

The regular meeting of the Board of Education of the City of Vineland was held in the Board Room, 625 Plum Street, Vineland, New Jersey, Wednesday, March 9, 2016 at 7:00 p.m., pursuant to notice with Mr. English presiding and the following members present: Ms. Acosta, Mr. Bordley, Ms. Codispoti, Mr. DeWinne, Mr. Jennings, Mr. Pagano, Ms. Rios and Mr. Sbrana. Absent: None.

Also present: Dr. Guccio, Superintendent, Mr. Frey and Mr. Frangipani, Assistant Superintendents, Mrs. Haley, Board Secretary, Dr. Rossi, Executive Director of Personnel, Mr. DeSanto, 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, the Grapevine, Clerk - City of Vineland, and Administrative Office Public Bulletin Board.

Flag Salute: Students from Leuchter Elementary School led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Resolution: None.

Special

Presentation (s): Dr. Guccio introduced Mr. Ed Zatzariny, Veterans Memorial School Band Director, to honor two students who qualify to perform with the All South Jersey Junior High Band.

Mr. Zatzariny said as a teacher and band director he never takes any credit for a student’s success. He said all of that comes from what is inside of them, which is intrinsic motivation. Mr. Zatzariny introduced Adrian Ferrer and Jonathan Choo the All South Jersey Junior High Band students.

Dr. Guccio introduced Ms. Tammy Monahan, Rossi Middle School Principal, to recognize students and staff for their dedication in raising money for the 2016 JDRF Kids Walk to Cure Diabetes.

Ms. Monahan thanked Dr. Guccio and the Board for recognizing Rossi School on their efforts to raise funds in support of the JDRF as well as educating our students/staff about diabetes and its prevention. She acknowledged the individuals that assist and support the cause in many different ways.

Dr. Gruccio introduced Dr. Joanne Negrin, Supervisor for Instruction and Curriculum, to present information on the Bilingual Programs in the district.

Dr. Negrin said she supervises K through 12 bilingual education, English as a Second Language Program, World Languages Program, Performing Arts and ESSA (formerly NCLB). She presented the Language Programs in Vineland: Promise and Results.

Mr. English said Dr. Negrin's PowerPoint presentation was outstanding and he thanked her on behalf of the Board. He also thanked the bilingual staff and students for helping this program excel. Mr. English asked for the presentation to be sent to the Board members and put on the district website. He thanked Ms. Rios for requesting this bilingual presentation to be added to the agenda.

Dr. Gruccio introduced Mr. Joseph Callavini, Coordinator of Transportation/Registration, to present information regarding the district's transportation programs.

Mr. Callavini thanked Dr. Gruccio and the Board for allowing him to present tonight. He presented a brief synopsis on the Registration-Transportation Department bus stop consolidation for the City of Vineland.

Mr. English asked if the Sheppard routes will be eliminated by doing this. Mr. Callavini responded no.

Mr. Callavini presented a second presentation along with a video on Z Pass Student Ridership Recording and Electronic Bus Pass. He thanked everyone who helped to make the video for the presentation.

Mr. English asked if the bus will wait for a student to go back to their house if they forget the Z pass. Mr. Callavini said we have something that handles that situation. Mr. English asked what happens if a student loses their pass in school. Mr. Callavini said every school is issued temporary passes. Mr. English asked if the future passes will be given to 8th graders. Mr. Callavini said the cost is for the equipment and once that is done the cards are only \$2 per student.

Approval of Minutes: Upon motion by Mr. Jennings, seconded by Ms. Codispoti, the minutes were approved from February 3, 2016 and February 10, 2016. All Members voted “yes.”

Solicitor’s Report: None.

Public Comment on
Agenda Items:

Melanie Beck, Principal Landis Middle School
Ms. Beck spoke in support of a tax increase. She also spoke on behalf of the faculty and staff at Landis Middle School.

Lee Burke, Vineland Resident

Mr. Burke commended the Board in their efforts in getting more people out to vote. He said he along with the public have not been sold on the need for an increase in taxes. Mr. Burke said we have good people in the district but some do not perform and are job protected. He reminded the Board that when you vote tonight remember you are here to represent the citizens and a legal obligation to do what is best within the restraints that you have.

Meghan Greenfield, Landis Middle School Teacher

Ms. Greenfield spoke in support of a tax increase. She asked where the silent majority of taxpayers are and why are they silent. Ms. Greenfield asked the Board if they want to be the Board that is held responsible for the fall of our Vineland education system. She expressed her concern on the possibility of Landis Middle School closing. Ms. Greenfield distributed letters to the Board written by Landis School students on their thoughts in regards to Landis School being closed. She shared a few excerpts from the letters.

