

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, September 10, 2014 at 7:03 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, Ms. Rios and Mr. Ulrich. Absent: None.

Also present: Dr. Guccio, 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:

Mr. Medio asked for a moment of silence for September 11th.

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 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 terms and condition of a contract for the Assistant Superintendent for Administration. 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 Mrs. Morello, seconded by Mr. DiGiorgio, the resolution was passed. All Members voted “yes”.

Special

Presentation (s): Dr. Gruccio said every year we are required to have a public hearing regarding the Acceptable Use Policy #2361 for Computer Networks and Resources.

Mr. Frey presented the Acceptable Use Policy #2361 for Computer Networks and Resources. He said the purpose of the presentation is to review the key concepts of the Policy. Mr. Frey said Policy#2361 is guidelines for all technology in the district and how to appropriately utilize them to push forward the mission of the district. He said the complete policy can be found at Vineland.org.

Public Comments: None.

Approval of Minutes: None.

Report of the
Secretary/Custodian
Of School Monies: None.

Solicitor's Report: None.

Public Comment on
Agenda Items: Mr. Stanger, Acting VASA President
Mr. Stanger spoke in support of the individuals who are on the agenda for a transfer or promotion to the position of Assistant Principal or Principal in several schools.

The Board retired to executive session at 7:10 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 7:28 p.m.

Recommendations:

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

Ms. Morello asked if the Safety Grant was written specifically to get cameras for Almond Road School or can the money be refocused on another school that the district owns that has safety issues. Mr. Weaver said the grant does have some flexibility and he can discuss this with Mrs. Haley. Ms. Morello said we do not own Almond Road School.

Mr. English expressed his concern as to if the cameras are needed for safety reasons. Mr. Weaver thinks the cameras were proposed by Mr. Frey and believes they are certainly needed.

Mr. Ulrich asked if we lost the building could we take our property back. Mr. Weaver responded yes.

Approval of Bills:

Upon motion by Mr. DiGiorgio, seconded by Ms. Morello, the bills were approved and warrants issued for same. All Members voted “yes” (\$1,048,488.68).

Mr. English noted that the checks are dated the end of July and usually we are on a biweekly schedule. Mrs. Haley explained that we kept June open a little longer before rolling over to the next year. She said that is why the July checks are dated later in the month than normal. Mr. English said it is outstanding that we survived without one check written to Grainger and he is looking forward to next month’s bill report.

Emergent Item(s):

(with prior approval)

Approval of the Collaboration Agreement between Bridgeton Public Schools and Vineland Public School to participate in the activities proposed in the Steward B. McKinney-Vento Program for the education of homeless children and youth.

Ms. Morello asked if the only level of involvement we have with this program is sharing transportation. Dr. Gruccio said this program provides additional instruction for our homeless students.

Motion:

A motion was made by Ms. Morello, seconded by Mr. DiGiorgio, to approve the Steward B. McKinney-Vento Program for homeless children and youth. All Members voted “yes.”

Public:

Ron Walker

Mr. Walker said if he was Dr. Gruccio he would have walked off the stage tonight. He thanked Mr. Ulrich, Mr. English, Mr. Jennings and Ms. Rios who stood by Dr. Gruccio. Mr. Walker said this is an embarrassment for those who were supposed to be promoted tonight. He said that he was very surprised with Ms. Morello tonight being an educator he thought she would know how things work. Mr. Walker told Dr. Gruccio to hold her head up, be strong and do the best that she can.

Karen Wiley, Parent

Ms. Wiley said she understands the reasoning behind the uniform policy and was wondering if the Board was aware of how strictly it is being enforced in some schools. She said that she purchased approved clothes for her children based on the guidelines and was told by a teacher that only polo shirts are being allowed this year. Ms. Wiley expressed her concern that these new guidelines are not in the policy, agenda or calendar and her daughter is being written up every day.

Mr. Medio thanked Ms. Wiley and said the Superintendent will look into this.

Jeff Bordley, Parent

Mr. Bordley expressed his concern that his daughter is not getting a bus and has to walk to school with no sidewalks in the dark. He requested for the Board to consider new transportation policies

Carol Deola, Director of All Kids First

Ms. Deola thanked the Board and Dr. Gruccio for getting All Kids First their two classrooms back.

Vicky Miller

Ms. Miller said that Dr. Gruccio is a real woman to take this stuff from this Board. She said this is not fair to Dr. Karwowski, the Johnstone Elementary School Principal, and the candidate who was selected as principal.

Lee Burke, Vineland Resident

Mr. Burke said he wanted to follow up on comments made at last week's work session on the QSAC report.

