

The regular meeting of the Board of Education of the City of Vineland was held in the Vineland High School North Auditorium, 3010 E. Chestnut Avenue, Vineland, New Jersey, on Wednesday, May 14, 2014 at 7:00 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 and Ms. Rios. Absent: Mr. DeWinne and Mr. Ulrich.

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: Students from Winslow Elementary School led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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 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. Any matter involving the 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 contracts of central office administrators. **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, seconded by Ms. Morello, seconded by Mr. DiGiorgio, the resolution was passed. All Members voted “yes.”

Special

Presentation (s): Mr. Medio introduced Mrs. Ruth Polof, Assistant Superintendent of Administration, to honor the Vineland School District Teachers of the Year.

Mrs. Polof said tonight it is with great pride we recognize this year's Teachers of the Year and she along with Mr. Frey, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, introduced each of them. Mr. Frey also introduced the District Teacher of the Year, Meghan Moratelli.

Dr. Guccio congratulated and thanked all of the teachers and said they truly make the difference in our student's lives.

Dr. Guccio introduced Ms. Jennifer Belvett, VHS English Teacher, to introduce the student who received a writing award.

Ms. Belvett said it is an honor to present her student, Evan Bombeke, who was awarded the bronze medal for short story writing from the NJ Council of Teachers for the English High School Writing Contest.

Dr. Guccio congratulated Evan.

Dr. Guccio introduced Mr. Lou Bramante, VHS Automotive Technology Teacher, to honor the NJ Skills USA award winners.

Mr. Bramante said in April two of our students Daniel Sakan and Matthew Ferrari competed at the NJ Leadership Conference and CTE Competition for Skills USA. He said Daniel won the silver medal in the Automotives Maintenance Competition and Matthew won the gold medal in the Automotive Services Technology Competition. Mr. Bramante said Matthew Ferrari and Ariel Mendez competed at the Regional Competition at the Ford Motor Company and placed second. He said Matthew Ferrari will be traveling to Kansas City in late June to compete at the National Level representing New Jersey and donations to help this effort are being solicited from local businesses and members of the community.

Dr. Guccio congratulated the students and wished them continued success.

Dr. Gruccio introduced Ms. Lori Cummines-Huck, VHS Fine Arts Teacher, to introduce the student who placed third in the Skills USA State Photography competition.

Ms. Cummines-Huck introduced Felix Afanador, the 3<sup>rd</sup> place winner, in the Skills USA State Photography competition. Felix presented some of his photographs.

Ms. Cummines-Huck introduced and recognized the VHS Select Choir and Madrigal Singers for their efforts in New York City at a Music Festival that was hosted by the World Strides Heritage Performance Program. She announced that they will be participating in the NJ State High School Festival at Rutgers University and tonight they will be performing one of the pieces; Take a Stand, from that upcoming event.

Mr. Bramante thanked the Local UAW #2327 Union for donating the remainder of the money needed to send Matthew Ferrari to Kansas City in June.

Approval of Minutes: Upon motion by Ms. Morello, seconded by Ms. Rios, the minutes were approved from April 2, 2014, April 9, 2014 and April 24, 2014. All Members voted “yes” except Ms. Rios who voted “yes” on all minutes but “abstained” on April 9, 2014.

Report of the  
Secretary/Custodian  
Of School Monies:

Upon motion by Ms. Morello, seconded by Mr. DeWinne, the reports of the Secretary and Custodian of School Monies for the month March of 2013, which are in agreement were approved as submitted and on file in the Minute Book, and the Board approved its monthly certification of budgetary major account fund status and the Board Secretary’s monthly certification as on file with the Secretary. All Members voted “yes.”

Mr. Schectman read the following email the Superintendent received late this afternoon from the Regional County Executive.

*Dr, Gruccio, My office has received a detailed list of revenues and/or appropriations the Vineland Board of Education is proposing to change. N.J.S.A. 18A:22-10 requires that Boards hold public hearings on their budgets between April 24 and May 7, thus the Vineland Board was within this timeframe in holding its public hearing on May 6. Additionally, according to statute N.J.S.A. 18A:22-32, Boards must adopt budgets by May 14, 2014. The Vineland Board adopted its budget the following day on May 7, 2014. The one week gap from May 7 to May 14 is statutory and allows boards additional time to meet to adopt budgets after their public hearings.*

**This one week gap does not give boards statutory authority to make changes to either revenues or appropriations that were not discussed specifically and in detail at their public hearings.** According to information received from the Vineland administration, three detailed and specific appropriations were discussed at its public hearing on May 6: 6 computer teachers, 2 itinerant nurses, and 1 nursing supervisor. Additionally, there were no additions or reductions of revenue discussed at the Public Hearing on May 6.

*Please resubmit the Vineland Budget with changes/adjustments that were discussed at the Public Hearing to expedite the finalization of the budget according to established timelines. The budget must be in balance to avoid any fatal errors and must meet T & E in order to gain State approval.*

Mr. Schectman provided the Board with Mr. Bumpus's email along with a copy of the two statutes that were addressed in his email. He said in line with Mr. Bumpus's letter and the statutory authority granted this Board, the Administration recommends the following budget changes as detailed at the Public Hearing held May 6, 2014:

- Restoring 3 Itinerant Nurses
- Restoring 8 Computer Teachers
- Eliminating Bayada Nurse Substitute Contract
- Eliminating 8 Teaching positions through attrition
- Move 1 Itinerant Nurse to Johnstone School (for a retirement)

Mr. Schectman said this would have a neutral effect on the budget.

For the record, Mr. Medio announced that Mr. DeWinne arrived at 7:20 p.m. and took his place with the Board.

