

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the City of Vineland was held Thursday, March 27, 2008 at 7:03 p.m., in the Board Room, 625 Plum Street, Vineland, New Jersey, pursuant to notice with Mr. Giordano presiding and the following members present: Mr. Bernardini, Mr. Fanucci, Mr. Franceschini, Mrs. Gavigan, Mr. Spinelli and Mr. Ulrich. Absent: Ms. Arroyo and Mr. Snyder.

Also present: Mr. Ottinger, Superintendent, Dr. Figgs, Dr. Guccio and Mr. Peters, Assistant Superintendents, Mr. Franchetta, Board Secretary, Ms. Greenfield, Executive Director of Personnel, Mr. Rochetti, Executive Controller, Mr. Musterel, Accountant and Mr. Shapiro, Associate Solicitor. Absent: Mr. DeSanto, Associate Solicitor.

Mr. Giordano 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.

Flag Salute:

Ms. Arroyo arrived at 7:08 p.m.

Mr. Franchetta presented a brief overview on the budget that the board passed a few weeks ago. Our proposed budget for the 2008-2009 school year is \$189,383,386, which is 5.4 million dollars over last year's budget. The tax levy is \$21,143,997, which is an increase of \$813,000 from last year. The proposed budget includes a tax rate of 1.037 per \$100 of assessed value. Mr. Franchetta said this would result in a tax increase of \$25 for a house that is valued at \$100,000. The budget consists of a budgeted fund balance of 5.2 million dollars, which are funds that are estimated from the previous year. Mr. Franchetta said we have tuition of \$150,000 and miscellaneous revenues that include interest on investments, rentals and other sources of income that we receive through the district of \$775,000. The total local share is \$22,068,997 and the bulk of our revenue comes from state aid. Mr. Franchetta said this year the state renamed all of the aid categories from the previous years. He said the total amount from state aid was \$155,758,605. We also received funds from federal grants, No Child Left Behind, IDEA Part B, Vocational Education, Adult Basic Education, JTPA, other federal revenues, Medicaid reimbursement, with a total federal aid of 6.2 million dollars for total revenue of \$189,383,386. Mr. Franchetta said 82.25% of our aid comes from the Department of Education and the local tax levy is only 11.16%, federal aid is 3.31% and other is 3.28%. Last year our state aid was 81.76% and this year it is 82.25%. Mr. Franchetta said on the expenditure side school based budgets account for 48% of our expenditures at 91 million dollars.

Mr. Spinelli asked what the difference is between general and school administration. Mr. Franchetta said general administration is the superintendent expenses, board expenses and the civil service vacation day settlement. The school administration is the principals' salaries and office staff. Mr. Spinelli asked what special revenue is. Mr. Franchetta said it is federal grants that we receive. He said recently the state released a comparative spending guide, where the state compares like districts to see how you rank amongst you peers. He said our cost per pupil ranking was 15 of the 31 and the average was about 21. Mr. Franchetta said we were slightly below the average for class instructional.

Mr. Fanucci asked if Lucille Davy was incorrect when she gave the district's per pupil cost at the college. Mr. Ottinger said yes she cited in her discussions at Cumberland County College that we spend \$16,000 per student. He said for the public record we do not spend \$16,000 per student.

Mr. Spinelli said the board has some tough decisions to make whether or not we want to keep the tax increase that was suggested. He said that he is undecided how to vote and if someone wants to convince him into voting for the way the budget was presented he will listen.

Mr. Ulrich echoed some of Mr. Spinelli's comments. He is also struggling with some of the cuts. He said it does not take a genius to figure out that we are in a deep hole. Mr. Ulrich thinks it would be wise to cut back as much as we can with as little impact to students, save as many teachers as we can and also include a small tax levy. He said if we can fill the two principal positions without making additional hires it would be a considerable savings.

Mr. Franceschini asked if we know how many clubs we have in the high school. Mr. Ottinger said over fifty.

