

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 4, 2015 at 7:02 p.m., pursuant to notice with Mr. English presiding and the following members present: Ms. Acosta, Ms. Codispoti, Mr. DiGiorgio, Mr. Jennings, Ms. Morello, Mr. Pagano and Ms. Rios. Absent: Mr. DeWinne arrived at 7:10 p.m.

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

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, Clerk - City of Vineland, and Administrative Office Public Bulletin Board.

Flag salute:

Resolution:

Mrs. Haley read a resolution to convene into executive session for the following reasons as outlined in N.J.S.A. 10-4-12. Any matter involving the employment, appointment, termination of employment, terms and conditions of 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 extended employment and extension of retirement date of an administrative employee. 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. **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:

Dr. Gruccio introduced Mr. Lou Bramante, VHS Automotive Technology Program teacher, to honor students who placed in the Universal Technical Institute Top Tech Challenge.

Mr. Bramante said Mr. Daniel Sakan and Mr. Ariel Mendez are two of his senior automotive students and placed second overall in the Universal Technical Institute Top Tech Challenge. He said the students were awarded a \$1,000 certificate for Snap-on Tools. Mr. Bramante recognized Daniel and Ariel for their hard work.

Dr. Gruccio introduced Dr. Dina Elliott, Superintendent of Cumberland County Technical Education Center (CCTEC), to present an overview of the new CCTEC building and programs.

Dr. Elliott presented an overview of the new Cumberland County Technical Education Center and programs that will be offered there.

Mr. English asked Dr. Elliott if she could possibly attend a Curriculum & Instruction meeting. He asked what the functional capacity of the CCTEC building is. Dr. Elliott said about 1200 is the student capacity. Mr. English asked if the CCTEC will be operating on the same schedule as the high school. Dr. Elliott said we are looking at all sending district schedules. Mr. English asked if the CCTEC is looking for a certain percentage of students from Vineland to attend the 2016 freshman class. Dr. Elliott said each municipality will be given a minimum number of seats and the larger municipalities will have more seats available. Mr. English asked how the existing students will be phased into the daily routine. Dr. Elliott said we are focusing solely in the full-time institution on our high school population. She said the adults that attend during the day will be in an evening program that is yet to be determined. Mr. English asked if there have been discussions with other county superintendents on how we should be forwarding information to the middle school students. Dr. Elliott said historically we have had two sessions for our high school guidance counselors, which is held at CCTEC in the fall and spring. Mr. English asked if the curriculum will be changing. Dr. Elliott said absolutely. Mr. English expressed his concern in regards to the criteria for students who want to go the blue collar route and the door is not open for them.

Ms. Morello said she is hoping that the shared time will remain because the sophomore year of high school seems to be the time when many students begin to develop some kind of affinity to a particular skill or career. She said if shared time will most likely be an option that is very reassuring. Ms. Morello asked for this presentation to be put on *Channel 9*.

Mr. DiGiorgio thanked Dr. Elliott, her staff, and Board of Directors of the CCTEC for the presentation. He asked Dr. Elliot to elaborate on the revenue generation that will be needed from the district. Dr. Elliott said she can give the educator answer and maybe Mr. Mercoli, Business Administrator, can attend a Finance Committee meeting to get more technical. She said the district currently pays tuition to the CCTEC for their students to attend. Dr. Elliott said by statute they are permitted to assess a tuition rate. She said currently they are assessing what their tuition rate will be, which will be higher because the time will increase. Dr. Elliott said we are going to be comparable to our peers. Mr. DiGiorgio asked if the tuition will be comparable to our current per pupil tuition cost in our district. Dr. Elliott said it will be different.

Ms. Morello asked if a student leaves the CCTEC and returns to their home school will the credits shift. Dr. Elliott said correct.

Mr. DeWinne said Mr. English cares about all children and has more of a concern for those who are not attending college. Mr. English said that is correct. Mr. DeWinne asked how many students are at the CCTEC currently. Dr. Elliott said with our shared time population about 700 students not including our Strive population. Mr. DeWinne asked how many students are from Vineland. Dr. Elliott deferred the question to Mr. Cruet, Principal at CCTECH, who was in the audience and said close to 200.

Mr. English asked about the language courses offered. Dr. Elliot said we are only offering one language to start. Mr. English thanked Dr. Elliot and the entire CCTEC group who are at tonight's meeting. He wished them all the luck with this new endeavor. Dr. Elliott encouraged everyone to work with Dr. Gruccio and get the information. She thanked the Board for allowing them to be here this evening.

