

An open work session of the Board of Education of the City of Vineland was held in the Board Room, 625 Plum Street, Vineland, New Jersey, Wednesday, January 15, 2014 at 6:03 p.m., pursuant to notice with Mr. Medio presiding and the following members present: Mr. Baruffi, Mr. DeWinne, Mr. DiGiorgio, Mr. English, Mr. Jennings, Ms. Morello and Mr. Ulrich. Absent: Ms. Rios.

Also present: Dr. Gruccio, Superintendent, Mr. Frey, Assistant Superintendent, Mrs. Polof, Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Schectman, Board Secretary, Dr. Rossi, Executive Director of Personnel, Mr. DeSanto, Board Solicitor, press and public. Absent: None.

Mr. Medio said Ms. Rios was absent due to a death in the family.

Mr. Medio 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 to be sent to the following, announcing time and place thereof, agenda, etc.: The Daily Journal, the Atlantic City Press, Clerk - City of Vineland, and Administrative Office Public Bulletin Board.

Flag salute:

Resolution:

Mr. Schectman read a resolution to convene into executive session for the following reasons as outlined in N.J.S.A. 10-4-12. Any collective bargaining agreement, or the terms and conditions of which are proposed for inclusion in a collective bargaining agreement, including the negotiation of terms and conditions with employees or representatives of employees of the public body (Specify contract: VASA grievance, Non-Educational Certificated Employees (NECE) Contract and Donated Sick Leave Program). Any pending or anticipated litigation or contract negotiation in which the public body is or may be a party. If anticipated/pending litigation the matter is All Kids First. If contract negotiation the nature of the contract and interested party is Air Force JROTC Program. Any matters falling within the attorney-client privilege, to the extent that confidentiality is required in order for the attorney to exercise his ethical duties as a lawyer. Any matter involving the employment, evaluation of the performance, promotion or disciplining of any specific prospective public officer or employee or current public officer or employee employed or appointed by the public body, unless all individual employees or appointees whose rights could be adversely affected request in writing that such matter or matters be discussed at a public meeting. The nature of discussion is tenure charges against a teacher, promotion of a support staff employee, suspension of a teacher and salary withholding from a teacher.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Education hereby declares that its discussion of the aforementioned subject(s) may be made public at a time when the Board Attorney advises the Board of Education that the disclosure of the discussion will not detrimentally affect any right, interest or duty of the School District or any other entity or person with respect to said discussion.

Motion: Upon motion by Ms. Morello, seconded by Mr. DiGiorgio, the resolution was passed. All Members voted “yes”.

Special

Presentations: Mr. Medio introduced Ms. Charlene Zoerb and Ms. Jane Kershner representatives from the NJ School Boards Association to discuss the Strategic Planning process.

Ms. Zoerb said she along with Ms. Kershner are here tonight to discuss the Strategic Planning process. She said it is important that the Board understands all of the components of Strategic Planning and to embrace the fact they are going to be embarking on a process that involves staff and community. Ms. Zoerb and Ms. Kershner presented the details and an overview of Strategic Planning.

Mr. DiGiorgio asked if budgetary items are a consideration that goes into the Strategic Plan. Ms. Zoerb said as the Board formulates goals they will drive the budget. Mr. Ulrich said school climate can be changed without money.

Mr. Ulrich said if there are Board members who do not believe in the Strategic Plan concept then we should not waste our time. He said we need to commit and stay committed to something, which has not happened a lot during the seven years he has been on the Board.

Mr. DiGiorgio said he is for a Strategic Plan and feels without it you are doomed.

Ms. Morello feels timing is important in a variety of ways. She said we have the budget coming forward and hopes it is a less confusing process than it was last year. Ms. Morello agrees that we have to consider the entire budgeting process because it involves a lot of time. She said that she was involved in strategic plans while on the board during past terms. Ms. Morello said she is concerned about receiving all the pieces that will inform the decision making in place prior to the school climate survey.

Ms. Morello said historically the same people are involved and we have to find a way to bring in other people. She said the district wide infrastructure is a huge item that we need to address. Ms. Morello said we need time to plan before the planning so we get it right. She said the budget timeframe concerns her and January/February will be busy months.

Dr. Guccio said she does not know if there is a perfect time to do this planning. She said it involves an hour and a half in the evening and all board members do not have to participate. Dr. Guccio feels if we do not begin the process it will be another year before we move forward.