Mr. Ulrich asked for the total number that Schedule B and the clubs represent for the high school. Mr. Ottinger said most of the students participate in clubs.

Mr. Spinelli said if we can eliminate the clubs that only have a couple students involved it would allow for some savings.

Mr. Ottinger said it is important to point out that the first budget that was submitted did not include basic skills teachers and a tax increase. He said it was the board's desire to put the basic skills teachers back and support a tax increase to fund it.

Mr. Ottinger said he does not know if all of the board members share the opinion of transferring a person into the principal positions. He said we need clarity from the board on the direction we should take. Mr. Ottinger said he agrees with Mr. Ulrich that we do have these vacant principal positions and it seems reasonable if the people are qualified for us to use the vacant positions in our budget crisis.

Mrs. Gavigan asked if we still have to utilize the SLC (School Leadership Council) team process in regards to the vacant principal positions. Mr. Ottinger said the Director of Abbott Services said if we advertise and fill the position now we would have to but after July 1 we do not have to.

Mr. Spinelli said even though the SLC teams are advisory they are not mandatory. Mr. Ottinger said that is absolutely true.

Mr. Ottinger said we would need to know if the board would like us to consider transferring qualified people into the principal positions or go through the hiring process. He said regardless the positions do have to be posted.

Mr. Bernardini asked if Mr. Ottinger was suggesting waiting until July 1 to fill the principal positions. Mr. Ottinger said with board approval we can transfer any body anytime that we want.

Mrs. Gavigan said we should be cautious about promoting someone without going through the process. Mr. Ottinger said we would not be allowed to do that.

Mr. Giordano asked if the structure at the high school would be hurt if two individuals were taken from the high school and put in each of the elementary schools. Mr. Ottinger said currently there is an executive and two associate principals and we have to find a place for Mr. Peters. He said there would be one position with two people left. Mr. Giordano asked what would happen if the board wanted to reinstate Schedule B. Mr. Ottinger said the principals would have to take something else out.

Mr. Franceschini asked if we have any Substance Awareness Coordinator's (SAC's). Mr. Ottinger said we have one at the high school. He said on Thursday night he received a telephone call from two of our SAC's who were out on the streets looking for one of our students, who threatened to commit suicide. Mr. Ottinger said the public should know that there are people out there looking after their children.

Mr. Spinelli said it is not the intent of any board member to say that everyone we are talking about in regards to budget cuts are not worth having. He said there has to be a priority set and the board has the task of looking at those priorities.

Mr. Franceschini asked how one SAC would take care of both high schools. Mr. Ottinger said they are not going to be able to and it will not be the same.

Ms. Arroyo asked if the budget is approved tonight, will it be possible to still make changes. Mr. Ottinger said it could happen but the difference this time is that we do not have an appeal process going to receive more funding.

Mr. Franceschini asked if Schedule B was about \$50,000. Mr. Ottinger said he thinks so.

Ms. Arroyo asked if we could still look at other alternatives to bring the social workers and SAC's back. Mr. Ottinger said we can but we need close to \$64,000 for each position.

Mr. Bernardini asked if the 2.5 cent increase in taxes is in any of the figures. Mr. Ottinger said yes to finance the basic skills teachers.

Mr. Giordano asked if we are changing anything at this point. Mr. Ottinger said he has good suggestions but as far as taking things out and putting things in they are temporary fixes.

Mr. Franceschini asked how we are doing with food service. Mr. Franchetta said he thinks we had a \$50,000 profit.

Mrs. Gavigan asked if there are other possibilities to generate income by sharing or selling our services. Mr. Ottinger said we are looking at contracted services all around the board.

Ms. Arroyo asked if facility rentals help in any way. Mr. Ottinger said we do not rent for profit only non-profit.

Motion: A motion was made by Mr. Bernardini, seconded by Mr. Spinelli, to open the public hearing. All Members voted "yes."

