

The special meeting of the Board of Education of the City of Vineland was held Wednesday, March 16, 2016 at 7:02 p.m. in the Reber Administration Building, Board Room, 625 Plum Street, Vineland, New Jersey, pursuant to notice with Mr. English presiding and the following members present: Ms. Acosta, Mr. Bordley, Ms. Codispoti, Mr. DeWinne, Mr. Pagano, Ms. Rios and Mr. Sbrana Absent: Mr. Jennings arrived at 7:05 p.m., Mr. Sbrana and Mr. DeWinne were both skyped into the meeting from another location per Board policy.

Also present: Dr. Guccio, Superintendent, Mr. Frey and Mr. Frangipani, Assistant Superintendents, Mrs. Haley, Board Secretary and Mr. DeSanto, Board Solicitor. 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:

Public Comments

On Agenda Item:

Harry Meyers

Mr. Meyers said he was disappointed that the budget which included a 4% tax increase was not approved. He said on tonight's agenda there is a budget proposal that includes a 3% and 2% tax increase. Mr. Meyers spoke in support of the 3% tax increase. He requested if at least one if not more than one librarian be reinstated into the budget.

Recommendation:

Mr. English said since the 3% tax increase was voted down we will now be entertaining a motion for a 2% tax increase.

Mr. DeSanto explained that the reason why the specific cuts are directed by the Board to the Superintendent is that the Board of Education has a choice. He said the Board can leave it to Administration to put in the cuts that would get the budget to 2% or the Board can determine what they are and direct the software to be inputted. Mr. DeSanto said if the Superintendent and Administration put the cuts in Board members would be hard pressed to complain about which cuts they chose. He said the Superintendent and Administration have provided the Board with potential alternatives and it is his understanding that if the Board decides to direct they will be utilizing the list that was provided to them by the Superintendent and not go beyond the list for tonight's purposes. Mr. DeSanto said the Board will always have an opportunity at the time of the final budget, after the public hearing, to suggest any changes. He said it is his understanding that tonight the Board will compromise and work with the Superintendent utilizing the sheet that has been presented.

Mr. Jennings said he feels we should continue with the 3% and did not want to vote for anything other than the 4%. He said it is in the interest of our future to do 4% because costs keep increasing and people expect raises, which is negotiable. Mr. Jennings said we are investing in our children who will be running this city in the future. He said we need to educate our children and need the funds to do it. Mr. Jennings said he told everyone at the city forum, run by the Chamber of Commerce, that he was looking to raise taxes and he was re-elected so he thinks he is on the right track. He said the increase is \$40 per year but if we wait it will be \$400 per year.

Mr. Bordley said he thinks if you ask a poor family if they want their child educated to get out of poverty they would support this increase.

Mr. English asked if we are hurting anything instructional wise with any of these tax increases. Dr. Gruccio said she thinks anytime we cut anything it has some impact on the education we provide. She said because we have good teachers and administrators we have continued to do the very best we can with less each year. Dr. Gruccio said the same opportunities are positively not happening today as to when we had the Abbott money. She said we keep doing more and more with less. Dr. Gruccio said we manage to get the job done but the job is never as thorough as it can be when you have the resources to make it happen the right way. She said all the things on the list may not impact the classroom but impact the families and students in some way. Mr. English feels that a 2% increase is a nice even way to flow through this year and possibly next year. He said as long as we are looking at non-instructional areas properly in the future. Mr. English said he wanted each Board member to know that when we look at the items that Mrs. Haley, Dr. Gruccio and the team have put together they are things that are non-instructional. He said if we do not need them why pay for them.

Mr. Jennings said there is nothing in the schools that is non-instructional. He said that he is struggling also every day and is willing to pay \$40 a year extra. Mr. Jennings said it is in our best interest to invest in our children.

Dr. Gruccio said she came from nothing and the one thing her parents taught her growing up is that education is important and comes first. She said that we need to rethink what we do and prioritize things.

Mr. Bordley said maybe it would have been wiser to spend the \$125,000 for the air conditioning at Winslow School instead of the high school.

Mr. Sbrana asked if this was the appropriate time to make a comment about a particular cut.

Mr. DeSanto said as he mentioned earlier this motion calls for the Board to determine where the cuts will be at this point for the input into the software. He said otherwise administration will decide where those cuts will be. Mr. DeSanto said yes it is very appropriate now for the Board to pick and choose from the selected cuts where they would like to see the \$221,000 come from.

Mr. Sbrana respectfully disagreed that the broadcasting of the Board meetings to the public is non-instructional. He said over the years there have been dozens of students who have learned highly technical skills from this process. Mr. Sbrana said he believes it is possible to forgo the purchase of the additional equipment this year and only spend the money for the student labor. Mr. English said the actual taping of the Board meetings has been removed. He said a cut was made of \$58,000 that represents television camera upgrades and technology for the video taping of the meetings.

Mrs. Haley said we had a selected cut of \$58,000 which represents camera upgrades of \$8,000 and technology updates of \$50,000. She said we are maintaining the \$2,500 for the taping of the meetings.

Mr. English said we are looking at 4 line items of cuts.

