

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, August 13, 2014 at 7:02 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. Rios and Mr. Ulrich. Absent: Ms. Morello.

Ms. Morello arrived at the meeting at 7:37 p.m.

Also present: Dr. Gruccio, Superintendent, Mr. Frey, Assistant Superintendent, Mrs. Haley, Interim 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:

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 pending or anticipated litigation or contract negotiation in which the public body is or may be a party. If pending/anticipated litigation the matter is Herb Schectman vs. Vineland Board of Education, anticipated litigation with Zion Productions and the All Kids First Provider Contact. 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. DiGiorgio, seconded by Mr. Baruffi, the resolution was passed. All Members voted "yes".

Special

Presentation (s):

None.

Approval of Minutes: Upon motion by Mr. DeWinne, seconded by Mr. DiGiorgio, the minutes were approved from July 2, 2014-Work Session, July 9, 2014-Regular Meeting, April 2, 2014-executive session and May 14, 2014-executive session. All Members voted “yes” except for Mr. Ulrich who voted “yes” on all minutes except he “abstained” on July 2, 2014, July 9, 2014 and May 14, 2014. Mr. Ulrich also noted that he was absent on the May 14, 2014 executive session meeting. Mr. English voted “yes” on all minutes but “abstained” on July 2, 2014 and July 9, 2014. Mr. Medio voted “yes” on all minutes but “abstained” on July 17, 2014. Mr. Medio said if there was no meeting held on July 17, 2014 he does not understand why there would be minutes.

Report of the
Secretary/Custodian
Of School Monies:

Mrs. Haley said there will be no report until the August 27, 2014 meeting.

Solicitor’s Report:

None.

Public Comment on
Agenda Items:

Vicky Miller

Ms. Miller asked if substitutes were going to be privatized. Dr. Gruccio said not to her knowledge. Dr. Rossi said that may be in reference to the district recommending to the Board at the next meeting to use a company to help us fill temporary full time substitute positions. Ms. Miller asked if the substitute list on file would not be used first. Dr. Rossi said no not necessarily. Ms. Miller asked if it were a possibility that substitutes would be gone. Dr. Rossi said we are looking for budget relief and this is one avenue we are pursuing. Ms. Miller expressed her concern that she has been substituting for nine years with no increase or benefits and the district is just going to push her away. Dr. Gruccio asked Dr. Rossi to explain further that he is speaking about open positions and we would still continue to use substitutes on a regular basis. Dr. Rossi said this is for full-time temporary positions not traditional substitute use. Mr. Medio said there seems to be a misunderstanding in the public that is pervasive. He said administration recommends to the Board and the Board does not recommend any of these things concerning private companies and privatization.

Dr. Rossi said without hurting current employees we are going to look at a cost effective way of filling vacancies on a temporary basis until we see what next year's budget brings. He said that is what is being prepared and has been discussed with individuals. Ms. Rios asked if this will be discussed in Policy & Personnel. Dr. Rossi said it has been and another meeting is being scheduled before the next Board meeting.

Mr. Medio asked Mrs. Haley to read the Board members who were in attendance at the July 17, 2014 Board meeting. Mr. Ulrich said he along with Ms. Rios, Mr. Jennings and Mr. English were in attendance.

Recommendations:

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

Approval of Bills: Upon motion by Mr. DiGiorgio, seconded by Mr. Jennings, the bills were approved and warrants issued for same. All Members voted “yes” except Mr. DiGiorgio and Mr. English who voted “yes” on all bills except Grainger they voted “no” (\$7,231,340.79).

Mr. DiGiorgio asked if this is the final bill for Buzz’s Bookworm. Mrs. Haley responded yes. Mr. DiGiorgio asked if Phil Heery is an approved substitute. Dr. Rossi said yes. Mr. DiGiorgio asked if we are paying Mr. Heery outside of payroll. Dr. Rossi said he serves the district in a variety of administrative substitute capacities.

Mr. English asked if the terminology was removed near the word Grainger. Mrs. Haley explained that it was put on there so no one would use the vendor. Mr. English said it was never said to not use Grainger it was more of a focus as to why are we using Grainger for everything versus our local vendors. Mrs. Haley said she would take the terminology off.

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

Public: Carol Deola, Director/Owner of All Kids First
Ms. Deola said she is here tonight to represent parents and staff members who have been affected by her contract. She addressed the 19 classrooms that she has available at her facility for Vineland to use for preschool. Ms. Deola requested if the Board can approve her contract for 19 classrooms to accommodate the children in her school this year.

Steven Tirell, Parent
Mr. Tirell expressed his concern that his daughter has been removed from All Kids First because two rooms were eliminated.

Jason Dare, Parent
Mr. Dare expressed his concern that his twin daughters have been removed from All Kids First because two rooms were eliminated.

Sophia Romo, Parent
Ms. Romo expressed her concern that her son has been removed from All Kids First because two rooms were eliminated.

Crystal Wallace, Parent

Ms. Wallace expressed her concern that her daughter has been removed from All Kids First because two rooms were eliminated.

Misael Fernandez Jr., Parent

Mr. Fernandez expressed his concern that his daughter has been removed from All Kids First because two rooms were eliminated.

Lisa Reimels, Parent

Ms. Reimels asked if the pool money can be used for All Kids First classrooms. Mrs. Haley said that preschool is funded by the ECPA Program and there are limited funds. Ms. Reimels expressed her concern as to why we are putting sports as a priority over education.

Mr. Ulrich said it is his understanding that we cannot transfer funds from our general budget to the early childhood budget. Dr. Gruccio said we cannot. She said to fund those two classrooms it would cost \$399,000 that we do not have in ECPA funds.

