

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, March 2, 2016 at 7:01 p.m., pursuant to notice with Mr. English presiding and the following members present: Ms. Codispoti, Mr. DeWinne, Mr. Pagano, Ms. Rios and Mr. Sbrana. Absent: Ms. Acosta, Mr. Bordley and Mr. Jennings who arrived at 7:24 p.m.

Also present: Dr. Gruccio, Superintendent, Mr. Frangipani, Assistant Superintendent, Mrs. Haley, Board Secretary, Dr. Rossi, Executive Director of Personnel, Mr. DeSanto, Board Solicitor, press and public. Absent: Mr. Frey, Assistant Superintendent.

Mr. English 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, The Grapevine, Clerk - City of Vineland, and Administrative Office Public Bulletin Board.

Flag salute:

Resolution: None.

Dr. Gruccio said that Mr. Frey’s father past away a couple of hours ago and asked everyone to please keep his family in your thoughts and prayers.

Special

Presentations: Dr. Gruccio introduced Mr. Purvesh Patel, Director of Food Service, to honor the 2015 Vineland Health Department Five Star Award recipients.

Mr. Patel said tonight he is here to present and honor our senior cooks and their schools for receiving the Vineland Health Department Five Star Award. He said every year dining establishments in Vineland are nominated for this award by the city health inspector. Mr. Patel said this is the highest number of Five Star Awards that Vineland Public Schools as received. He announced each of the award recipients.

HIB Report: None.

Student Liaison  
Report:

Mr. Jeff Martine, Student Liaison, presented the student report. He announced that the Vineland High School Cap N’ Dagger club will perform *Mary Poppins* on March 10, 11 and 12<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. with a matinee on March 13<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m. at Vineland High School. He said the National Honor Society is hosting their annual Jello Eating Contest on March 15<sup>th</sup> in the Vineland High School South gym.

Mr. Martine announced that Kathryn Slusarczyk won the Poetry Out Loud Regional Competition on February 17<sup>th</sup> at the Levoy Theatre in Millville. He said that Kathryn will be going to the state finals on March 17<sup>th</sup> at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ). Mr. Martine said the Academic Team won first place at Buena’s annual Geography Bowl.

Comments by

Board Solicitor: None.

Items for Review:

A. Superintendent

1. **PERSONNEL**

1.1 **Personnel Items** – No discussion.

1.2 **Withholding of Salary Increment** – No discussion.

2. **PROCEDURES & OPERATIONS**

2.1 **Travel** – No discussion.

2.2 **Submission of the Comprehensive Equity Plan** – No discussion.

2.3 **First Reading of the following Bylaws/Policies/Regulations – Policy 7250, Policy 8505, Policy 8550, Policy 3141, Policy 5516** – Mr. English thanked Mr. DeSanto and Ms. Rios for tightening up Policy #7250 Naming of Buildings and Facilities. Mr. DeSanto said we had a couple meetings with Dr. Gruccio and Mr. Frangipani whose input was significant. Mr. English encouraged each Board member to review Policy #5516 Use of Electronic Communication and Recording Devices

3. **BUILDINGS & GROUNDS**

3.1 **Resolution Authorizing Solicitation of Sealed Bids for Rental of Portion of Premises located at 1350 S.W. Boulevard** – No discussion.

3.2 **Resolution Authorizing Rental of VHS ball fields to PG Super Mid-lantic LLC** – Item Pulled from agenda for further discussion.