Mr. English stopped Ms. Greenfield from reading the student letters.

Ms. Greenfield suggested phasing out Landis Middle School gradually over a 3 year phase.

Anthony Jimenez, Landis Middle School Student

Mr. Jimenez, a student at Landis Middle School, thanked the Board for allowing him to speak tonight and spoke on behalf of Landis Middle School.

Tanya Kidd, Landis Middle School Teacher

Ms. Kidd said that she supports the budget that was presented last week even though she may be moved out of her 6 grade teaching position at Landis Middle School. She said the students at Landis School are worried about starting over and making new friends if the Board chooses to close Landis at the end of this school year.

Harry Meyers, Teacher

Mr. Meyers spoke in support of the 4% tax increase in next year's budget. He said through negotiations the VEA has saved the district hundreds of thousands of dollars by sacrificing teaching time for money. Mr. Meyers said the raises that were earned were modest compared to what could have been earned. He said our focus should be how we can save positions. Mr. Meyers asked to Board to please consider the education of our students and how it will be adversely effected if we do not pass this budget.

Tara Myerson, Teacher

Ms. Myerson expressed her concern in regards to Landis Middle School being closed. She said she is disturbed that the Board does not put enough trust in Dr. Gruccio's decisions. Ms. Myerson said she is confused as to why the Board will not unanimously agree to make an important investment in our student's education by raising the property taxes only 4%. She said that she is embarrassed that it has to be such a debacle for this district to get this tax increase approved. Ms. Myerson said she is baffled when it has been said that our budget has increased four times since 1991 but the education quality has not. She is sad that excellent employees will lose their jobs if funding is not found. Ms. Myerson urged the Board to do what is right and raise the taxes.

Lori Russo, Vineland Resident

Ms. Russo said over the past couple of weeks she has heard many comments over the proposed budget for next year including possibly closing Landis School and laying off teachers. She expressed her concern that if teachers lose their jobs she fears that Vineland will potentially lose some great teachers to other districts. Ms. Russo feels that her son's high school successes started with the foundation he gained at Landis Middle School. She urged the Board to not cut teachers and believes taxes should be raised.

Mr. Jennings left the meeting room at 8:20 p.m.

Ross Stanger, Supervisor

Mr. Stanger said he is here tonight to speak on behalf of Vineland Administrators and Supervisors Association (VASA) this evening. He said this week some of the comments made by the Board were dispiriting. Mr. Stanger implored the Board to please stop trying to build walls between us and instead build bridges. He said they have heard of additional cuts that include 39 positions beyond those proposed through the Superintendent's budget. Mr. Stanger said we have heard ideas such as having one principal over all 4 middle schools. He said we learned about what people made publicly but throughout all of that there was not one mention of the services that any of these people provide. Mr. Stanger said during the last school year to present he has served as a substitute principal in a couple middle schools. He said it is critical that we have two administrators and as many support staff as possible given the nature of the issues that come through the offices of our schools. Mr. Stanger requested on behalf of VASA, teachers and the children that we try to do what is best and pass the budget with the 4% tax increase.

Mr. Jennings returned to the meeting at 8:33 p.m.

Mr. English said he wanted to clarify a couple things. He said it is a Vineland thing to believe rumors. Mr. English said as far as the relationship we have with Dr. Gruccio he does not think you will find a Board in the last 10 years that has had the professional working relationship that this Board currently has. He said Dr. Gruccio has unveiled a plan for closing Landis School. Mr. English said in this future plan you will have 3 middle schools and he understands the heart piece of fighting for Landis School. He said raising taxes is an easy solution but it is only a band aide. Mr. English said Mr. DeWinne only made a suggestion and not a micromanagement. He said Landis School is the oldest building and the least functional building in the district. Mr. English said you have to understand that the ultimate goal was not to close Landis School but to ask questions many past Boards have not done. He said the Board is on the same page but just struggling with the words "tax increase." Mr. English said zero tax increases are done we understand that. He just wanted everyone to know that Landis was just discussion and said it is amazing how rumors fly.

Sonya Bertini, Teacher

Ms. Bertini spoke about the problems that occur when a teacher is cut.

Lisa Arena, Mennies School Principal

Ms. Arena spoke about the wonderful experience she along with her daughter's had while attending Vineland Public Schools. She invited any Board member to visit Mennies or any of the elementary schools to see the fabulous things that are going on.

