

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, April 9, 2014 at 7:00 p.m., pursuant to notice with Mr. Medio presiding and the following members present: Mr. Baruffi, Mr. DeWinne, Mr. DiGiorgio, Mr. English, Mr. Jennings, Ms. Morello and Mr. Ulrich. Absent: Ms. Rios.

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

Mr. Medio 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: Students from Sabater Elementary School Bilingual Kindergarten classes led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Resolution: Mr. Schectman read a resolution to convene into executive session for the following reasons as outlined in N.J.S.A. 10-4-12. **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. Any pending or anticipated litigation or contract negotiation in which the public body is or may be a party. If contract negotiation the nature of the contract and interested party is possible revision to Sodexo contract. 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. 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 donated sick leave request for a staff member.

Motion: Upon motion by Ms. Morello, seconded by Mr. DiGiorgio, the resolution was passed. All Members voted “yes”.

Special

Presentation (s): Dr. Guccio introduced Mr. Purvesh Patel, Interim Food Service Director, to honor district employees who received the “Five Star Award” from the Vineland Health Department.

Mr. Patel said every year the Vineland Health Department inspects over 400 food establishments and Vineland was selected in the top percentage for these awards. He said to receive the Five Star Award kitchens must demonstrate an outstanding record of food safety. Mr. Patel presented certificates to the following Five Star Award employees: Barbara Winkler, Rossi School, Diane Pease, Wallace School, Lori Kalowitz, Durand School, Bernardette Jester, Johnstone School, Rose Esposito, Mennies School and Mary Frangominalos, Winslow School.

Dr. Guccio introduced Board Member, Captain Tom Ulrich, to honor district employees who volunteered and were trained in Crisis Management to benefit students in the district.

Captain Ulrich said there are many employees in our district who go above and beyond their salary. He introduced Pastor Gary who will discuss employees who donated two back to back Saturdays to help out the school, faculty and students. Pastor Holden said he is the senior chaplain for the Vineland Police Department. He said six years ago the Chaplain Program was started in the city of Vineland and one of the things they do is training. Pastor Holden said they offered the group Crisis Training Course and each person that took the course received a certification. He recognized and presented awards to the individuals who took this course.

Dr. Guccio thanked everyone who participated and said we are number one in the State of New Jersey for the professional development we provide for safety and security.

Dr. Guccio introduced Dr. JoAnne Negrin, Supervisor for Curriculum & Instruction, to present Achievement Data in ESL/Bilingual Programs and Seal of Biliteracy. She also congratulated Dr. Negrin on receiving her Doctorate.

Dr. Negrin said she is pleased to be presenting this information. She said we have been working very hard across the district with the ESL/Bilingual students. Dr. Negrin said children who have high literacy levels in their first language are going to get high literacy levels in their second language. She said we tend to look at the bilingual students as having a disadvantage, which is not true. Dr. Negrin said bilingualism is a huge advantage and presented the data to the Board.

Mr. DeWinne asked Dr. Negrin if these services are mandatory for kindergarten students coming in to the district. Dr. Negrin said we try to discourage people from opting out but parents have the right to refuse services.

Ms. Morello said she would love to see a language academy at the high school level because she does not know of any high school in the area that has one.

Dr. Gruccio thanked Dr. Negrin for her hard work and said what was just presented is a perfect reason why we value our supervisors so much.

Dr. Gruccio said Mr. Schectman will be presenting the 2014-2015 school district budget. She thanked all of central office, the finance committee, Mr. Weaver, Mr. Callavini and everyone who put a lot of hours into trying to develop a balanced budget that is educationally sound.

Mr. Schectman said he believes there was confusion last week on the budget process and would like to clear things up so everyone understands what the Board and Administration went through to come up with a balanced budget. He presented a timeline of things that have been done from when he started working for the Vineland Board of Education September 2013 to present.

Mr. DeWinne said during the middle of January the Finance Committee submitted a request of over twenty items seeking data and answers to questions. He said on January 26<sup>th</sup> an additional nine questions was added. Mr. DeWinne said in mid-February he received a binder that answered two or three of the questions.

