

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the City of Vineland was held Tuesday, March 30, 2010 at 7:01 p.m., in the auditorium of Landis Middle School, 61 W. Landis Avenue, Vineland, New Jersey, pursuant to notice with Mr. Giordano presiding and the following members present: Mr. Bernardini, Mr. DeWinne, Mr. DiGiorgio, Mr. Fanucci, Mr. Franceschini, Mrs. Phillips, Ms. Rios, and Mr. Ulrich. Absent: none.

Also present: Dr. Banks, Superintendent, Dr. Gruccio, Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Franchetta, Board Secretary, Mrs. Polof, Director of Special Education and Mr. DeSanto, Board Solicitor. Absent: Ms. Greenfield, Executive Director of Personnel

Mr. Giordano 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.

Flag Salute:

Resolution: Mr. Franchetta read a resolution to recess into executive session on **Tuesday, March 30, 2010**, regarding budget issues, personnel matters and/or contract negotiations.

Motion: A motion was made by Mr. Franceschini, seconded by Mr. Fanucci, to approve the resolution. All Members voted "yes."

The board recessed to executive session at 7:05 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 7:28 p.m.

Motion: A motion was made by Mr. Franceschini, seconded by Mr. Fanucci, to open the Public Hearing. All Members voted "yes."

Mr. Franchetta presented a brief overview of the 2010-2011 budget. He said the proposed budget is \$189,633,615 with a local tax levy of \$22,026,538. There is an increase in the tax levy for this year of \$406,757.00 due to an increase in ratables. Mr. Franchetta said the increase in ratables is not due to a tax rate increase on the budget. The tax rate will remain at \$1.037 per \$100 of assessed property value. Mr. Franchetta said our total local revenue is \$22,677,232, state revenue is \$148,064,085 and federal revenue is \$189,633,615.

Mr. Franchetta said the budget breakdown is as follows: school-based budgets \$89,061,443.00, special revenue, \$26,708,026.00, maintenance & security, \$14,645,846.00, employee benefits, \$19,160,202.00, student services, \$6,768,778.00, transportation, \$9,722,628.00, district-funded programs, \$4,922,444.00, tuition, \$7,997,154.00, tuition-charter school, \$1,203,056.00, curriculum & staff training, \$3,537,653.00, central services, \$2,020,972.00, administrative information technology, \$1,749,176.00, general administration, \$1,639,057.00, adult education, \$0, summer school, \$199,500.00 and school administration, \$297,680.00 with a total budget amount of \$189,633,615. Mr. Franchetta said every year the Department of Education releases a Comparative Spending Guide. He said we are called a SDA district formerly known as an Abbott district and there are 31 SDA districts. The district's cost per pupil is \$419 below the SDA average. The district is slightly below the State SDA average for classroom instruction and we spend \$9,310 per pupil vs. \$9,334. The administrative cost is \$47 per pupil above the SDA district average. The district has 177.3 students per administrator vs. SDA average of 141.5 students per administrator.

Mr. Giordano said he received a phone call and an email on a couple of rumors today. The first rumor was that the Sabater Elementary School will be closing and the second was that all the food service workers are going to lose their jobs because the board is going to privatize that portion of the district employment. Mr. Giordano said both rumors are totally inaccurate, unfounded and not true. He said we are not closing any schools or privatizing the school cafeterias. Mr. Giordano said the budget is a fluent document and we have the capability of changing it from now until June 30, 2010. He said that we received a letter yesterday from the County Superintendent who reviewed the budget and was going to make one change effective this meeting. Mr. Giordano said the directive from the County Superintendent was to put summer school back in to the budget. Mr. Giordano said if any member of the public has specific questions that they would like answered to please write them down and give them to Mr. Franchetta. He said the public comment portion of the meeting is for observations, comments and possible suggestions on the budget.