Angela Vega, Vineland Resident & Teacher

Ms. Vega expressed concern in regards to her child's future and said that she would support a tax increase.

Louis Russo, Vineland Resident & VEA President

Mr. Russo said Richard Nixon coined the phrase "The Silent Majority." He said health insurance is the uncontrolled cost factor that is driving us up the wall. Mr. Russo said the average teacher pays over \$6,000 for their health insurance. A teacher at the top of the salary guide with a family plan pays over \$10,000, which is more than what the private sector pays on average. Mr. Russo applauds the Millville Board of Education for approving a 4% tax increase and having the courage to invest in their city's children. He personally thanked Mr. Jennings and Mr. Pagano for their comments last week because finally we have somebody on the school board who understands. He said there is no fat to trim and you are now cutting the central services and programs for students. Mr. Russo said he has a lot of respect for Mr. DeWinne because he has the courage to say what he feels and believes. He was offended and insulted that Mr. DeWinne made it appear that the only thing VEA cares about is to raise the taxes in this city so we can put more money in our pockets. He hopes the Board votes for the 4% tax increase that Dr. Gruccio recommended. Mr. Russo said there is no silent majority because they are never here. He said he would never put politics in front of providing services and programs to our children.

Noel Bennett, Landis Middle School Teacher

Ms. Bennett said that she has spent the last 22 years teaching at Landis Middle School. She said her son attended Landis Middle School and had the best teachers. Ms. Bennett encouraged the Board to visit Landis Middle School.

Recommendations:

Dr. Guccio said she believes that the budget central administration proposed is what we believe is best for our students. She said in her opinion some of the suggestions made up here at the Board table are made with some misunderstanding. Dr. Guccio said ensuring a quality education for all of our children means managing a daily environment, which on any given day can present potentially overwhelming number of time consuming behavior and interpersonal challenges. She said each impacted child or parent deserves the attention of that building administrator whenever an incident arises. Dr. Guccio said we cannot make comparisons to budgets of past decades because we must acknowledge that societal and socially economic changes have dramatically altered the landscape of public education and the families that we serve in this community. She said Vineland Public Schools hosts a richly diverse student body, which is a wonderful thing. Dr. Guccio these students represent a plethora of individual needs and support requirements. She said these needs go well beyond the traditional endeavor of teaching reading, writing and arithmetic. Dr. Guccio said the district is not only mandated to provide these resources but it is compelled to do so because comprehensive services are necessary to prepare all of our children for a future of increased competition and forever diminishing opportunities of employment. She said we need to support all of our students, from those who are struggling to our most advanced students. Dr. Guccio said services and programs to address these various needs are what keep us competitive and allow us to provide the best for all of our students. She said ideas like closing buildings without a phase out plan in her personal opinion will create a disruption to our staff and students as well as an increase class size and transportation costs. Dr. Guccio said we shall never apologize for maintaining compassion for potentially displaced colleagues. She said this budget that we propose utilizes attrition rather than involuntary separation of professionals who have dedicated their lives to teaching and mentoring our young people. Dr. Guccio said as for revenue generation, we serve the children of our own community. She said we as a city and our residents must pay our fair share to educate our young people so our community can grow, prosper and effectively train the leaders of tomorrow. Dr. Guccio said after two decades, without local school revenue increases, the school district is now falling upon our neighbors in this community to support this budget with a 4% tax increase so we can continue to educate our children in the best possible way. She said this tax increase is not saving jobs but helping to balance our budget so the education we provide can be the best possible education we can give all of our students. Dr. Guccio said as certified educational leaders central administration respectfully urges our Board to please adopt the budget as we have presented it. She said we feel it provides the highest quality of instructional and management services that are available in the face of a staggering financial challenge. Dr. Guccio thanked all the administrators and every department in this district for working diligently to address this large shortfall by making cuts that none of us like but believe will have the least possible impact on our primary issue of educating our youth. She said that we met with every department and they all made cuts in trying to do what we believe was the best we can do. Dr. Guccio said the many challenges that we face are addressed due to our dedicated administrators, teachers and all of our staff. She said we provide an excellent education to any student who chooses to take advantage of it.

Dr. Gruccio said the budget that we placed before you tonight is a result of much hard work and a lot of collaboration and it is our hope that we will have your support. She said she heard the Board’s feedback at last week’s meeting. Dr. Gruccio said she was told to go back and try to find a compromise to reduce the budget down to a 2% tax increase. She said central office has been working for the past 3 days the best they can if this budget is voted down to address what we have to address. Dr. Gruccio encouraged the Board to please support what is before you tonight.