Ms. Morello said if we are going to do this we need to do it the right way and involve everyone and not just the regular players.

Mr. Ulrich said he agrees with Ms. Morello but thinks it is something that the majority of the Board needs to agree to do. He feels a school climate survey is a great idea.

Ms. Morello said the Department of Education has a school climate survey done through them that is truly anonymous. She said in the district where she is employed there was a 98% participation because people felt they would be able to be honest without worrying about someone knowing what their opinion was.

Mr. Baruffi said he agrees with goal setting but around six years ago there was a strategic plan for small learning communities in the city, which did not work. He said as a teacher he was never asked what his thoughts were. Mr. Baruffi feels if the Board gets together as a group with parents and teachers it is good but everyone on the Board has to agree if it is going to work.

Mr. English said he agrees with Mr. Ulrich and Ms. Morello. He said that he supports Strategic Planning and will volunteer the time to it. Mr. English said he would like to see different people involved.

Ms. Zoerb said she has a list of groups to reach out to for representation. She suggested a couple of Board members getting together to discuss the planning and ideas they may have to bring back to the full board.

Mr. Ulrich said he would volunteer.

Dr. Gruccio said the Strategic Plan Program was purchased around a year ago so we just need to move forward with the process because a district our size should have a strategic plan. She said if some of the Board members would like to volunteer a meeting could be scheduled before the February Strategic Planning meeting to review the questions and concerns.

Ms. Morello said she supports the Strategic Plan but is not in favor of having the February meeting as the first meeting of this form of Strategic Planning. She is not comfortable that we have done the groundwork and have a deep enough understanding.

Mr. Ulrich said he agrees with Ms. Morello and does think a month is a big issue.

Ms. Morello said it would be nice to vary the times of the meetings some in the evening and others on Saturday.

Dr. Gruccio said she will call Ms. Zoerb tomorrow to schedule a date for the planning meeting.

Ms. Zoerb said if the Board is interested she will return to review the Superintendent's evaluation and goal setting process.

A brief recess was taken at 6:55 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 7:00 p.m.

Dr. Gruccio introduced Mr. William McDevitt, the Vineland High School Fine Arts Department Chair, to honor two students.

Mr. McDevitt announced that Kathryn Faul and Dimitri Rainmonde have been selected to the South Jersey Symphonic Band and Wind Ensemble. He explained the audition process for being accepted into this organization.

Dr. Gruccio said she is proud of both of them and wished them the very best in their future.

Dr. Gruccio introduced Mrs. Ruth Polof to present the semi-annual Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying HIB report as part of our (HIB) requirements.

Mrs. Polof said the report given to the Board is September through January. She said this report lists the harassment, intimidation and bullying cases in all of the schools that were substantiated and unsubstantiated.

Mr. Ulrich said there seems to be confusion that the discipline policy being used is not the correct policy that the Board approved. He would like to know if there are two different systems used that look at discipline, harassment, intimidation and bullying statistics. Mrs. Polof said HIB has not changed since it was put into place and there is nothing different about the reporting or process. Mr. Ulrich asked if the discipline guide was changed. Mrs. Polof said the discipline guide was changed and finalized in July and August. She said the principals are using the discipline guide that was put into place in August. Mr. Ulrich expressed his concern that there is discussion in the community that we are not doing what we are saying. He said there is a lot of miscommunication going on regarding the high schools and these guides. Mrs. Polof said she is not with the principals on a daily basis and knows they have leeway to make decisions and be flexible, which is in the regulations/policies.

Ms. Morello said that she asked in November for the discipline code to be added to the agenda. She said that she has serious concerns about holes in the guide. Ms. Morello asked why some schools have so many unsubstantiated reports made. Mrs. Polof said she thinks one of the reasons is changes in the law that have not been instituted out of fear that every time someone says the word “bullying” they have an obligation to react.

Mr. DiGiorgio said he thinks consistency and flexibility are two words that do not work together. He said there is a certain policy that one of the schools is not adhering to because staff and students are saying there are certain students who have a lot of flexibility.

Mr. DeWinne asked what administrative action means. Mrs. Polof said it means that the administrator has the flexibility to make a decision based on the nature and severity of the incident.

