

An open work session of the Board of Education of the City of Vineland was held in the Board Room, 625 Plum Street, Vineland, New Jersey, Wednesday, November 6, 2013 at 7:04 p.m., pursuant to notice with Mr. Medio presiding and the following members present, Mr. DiGiorgio, Mr. English, Mr. Jennings, Ms. Morello, Ms. Rios and Mr. Ulrich. Absent: Mr. Bongiovanni and Dr. Mounier.

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

Mr. Medio said that Mr. Bongiovanni's mother is ill and Dr. Mounier had an operation this morning and are both absent tonight.

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:

Mr. Schectman 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 contract negotiation the nature of the contract and interested party is renewal of user agreement with the City of Vineland regarding Gonzalez Park and discussion regarding awarding of contract to Sheppard Bus Service. 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 retirement of an administrative employee. **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. English, seconded by Mr. Ulrich, the resolution was passed. All Members voted "yes."

Public Comments

On Agenda Items: Keila Montanez, 328 W. Almond Street
Ms. Montanez thanked the Board, Vineland Police Department and the City of Vineland for their quick response on the Gonzalez Park issue.

Monica Dannenberger, Principal Sabater Elementary School
Ms. Dannenberger acknowledged and thanked all Sabater Elementary School parents for noticing a problem with Gonzalez Park near Sabater School and bringing it to the Board's attention.

Special

Presentations: Dr. Gruccio introduced Daisy Mercado, a Sabater Elementary School Teacher, to discuss the Family Friendly Center Summer Program.

Ms. Mercado said she is a second grade teacher at Sabater Elementary School and the Grant Coordinator/Supervisor for Family Friendly Center Program. She gave a brief presentation on what they are proposing to do with the existing Family Friendly Center Program.

Ms. Morello asked if you charge for the program during the year the money from the grant can be used for the summer program at no charge. Ms. Mercado said yes the program would be free in the summer with breakfast and lunch provided. Ms. Morello asked if it would be for the same or different children. Ms. Mercado said currently it would be open to the same children because they paid through the year. Ms. Morello thanked Ms. Mercado for thinking outside the box because it is a very creative way to approach the problem.

Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB Report), Suspension Report, Cunningham Alternative School Report/Average Daily Attendance – Mrs. Polof presented the reports.

Ms. Morello asked if the intermediate schools share their best practices as to what works for them. Mrs. Polof said they have had several meetings on discipline and have discussed best practices.

Mr. English asked if any of the high school suspension numbers have to do with the dress code. Mrs. Polof said they are not broken down by dress code but compared to last year, when we did not have the uniform policy, the numbers were not that significant.

Comments by

Board Solicitor: None.

Items for Review:

A. Superintendent

1. **PERSONNEL**

1.1 **Personnel Items** – No discussion.

2. **PROCEDURES & OPERATIONS**

2.1 **Travel** – a. Field Trips, b. District – Ms. Morello expressed her concern that there are still problems with travel being submitted by the deadline. She asked if there is some way the principals or assistant principals can develop a cheat sheet for distribution to staff members so they are informed of every step that needs to be done for travel. Dr. Gruccio said all the principals have a list of cut off dates for submission. She feels it is important for them to share with all staff members because there seems to be a disconnect when certain advisors put the paperwork in. Mr. Medio said there is no one on the board that will refuse a field trip. He said it is about time that a provision is made with the superintendent to approve field trips based on consultation with the board members. Mr. Ulrich asked if that can be done with the accountability regulations that are in place. Mr. DeSanto said the concern that he has is that you are taking a vote without a meeting and it could be a Sunshine Law violation. He said that he will look into this and will have an answer for the next meeting.

2.2 **Bus Evacuation Drills for Sept/Oct** – No discussion.

2.3 **Regent University Partnership Agreement** – No discussion.

2.4 **Revised World Language Curricula** – No discussion.

2.5 **Revised School Self-Assessment** – No discussion.

2.6 **2013-2014 Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) District Performance Reviews** – Dr. Gruccio said the report can change when QSAC comes in to do their review with us in February.

Ms. Morello asked how many hours of employee time are tied up in QSAC. Dr. Gruccio said it takes quite a bit of time. Ms. Morello asked if the reports that QSAC requests are reports just specific to them. Dr. Gruccio said it is information that we should have in district it is just a matter of compiling the information for them to review. Ms. Morello asked if the information gathered is useful to the district. Dr. Gruccio explained that it is information that we have already done throughout the year. She said it is just time consuming to pull all the pieces together.