Mr. English asked for a clarification from Mr. DeSanto on the proper process for voting on all the scenarios presented tonight.

Mr. DeSanto said all 4 items are interrelated and should be voted on. He said Dr. Gruccio, as the Chief Executive Officer of the district, has the obligation to present her budget to you. Mr. DeSanto said Dr. Gruccio stands by and defends her budget, which is the budget you are to vote on. He said in the event the budget does not pass then Dr. Gruccio appears to be prepared to offer alternatives. Mr. DeSanto said if the Board feels they have enough information then they can take a follow up vote on one of her alternatives. He said the Board will vote first on Dr. Gruccio’s budget with a 4% tax increase.

A break was taken at 9:10 p.m. for a tape change.

The meeting resumed at 9:27 p.m.

(2) Regular Agenda

1. Approval of the following items regarding the 2016-2017 School District Budget:
 - a. Approval of the 2016-2017 School District Budget for submission to the State of New Jersey, Department of Education as follows:

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Local Tax Levy</u>
General Funds	\$169,523,528	\$23,052,711
Special Revenue Funds	25,635,373	n/a
Debt Service Fund	-	-0-
Total	<u>\$195,158,901</u>	<u>\$23,052,711</u>

- b. Approval of the Local Tax Levy in the amount of \$23,052,711, which includes the use of \$367,888 of the Adjustment for Increase in Health Care Costs as calculated in the tax levy cap adjustment.

- c. Approval of Capital Reserve withdrawal in the budget. The budgeted withdrawal from Capital Reserve-Excess Cost and other Capital Projects is \$300,000 and will be applied to projects identified in the Capital Budget.
- d. Approval of the maximum travel amount in accordance with N.J.A.C 6A:23A-7.3 for the 2016-2017 school district budget in the amount of \$33,025. The amount spent to date in the 2015-2016 school year for travel is \$31,617.11.

Motion: A motion was made by Mr. Jennings, seconded by Mr. Bordley, to approve the 2016-2017 Budget 1.a through 1.d. with the 4% tax increase. All Members voted “yes” on a. and b. except for Ms. Codispoti, Ms. Rios, Mr. Sbrana, Mr. DeWinne and Mr. English who voted “no” and All Members voted “yes” on c. and d. Items 1. a. and b. did not pass and 1. c. and d. passed.

Ms. Acosta said she heard everyone and saw the challenges we have. She knows we have to make some realistic cuts in order to balance this budget. Ms. Acosta said a lot of hard work was done by the finance committee, Dr. Gruccio, Mrs. Haley and her team. She is a firm believer that your community is only as good as your school system. Ms. Acosta said she made a vow to do what is in the best interest of the citizens and children. She said there is nothing in her opinion that is more important than educating our children and the biggest investment that will give us rewards in the future are our children. Ms. Acosta said as painful as it may be as a taxpayer if we invest in our children they will have the opportunity to give back to the community. She said that she supports this budget and her vote is “yes.”

Mr. Bordley thanked all the principals and administrators who made cuts in this budget for it to balance. He commended everyone for what they do for our children. Mr. Bordley said he was elected to be a representative for this city. He said everyone who has reached out to him has supported a tax increase. Mr. Bordley said he will be voting “yes” because the tax increase is needed.

Ms. Codispoti thanked central administration and the finance committee for working very hard on this budget. She said when she was elected by the taxpayers of Vineland her goal was to ensure that our students are getting the best possible education that they can keeping in mind what is best for our tax payers. Ms. Codispoti said she has had the opportunity to speak to a lot of people some are in favor of raising taxes and others are not. She said she has been receiving numerous phone calls, text messages and emails for and against the budget. Ms. Codispoti believes that working together and reaching a consensus plays an integral part in this budget process. She said we all need to be able to compromise together and do what is best for all. Ms. Codispoti said she respects everyone who has taken the time to talk to her and every Board members opinion. She understands that the Superintendent’s budget is a 4% tax increase.

Ms. Codispoti said she is very reluctant to raise taxes that much. She does not feel that the tax payers should be burdened with getting our house in order but believes steps can be taken in house to do that. Ms. Codispoti said she believes in a tax increase but cannot vote on a 4% increase so she will be voting “no” on a and b but voted “yes” on c and d.