Ms. Morello asked if conduct is being tracked in Genesis in every school. Mrs. Polof said it is being done in the high and middle schools. Ms. Morello asked when this Genesis tracking began. Mr. Frey said administrative staffs at the schools are entering this information.

Ms. Morello said if you have this information in Genesis you can track the percentage of times that administrator flexibility is implemented versus discipline guide. She said we purchased this program and have the capacity for data input then why are we not using it. Mr. Frey said we plan on mandating this for September.

Mr. Ulrich asked if the demographic data is also being captured. Mr. Frey responded yes.

Mrs. Polof said as of January 15, 2014 there were 29 HIB reports through the district, 10 were substantiated and 19 were unsubstantiated.

Comments by

Board Solicitor: Mr. DeSanto explained that the difference between a HIB report and substantiation is that the statute requires that the victim be a specific target of intimidation. He said unless the individual is being intimidated for their disability, sexual orientation or race there is no substantiation of HIB.

Public Comment

on Agenda Items: None.

Items for Review:

A. Proposed by Superintendent

1. **PERSONNEL**

1.1a. **Personnel Items** – Mr. DeWinne asked if it is a one-step increase on the promotions. Dr. Rossi explained that the titles dictate where the step is.

Mr. DiGiorgio asked what the individual's title currently is before being promoted to supervising clerk typist. Dr. Rossi said senior clerk typist. Mr. DiGiorgio asked what will be the new civil service title. Dr. Rossi said supervising clerk typist. Mr. DiGiorgio asked if the transportation position termination is scheduled to be filled in the future. Dr. Rossi said it is currently in discussion. Dr. Gruccio said at this point we are asking that it not be filled.

1.2 **Unpaid three day suspension of Certificated Employee** – Mr. Ulrich asked if this is one of the items for executive session discussion. Dr. Gruccio responded yes.

1.3 **Withholding of salary increment of Certificated Employee** – No discussion.

2. **PROCEDURES & OPERATIONS**

- 2.1 **Travel – a. Field Trips, b. District** - Ms. Morello asked how we are doing with documentation being submitted on field trips. Dr. Guccio said it has improved.
- 2.2 **Approval of the Semi-Annual HIB Report September 2013 through January 2014**
No discussion.
- 2.3 **Bus Evacuation Drills for November/December** – No discussion.
- 2.4 **Approval of the following Policies/Regulations (Mandated changes): #1240/Superintendent Evaluation, #3221/Teacher Evaluations, #3222 Teaching Staff Member Excluding Teachers and Administrators, #3223 Evaluations of Administrators, Excluding Principals, Vice Principals and Asst. Principals, #3224 Evaluation of Principals, Vice Principals and Asst. Principals** – Ms. Morello asked if these are all reflections of the new evaluation model. Dr. Guccio responded yes.
- 2.5 **First Reading of Policies/Regulations: Policy #3431.4 Donated Sick Leave (Teaching Staff Members) Policy #4211.2 Donated Sick Leave (Support Staff Members)** – Mr. Ulrich thanked Mrs. Polof and the unions for this policy.

3. **BUILDINGS & GROUNDS** - None.

4. **FINANCE**

- 4.1 **Budgetary Transfers** – No discussion.
- 4.2 **Placement of Special Education Students** – No discussion.
- 4.3 **Glassboro Public Schools Joint Transportation Contract** – Ms. Morello asked how we are we doing with the anticipated costs for this year. Mr. Schectman said we are currently on target. Ms. Morello requested an explanation on the transportation contracts. Dr. Guccio said that we do not receive the contracts until the district that is providing the transportation sends them to us. Ms. Morello asked if these students are School Choice students or placements. Dr. Guccio said they are special education students. Mr. Ulrich asked when the out-going School Choice transportation contracts will being approved. Dr. Guccio said the next school year.

Mr. Ulrich asked if a parent declines bus transportation do we pay them to transport their child. Mr. Schectman said yes the payment is around \$880 per year. Mr. Ulrich asked if it is cost effective to have the parent transport the student or to ride the bus. Ms. Schectman said it depends what school they are going to, how many students involved and whether or not we have a full bus. Mr. Ulrich asked if this busing is required by law. Dr. Gruccio said yes. Mr. Ulrich asked if we are certain this is the law. Mr. Medio said we will have a clarification on this next week.