Mr. DeWinne said at the March 12<sup>th</sup> Board meeting they requested administration to reach out to the county to seek an extension of time to submit the budget, which was denied. He said on March 19<sup>th</sup> the Board voted on the budget and after the meeting was presented with a few binders that answered a majority of the questions. Mr. DeWinne said along with the request for fine arts to be funded they also asked for Schedule B extra-curricular activities and athletics to be increased as well.

Mr. Ulrich said he asked Mr. Medio if he could meet with him and Dr. Gruccio to further discuss how we can come to a resolution. He said that meeting occurred yesterday. Mr. Ulrich said they discussed the realities of the current budget, proposed deficits for next year and what we could do now to mitigate the proposed deficits. Ms. Morello asked if it was just a conversation about moving forward. Mr. Ulrich said it was a conversation about the budget crisis that we are in and the reality of next year.

Mr. Baruffi noted that Mr. Schectman said that this budget has been submitted two or three times but he does not think it was done as well as tonight.

Approval of Minutes: Upon motion by Ms. Morello, seconded by Mr. DiGiorgio, the minutes were approved from February 5, 2014, February 12, 2014, March 5, 2014, March 12, 2014 and March 19, 2014. All Members voted “yes” except for Mr. Ulrich who voted “yes” on all minutes but “abstained” on the February 12, 2014 minutes and requested for the March 5, 2014 minutes to reflect that he stepped out of the meeting because he was conflicted on the John Sammons matter.

Report of the  
Secretary/Custodian  
Of School Monies:

Upon motion by Ms. Morello, seconded by Mr. DiGiorgio, the reports of the Secretary and Custodian of School Monies for the month February of 2014, which are in agreement were approved as submitted and on file in the Minute Book, and the Board approved its monthly certification of budgetary major account fund status and the Board Secretary’s monthly certification as on file with the Secretary. All Members voted “yes.”

Solicitor's Report: None.

Public Comment on  
Agenda Items:

Lee Burke

Mr. Burke addressed the budget situation and hopes there will be a favorable vote for action.

Louis Russo

Mr. Russo said the School Board has the option to put up to a 2% increase in the budget and he would like his taxes raised. He said every year that we fail to do this we fall further and further behind and the deficits get bigger each year. Mr. Russo expressed his concern that we should not be putting a half a million dollars out in capital improvement projects until we maintain what we already have.

Recommendations:

B. Proposed for review or discussion or adoption by Board Members: None.

Approval of Bills: Upon motion by Ms. Morello, seconded by Mr. DiGiorgio, the bills were approved and warrants issued for same. All Members voted “yes” (\$4,526,713.45) except Mr. DiGiorgio and Mr. Medio who voted “yes” on all bills except Buzz Bookworm and Grainger they voted “no” and Mr. Ulrich and Mr. English who voted “yes” on all bills except Grainger they voted “no.”

Emergent Item(s)

(with prior approval) a. The Board approve submission of the following grant as provided and on file with the Secretary of the Board:  
NJ School Boards Insurance Group  
2014 Safety Grant Program  
July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014  
In the amount of -----\$106,611.00

Motion: A motion was made Mr. DiGiorgio, seconded by Ms. Morello, to approve the NJ School Boards Insurance Safety Grant. All Members voted “yes.”

b. The Board approve replacement hires in accordance with the list provided and on file with the Secretary of the Board.

Mr. Medio asked for an explanation as to why this was added to the agenda. Dr. Gruccio said it would cost the district more money if we had to hire a private company to provide these services that we are mandated to provide. She said that we felt it would be more prudent to bring this person on board. Ms. Morello asked if this is replacing someone who resigned. Dr. Gruccio responded yes.

Motion: A motion was made by Mr. DiGiorgio, seconded by Ms. Morello, to approve the replacement hires. All Members voted “yes.”

Public: Ronald Walker, Vineland Resident  
Mr. Walker said he prays that everything done tonight was for the best of our students and he will fight for them.

