

The regular meeting of the Board of Education of the City of Vineland was held in the Wallace Intermediate School, 688 N. Mill Road, Vineland, New Jersey, Wednesday, June 10, 2015 at 6:39 p.m., pursuant to notice with Mr. English presiding and the following members present: Ms. Acosta, Ms. Codispoti, Mr. DiGiorgio, Mr. Jennings, Ms. Morello, Mr. Pagano and Ms. Rios. Absent: Mr. DeWinne.

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 Wallace Intermediate School led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. DeWinne arrived at 6:41 p.m.

Special

Presentation (s): Dr. Guccio introduced Mr. Don Robbins, Athletic Director, to recognize some of the Vineland High School athletes.

Mr. Robbins thanked Dr. Guccio, Central Office, and Administration for honoring some of our outstanding student athletes tonight. He introduced Mr. DeShields, Head Winter Track Coach and Mr. Geraci, Asst. Track Coach. Mr. DeShields introduced and recognized the student athletes. Mr. Geraci spoke about the accomplishments of the athletes and wished them the best in the future.

Dr. Guccio introduced Ms. Morano and Ms. Heer, Elementary School Principals, to recognize an Art Teacher in the district.

Ms. Morano congratulated Ms. Dayna Silver, Art Teacher, for receiving the honorable mention in the Phillis Lesson Plan Contest.

Dr. Guccio, introduced Ms. Lori Cummines, Vineland High School’s Choir Advisor, to honor the VHS Select Choir for their achievements.

Ms. Cummines said the Select Choir was fortunate enough to sing at Carnegie Hall this year and did exceptionally well at the NJ State ACDA Choral Festival. Ms. Cummines introduced each of the Select Choir students.

Dr. Guccio introduced Ms. Teri Godlewski, Director of Special Services, to honor the Special Olympians who participated in the Winter Bowling Tournament and Spring Track & Field.

Ms. Godlewski said tonight she has the privilege of honoring students who participated in this year's Special Olympics. She thanked coaches Jason Volpe and Amanda Leonetti for their time and dedication. Ms. Godlewski introduced each of the athletes.

Dr. Guccio introduced Mr. William McDevitt, Vineland High School Band Advisor, to recognize district students from grades 4 through 12.

Mr. McDevitt introduced his colleagues Rebecca Allen, Johnstone Elementary Band Director and Ed Zatzariny, Band Director at Memorial Intermediate School, to introduce their students who have been selected to participate in the all South Jr. High Honors Band and All South Jersey Elementary Honors Band. Mr. McDevitt introduced the high school South Jersey Band and Symphonic Band participants.

Dr. Guccio introduced Ms. Kim Piccari, Wallace Intermediate School Counselor, to honor a middle school student.

Ms. Piccari said Yahaira Hernandez, who is not present tonight, won the LSA Earth Day Poster Contest.

Dr. Guccio introduced Mr. Ross Stanger, Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction, to recognize students who participated in the Elks Chapter Essay Contest.

Mr. Stanger introduced the students who participated in the Elks Chapter Essay Contest and the subject was "What the Pledge of Allegiance Means to Me."

Suspension Report: No discussion.

Public Comments

On Agenda Items:

Jennifer Belvett

Ms. Belvett said she is currently a tenth grade Honors and Advanced English teacher at Vineland High School North. She asked the Board why you would remove seasoned highly qualified staff members from one grade level to teach at levels where they have no professional experience or expertise. Ms. Belvett asked the Board to reconsider the transfer plan.

Val Francisci

Ms. Francisci implored the Board to please vote “no” on the transfer of Richard Panas.

Donna Mark

Ms. Mark acknowledged the wonderful students who were recognized tonight. She said after sixteen years of teaching upper level Math at the high school she was informed that she may be transferred to an elementary school in September. Ms. Mark believes her strength is upper level Math and feels that is where she would be most beneficial to the students of Vineland.

Terry Kuhnreich

Ms. Kuhnreich said she agrees with everything that Ms. Francisci said. She urged the Board to keep Mr. Panas at Vineland High School and feels that those who do not want to be transferred should not be transferred.

Jeffrey Martine

Mr. Martine, President of Class of 2016, said he is here to represent the student body at Vineland High School. He said the general consensus amongst the student body is that of profound disappointment at the administration changes being voted on here tonight. Mr. Martine urged the Board to reconsider making changes to the administrative team that works so well together and provides the student body with the support and stability they need.

Tom Ulrich

Mr. Ulrich said no one takes change easily and people are used to a routine. He said change is not always bad and believes that we need to support our Superintendent.

Mr. English asked for a point of clarification on the agenda. He said there are people here this evening from the band who want to discuss a certain band cut. Mr. English asked if this is on the agenda so they can speak. Dr. Gruccio said it is not on the agenda.

Susan Kutner

Ms. Kutner spoke in support of not transferring Mr. Panas from Vineland High School.