- 4.4 **Acceptance of the 2014 Target Field Trip Grant for Max Leuchter Elementary School** – No discussion.
- 4.5 **Rock Salt Five-Year Agreement with City of Vineland** – No discussion.
- 4.6 **Air Force JROTC Agreement** – No discussion.
- 4.7 **Delsea Regional Joint Transportation Contract** – No discussion.
- 4.8 **Buena Regional Joint Transportation Contract** – No discussion.
- 4.9 **Kiwanis Club \$500.00 Donation to VHS Key Club** – No discussion.
- 4.10 **Cumberland County Technical Education Center Contract** – No discussion.
- 4.11 **Institutional and Business Subscription Agreement with World Book** – No discussion.
- 4.12 **Approval of Surplus Items to be Auctioned on GovDeals** – No discussion
- 4.13 **Amendment to Sheppard Bus Contract that was approved on Nov. 13, 2013** – No discussion

2. ITEMS PROPOSED FOR REGULAR AGENDA:

- a. **Report by the Secretary of the Board of Education** – Mr. Medio asked if the Board is required to vote every month that the budget is within the set parameters and guidelines. Mr. Schectman said he will look into this.

Ms. Morello asked if the books are not closed out for September, October and November. Mr. Schectman responded yes. Ms. Morello asked why the books are not closed out for those months and how are we assured that we are within the parameters and guidelines.

Mr. Schectman said we can be assured with the numbers we have as far as Systems 3000. He explained that everything is in Systems 3000 as either a posted or unposted item and will not be posted until the month is closed. Mr. Schectman said the books have not been closed out because as the Board will recall the auditors were reviewing them until early fall. He said we also had a loss of staff that diminished our ability to have this work done on a timely basis. Mr. Schectman said the Assistant Business Administrator started December 9th and has done wonders in bringing everything up to date. He said August has been closed and September will be closed by the end of this week. Mr. Schectman is confident by the February meeting at the latest everything will be closed and up to date.

Mr. Ulrich asked if funds are encumbered when the purchase order is entered or paid. Mr. Schectman said when the purchase order is approved in the system the funds are encumbered.

Ms. Morello said you should be able to predict how much in surplus funds we have to be applied to next year's budget. Mr. Schectman responded yes when everything is brought up to date.

7.b Proposed for review or discussion or adoption by Board Members: None.

- a. **Monthly Bills Incurred** – Mr. DiGiorgio asked for an explanation on what a 504 service payment from a pediatrics firm is. Ms. Godlewski explained that it is for occupational therapy services. Mr. DiGiorgio asked how a school handles petty cash and is it on site. Mr. Schectman said for the schools it is on site but for the athletic department it is in a checking account. Mr. DiGiorgio asked for an itemized detail of the number of cell phones, who has one and a description of our cell phone plan. Mr. DiGiorgio asked what is implement credit recovery as it relates to a bill for a vendor known as Perfect Moves. Dr. Gruccio explained that it is for equipment for the classroom where students are doing credit recovery at the alternative school. Ms. Morello asked if it was for furniture or computers. Mr. Schectman said it was mostly furniture. Mr. DiGiorgio asked if Buzz's Bookworm contract is renewed annually. Dr. Gruccio said it is a onetime contract.

Ms. Morello asked when the buses get decommissioned. Dr. Gruccio said after fifteen years. Ms. Morello asked if the buses are rotated to even out the mileage. Dr. Rossi said Mr. Callavini rotates the buses.

Public Comments: Mario Olsen, Principal of VHN
Mr. Olsen thanked Mr. Jennings for visiting Vineland High School North. He said the teachers, counselors and social workers at VHN are utilizing the Genesis system fully to run data, reports and to communicate with parents. Mr. Olsen said as far as the consistency with discipline there are times when we deviate from the guide but for the most part it is followed.

Committee

Reports: Mr. Medio appointed the following Board members to the Finance Committee: Brian DeWinne, Chairman, Frank DiGiorgio and Diamaris Rios. He said he will appoint the other committees next week.

Unfinished

Business: Mr. Medio said the discipline guide can be discussed now. He said that he does not believe the Board approved the discipline guide. Mrs. Polof said that is correct the discipline guide was not approved by the Board and was under the regulation.