4. **FINANCE**

- 4.1 **Budgetary Transfers January 2016** – No discussion.
- 4.2 **Board Secretary/Treasurer’s Report for January 2016** – No discussion.
- 4.3 **Placement of Special Education Students** – No discussion.
- 4.4 **Tuition Contract between Delsea Regional School District and the Vineland Board of Education** – No discussion.
- 4.5 **Submission of the following grant – a. ELL Achievement at Rowan Summer Program** – No discussion.
- 4.6 **Acceptance of the following funding – a. USA School Garden Grant, b. NJ Dept. of Education 2015-2016 Perkins Grant, c. NJ Dept. of Education IDEIA Carryover Funds** – No discussion.
- 4.7 **Donation from Falasca Mechanical Inc.** – No discussion.
- 4.8 **Items to be Auctioned on Gov.Deals** – No discussion.
- 4.9 **Transportation Contract between Waterford Township Board of Education and the Vineland Board of Education for 2015-2016** – No discussion.
- 4.10 **Tentative Tuition Charges for 2016-2017** – Mr. English asked Mr. DeSanto if everything was good with the wording of this. Mr. DeSanto said the Resolution sets forth what the concerns were and what this covers. He said this is something that we are required to calculate tentatively until the audit is completed at the end of the fiscal year.
- 4.11 **Authorization for Board Secretary to Advertise and Receive Competitive Bids/RFP’s for 2016-2017** – Mr. English asked for a brief explanation on this item.

Mrs. Haley said this is a blanket approval that allows us to go out to bid for various items that we do each year.

- 4.12 **2016-2017 School District Budget** – Mr. English said the Board digested the budget Monday evening. He asked if this recommendation is basically saying that we are approving a 4% tax increase. Mrs. Haley said yes 4% on our tax levy, which comes out to 2.6 cents for the taxpayer. Mr. English said we will be voting on this next week and asked Board members to express how they feel.

Mr. DeWinne said this is the opportunity as Board members to discuss this tax increase and the budget in general. He first wanted to say that he knew Mr. Frey's father personally and wanted to send his condolences to Mr. Frey and his family. Mr. DeWinne said the presentation that Mrs. Haley's gave last week was excellent and probably the best budget presentation he has ever seen. He said no one up here especially the Superintendent wants to make any cuts. Mr. DeWinne said as much as we want to add programs with flat funding it is not financially feasible. He said on Monday night the Board members listened patiently to people who spoke at the meeting. Mr. DeWinne said the recurring theme from most speakers, many who work in the district, was that they want a tax increase. Mr. DeWinne said the hope of the meeting was that we were going to get ideas from staff and taxpayers on different approaches to make cuts. He said for the most part that did not happen. Mr. DeWinne said in regards to the budget process the Superintendent recommends cuts and a tax increase. He said the Superintendent does not want to eliminate jobs or staff. Mr. DeWinne said that is not how the private sector works. He said you get lean and do more with less. Mr. DeWinne said that he does not support a 4% tax increase or any tax increase. He said Mrs. Haley mentioned that based on the state average we should be contributing over 50 million dollars to our budget and the reason we pay much less is because of our resident taxpayers. Mr. DeWinne said over the years the VEA has done a great job in negotiating favorable contracts with the school boards of the past. He blames the past school boards for awarding these contracts. Mr. DeWinne said he is all for the teachers but the UAW workers have been short changed. He said in the past when the Board elections were in April the budget was on the ballot and whenever there was a tax increase the voters voted it down. Mr. DeWinne said just because we can raise taxes does not mean we should. He believes that there is a silent majority in the community who do not want a tax increase. Mr. DeWinne said he can afford the taxes but represents the students and taxpayers. He believes that many taxpayers in the community struggle. Mr. DeWinne does not believe that we need to raise taxes and presented the following ideas why we should not: Close Landis Middle School, have 1 principal oversee 3 grade levels at all the middle schools, eliminate assistant principals at the elementary level except Sabater. Mr. DeWinne said we can take the savings from these ideas, restore the cuts and not raise taxes. He expressed his concern that when the public spoke last week the attendance was large and tonight when the Board has a chance to respond there is no one present. Mr. DeWinne said he attended Rider College and they had an issue this year because enrollment was down. He said they faced eliminating 13 majors and 14 full-time professors to make ends meet. Mr. DeWinne said to avoid the eliminations the faculty union agreed to a two year wage freeze. He said that he does not see these type of suggestions from our staff and no concessions were offered except to raise taxes. Mr. DeWinne said he does not believe the taxpayers agree and neither does he.

Mr. Jennings apologized for any interruption he made during the presentation on Monday. He commended Mr. DeWinne on his knowledge in the budget field. Mr. Jennings said we have to educate the children who will be running our city/county in the near future.