Public Comments: William Jannarone, Vineland Resident  
Mr. Jannarone asked what positions will be eliminated. Mr. Ottinger said a total of about forty one positions. Mr. Jannarone asked if they are all mandated positions. Mr. Ottinger said some are. Mr. Jannarone asked if the tax increase will reinstate any of those positions. Mr. Ottinger said yes the basic skills teachers at the intermediate level. Mr. Jannarone asked if there is a challenge procedure. Mr. Ottinger said yes the State Department of Education has filed a legal motion asking the Supreme Court to set aside the Abbott designation. Mr. Jannarone said the board is to be commended for the diligence they pursue balancing a budget in a state where the budget process is dysfunctional. He said the question is what we do about it. Mr. Jannarone said what we absolutely do not do is ask our taxpayers to come up with \$500,000; which represents mandated positions that are partially funded or not funded at all. He said the message to the Department of Education is that what the district has been given for funds is being questioned.

Joanne Downey, VHS Substance Awareness Coordinator.

Ms. Downey said our Student Assistance Program consists of nine state certified substance awareness coordinators. She expressed her concern that the current proposal would abolish the program and leave one SAC for three thousand high school students. Ms. Downey asked the board to think outside the box and not abolish the entire program and feels there has to be some alternative.

Juan Luengo, Vineland Resident

Mr. Luengo said he sympathizes with the board and feels that a 2.5 cent tax increase is reasonable and necessary. He suggested to the board to charge 11% tuition for students that are coming from another district. Mr. Ulrich said we do not accept students from other districts. Mr. Ottinger said we only accept special education students.

Motion: A motion was made by Mr. Bernardini, seconded by Mr. Spinelli, to close the public hearing. All Members voted “yes.”

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G I O R D A N O	G A V I G A N	A R R O Y O	B E R N A R D I N I	D E C K A R D	F A N U C C I	F R A N C E S C H I N I	S N Y D E R	S P I N E L L I
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Vineland Board Of Education  
Report to the Board – March 27, 2008

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The Board approve travel for district members as required by NJAC 6A:10A-8.3 and/or school field trips as per lists provided and on file with the Secretary of the Board.

All Members  
voted “yes.”  
(8-0-0)

**Mr. Franceschini asked what the National Leadership Conference is about. Mr. Ottinger said that is the Future Business Leaders of America group.**

2. The Board adopt a tentative 2008 – 2009 school district budget for submission to the voters as follows:

All Members  
voted “yes.”  
(6-2-0)

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Local Tax Levy</u>
General Fund	\$164,553,374.	\$21,143,997.
Special Revenue Fund	25,066,631.	0.
Debt Service Fund	0.	0.
Less: Transfer from General Fund	236,619.	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$189,383,386.</b>	<b>\$21,143,997.</b>

Further, the Board establish the maximum travel amount for the 2008 – 2009 school district budget at \$419,762.00.

**Mrs. Gavigan voted “no” and explained that she has a problem with asking the tax payers to make the difference up for our budget. She said we are still an Abbott district and if we have to continue to fulfill the mandates the state should provide the funding.**

**Mr. Giordano voted “no” and said nothing has changed significantly this time around.**

Mr. Franchetta read a resolution to recess into executive session on **Thursday, March 27, 2008**, regarding contract negotiations and personnel matters.

Motion: A motion was made by Mr. Bernardini, seconded by Mr. Franceschini, to approve the resolution. All Members voted “yes.”

Mr. Giordano thanked his colleagues for the genuine concern they have expressed throughout these meetings.

Mr. Ulrich mentioned that when Ms. Davy was asked about the Abbott regulations at Cumberland County College she made a comment that the Department of Education will be issuing a new set of regulations for all school districts. Mr. Ottinger said the commissioner is not the person who can decide whether or not there is going to be Abbott regulations.

The meeting was adjourned to executive session at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin J. Franchetta, CPA  
Board Secretary

KJF:df