Resolution:

Mrs. Haley read a resolution to convene into executive session for the following reasons as outlined in N.J.S.A. 10-4-12. Any matter which, by express provision of Federal Law, State Statute or Rule of Court shall be rendered confidential or excluded from discussion in public Provision relied upon HIB appeal of Durand Elementary School student. 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 administrative employee assignment and building transfers, employment of principals and vice principals; transfers of administrative personnel to another collective bargaining unit and Superintendent's evaluation. 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. **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.

Motion:

Upon motion by Mr. Jennings, seconded by Ms. Morello, the resolution was passed. All Members voted "yes".

Approval of Minutes: Upon motion by Mr. DiGiorgio, seconded by Ms. Morello, the minutes were approved from April 1, 2015 and April 15, 2015 executive sessions and May 6, 2015 special meeting. All Members voted “yes” except for Ms. Rios who “abstained” on the April 1, 2015 minutes.

Report of the
Secretary/Custodian
Of School Monies:

Upon motion by Mr. DiGiorgio, seconded by Ms. Morello, the reports of the Secretary and Custodian of School Monies for the month April of 2015, 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:

Mr. DeSanto said the opinions of the School Ethics Commission in regards to the upcoming vote on the VEA Contract over the past year have significantly changed with respect to Board operations and Collective Bargaining Agreements. He said as a result of those decisions he has obtained from each Board member information as to whether or not they have a relative either in VEA, NJEA or NJEA affiliate. Mr. DeSanto said based upon the responses that he received it is his advice to the Board that three Board members, Mr. English, Mr. DiGiorgio and Ms. Acosta are conflicted from voting on the VEA Contract. He said it is also his opinion that Ms. Rios is conflicted for one year. Mr. DeSanto said any Board member that is endorsed by a Collective Bargaining Unit is precluded from acting on issues involving that unit for one year. He said it was reported to him that the other five Board members do not have any relatives that are involved in any way in VEA, NJEA or NJEA affiliate. Mr. DeSanto said these five Board members are entitled to discuss and vote upon the VEA Contract, which is under discussion tonight and ratified on Friday. Mr. DeSanto recommended to the Board to elect a temporary chair tonight because both Mr. English and Ms. Rios are conflicted. He said someone will be needed to preside over a special meeting to vote on the contract and deal with the attorneys to set things up for that meeting. Mr. DeSanto said Mr. Pepper recommends that the special meeting be scheduled as soon as possible because there is some impact on health benefits. He asked for a motion to be entertained to elect a temporary chair to process the VEA contract discussion and vote.

Mr. English said he finds it hard to believe that because his sister is an instructional aide in the Buena School District that he cannot be part of this process. He asked if a letter of appeal can be sent stating his thoughts on this new ruling. Mr. DeSanto said he has spoken at lengths with the legal department at the NJ School Boards Association and they are as perplexed as we are with all of the decisions.

Ms. Morello asked how they determine in a midst of a process that someone is excluded. Mr. DeSanto said we have to take our opinion and apply it to our situation.

Motion:

A motion was made by Ms. Morello, seconded by Ms. Codispoti, to nominate Mr. DeWinne as the temporary chair for the VEA Contract Negotiations. Mr. Jennings, Mr. Pagano, Ms. Morello, Ms. Codispoti and Mr. DeWinne voted “yes.”

Mr. DeWinne was nominated Temporary Chair for the VEA Contract Negotiations.

Mr. DeSanto said if a public body such as a School Board intends to discuss the performance of an employee, terms/conditions of an employee’s contract or the transfer of an employee that discussion takes place in executive session. He said unless the individual employee requests that the discussion about him or her takes place in public session. Mr. DeSanto said the Sunshine Law requires that and the case of Rice versus Union City Board of Education elaborated on that by saying that the employee must be given reasonable notice of the intention to discuss them. He said a Rice Notice must be provided to an employee if you have a discussion about that person’s performance etc. Mr. DeSanto all of the individuals who are being recommended for a transfer have received Rice Notices on Monday afternoon. He said three of the individuals Mr. Panas, Mr. Camardo and Ms. Alvarez have exercised their rights under the Rice Case and Sunshine Law to have any discussion about them take place in public. He reminded the Board that the discussion in public does not mean that there is a discussion with the public or employee. Mr. DeSanto said it means that the executive session is moved from the closed room into public where that individual employee and the public can observe only the discussion. He said there is no participation by anyone. Mr. DeSanto advised the Board that there should be no discussion whatsoever about those three individuals while in executive session.

Mr. DeSanto said when the executive session is finished if any one has any questions or comments about those three individuals that should take place out here. He said if there are no questions or comments about those three people then the executive session is over and you proceed with the continuation of the meeting.

Mr. English wanted to clarify that the invisible wall is up when those three individuals are discussed and the only people that were Riced were administrative transfers. Mr. DeSanto said there were some employees who were proposed to be transferred from one bargaining unit to another. He said there are three people who are being proposed as new hires into administrative positions.

The Board recessed to executive session at 8:08 p.m.

The regular meeting resumed at 9:31 p.m.

Recommendations:

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

Mr. DeWinne departed at 9:52 p.m.

Approval of Bills: Upon motion by Ms. Morello, seconded by Ms. Codispoti, the bills were approved and warrants issued for same. All Members voted “yes” (\$8,014,934.77).