Mrs. Polof said Mr. Olsen's statement about principals not being able to make decisions was taken out of the discipline guide. She said under Regulations of the high school's discipline code it states "the school district personnel may on a case by case basis consider unique circumstances when determining whether or not to propose discipline."

Ms. Morello said she does not think that students should have devices that are wide open in the school. She said the district would be liable and there are many issues that need to be addressed. Ms. Morello said she has serious reservations about students recording other students, staff or themselves.

Mr. Ulrich said many of the ear buds or headphones are designed so you do not hear the outside environment. He said by doing this you could be jeopardizing your own safety and there could be a lock down drill or active shooter incident. Mr. Ulrich would like to see the educational benefit to walking down the hallway with headphones on. He said as far as wide open devices he is confident that technology exists with the firewalls that could be a benefit to bringing your device to school.

Ms. Morello said we cannot have our bandwidth in jeopardy and we need a way to have control as a district over the devices.

Mr. Ulrich said the problem with recording devices is if a student who is not involved in a conversation hits the record button they have committed a wiretap violation by taping other people without their knowledge.

Ms. Morello said somewhere along the line someone is going to sue and find the district liable. She said our ultimate responsibility is the safety of students and their education.

Mr. DiGiorgio agrees with Ms. Morello and Mr. Ulrich and thinks there is a fine line between safety and utilizing technology. He said in regards to the uniform policy some schools are more flexible than others in enforcing the policy.

Ms. Morello said the discipline guide needs to be addressed and needs to be addressed thoroughly.

Mr. Ulrich asked Mr. DeSanto if a Board policy can be more stringent than a regulation.

Mr. DeSanto said the State Legislature passes statutes and confers with the Commissioner of Education to do regulations to implement the statute. He said the same thing happens with this Board. Mr. DeSanto said the Board adopts a policy and administrative regulations are adopted by the administration to implement the policy. He said the regulations cannot alter the policy. Mr. DeSanto said many times a policy is very bare bones and administration has to do detailed regulations. He said the regulations cannot be stricter than the policy but the policy leaves open certain implementation and the regulations have to fill in the gap. Mr. DeSanto said what he has been hearing is the student handbook and guidelines are very important in the disciplinary procedure so no student or parent can say “I did not know this.” He said every policy should be included into the student handbook that has penalties or punishment. Mr. DeSanto said then you would have a consistency that these are the standards at which you are going to be held accountable for.

Ms. Morello said we have a policy that is not being followed except when someone decides it should be followed. She said if administration does not follow the policy then are employees/students expected to follow the policy. Ms. Morello said our policies should be followed and if they need to be changed then we need to address them.

Mr. DeSanto said one concern that he heard was that when you begin the school year and student handbooks are issued there is this one page guideline is what he calls the snapshot. He said it is not practical to print a twenty page regulation into a student handbook. Mr. DeSanto said since this appeared in August as to what was expected of students this school year it becomes very difficult to make changes in that guide while you are in the midst of a school year. He said what needs to be done is to review all the policies before the summer that have student conduct implications to it.

Ms. Morello said we still have a discipline guide that does not adequately reflect a Board policy. She asked how the current guide addresses that.

Mr. Ulrich said the greater issue is what policies you decide to follow and not follow.

Mr. DeSanto said it is now January 15th and if the review that he discussed reveals that there is only one policy that is not included in the guide send a massive distribution notice out to the schools and parents for implementation in a month or two. He said the preferred way is to have this done for the start of the next school year.

Ms. Morello said she is one person out of nine and we govern as a body but she is not happy with the fact that we are going to review all the policies and they will be reflected for next year. She said we know that there is a very specific problem that can have consequences.

Mr. Medio said the regulation came from administration so he thinks we should give administration until next week to decide what they are going to do with it as far as changing it.

Mr. Baruffi said when he was a teacher at the high school approximately 90% of the students had cell phones. He said at Mainland High School he thinks they have a policy where they are able to use their cell phones at lunchtime only. Mr. Baruffi said he has heard that it is working out well at Mainland. He said if you are a good teacher you have control of your students and they will respect you as long as they know that you mean business.

New Business: Mr. English asked if we have an emergency protocol in place other than the telephone call system when weather conditions are bad. Dr. Gruccio said that is a topic for discussion at our safety committee meeting.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by voice vote at 8:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Herbert G. Schectman
Board Secretary

HGS:df