Barbara Thibodeau, Itinerant Nurse  
Ms. Thibodeau spoke in favor of itinerant nurses in the district.

Carmina Lopresti, Itinerant Nurse

Ms. Lopresti expressed her concern in regards to the cutting of the itinerant nurses in the budget.

Rosemary Ulrich, Bus Driver

Ms. Ulrich said we have a wonderful fleet and we do not want to be privatized.

Board Member

Remarks:

Mr. Ulrich said the students who attended the discussion forum in regards to skipping school lunches were fantastic. He said the things they said and stories they told can make a difference in an educator's life. Mr. Ulrich said he is for a lean efficient operation. He said there are many staff members who are here well beyond the clock.

Mr. DeWinne thanked everyone who spoke. He also thanked Mr. Burke for all the issues he has researched and spending time to speak publicly. Mr. DeWinne said he is usually in favor of raising taxes but when five people do not support it he does not see the need to go forward. He said there will be a public hearing where views can be expressed. Mr. DeWinne said we have excellent teachers in the district and he does not believe in cutting teachers unless we absolutely have to. He said a Finance Committee meeting needs to be scheduled.

Mr. DiGiorgio said he respects the public's opinion and appreciates the fact that people speak. He said everything we do is focused and centered on what is best for our children. Mr. DiGiorgio said inequities sometimes exist, which is no fault of the Board or Administration. He said in his opinion he believes the Vineland School District provides the best opportunities for education to the children in this community. Mr. DiGiorgio said he needs to see facts and supporting documentation for expenditures involving personnel and no one up here wants to reduce personnel. He said he takes his duties/responsibilities on this Board very seriously and will continue to made decisions based on facts. Mr. DiGiorgio said he will do what is practical and in the best interest of all students without being motivated and influenced by anyone's agenda.

Ms. Morello said as a school district we have to come together and decide that we going to promote and celebrate the areas that we excel in and offer to our students. She said we need to implore parents to take education seriously because it is a right and a gift. Ms. Morello said we need a true partnership in the community for parents, staff, the Board and Central Administration. She said the community has to be involved year round because we have great schools and community support is needed to make them even better. Ms. Morello said she would like to hear from students because they are the people who are receiving the goods and services. She wished everyone a happy Easter and great Passover. Ms. Morello thanked her fellow Board Members along with Administration and said the 2014-2015 school year will be better.

Mr. Baruffi said morale has been low in some of the schools. He said as a coach you always want your students/players to prove that they are invaluable, which is what the teachers need to do also. Mr. Baruffi said the people on the Board are trying to work as well as they can together to get this going for the next couple of years.

Mr. English said sometimes people are not ready to hear an honest answer and we have to make financial sacrifices. He said the question is could we save everyone probably not. Mr. English said he is all about the students. He urged the County and Regional Superintendents to come down to Landis Avenue and see what we are doing here. Mr. English said he cannot guarantee the perfect budget but realistically he is honest and passionate. He wants to see some sacrifices which is something our economy and the world is dictating now.

Mr. Schectman said a Vendor Orientation was held in March and 300 invitations were sent out to local businesses. He said 100 businesses responded that they would attend the orientation but only about 55-60 people attended. Mr. Schectman said Dr. Zorzi, Purchasing Director, did a remarkable job and was able to connect with many of the vendors. He said that Mr. Zorzi has been contacted by several of the vendors wanting to know how they can expand their business opportunities with the Vineland School District. Mr. Schectman said the Vendor Fair was a success and he would like to have it again in the fall.

Report/Remarks by  
Board President:

Mr. Medio said we had a member of the public state that Board Members should not question employees at these meetings. He said that he does not ever remember anyone ever getting called up to the podium. Mr. Medio said the protocol is that Board Members questions are directed to the Superintendent. He said if the Superintendent wishes to call employees to the podium to answer a question that is an entirely different situation.

The Board recessed to executive session at 9:38 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 10:10 p.m. to vote on 1.2 under personnel.

Adjournment:

The Board adjourned the meeting by voice vote at 10:11 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Herbert G. Schectman  
Board Secretary

HGS:df