Emergent Item(s)
(with prior approval) None.

Public: Yolanda Garcia
Ms. Garcia expressed her concern on the loss of the band assistant and the \$100,000 that will be spent for the Dance Program and teacher. She urged the Board to please reconsider the band assistant in the budget.

Dr. Guccio said she is working with Dr. McCann and making every effort to see that this position is in place for next year.

Mr. English said for the record the band assistant is \$4,533.00.

Ms. Morello asked when Dr. Guccio said she is working to have that position in place next year does she mean July 2015 or 2016.

Dr. Guccio said July 2015.

Mr. Jennings asked if items 1.2 a through f carried. Mr. DeSanto responded yes.

Board Member

Remarks: Mr. Pagano thanked everyone for coming out. He also thanked everybody who works in the district for an outstanding job and wished them a safe and happy summer.

Ms. Morello echoed Mr. Pagano’s comments. She thanked all the families who make sure their children come to school ready to learn every day. Ms. Morello said when you are a Board member you need to exercise due diligence to get information, make informed decisions, and to know that you are ensuring that money is being spent efficiently and that the best educational practices are put into place. She said asking questions and expecting to get information in a timely manner is not micromanaging but exercising due diligence. Ms. Morello wished everyone a safe and happy summer.

Ms. Morello departed at 10:06 p.m.

Ms. Codispoti thanked everyone for coming out and said everyone's opinions have been taken into account. She said for National Policy Week students made cards from preschool up and sent them to the Police Department. Ms. Codispoti said she had the opportunity to look at the cards and they touched her heart. She thanked Debbie Marko for the article she put in the newspaper that showed the positive interactions that our students, schools, and police have established together. Ms. Codispoti said she is a Board member and a police officer's wife. She gets to see the interaction every day and thanked everyone who participated. Ms. Codispoti wished the students, teachers and staff a very happy, safe, fun summer. She congratulated the seniors on a job well done.

Mr. DiGiorgio said an organization is only as good as its people. He said there was a lot on tonight's agenda and decisions are hard. Mr. DiGiorgio said everyone deserves to be adequately compensated for what they do. He said moves can be difficult and hopefully Dr. Gruccio gets the result that she is looking for. Mr. DiGiorgio congratulated all of tonight's achievers on their accomplishments. He wished the staff a happy summer and student's good luck.

Ms. Acosta congratulated all of the students. She said there is no doubt in her mind after listening to tonight's speakers that there are a lot of feelings and emotions with respect to the transfers. Ms. Acosta believes while change is a difficult thing sometimes we have to embrace it. She congratulated the seniors and said whatever path they take will be successful.

Ms. Rios congratulated all the award recipients. She thanked the Wallace School students for the flag salute, everyone who spoke tonight along with administration for clarifying everything tonight. Ms. Rios thanked administration, staff, students, parent's community members and non-profit organizations that have helped the district. She also thanked all the current Board members for all their time along with former Board members who were in attendance at tonight's meeting. Ms. Rios wished everyone a safe summer.

Dr. Gruccio congratulated all the students who were recognized this evening. She said we have so much to be proud of and grateful for in this district.

Dr. Guccio said she knows that change is difficult and some teachers that are being moved are hesitant on where they are going. She said please realize that we had to cut over five million dollars this year and in doing that we were able to save everyone's job. Dr. Guccio said sometimes when people are certified with a variety of degrees we need to utilize another degree in a new position so someone else does not lose a job. She thanked Dr. Rossi for all his hard work to ensure that people had a job to come back to in September. Dr. Guccio said to those who are hesitant to try something new all she asks is to please embrace it and give it their best shot. She thanked all the administrators and said we did not move administrators based on weaknesses or something we were disappointed in that they are doing. Dr. Guccio said we moved them based on their strengths. She said every administrator that we spoke with regarding a transfer to a new location was gracious and willing to give it a try. Dr. Guccio said we will do everything we can to ensure they are happy and successful. She wished everyone a safe, healthy, happy summer.

Report/Remarks by
Board President:

Mr. English thanked the Wallace students for the flag salute and the school for hosting the Board meeting. He thanked Dr. Karwowski for extending her retirement and being a true advocate for her students and staff. Mr. English thanked everyone throughout the year that invited Board members to events. He thinks the Reality Fair that was held at Wallace School last week should be held at the elementary and high school levels also. Mr. English thanked all of this evening's honorees. He urged the class of 2015 to be safe, stay alert, and enjoy their graduation. Mr. English thanked his fellow Board members for the time they put in during the month of June. He congratulated all the new hires and wished the best of luck to the transfers. Mr. English addressed Ms. Belvett and encouraged her. He said Dr. Guccio and the team did the best that they could do with the five million dollar number. Mr. English wished everyone a safe, happy summer.

Dr. Guccio congratulated Ms. Alvarez, Ms. Tomlin, Ms. DeMarchi and Mr. DuBois on their promotions.

Adjournment: A motion was made by Ms. Rios, seconded by Ms. Codispoti, to adjourn the meeting at 10:29 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Helen G. Haley
Board Secretary

HGH:df