Mr. Jennings said we are lean in this district. He said raising taxes is a band aid for a bigger problem down the road and we need to keep up with it. Mr. Jennings said the presentations given by Dr. Negrin and Mr. Callavini show that it is all about supervision and management. He said an increase in taxes now will be less expensive than an increase later. Mr. Jennings said let’s start now building our future for the children who will be leading our city in the near future. He said his vote is “yes.”

Mr. Pagano said he has nothing but admiration and respect for the teachers and workers in this district. He assured everyone that he has no aspirations for running for any office in the future. Mr. Pagano said his children have graduated from the Vineland School District and are doing quite well. He thanks everyone in the room for his children’s success. Mr. Pagano said with being a public employee there are procedures and trying to do things can sometimes take years. He said Dr. Gruccio presented a budget that required a 6% tax increase and he thought there was nothing wrong with it however, we sent her back to do more trimming. Mr. Pagano said the budget Dr. Gruccio proposed was fair and everyone in this district made cuts and sacrifices. He said having librarians and nurses in the schools are very important things to him. Mr. Pagano said there comes a time you have to step up to the plate and do what is right. He said there has been so much change over this past year and we are all working together. Mr. Pagano said he feels the budget was more than fair and he is voting “yes.”

Ms. Rios thanked the administrators, finance committee and all those involved in the process. She said a family bringing in an income of \$40,000 per year with one child after paying all the bills is left with \$375 per month to spend. Ms. Rios said all the problems that children have in school are due to homelessness and poverty. She feels that a 4% tax increase is extremely high. Ms. Rios said employees, parents and the community have given many suggestions to the Superintendent. She thinks we can take these suggestions and implement them to decrease the 4% tax increase. Ms. Rios said her vote is “no” on a and b but “yes” on c and d.

Mr. Sbrana thanked Dr. Gruccio, the administrative team and everyone who was involved with the budget process. He also thanked everyone who came out tonight and expressed their views. Mr. Sbrana said he will be voting “no” but he wants to start a process to have conversations and reach a consensus on changes in the budget that would address the needs of our students and staff in the best interest of our taxpayers. He said he is voting “no” on a and b but “yes” on c and d.

Mr. DeWinne said he appreciates those who spoke and is not offended. He voted “no” on a and b but “yes” on c and d.

Mr. English said he challenged our Superintendent last week coming to her from the heart representing the Board, public and district. He asked Dr. Guccio if we are being as fiscally responsible as we can be. Mr. English thanked everyone who was involved in this budget process, which began in October. He said that he does not have any political aspirations but is here to do what is best for the City of Vineland. Mr. English said the ship is sailing in the right direction and Dr. Guccio has 100% from this Board. He knows the days of zero tax increases are gone for the City of Vineland and State of New Jersey. Mr. English said Dr. Guccio has stated this evening that she believes strongly in this budget, which he respects. He said Dr. Guccio and central administration have found some areas that do not affect the classroom with a 2 or 3% tax increase. Mr. English said that intrigues him because Dr. Guccio is trying to be as fiscally responsible as possible. He said he will be voting “no” this evening but is supporting the 2% cap that is put in place. Mr. English said he will support a 2% tax increase if Dr. Guccio brings it forward. He said he is voting “no” for a and b but “yes” for c and d. Mr. English said we have to present a budget by March 22 to the county.

Mr. DeSanto said currently the recommended budget has been defeated. He said the Superintendent has the responsibility to propose a different budget. Mr. DeSanto said it is her prerogative whether she does it tonight and whether the Board feels they can vote on it tonight. He said between now and March 22nd, when Dr. Guccio is prepared, she will make a proposal to present to the Board. He said the Board should have the opportunity to review the proposal and then have a special meeting for public input and Board member votes. Mr. DeSanto said if Dr. Guccio is prepared to go forward with an alternate plan that should be distributed to the Board.

Mr. English said he personally would like each Board member to receive a copy of Dr. Guccio’s alternate plan to digest.

Mr. DeSanto said the presentation is Dr. Guccio’s decision.

Dr. Guccio said she sees no point in presenting anything if the Board wants time to digest.

Mr. English wanted to know how the Board members felt about voting on an alternate budget plan.

Ms. Acosta said she would like the opportunity to digest whatever Dr. Guccio has and speak with other administrators for their feedback.

Mr. Sbrana said he will be away from Friday, March 11th until March 25th and said if there is a special meeting he cannot attend or vote. Mr. English said we can test Mr. Frey’s Skype skills out.