Mr. Burke said there was an article in the *Atlantic City Press* on August 10th in regards to the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC) report being more available in New Jersey public schools. He said the QSAC Report is accountability to the public and employees on the effectiveness of this school district. Mr. Burke said our evaluations for this Board are consistent with other peers in the county. He expressed his concern as to how the public would know about this report and accountability of this Board and School District. Mr. Burke said this report is relatively unknown to the public to ask about. He said until the public is made more aware of the performance of this particular Board he cannot see how a Superintendent can be effective. Mr. Burke said we have had five superintendents in 11 years and 4 Business Administrators within 4 years, which is a reflection of the dysfunctional process of this Board. He said the tactics being used such as tabling and manipulating *Roberts Rules* show the attitude of this Board towards Central Administration.

Board Member

Remarks:

Mr. Jennings stated that he would like a presentation on Cenergistic, Inc. within the next couple months. He said he is making decisions that he sees are the right decisions in his opinion. Mr. Jennings said his opinion is exactly what Mr. Burke said that we are hindering the movement of this district. He said Dr. Gruccio has made concessions and we have helped her understand that certain positions were not needed. Mr. Jennings said we are now tabling a simple Principal position. He is happy that we pulled through for our Assistant Superintendent today.

Ms. Morello said a comment was made that she is in education and should know how it works. She said she does know how it should work and that is why she asked for things to be tabled. Ms. Morello said her fellow Board members all have their own opinions and ideas on how things should go. She said that she respects them and we do not always agree. Ms. Morello asked that all Board members be given the opportunity to be comfortable making these decisions with correct and accurate information in front of them. She said these decisions go a long way and there needs to be a deeper level of understanding. Ms. Morello appreciates everybody's different opinions but thinks it is best when a governing group gets the same information at the same time so we are on all the same page to move forward.

Ms. Morello hopes everyone has a great school year and all students stay safe. She also hopes we can continue to score in the high nineties in instruction and have a very successful school year. Ms. Morello welcomed Mr. Frangipani to the district.

Mr. Jennings said on May 14th we had several Vineland tax payers speak in favor of increasing the school tax 2% because they want to see our children educated. He thinks we need to look at increasing the taxes.

Mr. Ulrich welcomed Mr. Frangipani to the district. He said there is one unknown product coming to this district; all the rest are people that we know. Mr. Ulrich does not know of anybody who does not see them as good people and administrators. He said that is why he is confused about this succession planning because these people are already supervisors in our district. Mr. Ulrich said he does not know why we are questioning our own employees. He said if they are so bad that they do not deserve a promotion then why have they not been removed from the district or disciplined. Mr. Ulrich said Dr. Gruccio is one of the most approachable people that you will ever meet in your life. He said if you take the time and want a meeting she is willing to do that out of her schedule. Mr. Ulrich said it is not like this is some kind of secret operation and she is trying to keep the Board in the dark. He said tonight we have just affected people's lives and he is at a loss as to why we would treat our employees like this. Mr. Ulrich said he is very upset and hopes the public sees this. He said we have to come up with creative ways to work with our unions and should not just burst in and destroy them. Mr. Ulrich apologized that he did not have enough influence to convince one more Board member to say enough of this. He asked for the State to truly send a monitor in for governance and finance because it is not getting done. Mr. Ulrich said this is about personalities and punishing people because they have a relationship with teachers and the Superintendent. He encouraged everyone to get the information they need and listen to the Superintendent to move these good people forward.

Mr. DeWinne said Mr. DiGiorgio along with Ms. Rios have a lot of information to address the uniform policy. He asked for our Transportation Director or Board President to find a way for these students who live out in the areas that Mr. Bordley spoke about to receive busing.

Mr. DeWinne said he came tonight prepared to vote “yes” on the hires. He said when the Board committee chair requested more time he wanted to know what the issues are. Mr. DeWinne wished the students a good year.

Ms. Rios apologized for not being at last week’s meeting but was on vacation. She wanted to clarify that she would have supported all of the promotions. Ms. Rios said she has visited the various schools and has seen many of these people at work. She said it is a blessing to have people like this in our district and to see how much the students love these educators.

Mr. DiGiorgio thinks the majority of the residents, staff and students know that he does not take his duties in the district or public position with the city too lightly. He said he does his homework and points out a lot of things. Mr. DiGiorgio said no one said any of these employees are bad employees. He said people put a lot of ideas and things in the minds of others before they know the entire story. Mr. DiGiorgio said his role here is to make sure our district functions and runs well. He said he hopes the parental concerns are addressed. Mr. DiGiorgio said the ramifications of every decision made in this district, especially by those in the lead role, will be paid for years to come by the people that sit in that seat. He said historically we have seen it and at times still suffer from it. Mr. DiGiorgio said that Mr. Burke stated that the Business Administrator is the second most important position. He said it is imperative that the candidate who is moved forward by the Superintendent has the capacity to do the job. Mr. DiGiorgio said one of the reasons QSAC was an issue is we had an employee in the district that made a mistake. He said he would like an update or a report on how that employee was disciplined and how that impacted our QSAC. Mr. DiGiorgio said he read the uniform policy regulation and it is inconsistent and not clear to the staff, parents and students.

Ms. Rios does not understand why there are so many different rules/regulations regarding school uniforms and said there has to be consistency.