Dr. Gruccio introduced Mr. Joe Callavini, Transportation/Registration Coordinator, to present an update on the Transportation/Registration Plan.

Mr. Callavini presented a brief synopsis on the Transportation/Registration Plan.

Mr. DeWinne asked what percentage of the student body ride the bus. Mr. Callavini said around 78% to 80% of the students.

Mr. English said he struggles that we still have in-district students walking to school and yet we cater to the out of district students.

Ms. Morello asked if we have ever lobbied to the Department of Education and brought to them the fact that we are the largest city in the state and have very poor infrastructure in terms of sidewalks and zero public transportation. She said that should have an impact on the transportation for our students. Ms. Morello said in the entire county there is no reliable public transportation for students to get to school. Mr. English asked who would make that call to lobby. Ms. Morello said the Board through a resolution. Mr. DeWinne said we could utilize our School Board Association. Mr. English said this is something we really need to start looking into. He said that Ms. Rios pointed out to him that there are a lot of elementary students who are walking.

Dr. Gruccio asked Mr. Callavini if he remembers the cost to bus every student. He said he believes it would increase the budget by almost a million dollars but he will check.

Mr. DeSanto said the strength of such lobbying effort is really in the number and it should be a joint effort with a lot of different townships and municipalities throughout rural South Jersey. He said then there may be ears that will listen.

Ms. Morello asked if there is an opt out process where a parent can sign off on receiving a bus pass to make more seats available. Mr. Callavini explained that there is currently nothing set up for a parent to opt out.

Ms. Rios said at the Policy & Personnel Committee meeting transportation will be discussed in detail. She said her concern is the younger children and if there is a bus that has room on it we should pick them up.

Mr. Jennings said he would like to discuss community bus stops where the children walk a hundred yards with eight to ten of them picked up at one stop. He said this would save a lot of time and money.

Ms. Rios said we live in a dangerous society and we need to do everything that we can for the safety of our children.

Mr. Callavini said he would like to see every student transported but funding is the problem.

Mr. DiGiorgio asked what our annual transportation budget is. Mr. Callavini said around nine million dollars.

Ms. Codispoti asked who pays for the private school transportation. Mr. Callavini said we are responsible as a school district.

Mr. English requested that a copy of the transportation power point presentation to be given to each Board member. He said our goal is not to privatize transportation. Mr. English asked Mr. Callavini if he considered applying for grants to purchase buses. Mr. Callavini said in October we did apply for a grant for replacement buses and he has not heard anything yet. He said most of the recent grants have been about fuel. Mr. English asked how many buses are we currently down. Mr. Callavini said about 20 buses.

Mr. DiGiorgio said he would like to see additional detail that shows what percentage special needs and regular transportation make of the budget along with some history.

Ms. Morello asked if a portion of the transportation costs for a special education student come from IDEA or IDEIA Grant. Mr. Callavini said no. Mrs. Haley explained that there is a certain amount of money in IDEA and we have filled it with tuition at this point. She said we took a lot of employees out and put them in our regular budget because we found that by leaving employees in IDEA we have to give back the TPAF and FICA reimbursements to the state. Mrs. Haley said most districts put tuition in IDEA because it is a clean number.

Mr. Jennings commented about the noise in the registration building and maybe putting sound buffers in the room. He asked how the online registration is going. Mr. Callavini said no one is choosing to use it.

Ms. Codispoti asked if one of our elementary students, who is a walker, decides to attend a charter school within 1 ½ miles do we still pay for their tuition. Mr. Callavini said no they have to make the same mileage as our students do.

Ms. Acosta asked for a breakdown on how many students in K through 5 are actually walking. Mr. Callavini said absolutely. Ms. Acosta feels that our younger children should not be walking home and said we need to come up with some way to accommodate them.

Ms. Rios departed the meeting at 8:33 p.m. to attend a viewing.

The Board recessed for a break at 8:35 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 8:50 p.m.

Dr. Gruccio introduced Mrs. Helen Haley, Business Administrator, to present the 2015-2016 School District Budget.