Mrs. Haley wanted to clarify when the Board is voting they are not voting on line items but a total budget. She said when we present this to you we are asking you to vote on a total budget made up of the general fund and special revenue fund for a grand total of X. Mrs. Haley said we present the line items on the budgets, cuts and so forth but you are not actually voting on that but on dollar amounts.

Mr. DeSanto asked Ms. Rios if the policy was adopted on virtual appearance at Board meetings. Ms. Rios responded yes. Mr. DeSanto asked if it is up to two Board members who can participate. Ms. Rios said she will have to check.

Dr. Gruccio asked if another budget had to be presented and items are presented that we feel will not hurt the students directly and the Board decides they will support a 2 or 3% tax increase but do not like the items that we have chosen what happens then. Mr. DeSanto said by what Mrs. Haley has indicated that is not what the Board will be voting on at the special meeting. He said for informational purposes you are showing the Board how you got there.

Mrs. Haley said if the Board felt strongly on a certain tax increase they would vote on the total dollar amounts and then we work out what the cuts are. She said whatever is submitted to the county must be detailed by the account numbers. Mrs. Haley said after the county reviews the budget it is advertised and then there is a public hearing with another budget presentation. She said the final budget will be voted on in May.

Mr. English wants to move forward to see how this Board feels.

Ms. Rios said that she wants to review the information.

Ms. Acosta said the options the Board has to vote on is either a 2 or 3% tax increase. She asked if we are only voting on the number and it is not the Board's place to comment on what is being cut. Mr. English said no the Board will receive the paperwork on a couple of scenarios and in those scenarios there will be a number with line items attached.

Mr. Jennings said he is not voting for anything but the 4%.

Mr. Bordley said he is not voting for anything but the 4%.

Mr. Pagano said he is not voting for anything but the 4%. He said if he was Dr. Gruccio he would send the budget to the County Superintendent and let her do our budget.

Ms. Codispoti said she would like to digest the information.

Mr. DeWinne said he is prepared to vote.

Mr. English said he would like to digest the information.

Ms. Acosta changed her mind and said she is prepared to vote on the number that was given by Dr. Guccio tonight. Ms. Rios said that was voted down and asked where we are now with the 2 and 3% tax increase.

Mr. DeSanto said as he understands it if the 4% was defeated Dr. Guccio was prepared to recommend a number with a 3% increase.

Mr. English asked if the four Board members who said they will not vote for anything but a 4% tax increase have to come to the meeting. Mr. DeSanto said the fact that a Board member expressed their current intention does not prevent them from coming to a meeting or participating.

Dr. Guccio said at this point the next thing she has to do is propose another budget. She said if that budget does not pass her recommendation will be to send it to the County Superintendent and let them do the budget. Dr. Guccio said that she would present the 3% increase whenever the Board wants to hear it. She wants everyone to understand that she does not like any of these cuts and thinks that the budget she put forth was tough enough to do. Dr. Guccio said to get down to 3% increase we are proposing to cut the following for a total of \$228,000:

- Upgrades to our cameras, technology upgrades and taping of Board meeting – a savings of \$60,500
- Athletic Budget – a savings of \$42,500
- No Air Conditioning in Winslow School All Purpose Room – a savings of \$125,000

Dr. Guccio said these three cuts would be a 3% tax increase.

(2) Scenario 2

3% increase in Local Tax Levy

- a. Approval of the 2016-2017 School District Budget for submission to the State of New Jersey, Department of Education as follows:

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Local Tax Levy</u>
General Funds	\$169,301,867	\$22,831,050
Special Revenue Funds	25,635,373	n/a
Debt Service Fund	-	-0-
Total	<u>\$194,937,240</u>	<u>\$22,831,050</u>

- b. Approval of the Local Tax Levy in the amount of \$22,831,050, which includes the use of \$146,227 of the Adjustment for Increase in Health Care Costs as calculated in the tax levy cap adjustment.

Motion: A motion was made by Ms. Codispoti, seconded by Mr. DeWinne, to approve the budget with a 3% tax increase. All Members voted “no” the motion was defeated.

Mr. Jennings said these are things that will have to be looked at again next year. He said if we vote this down and it goes to the county what will the county do. Dr. Gruccio said we do not know they may come back with a 10% tax increase. Mr. Jennings said lets be fiscally responsible right now and take care of our business. Mr. English said this is the same county that believes our support staff needs to be cut and he would like to see what the county has to say. Mrs. Haley said that is from the taxpayers spending guide not the county.