Ms. Morello asked what would happen if you did not participate in QSAC. Dr. Gruccio said we were told they could withhold our funding. Mr. DiGiorgio asked if there has been any documented case of withdrawal of funding for any district that has not complied with QSAC. Dr. Gruccio said she does not know of any district that has not complied. Mr. DeSanto said you could save time if you accumulate documents for QSAC as you go as opposed to trying to reinvent the wheel and collect the documents in the end.

3. **BUILDINGS & GROUNDS** – None.

4. **FINANCE**

4.1 **Budgetary Transfers** – No discussion

4.2 **Placement of Special Education Students** – No discussion.

4.3 **Glassboro Public Schools Joint Transportation Contract**- No discussion.

4.4 **Korean War Veterans Donation** – Mr. Weaver said the Korean War Veterans donated a new electronic sign for the front of Veterans Memorial School, which will be a fabulous addition to the school. He thanked the Korean War Vets for the donation. Mr. Weaver introduced Charles Biletta who spoke on behalf of Salve Maurizio who is in the hospital and was the person who followed through on the sign. Mr. Biletta said over the years our group has been instrumental in creating the atmosphere that exists as far as honoring veterans. He thanked all board members who served during the past twelve years for giving their approval on everything done at Veterans Memorial School. Mr. Biletta also thanked the principals and assistant principals at Veterans Memorial School for being so helpful and Joe Morello for the fantastic job he has done in the school.

Ms. Morello thanked Mr. Biletta for his service and presented the Korean War Veterans with a certificate.

4.5 **Somerdale School District Joint Transportation Contract** – No discussion.

4.6 **Vineland Community Health & Education Center Lease Extension** – No discussion.

4.7 **Checks to State of NJ Unclaimed Property** – Ms. Morello asked if we really wrote someone a check for 93 cents. Mr. Schectman responded yes.

4.8 **Salem County Special Services Joint Transportation Contract** – No discussion.

4.9 **National Constitution Center Grant** – Mr. Ulrich thanked Stacy Cast for applying for this grant because the students will have a great time.

Mr. English asked what the difference is between this grant and the grant that was discussed earlier. Dr. Gruccio said it is because the paperwork was not submitted in time for the other grant.

4.10 **Stow Creek Joint Transportation Contract** – No discussion.

4.11 **Municipal Alliance Contract** – No discussion.

4.12 **No Child Left Behind Application Submission for the 2014 School Year** – Ms. Morello asked if we can develop a calendar for these types of things to be handled in a timely fashion. Mr. Schectman said he and Mr. DeSanto have discussed this and Mr. DeSanto requested for us to re-implement a tighter tickler file system. He said this application was supposed to be submitted by August 31st and was not.

2. ITEMS PROPOSED FOR REGULAR AGENDA:

a. **Report by the Secretary of the Board of Education** – None.

b. **Proposed for review or discussion or adoption by Board Members:** Discipline Guide

Ms. Morello asked for the Discipline Guide to be placed on the agenda for discussion because to the best of her knowledge cell phone and electronics use is not addressed at the high school level. She said that is in direct violation of this board's policy. Ms. Morello said the staff needs to have input. Mr. Ulrich agrees with Ms. Morello and said the biggest complaint is a lack of consistency of application of the discipline code. He said the policy is only as good as the people who are going to enforce it consistently. Ms. Morello said unless there is some type of immediate response then it would appear that using foul language is ok. She said staff members are becoming disheartened and not reporting anything because many times nothing is happening. Ms. Morello said we need to expect more and raise the bar for student behavior. Mr. DeSanto suggested for administration to check the codes to make sure they cover the various infractions. Dr. Gruccio said she believes Mrs. Polof did do that and we have the electronics piece on the Policy & Personnel agenda for discussion. Mr. Medio asked Dr. Gruccio if she is talking about the policy or regulations. Dr. Gruccio said she believes it is the policy that will be reviewed. Mr. Medio asked why we are going to review the policy. Dr. Gruccio said to discuss if there should be any changes to the policy in regards to electronics.

Ms. Morello said the bring your own device to school has long and far reaching implications legally for the district, that were not addressed in any of the plans that were brought forth and were ready to go without board approval. She said Mr. DeSanto needs to do some research on this.

Mr. DeSanto said the other housekeeping suggestion he has is that what we call the disciplinary code is a chart that is part of our regulations. He said the chart itself may not be enough communication and what the schools need to see besides the chart is the regulations. Mr. DeSanto said between the two documents guidance and instruction could be provided to the administrators.

Mr. Medio said he does not know where it is in our policy that guidance counselors became disciplinarians. Dr. Gruccio said they are not supposed to be disciplinarians. Mr. English said the first offense is guidance counselor/social worker visit for cutting, roaming halls, leaving area and failure to sign in. Dr. Gruccio said that means if a child continues to do those actions they want the guidance counselor to discuss with them why it is happening.