Mrs. Haley presented the 2015-2016 Budget. She reviewed the background on the budget process that was incurred to date along with dates /deadlines for approval and submission. Mrs. Haley said the parameters of the budget are revenue minus appropriations equals a balanced budget. She said revenue is comprised of state aid, local tax levy, local non-tax revenue, other aid, use of fund balance and use of capital reserve/maintenance reserve. Mrs. Haley said the total budget for 2015-2016 is \$196,825,086, which compares to last year's amount of \$196,144,066. She said we have increased \$681,020 which equates to less than 1% of an increase. Mrs. Haley said you can say that our budget is flat. She said we are proposing to increase the tax levy by 2%, which equals \$434,629. Mrs. Haley said our state aid is 80% of our revenue and our local tax levy is 13%. She said appropriations are the expenditure side of the budget. Mrs. Haley said the appropriations exceeded revenue when we started the budget due to contractual increases in salaries and increases in health benefits. She said the largest portion of our appropriations relate to salaries which are 53.3% and benefits 17.3%. Mrs. Haley said 70% of our budget is made up of salaries and benefits. She said when we began the budget process we had a shortfall of 5 million dollars. Mrs. Haley said our goal was to balance the programmatic side with the financial side. She said in order to do that we came up with several cuts, additions and so forth.

Mrs. Haley reviewed the following highlights in what is reflected in the balanced budget: Cunningham School will be taken off line, the Alternative Program shall be moved to a new location, the middle and high schools will have a modified schedule, consolidation of supervisor positions, additional personnel savings, supply budget cuts, Terra Nova testing was eliminated and Otis Lennon testing reduced, health benefits increase, two additional modules for Project Lead the Way, transportation changes, reduction of overtime/extra pay in security and technology and special education. The capital outlay budget has a total of \$3,273,500. Mrs. Haley said we have two big projects this year one is the fluid cooler installation for \$500,000 and the other is Middle School 2 geothermal well field for \$650,000. She said we are increasing the tax levy by 2%, which is \$434,629. Mrs. Haley said a 2% increase in taxes on an average assessed house of \$159,164 would be \$27.06 per year, which is an increase of \$2.25 per month. She said the tax for the school piece is increasing from \$.543 to \$.560 per \$100 of assessed value.

Mr. English thanked Mrs. Haley and her staff for all their time on the budget along with central administration and the building principals. He also thanked the Finance Committee for putting in extra hours during the past few months. Mr. English said the budget process is always stressful and this year we are proposing a tax increase, which is a tough decision for any Board to make. Mr. English said this is a proposed budget by Dr. Gruccio and we will be voting on this next week. He said that he was very happy with the process compared to prior years.

Ms. Morello thanked Mr. DeWinne for the budget highlights and for answering her questions. She asked what the timeline is for something to be changed or added into the budget after the Board approves the tentative recommended budget. Mrs. Haley said changes can be made to the budget up to and immediately after the public hearing. She said if there are changes to be made to the budget they should be discussed at the public hearing. Mrs. Haley said you cannot change anything that was not discussed at the public hearing.

Mr. DeSanto asked Mrs. Haley if Mr. Knight, the County Business Administrator, said it is only matters at the public hearing brought up by the public or matters can be brought up by the Board. Mrs. Haley said we will have an advertised budget before the public hearing. She will need to find out if a change can be made to this budget before the advertised budget is out.

Ms. Morello asked for a written advisory from Mr. Knight that could be shared with the Board. She said then the public will know that if they have a concern they could come to the public hearing and express their desires. Ms. Morello thanked Mrs. Haley and her colleagues for a very in depth and clear presentation.

Mrs. Haley said that she will have Mr. Sbrana put the budget on the website.

Ms. Morello said when a form is received from Mr. Knight maybe that could be put on the website also.

**Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB Report), Suspension Report, Cunningham Alternative School Report/Average Daily Attendance - No discussion.**

Comments by

Board Solicitor: None.

Mr. English announced that Ms. Rios returned to the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Items for Review:

A. Superintendent

1. **PERSONNEL**

- 1.1 **Personnel Items** – Mr. DiGiorgio asked what the difference is between a transfer and a promotion if an existing employee transfers into a next level position. Dr. Rossi explained that there is a process through civil service for the support staff level like a promotion. Mr. DiGiorgio asked what group does the principal accountants fall under. Dr. Rossi said civil service. Mr. DiGiorgio asked about the transfer of a teacher to guidance counselor.

Ms. Morello wished Lindsey McCarron great success in her new position at Upper Deerfield. She asked if Ms. McCarron's position will be filled with a substitute. Dr. Rossi said there is a student teacher at Johnstone School and Dr. Karwowski is very pleased with her work. He said we are awaiting the paperwork to be complete.