Mr. Sbrana said he is not in support of not taping the Board meetings and disenfranchising the public as to what is going on. Dr. Gruccio said she thinks that taping is a luxury. She said Board members are elected to represent our children and not be on television.

Ms. Acosta said she cannot support reductions in athletics. She said our children in the city have very little if nothing to do. Ms. Acosta said athletics are the only thing some children have and is a potential way of being able to get a scholarship to go to college. She said Winslow School currently has an outstanding program for students with Autism. Ms. Acosta said having a special needs child she knows how very difficult it is for an autistic child to be in either a very cold or warm room. She feels this upgrade at Winslow School is extremely necessary and she could not support this cut.

Ms. Codispoti asked if we are voting for the amount and the line items can be hashed out at a different time. Dr. Gruccio responded yes.

Mr. English asked if Winslow School was in violation for not having air conditioning. Mr. Weaver responded no. Mr. English asked if there was a possibility of putting \$50,000 or \$100,000 back in for overtime. Mr. DeWinne said there is \$30,000 listed and the question is can Dr. Gruccio take a look at this a little further.

Mr. Bordley said we talked about the history of micromanaging the superintendent. He said Dr. Gruccio presented a 4% tax increase that she was comfortable with. Mr. Bordley understands that we have a duty to the taxpayers. He said every email he received supported a 4% tax increase. Mr. Bordley said it is a responsibility to this city to educate our children. He said that he gives Dr. Gruccio all the credit in the world to even compromise. Mr. Bordley said if Dr. Gruccio is not comfortable with anything less than a 4% tax increase then neither is he, which is why he voted no.

Mr. DeWinne said a few years ago he was wrongfully accused of micromanaging. He said not only was everything he did right per the NJ School Boards Association it was in two editorials in the newspaper.

Mr. Bordley apologized and was not accusing anyone of micromanaging.

Mr. English said we need a majority vote on a figure and he asked Mr. DeSanto where we go from here.

Mr. DeSanto said if you do not have an approved budget by March 22nd Dr. Gruccio is going to send her 4% budget to the county.

Dr. Gruccio asked if the 3% tax increase was voted down because of the items on the list or because the Board cannot support a 3% tax increase. She asked if the Board will support a 3% tax increase for a compromise, so that we can move forward with the process.

Mr. English told Dr. Gruccio if she cannot get a majority vote on 2% then send the budget to the county.

Mr. DeSanto said the process and budget guidelines clearly say the Board shall, should or may. He said ultimately this is the Board's budget because the Board is charged under 18A of approving the budget. The executive office of the school district like the governor is the one that accumulates the information and presents the budget for the Board's consideration. Mr. DeSanto said after public input the Board can decide to accept it or make changes. He said please do not ever accuse a Board of Education of micromanaging a budget when it is their statutory responsibility to approve it. Mr. DeSanto said with respect to tonight he sees the option of the leaving the budget the way it is and if it does not get voted on between now and March 22nd the 4% budget goes to the county. He said the second option is to present the 2% budget and see where it goes from there.

Mr. English said it is Dr. Gruccio's decision.

Dr. Gruccio said she was asked to come up with a 2% tax increase, which she did. She said she is not really comfortable with it and if that is what she has to live with she will. Dr. Gruccio said listening to some of the Board members, who feel the tax increase should not be less than 4%, it is very hard to say ok here is 2% because when we get to that point we are cutting people again.

Mr. Sbrana said he has a problem with the first cut line item but would vote for a 3% increase otherwise.

Mr. DeSanto said Mrs. Haley assured you by voting on the bottom number it does not mean that you have agreed to those cuts. He said you are allowed before the close of the meeting to change your vote with respect to the 3% and record your change.

Mr. English asked for a roll call again on the budget with the 3% tax increase.

Ms. Acosta, Mr. Bordley, Mr. Jennings, Mr. Pagano, Ms. Rios, Mr. DeWinne and Mr. English voted “no.” Ms. Codispoti and Mr. Sbrana voted “yes.” The motion did not carry.

Mr. DeSanto said as it stands now we do not have an approved budget and should move on with the meeting.

Mr. English said he does not agree with a 4% or 3% tax increase but agrees with a 2% tax increase and thinks we should move forward on the agenda

B. Proposed for review or discussion or adoption by Board Members:

1. Approval of 3 bus advertisements for Vineland Landscaping.

Motion: A motion was made by Ms. Codispoti, seconded by Mr. Bordley, to approve 3 bus advertisements for Vineland Landscaping. All Members voted “yes.”