Mr. Fanucci, Chairman of the Finance Committee, said he will be addressing three topics. He said with respect to the secretarial positions he would like to make everyone aware that there are some things that are being worked on. The Finance Committee has put together a plan that would create a positive effect on the secretarial positions however; this is something that has to be presented to the union and will be discussed next week with Dr. Banks and union leadership. He said if the unions accept this presentation there will be no secretarial loss in the district with a savings to the school district as well.

Mr. Fanucci said the Finance Committee will meet this week to discuss options in regards to the Adult Education Program to see if there is a way to make this work. He said the rumors out there in regards to staff being cut, cafeterias being privatized, people being fired and wages being tampered with are such a joke. Mr. Fanucci said personnel were never an issue with respect to food service. He said when an option is discussed we need to have all the information to see where we can save on cost of goods, purchasing and acquisition from a management prospective. Mr. Fanucci said no Request for Proposals (RFP's) have gone out yet and he requested for everyone to please remain calm until we get through this. He said if you look at the budget there is a full staff on for next year in the kitchens.

Public Comments: Lisa Arena, Principal of Mennies Elementary School
Mrs. Arena requested for the district administration and Board of Education members to meet with the elementary school principals to examine other areas from which the budget could be trimmed in order to keep the cafeteria/playground aides.

Gary Bergh, Adult Education Center ESL Teacher
Mr. Bergh expressed his concern in regards to the ESL Programs that are being cut at the Adult Education Center.

Richard Boone, Adult Education Center Teacher
Mr. Boone expressed his gratitude to the community of Vineland for having the Adult Education Center.

Joseph Camardo, Principal of Adult Education Center
Mr. Camardo thanked the Board of Education for their support of the Adult Education Center and requested for their continued support to keep the Adult Education Center from closing.

Stephen Dantinne, Supervisor of Technology
Mr. Dantinne respectfully requested that the reductions for the technology department be rescinded.

Valorie Francisci, Instructional Aide
Ms. Francisci expressed her concern in regards to the playground/cafeteria aide cuts. She said she would personally give up working three of her 185 contracted days if it would mean saving the jobs of friends and coworkers who provide an invaluable service to the students in the district.

Odeine Lettsome

Ms. Lettsome spoke in support of the Adult Education Center.

Antoinette Ocasio, Food Service Worker

Ms. Ocasio thanked the Board for dispelling the rumors about the Food Service Department.

Joan Pace, Food Service Worker

Ms. Pace also thanked the Board for dispelling the rumors about the Food Service Department.

Elizabeth Ramirez

Ms. Ramirez spoke in support of the Adult Education Center.

Lisa Reimels, Playground Aide

Ms. Reimels expressed her concern in regards to the playground/cafeteria aides being cut. She also expressed her anger with Mr. Giordano, Board President, for releasing this information to the *Daily Journal* before employees were notified of losing their job.

Judith Rush, Millville Board of Education GED Instructor

Ms. Rush spoke in support of the Adult Education Center.

Ruth Shropshire, Adult Education Center Teacher

Ms. Shropshire spoke in support of the Adult Education Center.

Elaine Dunkin

Ms. Dunkin spoke in support of the Adult Education Center.

Bryant Nelson, Transition Coach NJ Youth Corp

Mr. Nelson spoke in support of the NJ Youth Corp Program held at the Adult Education Center.

Alan Mounier, School Board Candidate

Mr. Mounier expressed his concern in regards to the way the board handles budgets. He feels the board's priorities are backwards and for the sake of our students, teachers and staff it is time to cut waste not jobs.

Jim Smith, School to Career Coordinator

Mr. Smith said ending the Schools to Career Program would mean the loss of over 250 jobs for our high school students and numerous job related programs. Mr. Smith said an important aspect of the program is the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Grant Program, which is for low income and disabled students. He said students in the WIA Program earned over \$82,000 last year in salaries, stipends and incentives. He said Vineland is the only high school in Cumberland County to have the WIA Grant because we have been the only successful high school program in South Jersey. Mr. Smith said it would be a tragedy for the students and community to lose such a program.