Ms. Acosta said assuming that Allen Associates is not able to negotiate the 15% for prescription, do we have enough money in the budget to cover that expense. Mrs. Haley said we would have to find the money somewhere else. She said you budget your best estimate and sometimes things come out higher and sometimes lower. Ms. Acosta said if a 2% tax increase is approved then the actual cuts may be more than what is anticipated. Mrs. Haley said currently we put in \$142,133 as a cut in the insurance and if we do not have that answer before we settle this than that amount becomes surplus and will be rolled into next year. Ms. Acosta asked if there is a company we would be using for the hiring of custodian positions and how can we be assured we will not have a shortage of custodians. Mrs. Haley said currently we have 5 open custodian positions. She said this was discussed with Mr. Weaver who feels comfortable using substitutes who would fill those spots on a 20 hour per week time. Mrs. Haley said we would be saving on their benefits and the differential in salaries, which is \$130,350.

Mr. Jennings asked what the motion would be for the 2% tax increase.

Proposed by adoption by Board members:

Mr. English read the following resolution:

The Superintendent’s recommendation has been defeated. Therefore, I will now entertain a motion to approve the 2016-2017 School District budget for submission to the Department of Education with general funds totaling \$169,080,206 and special revenue funds totaling \$25,635,373 for a total of \$194,715,579. The motion would further approve a local tax levy in the amount of \$22,609,389 including a 2% local tax levy increase with specific cuts directed by the Board to the Superintendent and the Business Administrator for input into the D.O.E. software to be submitted to the Executive County Superintendent.

Summarized as follow:

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Local Tax Levy</u>
General Funds	\$169,080,206	\$22,609,389
Special Revenue Funds	25,635,373	n/a
Debt Service Fund	-	-0-
 Total	 <u>\$194,715,579</u>	 <u>\$22,609,389</u>

Mr. Pagano expressed his concern that we seem to be cutting very close and Mr. Allen is not guaranteeing the 15% for prescription. Mrs. Haley said she did not use the entire 15% and has a leeway of \$46,000.

Mr. Jennings said that Dr. Rossi has been working very hard to maintain full time positions.

Mr. English asked Dr. Gruccio to give each Board member Ms. Nicolosi, the Executive County Superintendent’s, phone number so they could discuss Thorough and Efficient (T & E) with her so they understand. Dr. Gruccio said she would call Ms. Nicolosi to explain to the Board.

Mr. DeSanto said the following cuts are included in the Board’s vote to get to the 2%:

- Televising of meeting for \$58,000 (excluding \$2,500 for taping) – cut camera upgrades and technology upgrades.
 - Calendar mailing \$11,000 – put online
 - Additional Reduction in overtime \$22,311,
 - Using substitutes for Custodial positions \$130,350
- For a total of \$221,661.00

Mr. English asked if we are currently using custodial substitutes now. Mrs. Haley said yes we currently are using them now but she does not know if they are being used up to 20 hours per week. Mr. English asked if the rooms are being cleaned.

Motion: A motion was made by Mr. Jennings, seconded by Mr. Pagano, to table the 2% vote to go into executive session. All Members voted “yes” except Mr. Bordley, Ms. Codispoti, Ms. Rios, Mr. Sbrana, Mr. DeWinne and Mr. English voted “no.” The motion did not pass.

Mr. DeSanto said in order to go into executive session you need to have a separate motion and a legitimate reason under the Open Public Meetings Act.

Mr. Weaver said as far as the substitutes we currently have 5 open positions that we have been filling with substitutes. He said we went approximately 6 months with 10 open positions. Mr. Weaver said the substitute list is currently strong and we have a good list. He said Dr. Rossi has been advertising for substitutes and we are doing very well. Mr. English asked if no current custodian was losing a job. Mr. Weaver said no these are open positions.

Motion: A motion was made by Mr. Sbrana, seconded by Ms. Codispoti, to approve the budget with a 2% local tax increase and a Local Tax Levy in the amount of \$22,609,389 with specific cuts directed by the Board to the Superintendent and Business Administrator for input into the Department of Education software to be submitted to the Executive County Superintendent. All Members voted “yes” except for Ms. Acosta, Mr. Bordley, Mr. Jennings and Mr. Pagano who voted “no.” The motion passed.

Mr. DeWinne said in the spirit of compromise he will vote “yes.”

Mr. DeWinne signed off from the meeting at 8:08 p.m.

Public

Comments: Vicky Miller

Ms. Miller spoke in support of a tax increase. She expressed her concern that Mr. Sbrana has a personal agenda with the videotaping.

Louis Russo

Mr. Russo congratulated the Board for passing the budget. He expressed his disappointment in the budget that is being presented to the public and the positions being cut.

Mary Greenfield

Ms. Greenfield expressed her concern in regards to the lack of school tax increases and the impact it will have on the value of her property.

Marlene Casazza

Ms. Casazza said this is not the Vineland School District she has known her entire life. She expressed her concern in regards to the lack of people at every level in the schools.

A motion was made by Mr. Jennings, seconded by Mr. Bordley, to adjourn the meeting at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen G. Haley
Board Secretary

HGH:dt