Mr. Jennings said the children are our future and we need to invest in our future however possible.

Mr. Pagano said there are a lot of things that can be done as far as the VEA and other contractual parties we deal with, however that is something that cannot be changed quickly. He said with increasing expenses we are left with a challenge. Mr. Pagano said we need to meet the educational needs of our students and maintain a manageable budget. He said with teamwork on the part of administration, the Board, staff and community we will meet that challenge again this year. Mr. Pagano said central administration has worked hard along with administrators and staff to trim this year's budget and come up with an 8 million dollar shortfall. He said for the first time this year we are actually making money in the district and trying new ideas. Mr. Pagano commended Joe Callavini, Transportation Supervisor, for the outstanding job he has done on cutting his budget and coming up with ways to bring income into the district. He said also Wayne Weaver, Executive Director of Physical Facilities, is doing the same thing. Mr. Pagano said central administration made up the 8 million dollars with no major impact to our students without putting anyone on the unemployment line. He said the district will continue to explore and find new ways to save and earn future monies to prepare for future budget shortfalls. Mr. Pagano said there is a plan in place for closing Landis Middle School, which will take place over a period of time with minimal impact. He said closing a school is one of the most difficult decisions a school district can make. Mr. Pagano said the budget has been presented and meets the needs of the district but it comes with a 4% tax increase. He said with the 4% tax increase the average household accessed at \$159,900 would have a \$42 per year increase. Mr. Pagano said the school board has not raised taxes in 18 years with the exception of 2% last year. He feels the tax increase is needed as well as being creative and exploring new ways to save and earn future monies to continue the great tradition of excellence in education within our schools. Mr. Pagano feels that we need to invest the \$42 a year in our children and our future.

Mr. English said times like these are stressful. He said he and Dr. Gruccio have a very professional relationship and we communicate. Mr. English said he prides himself on being honest and fair which he learned from past Board Presidents. He said a lot of time, effort and energy has gone into trying to get the best budget for everyone. Mr. English said he continues to question why he struggles with this proposed budget. He said it is things like the 4% tax increase and lack of a Plan B if the proposed budget gets voted down. Mr. English questioned if we are truly lean enough in all areas of the district. He trusts and has faith in Dr. Gruccio and Mrs. Haley when they tell him yes. Mr. English also questioned if this budget is truly balanced if we are using tax dollars to balance it. He said we raised taxes 2% for the first time in a while last year but what did the taxpayers get for that 2%. Mr. English said what he is asking of central administration is to sit back down to renegotiate the best budget and try to compromise for a 2% tax increase before we vote on this.

Mrs. Haley said for several years we have received flat funded state aid. She said if the state actually funded us based on the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA) calculation we would receive \$365,940 less in state aid.

Mr. English said you have to understand that when each one of us pounded that pavement there was one common denominator which was “do not raise my taxes.” He said he did not say anything about not raising taxes but the word he is using is compromise.

Mr. Jennings said he thinks at this point we have no option except to raise taxes. He said this is what will get us on the right track. Mr. Jennings said eventually the state is going to realize that we need help. He said he is a taxpayer too and wants the children educated. Mr. Jennings said he would support a 6% tax increase and firmly supports a 4% tax increase.

Mr. Pagano said the first time the balanced budget was provided to the Finance Committee the tax increase was 6%. He said the Finance Committee said no to trim more.

Mr. English said he agrees with a 2% tax increase and thinks we can trim some areas, which Mr. DeWinne spoke about.

Mr. Jennings said he is supporting the budget as it stands with the 4% tax increase.

Mr. Sbrana said in response to Mr. DeWinne’s statement about the silent majority. He said people that he has spoken to are not silent but very vocal and feel that everyone should live within their means and not rely on tax increases to fund programs.

Ms. Rios said everyone up here has the right to express their opinions and present their ideas. She said the public also has the same right as the Board to present ideas and suggestions. Ms. Rios said the taxpayers should not have to attend the Board meetings and state that they do not want their taxes increased because that is why they elect the Board members. She said that she is a parent as well as a taxpayer and knows what it is to be without and live from paycheck to paycheck with no pay increases. Ms. Rios said at the next meeting she will go into detail as to what Vineland life is really like when you are not making enough money.