Juanita Carrido

Ms. Carrido spoke in support of the Adult Education Center.

Chris Possumato, UAW Chief Steward

Mr. Possumato expressed his concern that he was not contacted by anyone from the school district to try to work out a plan in regards to employees who are losing their jobs. He said it was put into the newspaper with no fore warning and has destroyed a lot of lives. Mr. Possumato said the amount listed in the newspaper should be \$250,000 not \$503,000. Mr. Possumato urged the board to please contact him to try to work these things out before decisions are made.

Anna DeNovellis, Wawa Recruitment Specialist

Ms. DeNovellis asked the Board to please reconsider putting Mr. Jim Smith in his position for next year as the Schools to Career Coordinator so we can continue to have this program.

Lou Russo, VEA Union Representative

Mr. Russo thanked the board, superintendent and business office for doing everything they can to preserve as many programs as they possibly could. He reminded the public and the board that the governor chose to withhold eight hundred plus million dollars from school districts across this state. Vineland was cut nine million plus dollars and we are only in this position because of the governor's priorities, which was to give a tax cut to individuals who earn over \$400,000 dollars a year. Mr. Russo urged everyone to write the senator and assemblymen and ask them to reinstate the tax cut in this year's budget to restore some of the funding to school districts across the state.

Eugene Medio, School Board Candidate

Mr. Medio said the big problem the board and administration has is their competence is questioned because they hired an assistant superintendent that the public felt we did not need. He said the board cut 82 jobs without addressing administration. Mr. Medio said if the board wants to restore the public's confidence they can vote on cutting the assistant superintendent position.

Tina Heath

Ms. Heath spoke in support of the Adult Education Program.

Catherine Ravell

Ms. Ravell spoke in support of the Adult Education Program and the cafeteria/playground aides.

Mr. Giordano assured everyone that no cuts are easy.

Recommendations: Page 7 of this document

Board Member

Comments:

Mr. Ulrich thanked everyone who expressed their concerns tonight. He said it is hard to be a board member and to make cuts that affect people's lives. Mr. Ulrich said he is not on the Finance Committee but one of the things that concerned him was the cut of low paid personnel that receive no benefits. These employees perform a vital function in regards to safety of our students during recess and lunch. Mr. Ulrich said that he thought the figure of \$500,000 was high but it is actually 65 positions being eliminated not 33. He said what bothers him is that they are low paying positions that are providing a service. Mr. Ulrich said the overtime hours concern him and if we can tighten our belts in some areas we can reduce the staff reductions. He said the hiring of an assistant superintendent with an \$118,000 salary is not the downfall of the district. Mr. Ulrich said that he believes that the position will help increase sufficiency and provide accountability, which is what the board has asked Dr. Banks to do. He said it is easy to come before the board and say what you do not want without having solutions.

Mr. DeWinne said he is a member of the Finance Committee and on March 18 they first learned of the district plan with very little time to review it. He said that he made up a list of a number of things where he thinks we can tighten our belts and put that money to good use. Mr. DeWinne said he is hopeful we can meet soon to discuss this and review everything.

Mr. Bernardini thanked everyone who came out tonight. He said that he was the former tax collector in the city and knows taxpayers suffer when taxes are increased. One of the things that the board tried to do and was successful was to have no tax increase. Mr. Bernardini asked everyone if they have any suggestions where money can be saved to please put it in writing to Mr. Franchetta. He said the board did not want to cut Adult Education it was the governor's choice. Mr. Bernardini said the board is trying their best and please do not listen to rumors.

Mr. Giordano said he contacted Mr. Franchetta in regards to the original figure for the playground and cafeteria aides being too high. He said the playground and cafeteria aides have a tough job and this issue needs to be revisited soon for clarification. Mr. Giordano thanked everyone for coming out and complimented them on their ultimate professionalism and courtesy while people are at the microphone.

The meeting was adjourned by voice vote at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin J. Franchetta, CPA
Board Secretary

KJF:df