Approval of Bills: A motion was made by Ms. Codispoti, seconded by Mr. Bordley, to approve the bills and warrants issued for same. All Members voted “yes” (\$21,334,670.28).

Emergent Item(s)
(with prior approval) Approval of Extra-Curricular nurse for Spring Softball and Senior Trip.

Motion: A motion was made by Ms. Codispoti, seconded by Mr. Bordley, to approve the nurses for Spring Softball and the Senior Trip. All Members voted “yes.”

Public: None.

Board Member
Remarks: Ms. Acosta said she tries to make decisions that are in the best interest of our community and children. She knows in speaking to many people that we cannot afford to lose any more teachers and has serious concerns with our class sizes. Ms. Acosta also expressed her concern in regards to the bilingual students not being offered the classes to graduate. She is willing to sacrifice in order to give her children the best opportunity for their future. Ms. Rios asked this Board to invest in the future for our children.

Ms. Rios thanked everyone for all that they do. She complimented Dr. Negrin and her entire staff for what they are doing with the bilingual program.

Mr. Jennings said we must fight for wages anyway we can because our unions set the bar for our private sector employees. He said raising taxes is not always a bad thing.

Mr. Bordley said when he joined the Board the Finance Committee presented a balanced budget of 4%, which he was comfortable with. He said he personally would have supported a 6% increase.

Mr. Pagano said he agrees with Mr. Bordley and Mr. Jennings. He said central administration did the best they could to present a budget at 6%, which he thought was fair. Mr. Pagano said with trimming they came back with a 4% budget for an average of \$42 per year. He said that he frequents many places and speaks to a lot of people and not one person had a problem with the district raising taxes 4%. Mr. Pagano said the silent majority should take a drive to the county because we have no representation from Vineland on the Freeholder Board. He said take into consideration that our district is the lowest paid in the state and be thankful they vested in our children. Mr. Pagano thanked everyone for what they did with the budget and urged them not to drop more than 4%.

Ms. Codispoti thanked the flag salute students, Dr. Negrin and Mr. Callavini. She congratulated the students on their band awards. She also congratulated our health occupation students for winning awards. Ms. Codispoti thanked Rossi School for what they do to raise money for juvenile diabetes. She said she is the preschool liaison and attended the Food Festival at Dallago Preschool, which was fantastic. Ms. Codispoti said she read for Read Across America and is trying to get into all the schools to see what our students are doing.

Mr. DeWinne said Mr. Zatzariny does a great job with the band. He said Dr. Negrin is doing a fantastic job with the bilingual program. Mr. DeWinne said it is wonderful what Mr. Callavini proposed in regards to bus stops. He said the student who spoke tonight did a great job. Mr. DeWinne said we should explore Mr. Meyer's idea on new curriculum. He appreciates Mr. Burke for speaking.

Mr. DeWinne said he respects all the staff and has always been professional. He said micromanaging is a serious word, which is why he stopped going to the schools. Mr. DeWinne said he understands and appreciates the roles of Mr. Russo and Mr. Stanger. He said freedom of speech is great and what they have said does not appall him. Mr. DeWinne said he is one of nine members and offers suggestions. He clarified that education has improved and is power. He said as far as votes many times he was the lone “no” vote. Mr. DeWinne said he will be away for 8 days starting Tuesday. He said we have a great school system and thanked everyone who came out tonight.

Dr. Gruccio said EIRC donated 2,800 #2 pencils to our district.

Report/Remarks
by Board President:

Mr. English said this is a great group and this is one of those areas that we are disagreeing. He said it should never be personal because everyone has brought up good points. Mr. English said he and Dr. Gruccio have had quality discussions and have a successful relationship. He said he learned a new term tonight from Mr. Zatzariny “intrinsic motivation.” Mr. English said the passion that Mr. Zatzariny has for the arts is the best on the East coast. He said the middle school play *Hairspray Junior* was outstanding. Mr. English announced that the Cap n’ Dagger Club will perform *Mary Poppins* on March 10, 11, 12 and 13th. He wished the spring athletes good luck and congratulated the winter season athletes. Mr. English thanked Ms. Heer and the Leuchter School students for the flag salute. He thanked all the elementary schools for their hospitality during Read Across America. Mr. English said the Board will continue to work for what they believe is best for everyone.

Adjournment:

A motion was made by Ms. Codispoti, seconded by Mr. Jennings, to adjourn the meeting at 11:27 p.m. All Members voted “yes.”

Respectfully Submitted,

Helen G. Haley
Board Secretary

HGH:dt