Ms. Codispoti said that there are things that everyone said that she agrees but she is still listening. She said the finance committee and central administration have worked very hard on this budget. Ms. Codispoti said she has received many phone calls from the silent majority. She said we were elected by the taxpayers and have to take them into account.

Ms. Codispoti said she understands both sides of this because she was a single parent with two children. She is investigating and working hard to make the best possible decision for the students and taxpayers. Ms. Codispoti expressed her condolences to Mr. Frey and his family.

Mr. English said the heart of a woman is that you feel the passion. He said what makes a Board and School District strong is positive discussion from all Board members. Mr. English said Ms. Rios represents a big piece of what Vineland is and is a single successful mom. He said this is the type of discussion that makes him proud as the Board President because we are working to get to the solution. He said we are not going to agree or status quo everything.

4.13 **Local Tax Levy** – Discussion under 4.12.

4.14 **Authorization of the use of \$443,322 in Banked Cap for 2016-2017** – Mrs. Haley said 4.14 will need to be changed from Banked Cap to Adjustment for Increase in Health Care Costs. She said there is an adjustment that is calculated based on comparing health care from one year to the next and a calculation within the state's software states you can use part of that as an adjustment to the increase in the tax levy. She said the amount is now \$367,888.

4.15 **Capital Reserve Withdrawal in the Budget** – No discussion.

4.16 **Maximum Travel Amount** – Mr. Jennings asked if this is what we are anticipating. Mrs. Haley responded yes and said this item should be part of the budget section because it is part of the budget approval process.

4.17 **Change Authorize Signers on the Landis Middle School Activity Account** – Mr. Jennings asked who the other signers are on the account. Mrs. Haley said the four signers that are listed.

## 2. REGULAR AGENDA

- b. Items proposed by the Board President or an individual Board Member  
**Discussion regarding the approval of 3 Bus Advertisements for Vineland Landscaping** - Mr. English said usually Dr. Gruccio makes this recommendation but this advertisement happens to be her son so in discussion with Mr. DeSanto we thought it was best that it did not get recommended by her.

Review of bills incurred during January 2016 – No discussion.

Public Comments: Camie Almodovar

Ms. Almodovar expressed her concern in regards to the drug testing policy. She said her daughter has Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) was giggling in class and sent for drug testing. Ms. Almodovar asked what warrants drug testing over a disciplinary action because no one has given her an answer.

Mr. English said the Board would review the policy to see what it needs. He said as far as her questions he hopes that she can achieve what she is looking for through Mr. Frangipani and Dr. Gruccio.

Committee Reports: Ms. Rios said the Policy & Personnel Committee met February 10<sup>th</sup>. She said the garage staff and re-staffing of the registration office has been completed. Ms. Rios said we hope to place all staff based on the number of retirements and resignations. She said staff will be moved according to their certifications, which is based on the budget proposal of a 4% tax increase. Ms. Rios said after a thorough revision, with the assistance of the Board Attorney, Policy #7250 Naming of Buildings and Facilities was submitted to the full Board for review. She said they discussed and made revisions to the Wellness Policy #8505, Outstanding Food Service Charges Policy #8550, Resignation Policy #3141 and Use of Electronic Communication and Recording Devices Policy #5516.

Ms. Codispoti said a meeting was held with the preschool providers, which went very well. She said they discussed putting enrollment out on social media for 3 year olds.

Mr. Jennings said at the February 23<sup>rd</sup> Facilities Committee meeting discussed was readjustments to the ball fields to make them more viewer friendly, solar panel projects, and rentals of the perfect game proposal.

Old Business: None.

New Business: None.

Ms. Rios said due to the parent complaint she will be reviewing the drug testing policy at the next meeting.

Mr. English said on behalf of his fellow Board members thoughts and prayers are with Mr. Frey and his family on the loss of his father.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by voice vote at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen G. Haley  
Board Secretary

HGH:dt

