

The regular meeting of the Board of Education of the City of Vineland was held in the Vineland High School North auditorium, 2880 E. Chestnut Avenue, Vineland, New Jersey, Wednesday, December 11, 2013 at 7:01 p.m., pursuant to notice with Mr. Medio presiding and the following members present: Mr. DiGiorgio, Mr. English, Mr. Jennings, Ms. Morello, Dr. Mounier, Ms. Rios and Mr. Ulrich. Absent: Mr. Bongiovanni.

Also present: Dr. Gruccio, Superintendent, Mr. Frey and Mrs. Polof, Assistant Superintendents, Mr. Schectman, 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: Jacqueline Askins, Sarah Dietz and Emily Shellhamer, members of the Vineland High School National Honor Society led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Resolution: None.

Special Presentation (s): Mr. Medio introduced the Vineland High School Madrigal Singers under the direction of Lori Cummines to present musical selections.

Dr. Gruccio introduced Mr. Don Robbins, Athletic Director, to present an update on the eligibility standards for extracurricular activities.

Mr. Robbins said around three years ago the Policy & Personnel Committee requested that he keep a record of the student athletes academic progress as it relates to eligibility. He said last year, at this time, the average student athlete from fall and winter sports had a group Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.96. He said this year, through the budget process, we were able to add a second athletic coach who is working with the student athletes in the area of academics. Mr. Robbins said currently the GPA for a student athlete is 3.04 so we are moving in the right direction. He said student athletes at the middle school level are following the same policies that the high school student athletes are following.

Mr. Ulrich asked Mr. Robbins if he was able to track the number of students that were made ineligible because of the 2.0 policy. Mr. Robbins said for fall sports we had a grace period so the 2.0 policy went into effect the end of the first semester. He said currently this winter there are 14 student athletes that were affected.

Dr. Gruccio introduced Ms. Melanie Beck, Principal of the Cunningham Alternative School, to present an update on our Alternative Program.

Ms. Beck thanked the Board for the opportunity to present all the great things going on at Cunningham Alternative School. She provided the breakdown of teachers and student body make-up at Cunningham Alternative School along with first marking period grades, attendance, discipline, programs/activities, online credit recovery, coping/accountability program, school-wide positive behavioral plan, Cunningham Council, School Safety Team, Academic Rewards, Presentations/Assemblies, weekly counseling groups and vocational/sports/activities/clubs.

Ms. Morello questioned the amount of students who have dropped out. Ms. Beck explained that they are special and regular education students.

Mr. DiGiorgio asked where the five students who transferred out went. Ms. Beck said one went to Cumberland Regional and another was with a foster family that did not work out. She does not know where the other three students went.

Ms. Morello said we need to have a better handle on where students are going because it feeds into our dropout rate. Dr. Gruccio said we are working on that to have an accurate number.

Mr. Ulrich said Ms. Beck has been part of our Youth Coalition in Vineland. He said there are a lot of positive things going on and one is the use of our chaplains in a school environment. Mr. Ulrich said this is not a religion program but another resource for students to go to outside of the house.

Ms. Rios asked if students participated in any vocational sports, activities or clubs during the past year. Ms. Beck said they have.

Mr. DiGiorgio asked Dr. Gruccio if she can see the concept of online credit recovery used in the regular school setting in future. Dr. Gruccio said maybe at some point.

Mr. English asked if there is a maximum enrollment number for the Cunningham Alternative School. Ms. Beck said there is a twelve to one ratio maximum.

Approval of Minutes: Upon motion by Ms. Rios, seconded by Mr. DiGiorgio, the minutes were approved from November 6, 2013 and November 13, 2013. All Members voted “yes” except Dr. Mounier who “abstained” on both dates.

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

Solicitor’s Report: None.

Public Comment on  
Agenda Items: None.

Recommendations:

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

Approval of Bills: Upon motion by Mr. English, seconded by Mr. DiGiorgio, the bills were approved and warrants issued for same. All Members voted “yes” (\$6,991,740.80).

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

Public: None

Board Member Remarks:

Mr. Jennings thanked Ms. Beck for the thorough presentation.

