. Camardo is doing everything that he can do. He said that Mr. Camardo said in order for the program to continue it would require a substantial tuition based program in the neighborhood of eight and eleven thousand dollars.

Ms. Arroyo asked when the last time tuition was increased there. Mr. Ottinger said he does not think we ever did. Ms. Arroyo asked what the current tuition is. Mr. Ottinger said the program is financed by the school district for about \$300,000.

Mr. Franceschini said even though \$11,000 sounds like a lot he thinks that the market is out there.

Mrs. Gavigan asked what the tuition is for the LPN Program at the Vo-Tech. Mr. Ottinger said it is considerably lower. Mrs. Gavigan asked if anything has been adjusted in athletics since last week. Mr. Ottinger said a seven percent cut had to be made in the athletic budget as well. Mrs. Gavigan asked if the seven percent would be uniforms and equipment. Mr. Ottinger said yes it was not freshman sports or coaches. Mrs. Gavigan feels this is an area that could be looked at. Mr. Ottinger said absolutely.

Mr. Ulrich asked if Schedule B has been restored. Mr. Ottinger said yes for the most part it has been restored. He said that he agrees one hundred percent that athletics should not get a special break that all the other clubs and organizations do not get.

Mr. Franceschini asked what the current budget is for athletics at the high school. Mr. Ottinger said about \$600,000.

Mr. Fanucci asked if we have computer equipment at Cunningham School that can be used. Mr. Franchetta said the Cunningham School staff were given about a month to remove anything that they wanted. He said most of the computers were left for the alternative students who will start in September.

Mr. Franceschini asked for the current budget for Schedule B at the high school. Mr. Ottinger said he thinks it is about 50 or 60 thousand dollars.

Mr. Giordano asked if we are just now cutting the Audio Visual Contract. Mr. Ottinger said he tried last year but we had to give a one year's notice.

Mrs. Gavigan asked if there will be any cuts at Coney Avenue or maintenance. Mr. Ottinger said not at the present time.

Ms. Arroyo said we are still collaborating with South Jersey Hospital but they are paying. Mr. Ottinger said yes.

Mrs. Gavigan asked if any of the kindergarten or preschool programs are on the chopping block. Mr. Franchetta said the Early Childhood Program is a separate process that is reviewed by the Early Childhood Department in accordance with their standards and guidelines.

Mr. Bernardini mentioned that next year most of the other school districts have to implement a full day kindergarten and three/four year old program. Mr. Ottinger said it is in the planning stage and down the road it will be mandatory for everybody.

Mr. Ottinger mentioned that the Abbott Superintendents had a private session with Governor Corzine and Commissioner Davy and the issued he raised was that we should be entitled to keep everything that we worked so hard to get. He said already we are in a backward trend and if it continues we will not be able to keep everything we worked so hard to get for our students. Mr. Ottinger said it will have a profound impact on the way we provide education to our students.

Mrs. Gavigan said on the table is a tax increase but there is no way the local tax payers can even sustain what we are faced with cutting. Mr. Ottinger said we are going to be held accountable for the fact that we have not raised taxes all these years. He is certain when the challenge goes forth before the Supreme Court that one of the central issues will be the fact that we have not raised taxes during the entire duration of the Abbott funding cycle. Mr. Ottinger said the 2.5 cents will show the court that we are attempting to do what they are encouraging us to do.

Mr. Fanucci asked if we are prepared if the budget does not pass. Mr. Ottinger responded yes.

Mr. Giordano asked how many literacy coaches we have in the district. Mr. Ottinger said without the cuts we had eight and we are cutting three. Mr. Giordano asked what does add back one literacy coach across the board mean. Mr. Ottinger explained that each elementary school decided to put one eighth of the money we gave them back to hire one literacy coach that will be housed at Barse School because they do not have an assistant principal. He said this person would not be part of the administrative group. Mr. Giordano asked what the salary is for this. Mr. Ottinger said it is a teacher's salary. Mr. Giordano asked enrollment wise is Barse School entitled to an assistant principal. Mr. Ottinger said no there are a couple schools not entitled to an assistant principal.

Mr. Franceschini asked how many students are currently at Barse School. Mr. Ottinger said fewer than 500 students. Mr. Franceschini asked if Barse School has special education and bilingual. Mr. Ottinger said no.

Mr. Ulrich asked what schools have elementary principals that we do not have to support assistant principals for Abbott regulations with a class size of 500. Mr. Ottinger said Barse, Johnstone and Winslow School have less than 500 students. Mr. Ulrich said his question is why we have assistant principals in schools that truly are not mandated by the state. Mr. Ottinger said you have to know the make up of the school.

Mr. Bernardini asked if we are still pursuing through the Supreme Court our Abbott status. Mr. DeSanto said yes the Supreme Court gave us this designation.

Mr. Ulrich asked if Barse School needs an assistant principal to deal with discipline. Mr. Ottinger said he thinks that Mr. Johnson deserves a lot of credit because he is handling the school by himself and has not complained.

Mrs. Gavigan commented that we have achieved benefits that the state can not take away from us.

Mr. Giordano asked what the salary is for the literacy coach at Barse School. Mr. Ottinger said \$63,957.00. Mr. Giordano said the Mennies School 4th grade teacher that we are cutting is \$63,957.00. He does not understand why we are losing a teacher to give help to a principal who is doing an outstanding job. Mr. Ottinger explained that the first job of the literacy coach is to be a literacy coach to all eight elementary schools and 90% of his or her time will be for that purpose. Mr. Giordano said that person will service all of the elementary schools. Mr. Ottinger said they are going to try because this is a budget crisis. Mr. Giordano said his final point is that we are losing a teacher. Mr. Ottinger told Mr. Giordano that he discussed this with him and he clearly understood it. Mr. Giordano said he does not understand the reasoning in it. He asked if he was correct in assuming that there is absolutely no where else anything could be cut. Mr. Ottinger said he is incorrect in assuming that. He said we are trying and did the very best we could. Mr. Giordano asked what we are approving tonight. Mr. Franchetta explained that tonight we are approving the budget for initial submission for the county superintendent to review to allow the printing of the budget in the newspaper for the taxpayers to authorize the tax levy.

Mr. Giordano asked if these cuts could be restored down the road. Mr. Franchetta said if additional funding is found or if reallocations are made.

Mrs. Gavigan asked what the total budget is for the district. Mr. Franchetta said \$189,383,386.00. Mrs. Gavigan said it is hard to imagine that we can not balance our school district budget without a tax increase.

Mr. Fanucci asked if the literacy coach does duties assisting the principal at Barse School will it have to be addressed. Mr. Ottinger said no this individual will not be handling any discipline.

Public Comment
on Agenda Items: None.

Recommendations: See page 8 of this document

The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m. by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin J. Franchetta, CPA
Board Secretary

KJF:df

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Vineland Board Of Education
 Report to the Board – March 5, 2008

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The Board approve travel for district members as required by NJAC 6A:10A-8.3 and/or school field trips as per lists provided and on file with the Secretary of the Board.

WITHDRAWN BY SUPERINTENDENT

2. The Board adopt a tentative 2008-2009 school district budget for submission to the voters as follows:

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Local Tax Levy</u>
General Fund	\$164,553,374.	\$21,143,997.
Special Revenue Fund	25,066,631.	0.
Debt Service Fund	0.	0.
Less: Transfer From General Fund	<u>236,619.</u>	
TOTAL	\$189,383,386.	\$21,143,997.

Further, the Board establish the maximum travel amount for the 2008-2009 school district budget at \$419,762.00.