Mr. DeSanto said if the guidance counselors are not part of discipline then the regulations should say “the principal has the option of referring the student to the guidance counselor for intervention.” He said so it is clear that being sent to a guidance counselor is not for discipline.

Mrs. Polof said through the month of October we worked on revising the discipline guide and regulations based on input from the high schools and alternative program. She said today she held her last meeting with a principal from the high school and the results of the discussion were disseminated to them today. Ms. Morello asked when the board gets to see the revisions. Ms. Polof said she has copies.

Mr. English asked if the new discipline code is in the student handbook. Mrs. Polof said it was only in one handbook due to the fact that one high school had the handbooks printed early. She said all parents, students and staff members received a copy of the new discipline guide the first day of school. Ms. Morello asked when the new policy existed that was not in the high school handbook that was received early. Mrs. Polof said in August. Mrs. Polof said as far as training all of the high school principals and assistant principals were all involved in the process and they all knew the content and how it was going to be interpreted. She said once the policy is in place then the high school staff would share it with their teachers. Ms. Morello asked how the discipline code aligns with the intermediate schools. Mrs. Polof said the intermediate schools continue to have in-school suspension as an option so it does not align with the high school. Ms. Morello said she would like to know if there is any tracking on whether or not in-school suspension actually effects behavior or is it just a holding tank to get disruptive students out of the way.

Mr. Ulrich said there is no police contact for alcohol use, which is a disorderly person's offense, affects driver's license status and is illegal on school property.

Mr. Medio asked how much administrative time is wasted on parent conferences. Mrs. Polof said it has been changed to parent contact.

Mr. English asked if the electronic piece should be in the discipline code. Ms. Morello responded yes. She said we are the governing board and responsible for what goes on. Ms. Morello said things are not being done in accordance to the current policy and regulation of the district.

Mr. DeSanto explained that Strauss Esmay has different sections and one is student conduct, which would be the place to start. He said he would be happy to work with Mrs. Polof and others to review these policies and regulations.

Ms. Morello said we also have to be consistent in our policy in regards to staff.

Public Comments: Ronald Walker, Parent

Mr. Walker said he feels an Ad Hoc Committee for transportation is something the district should look into having because of all the issues with the bus stops.

Julie Howerton, Parent

Ms. Howerton said her daughter, Shelby, was best friends with Alexa Strittmatter the child who was fatally struck by a car walking to her bus stop. She asked the board what the plan is for bus stop changes and student safety. Ms. Howerton said that she has a petition demanding an immediate change that would no longer require any student to walk down or cross a high traffic street, be picked up in front of their house and change the circumference of the territory of those who are not provided bus service to a one mile radius. She said if she is not provided the request she is making, her intentions would be to become the biggest thorn in the Board's side because she will not back down.

Mr. & Mrs. Almodovar

Mr. Almodovar expressed his concern in regards to his daughter's bus stop and said something needs to change. Mrs. Almodovar said they are here to support what Ms. Howerton is doing and said the safety of the children should come first.

Review of Bills: Ms. Morello questioned the \$25,060.00 expenditure for lighting for end of the year activities. She hopes that staff members start looking at ways to cut back on things. Ms. Morello said in the past we had AVA Clubs and students involved in learning a skill. She thinks it would be nice if we started to move back towards those types of things.

Mr. Medio asked Mr. Schectman for the surplus numbers by the next meeting.

Ms. Morello asked if we could speak with someone from the county or city in regards to the sidewalk issues. Dr. Gruccio said several meetings were held with the city to try to come up with ways to implement sidewalks. She said it is the responsibility of the municipality not the school district. Mr. English feels if there is no sidewalk then the student should be picked up in front of their house. Ms. Morello said people in this community need to think about driving more safely, parents need to speak to their children about cell phone use and adults need to put their phone down.

Committee Reports: Mr. DiGiorgio said the Finance Committee met at the warehouse on October 16, 2013. He said facilities were discussed and Mr. Weaver presented an update on several projects that were underway. Mr. DiGiorgio said that Mr. Weaver also presented the results of the reduced work week analysis which showed that the district saved approximately \$92,000.00 during the summer. He said they also discussed the Planning/Zoning Board notice they received. Mr. DiGiorgio said Ms. Morello expressed concerns regarding our infrastructure, which is currently experiencing stress with the addition of more technology. He said the status of the audit was discussed and updates on fund 20, ABA position, sports, Ed Data, and additional benefit packages for employees. Mr. DiGiorgio said after the meeting the members took a tour through the warehouse. He said the employees are doing a great job at the facility and there is a good inventory.

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business: None.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned to executive session by voice vote at 8:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Herbert G. Schectman
Board Secretary

HGS:df