Mr. English thanked the Vineland High School Madrigal Singers. He also thanked Dr. Mounier for his service to the Vineland Public School District and wished him the best of luck in future endeavors. Mr. English wished everyone a safe and healthy Christmas and New Year.

Mr. Ulrich wished all staff and students a great holiday. He thanked Dr. Mounier for his service to the Board.

Dr. Mounier said he has a few things to say without malice or rancor. He said it has been an honor and privilege to serve on this board. Dr. Mounier said he has learned a lot about how things work and how they can be made to work better. He wished he could say that he has enjoyed every last minute and that his relations with administration and all the Board members have always been harmonious but that would make him a liar. Dr. Mounier said his vision for education in Vineland differs from the vision offered by the current administration and certain members of the Board. He said in some respects education in Vineland is superior and in other ways it is inferior. Dr. Mounier said the three things that are essential for improving education in Vineland are good management, strict discipline and economy. He said we need better management. Good intentions may make a satisfactory pavement if you are on the road to hell but they make a poor foundation. Dr. Mounier said good management demands more than social skills and a history in education. He said the five most commonly heard words from our chief administrator should not be “what do I do now” but should be “I know what to do lets get it done right and get it done right now.” Dr. Mounier said there should be a uniform code of discipline uniformly enforced.

Dr. Mounier said in his opinion discipline is lax and too often left to the discretion of individual administrators. He said our budget in round numbers amounts to two hundred million dollars. Dr. Mounier said we burn through that money every year and come back looking for more. He said some costs such as payroll cannot be reduced very easily and there is wasteful discretionary spending such as inspirational seminars, professional development and unnecessary office renovations. He said greed and waste go hand and hand. Dr. Mounier said most of our funding comes from taxpayers who do not reside in Vineland. We have a moral obligation to share with more needy districts especially small ones that do not enjoy the luxuries that Vineland takes for granted. Dr. Mounier said we could do very well with spending less without increasing the local tax levy as certain members of this board have suggested. He said just because someone has extensive experience in the schools does not make her judgment better than yours. Dr. Mounier said reject the false notion that the only way to accomplish goals in the face of failure is to hire more administrators, to invoke the latest educational theory or to spend more money on fancy programs. He said do not be afraid to challenge highly paid experts especially when their expertise is based upon a theoretical understanding rather than practical achievements. Dr. Mounier said remember that being highly paid is not always the same thing as being highly skilled or highly accomplished. He said remember that you are the representatives of the people and you owe them your service in delivering first rate education at a sensible cost. Dr. Mounier said he leaves knowing he has served well and honorably. He said if he could he would do more and give good management, strict discipline and thrift. Dr. Mounier said if you rely now on wishing, hoping and luck you will be no better off in the future than in the past. Farewell.

Ms. Rios thanked all school district employees for all their hard work and dedication throughout the school year. She congratulated and thanked all those who were honored during the previous board meetings including our flag salute students. Ms. Rios said she is grateful to the parents, community members and businesses who so graciously contribute to our school district on a yearly basis. She said it has been an honor and pleasure to work with administration and each board member. Ms. Rios thanked Dr. Mounier and Mr. Bongiovanni for volunteering their time. She asked everyone to be safe this holiday season and to enjoy their time with family and friends.

Mr. DiGiorgio thanked the Madrigal Singers. He acknowledged David Mazur for an article he wrote in the opinion section of the local newspaper. Mr. DiGiorgio said the Finance Committee minutes are available to the public if anyone wishes to see them. He thanked Dr. Mounier for serving on the Vineland Board of Education and admires his passion for expressing himself especially for what he believes in. Mr. DiGiorgio wished Dr. Mounier, his lovely wife and family continued happiness and good health. He wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy holiday.

Ms. Morello wished everyone a healthy, prosperous new year and wonderful holiday. She said she will miss Dr. Mounier's very frank utterances and candor. Ms. Morello thanked Mr. Bongiovanni for this time.

Report/Remarks by  
Board President:

Mr. Medio wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. He thanked Dr. Mounier for his service to the community of Vineland.

Adjournment:

The Board adjourned the meeting by voice vote at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Herbert G. Schectman, CPA  
Board Secretary

HGS:df



