

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the City of Vineland was held Wednesday, April 24, 2014 at 7:05 p.m., in the Landis Middle School Auditorium, 61 W. Landis Avenue, Vineland, New Jersey, pursuant to notice with Mr. Medio presiding and the following members present: Mr. Baruffi, Mr. DeWinne, Mr. DiGiorgio, Mr. English, Mr. Jennings, Ms. Morello, Ms. Rios and Mr. Ulrich. Absent: None.

Also present: Dr. Gruccio, Superintendent, Mr. Frey, Assistant Superintendent, Mrs. Polof, Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Schectman, Board Secretary, Dr. Rossi, Executive Director of Personnel and Mr. DeSanto, Board Solicitor. 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:

Motion: A motion was made by Ms. Morello, seconded by Mr. DeWinne, to open up the Public Hearing. All Members voted "yes."

Public Comments: Lee Burke
Mr. Burke expressed his concern in regards to the lack of members of the public at the hearing and the non-user-friendly budget that was advertised in the newspaper. He asked who was involved in the school budget, what is the role/purpose of school budget, what are the major budget categories for the district, where do the resources for the school budgets come from, when are the school budgets spent and how is this information related to the current local economic realities. Mr. Burke said it is the Board's responsibility to help answer these questions. He also asked who mandates the cuts when it comes to counselors, nurses, librarians and assistant principals. Mr. Burke said nothing is more essential to building organizational trust than the budget development process, which is a mystery to many people. He said there is a need for a strategic plan to assure the proper allocations and resources to improve learning/teaching with accountability and consequences at all levels. Mr. Burke said great expectations may be what we should all be thinking about for our students, ourselves and this community.

Special Presentations: Mr. Medio asked Mr. Schectman to explain the amended budget items.

Mr. Schectman said subsequent to the last presentation that was made to the Board and public, the Vineland Board of Education Facilities Director was notified by the School Development Authority (SDA) in Trenton that our HVAC System Project at Vineland High School South was approved in the amount of 6.8 million dollars. However, it was considered by the SDA to be an emergent item and therefore under that heading they would not pay for the air conditioning portion of the HVAC System Project. Mr. Schectman said the SDA is willing to move ahead as part of the bid process with the air conditioning portion provided the Vineland School District pays up to five hundred thousand dollars as a cost for the air conditioning. He said what administration is proposing this evening is that several items previously submitted in the capital program be reduced at this time in favor of a 495 thousand dollar item to pay for the air conditioning piece of this project at the high school.

Ms. Rios asked where the auxiliary gym falls in all of this. Mr. Schectman said the auxiliary gym is not in the budget.

Mr. Medio asked if the state said that this has to go into the budget. Mr. Schectman responded yes. Mr. Medio said this is the same state that said we cannot go out for a bond referendum because they pay 100% of the maintenance costs of all maintenance projects they do. Mr. Medio asked if we can encumber money from this year's budget for this item. Mr. Schectman said he would have to ask the county office because preliminary discussions indicate that we should not. He said that we would have to move capital reserve money, which was already designated for these projects. Mr. Schectman said to find another 500 hundred thousand dollars in this year's budget may be difficult at this point.

Mr. Ulrich asked if we did not fund the 500 hundred thousand dollars we would only get a heating system. Mr. Schectman said that is correct. Mr. Ulrich asked if it is our choice to fund the money to make it a complete project. Mr. Schectman said yes.

Mr. Medio said he cannot imagine anyone on the Board being opposed to that it is just a question of what our funding options are.

Ms. Morello asked if the 495 thousand dollars will cover the air conditioning piece of this project. Mr. Schectman said the SDA told Mr. Weaver to budget approximately 500 hundred thousand dollars for the air conditioning. Ms. Morello asked what happens if it falls short. Mr. Schectman said then we could reallocate those funds.

Dr. Gruccio said Mr. Weaver feels it would be less than the 500 hundred thousand dollars based on the numbers he received.

Mr. DeWinne said by the time they put this component in the air conditioning will not be ready until the spring of 2016. He said the money will not be due until the first or second quarter of 2016 however; we still have to encumber that money. Mr. DeWinne asked if Mrs. Haley or Mr. Schectman would like to elaborate about the capital reserve and how it works.

Mr. Schectman said we reserve the funds and they remain there until this project goes out to bid and we know what the amount is. He said if the amount comes in less than 500 hundred thousand dollars then we can reallocate the funds. Mr. Schectman said if the amount is greater than 500 hundred thousand dollars then it would be up to the district to find the additional funds necessary.

Mr. DiGiorgio asked if the budget that was advertised had all the items in capital projects such as network infrastructure and surveillance cameras. Mr. Schectman explained that what you see in the advertised budget are total amounts and some amounts were pulled from various line items to fund the air conditioning project.

Ms. Morello said maybe when we get through this budget we can have a breakdown of what the actual line items are with a thumbnail sketch under each. She said it would be helpful, as Mr. Burke stated, to be able to translate the budget into something useable.

Mr. Schectman said the district is required to provide a user friendly budget on our website.

Board Member
Comments:

Mr. DeWinne said he appreciates Mr. Burke coming out and expressed his concern that this is the fewest number of speakers we have had at a public hearing on the budget. Mr. DeWinne said every Board Member has the students' best interest in mind however; we may differ on certain items that we feel can be removed or reduced from the budget. He said three members on the Finance Committee have worked with multiple budgets so we have had the experience and knowledge. Mr. DeWinne said he has respect for Dr. Gruccio, Mr. Schectman, Mrs. Haley and whoever else was involved with the budget. He personally thinks there needs to be some discussion as far as how rigid the budget is because we may agree as a group to make changes to this budget.

Mr. DeWinne said we are all trying to do what is best. He said he disagrees with those who spoke in the past about raising taxes.

Ms. Rios said the city and county are both raising taxes. She said we have to be considerate of those who live paycheck to paycheck because it will be a huge amount to pay. Ms. Rios said sometimes we have to make sacrifices and part of those sacrifices are looking at things in detail and getting ideas from all Board Members and Administration.

Motion: A motion was made by Ms. Morello, seconded by Mr. DiGiorgio, to close the Public Hearing. All Members voted “yes.”

Public Comments: None.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m. by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Herbert G. Schectman
Board Secretary

HGS:df