Mr. Medio said he will address the public's questions and remarks at the end of the meeting.

Ms. Reimels asked if the public will be privileged to the information as to where the \$400,000 will be spent. Mr. Medio said yes but not at the end of this meeting.

Mrs. Morello requested for this issue to be revisited prior to the August 27, 2014 Board meeting.

Rosalinda Walsh, All Kids First teacher

Ms. Walsh expressed her concern in regards to the two classrooms that were eliminated at All Kids First and urged the Board to please reinstate the rooms.

Jennifer Neery, All Kids First teacher

Ms. Neery expressed her concern in regards to the two classrooms that were eliminated at All Kids First.

Board Member

Remarks:

Mr. Ulrich thanked everyone who voiced their concerns tonight. He said there are many things that the Board is not responsible for. Mr. Ulrich said the Board is not involved in the preschool process. He said that he would be mad too if he received the letter that these parents received. Mr. Ulrich said the question is where do we come up with \$400,000 for the preschool budget. He said in regards to the pool and capital money we have an obligation to maintain that facility, which is an expensive part of the Vineland High School North complex. Mr. Ulrich said we have an obligation to maintain the buildings that we have.

Mr. DeWinne said he agrees with Mr. Ulrich that the dehumidification system needs to be fixed at the pool. He said the ECPA budget is somewhat of a mystery. Mr. DeWinne said we cannot take our operating funds and move them to the ECPA budget. He said the issue is mistakes were made with the approval of preschool assignments and he does not know what our options are. Mr. DeWinne said sports represent less than half a percent of our budget and sometimes there is a misperception. He asked if at the next work session he can propose for the agenda the ability for student athletes to participate in a sport and follow the NJSIAA rules.

Ms. Rios asked if enrollment numbers have increased for the preschool program since the last email she received. Dr. Gruccio said we have not filled all of the slots at this point. Ms. Rios asked if currently there is no waiting list. Dr. Gruccio said correct. Ms. Rios said we should meet with Mrs. Bleistine the principal of that program. Dr. Gruccio said she has already done that and has had several conversations with the state. She said she is still waiting for a response from the state as to what happens if every slot is filled. Mr. Medio asked Dr. Gruccio how many classrooms All Kids First had last year. Dr. Gruccio said 19 but the numbers change each year based on the funding. She said based on the funding we requested that only 17 rooms be filled at All Kids First and 19 were filled. Ms. Rios said she believes we have to fill the in-district classrooms first because ECPA has rules and regulations that have to be followed. She said since this is the district's mistake we need to keep looking at this.

Mr. Fernandez said he and his wife have been paying taxes since 2008 so he would like a tax voucher so they can pay for their child's education for this year. Mr. Medio said to give the Board two weeks to come up with an answer.

Mr. DiGiorgio agrees with his colleagues and thanked everyone who came out. He said it is part of the success of our district down the road that we have this program and providers like All Kids First. Mr. DiGiorgio said it is a complicated set of circumstances. He said thirty families were promised a spot at All Kids First and an error of this magnitude is unacceptable.

Ms. Morello said the way we get to spend money is very complicated. She feels for the parents of the young children and believes all of our providers under the guidance of the state regulations and guidelines do a really good job. Ms. Morello said it is a personality fit for very young children and you have to meet the needs of working parents. She said we need to identify where the problem was and fix it. Ms. Morello said she has every confidence if this problem wants to be fixed by all parties involved it can in fact be fixed. She said in regards to the pool what happened to third graders learning how to swim in this district. Ms. Morello said we all want the schools run well, children to have what they need, parents/taxpayers happy and most of all the adults focusing on children. She said Mr. Medio will guide us into resolving this problem and this problem can be solved.

Mr. Baruffi said he is personally involved in this matter because two of his grandchildren have been removed from this program and he is not happy. He said he will do his best to try to get these two classrooms back.

Mr. English said All Kids First puts a great product out there and the way we survive is being the best. He said a \$400,000 mistake is not a hiccup but an earthquake. Mr. English said we cannot afford to have these earthquakes anymore the way our budget is looking. He said as Board members we want what is right and if All Kids First had 19 classrooms last year they should have 19 classrooms this year. Mr. English said we need the state to realize that Vineland is struggling and it is not going to get better only worse. He said in regards to the pool he feels if you start a project you finish a project. Mr. English said we have been operating short staffed in some areas and many employees have stepped up to the plate to get ready for September. He thanked the public for coming out.

Mr. English said he is going to ask Mr. Callavini, central administration, the union and bus drivers to work together to figure out how we can save. He said as we move forward he wants to focus on saving as many employees as we currently have.

Report/Remarks by
Board President:

Mr. Medio said that he spoke to Mr. Fanucci, City Council President, in regards to having meetings about shared services with the city and he was very receptive. He said we are all looking ahead to moving forward with some initiatives joining with city government. Mr. Medio said it is disappointing the things that he has heard about the All Kids First situation. He said that he found a ten million dollar hole in the budget once and can certainly find \$400,000.00. Mr. Medio said it is up to administration to come up with a plan and if they cannot the Board will come up with a plan. Mr. Medio asked where this ECPA money went if it is not there for the students. He said All Kids First is the most popular preschool in the district. Mr. Medio said how could you justify cutting classrooms at this school and giving them to someone else is beyond him. He said if the classrooms do not get filled then we will have a Board committee to try to find out what happened. Mr. Medio said he listens to people telling him how they have a bad image and need to have better communication with the city and people who live here. He asked how you could have better communication when you have a fiasco like this. Mr. Medio apologized to the parents for what happened and hopes we can make things right.

Adjournment: The Board adjourned the meeting by voice vote at 8:36 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Helen G. Haley
Interim Board Secretary

HGH:df