Mr. DiGiorgio acknowledged that one of our senior accountants is moving into a principal accountant position, which he has a lot of respect and admiration for. He said the promotion is in excess of the minimum starting salary and represents a 27% increase from his current salary. Dr. Rossi said the starting rate is \$65,000 and we are bringing him in at \$70,000 because of his on the job experience.

Ms. Morello thanked the individual in the community for doing sports volunteering.

2. **PROCEDURES & OPERATIONS**

2.1 **Travel** – No discussion.

2.2 **Vineland High School Class Trip to Spain and France 2016** – Ms. Morello said hopefully if we need to send a medical professional there will be sufficient students for that person to chaperone. Dr. Gruccio said we have a meeting next week to discuss guidelines and nursing.

2.3 **Bus Evacuation Drills** – No discussion.

2.4 **School Calendar for 2015-2016-** Ms. Morello expressed her concern that if the school calendar changes, due to snow days, students may be going to school well into June. She said it would make her happy to know that at a certain point the days would be deducted from spring break as opposed to going to school further into June.

Mr. DeWinne said he has the same concerns in regards to spring break and where it falls in reference to the third marking period.

Mr. English said he attended a meeting on the calendar planning. He said that he questioned the spring break but what he was told by the union representatives is that you end up with a big absentee rate and may not have enough substitutes to fill in.

Ms. Morello said she would like to see the school year end the second or third week of June as opposed to fourth or fifth week.

Mr. English said he brought everyone's issues to the table the day of the calendar meeting but when he left there he knew the Board would not be happy with the spring break piece. He asked what happens if the Board does not approve the calendar. Dr. Gruccio we go back to the drawing board with changes. She said we do make every effort to be as uniform as we can with the other districts in the county.

Ms. Morello said she thinks the calendar looks great and likes how Veterans Day has been moved in a consolidated way. She said on the actual day of Veterans Day students will be in school doing activities to make it a meaningful day. Ms. Morello said she would personally prefer taking days from spring break before extending into the hottest part of June. She asked for an estimate on what the energy expenses would be in June.

Dr. Gruccio said she thinks we have to get into the mindset that school is September 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup> especially with the kind of weather that we have been having.

Ms. Morello commended the committee for having many months with many contiguous days of instruction.

3. **BUILDINGS & GROUNDS** – None.

4. **FINANCE**

4.1 **Budgetary Transfers-** Mrs. Haley said this will be provided at the next meeting. Mr. English asked what does that mean. Mrs. Haley said it means that we did not do it yet.

4.2 **Placement of Special Education Students** – No discussion.

4.3 **Multicultural Health Community Disparity Prevention Grant** – Ms. Morello said this is a great grant.

4.4 **Advertise & Receive Competitive Bids** –Mr. DiGiorgio asked if this was general for everything. Mrs. Haley responded yes.

4.5 **Legal Fees Reimbursement** – Ms. Morello said she is happy we are approving the expungement fee.

Mr. DiGiorgio asked for an explanation on this item. Mr. DeSanto explained that there is a state statute that requires a Board of Education to indemnify its employee in the event the employee in the course of their duty is charged with a criminal offense and acquitted of that criminal offense. Mr. DiGiorgio said he is concerned that our employee was falsely accused and the district had to expend resources to prove that persons innocence. Mr. DeSanto said it is not always frivolous and many times there is an assault. Mr. DiGiorgio asked why we cannot acquire the money from the false accuser. Mr. DeSanto said the problem is the cost to pursue frivolous litigation is mostly cost ineffective.

Ms. Acosta said she has seen many of these issues appear in municipal court. She said the way our judicial system is set up is that any citizen has the right to file a complaint against anyone alleging a criminal act. Mr. DeSanto wanted to clarify that since Ms. Acosta has been appointed to the Board she has recused herself from district matters. Ms. Acosta said that is correct we have a conflict prosecutor handling any cases involving a district employee or truancy issue as well.

Mr. DiGiorgio said he hates that fact that someone gets falsely accused and has to go through a lot of emotional issues during that process. He said maybe the person who is falsely accused should file a lawsuit against the accuser.

- 4.6 **VHS South Toilet Room Change Order #1** – Mr. Jennings said he along with Mr. Weaver visited the restrooms and the work is an unbelievable transformation.

Mr. DeWinne asked if there were some issues with old items being replaced. Mr. Weaver said in the original demolition portion we found some asbestos that was unforeseen. He said we had to go further on the wall, which increased the costs. Mr. DeWinne asked if everything is new. Mr. Weaver said yes.