Mr. English expressed his concern that students are being punished at the high school for following the policy.

Mr. DiGiorgio said he echoed Mr. DeWinne's feelings on all the points he made regarding personnel. He welcomed Mr. Frangipani to the district.

Mr. English welcomed Mr. Frangipani to the district and told him what he has seen tonight is not how it always is. He sent his thoughts and prayers to the family of Jeffrey Corbitt, Jr. a student who passed away after an extended battle with cancer. Mr. English also sent thoughts and prayers to the family of Aisling Cooke, a young lady from Mainland High School, who was tragically killed in an accident. He said as Board members we are trying to do what we feel is right. Mr. English said he represents the students first and taxpayers second. He believes education is important for our students and will always support the Superintendent's recommendations with the utmost respect. Mr. English thanked Dr. Karwowski, Principal of Johnstone School, for all her years of service to the district. He said that Dr. Karwowski was scheduled to retire on September 1st but extended her retirement for another month until her successor was in place. Mr. English said in his opinion Dr. Karwowski is what every building principal should represent. He said she is a true role model for current and future building administrators. Mr. English wished the best of luck to all students, teachers and staff. He said the uniform policy comes down to interpretation. Mr. English said in June he requested a monthly report on how the high school is functioning with one principal. He credited Dr. Gruccio and Dr. McCann because he did not support one principal and the high school got off with no major speed bumps. Mr. English feels like he is standing in quick sand, mud and syrup in regards to what took place tonight. He said maybe it is time to go through Governance 5, 6, and 7. Mr. English said his living is based on customer service. He said customer service is the way to run a business but unfortunately he feels people on this Board have lost the faith and trust in our educational leader. Mr. English said Mr. DiGiorgio's concerns are valid concerns, which were addressed today. He does not ever want to have a Board member ask him why do we keep losing good people and thinks it was self-explanatory this evening.

Report/Remarks by
Board President:

Mr. Medio said he will discuss a couple misconceptions that he does not want to go beyond tonight. He said the first misconception is that there were a couple Board members who spoke about the positions and people up for positions. He said it is his expectation that all four of those people will be approved next month.

Mr. Medio said the question involved certain irregularities that we will discuss privately next month. He said we are not being disrespectful to people but just doing our due diligence. Mr. Medio said when you are on this Board everyone looks at the personal nature of what we do. He said he is always looking to cut into the shortfall in the upcoming budget. Mr. Medio said if you think it is a good idea to put someone in a job and cut that position next year, he disagrees with you. He wants to look at the overall budget and have discussion about making cuts somewhere. Mr. Medio said he does not want to put people into a job in October and tell them in June that they have to bump back. He said there have been many people who have been spreading a lot of disinformation about privatization. Mr. Medio said privatization was an administrative recommendation that the Board voted on in several areas. He is not in favor of privatization but in favor of cutting those jobs. Mr. Medio said when the Board came up with a budget, in that budget there were nine buses with drivers. He said we were looking at drying up jobs we could do without. Mr. Medio said we wanted administration to look at that and so far it has been done in a very limited way. He said we still have a six to eight million dollar shortfall. Mr. Medio said he sees Mr. Jennings point about taxes but if he gets reelected he will not vote to raise taxes until we have cut to the bone what we need done.

Mr. Jennings said people came to the microphone and said they were ready to have their taxes raised. He said we are choking this place out.

Mr. Medio said that is why he wants to look at drying up positions when people leave or retire.

Dr. Guccio wanted to make it very clear that Administration at no time decided to privatize anyone. She said Dr. Rossi has worked very closely with the unions to make sure what he is doing is to put substitutes in place to secure the jobs of the people we have. Dr. Guccio said we do not want anyone to lose a job and do not support privatizing anything. She said we have worked very closely with transportation and it is not our intent to privatize that either. Dr. Guccio apologized to the parents who had to go through a rough time in regards to school uniforms. She said it seems that the issues are strictly at Vineland High School and she will speak to Administration tomorrow to do what she can. Dr. Guccio said she respects Mr. English very much but does not want him to get Mr. Frangipani off on the wrong foot.

Dr. Gruccio told Mr. Frangipani, who was in the audience, that what he saw tonight is very typical and not the exception. She wanted him to know what he is getting into and welcomed him to the district. Dr. Gruccio apologized and thanked everyone that she recommended for their patience and understanding through this process. She said it should not have to end up being a two month process and she apologized. Dr. Gruccio said she has the utmost confidence in each of them and will continue to put their names forward because she believes it is the right thing to do. She told Mr. Sakers that she always tries her best to support in-house people however; he truly impressed all of the committee members. Dr. Gruccio told Mr. Sakers he should be proud of what he brought here and she believes he will be a very positive addition to this school district. She hopes the Board will support him next month when his name is placed on the agenda. Dr. Gruccio thanked him for his patience and understanding. She wished everyone a very successful school year and again said she is sorry.

Adjournment: The Board adjourned the meeting by voice vote at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Helen G. Haley
Interim Board Secretary