- 4.7 **Submission of following Grants: a. Evidence –Based Teen Pregnancy Prevention Grant, b. D’Ippolito Gannett Foundation Grant** – No discussion.

- 4.8 **School District Budget for 2015-2016** – No discussion.

- 4.9 **Local Tax Levy** – No discussion.

- 4.10 **Maximum Travel Amount for 2015-2016** – No discussion.

- 4.11 **Capital Reserve Withdrawal** – No discussion.

- 4.12 **Acceptance of the following funding: a. Mennies Educational Environment Scholarship Grant, b. Winslow School Garden Grant** – Ms. Morello said these grants are great.

- 4.13 **Delta Dental Flagship Renewal** – No discussion.

- 4.14 **Benecard Prescription Plan Renewal** – No discussion.

- 4.15 **Vision Service Plan Renewal** – Mr. Jennings asked what the total premium cost was. Mrs. Haley said in 2013 it was \$231,136 and it is going up to \$254,244 for an increase of \$23,108.

- 4.16 **City of Vineland Gasoline /Diesel Fuel Agreement** – No discussion.

- 4.17 **Amended 2015 No Child Left Behind Application** – No discussion.

**ITEMS PROPOSED FOR REGULAR AGENDA:**

- a. **Report by the Secretary of the Board of Education** – Mrs. Haley said this will be submitted at the regular meeting.
- b. **Proposed for review or discussion or adoption by Board Members:** None.

**Monthly Bills Incurred** – Ms. Morello thanked Dr. Gruccio and Mrs. Haley for getting her answers to questions that she asked. She is hopeful with our new purchasing agent that some of the toner cartridges and other items she questioned will be pulled together for better prices. Mrs. Morello said she hopes we get the preferential rate for the district on the computer items. Mr. English asked if as these items come in will they be itemized so they do not walk. Mr. Frey said correct.

Public Comments: Cindy Paterno

Ms. Paterno expressed her concern in regards to the loss of elementary computer teachers.

Louis Russo

Mr. Russo thanked Dr. Gruccio and Mrs. Haley for including a budget up to the 2% cap and implores the Board to consider approving it. He said the way we maintain all the educational programs is through the City of Vineland local taxpayers contributing more.

Committee Reports: Ms. Rios said the Policy & Personnel Committee met on February 24<sup>th</sup> and they discussed Policy #2431 – Athletic Competition Eligibility Standards, the Emergency Action Plan for sudden cardiac arrest along with Policy /Regulation #5300 AED, Policy #7510-Use of Facilities and costs of facility use, Policy #7450 – Property Inventory, Policy #8600 – Transportation, Policy #7520- Loan of School Equipment and Policy #7250 – Naming of Facilities.

Mr. English asked if the standing committee for transportation is something that needs to go to the Policy & Personnel Committee. Mr. DeSanto said he always thought it is something the Board can vote on but the policy on policies states bylaws go before the committee also. Mr. English said he will not be sitting on this committee meeting but wants it in place. He asked if the committee could be started as an Ad Hoc Committee. Mr. DeSanto said yes.

Mr. Jennings said that at the February 23<sup>rd</sup> Facilities Committee meeting they discussed the new middle school, Almond Road Preschool, Vineland High School HVAC system, the Vineland High School North pool, LED lighting and increased costs for fluid cooler.

Mr. DeWinne said the Board should have received a packet from the Finance Committee meeting and he thanked Mrs. Haley for presenting.

Unfinished

Business: None.

New Business:

Mr. DiGiorgio asked if we can visit our policy on emails and Board member communication. He asked if it was mandatory for Board members to communicate solely on district email. Mr. DeSanto said under the Open Public Records Act (OPRA) emails that involve Board business are public records. He said in order not to implicate your personal email Board members should use the district email for emails.

Mr. English asked if we have district background checks and contracted service background checks. Dr. Rossi said everyone in the district regardless of their employer has to go through the State of NJ Department of Education.

Ms. Morello asked if we are going to start including in Request for Proposals (RFP's) or anything that goes out that anyone who works in the district will be vetted by the Department of Education so we avoid this misunderstanding. Dr. Rossi responded yes.

Adjournment:

A motion was made by Ms. Morello, seconded by Mr. Jennings, to adjourn the meeting at 10:20 p.m. to executive session.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen G. Haley  
Board Secretary