Ms. Morello asked where the 8 teachers are coming from. Mr. Schectman said we anticipate taking it from attrition. He said we have already had four teachers who have submitted retirement letters. Ms. Morello asked at what grade levels. Mr. Schectman said preschool and elementary. Mr. Medio said we needed these 8 position until 4:30 today and he is wondering how many other positions could have been eliminated through attrition as the Finance Committee asked in February. Mr. Schectman said it was not the desire of administration to submit it this way but we were left with very little choice because we have nowhere else to find the funds at this late moment. He said Mr. Frey is going to look at class sizes to see if there are consolidation efforts that can be made. Mr. Medio said that should have been done back in December and part of the presentation to the Finance Committee and Board as a whole. He does not see anything in the statutes that specifically addresses what Mr. Bumpus addressed. Mr. Medio asked why we had a public hearing if the Board cannot make changes to the budget. He said we were told every time we tried to make changes that it was not the appropriate time or the budget was locked down. Mr. Medio said while the Board tried to do their due diligence all their attempts were rebuffed at every turn and he does not appreciate that at all. He said we still have a major deficit coming in the following year that we tried to address to some degree. Mr. Medio said his understanding is that the itinerant nurses and computer teachers are back in the budget with 8 teachers not being replaced. Mr. Schectman said we may not have to restore 8 teachers depending on how attrition works out. Dr. Gruccio said it was her understanding that we had to balance this budget by Friday. She said this is what Mr. Schectman and the County came up with. Dr. Gruccio said we could still go back tomorrow and look for the money for these 8 teachers. She said we may have to recommend that we do not put all 8 computer teachers back.

Mr. Medio said if people would have spoken at the public meeting asking for certain positions to be put back in to the budget they would have been put back. Mr. Schectman said that would have been up to the state.

Mr. Medio asked if the Board has no say in forming this budget. Dr. Gruccio said the Board directed us to restore the itinerant nurses and 8 computer teachers, which is what you have before you. She said the remainder of the Board suggestions are not being restored because they were not heard at the public hearing and people did not have the opportunity to speak on or defend a position. Dr. Gruccio said we are restoring the positions that were spoken about publicly. Mr. Medio said the Board was never told during the process when they could make changes to the budget. He said as far as the Board knew we did everything we were supposed to do and this email does not interpret the statute correctly. Ms. Morello asked for Mr. DeSanto's interpretation of the statute.

Mr. DeSanto said he has pored over the guidance, regulations and statute and does not see where the Board is restricted to make changes with only respect to the matters raised at the public hearing. He said the information indicates that on or after the public hearing the Board may revise the proposed budget. He does not know where the Regional Superintendent interpreted that to mean only matters raised at the public hearing can be the subject of revisions. Mr. DeSanto said the two statutes the Regional Superintendent quoted does not say that and he does not know of any other statute, regulation, or guidance from the department that supports his position. He said the difficulty is that the Regional Superintendent is the authority for the approval of your budget. Mr. DeSanto said we may need to have a discussion at a later point with respect to what you could do but the change needs to be made in compliance with the Regional Superintendent right now. Ms. Morello asked even if the Regional Superintendent's directive is in complete opposition to the statement of law. Mr. DeSanto said unless he is really wrong he does not see where it comes from unless the code is silent. He cannot advocate publicly that we disregard the direction. Mr. DeSanto said we may need to honor the direction and take other means to change it.

Ms. Morello said you can have a conflict of interest and hire people but you cannot have the same conflict of interest and evaluate people. She said why we are even here. Ms. Morello said it is the collective wisdom of this Board that we wanted those particular items addressed to stave off an immense shortfall in the coming years.

Ms. Morello said she is terrifically confused. She thought the Board's job was to sit and represent the elected position we have. She said now we are being superseded by someone who is coming up with all kinds of things and this is very annoying. Ms. Morello said thorough and efficient is one individual's interpretation but it is not the Board's interpretation.

Mr. DeWinne asked if this letter is in reference to what the Board voted on last week with the 7 to 1 approval with some changes that were originally submitted to the County Superintendent that had restored some teachers and itinerant nurses with cuts in other areas. Mr. Schectman said correct. Mr. DeWinne said around a month ago the Board voted on a budget that was defeated and not submitted to the county. He said the County Superintendent requested a meeting and four Board Members attended. Mr. DeWinne said the term "thorough and efficient education" was discussed a lot at that meeting along with a state monitor coming in. He said at another meeting the Board discussed the budget and it passed 7 to 1, which he was the dissension vote and it was sent to the county. Mr. DeWinne said at the first public hearing there was one speaker. He said there was a problem with the notice where the newspaper was not notified so we had public hearing #2. Mr. DeWinne said the next day the Board voted on the budget with the changes they wanted. He said after the first budget approval they were notified by the State that they need a half a million dollars for the air conditioning project. Mr. DeWinne said we agreed as a Board that it made sense. He said in echoing comments made by Ms. Morello we are volunteers working for the tax payers and trying our best in looking at a big issue coming our way. Mr. DeWinne said our revenues in total are \$186 million dollars and we are spending \$196 million dollars. He said for some reason that is a balanced budget. Mr. DeWinne said we are here at the eleventh hour being told no to the changes we voted on which he has a real issue with. He said this is his fourth year on the Board and it has been a lousy frustrating experience, which is not right. Mr. DeWinne said we are the representative voices of the tax payers and are all here for the students. He said we are handcuffed and he does not know why we went through any process. Mr. DeWinne said he does not know what we can do to contest, disagree or dispute this.

Ms. Morello said the Board has tried to compromise multiple times with administration.

Mr. DiGiorgio echoed his fellow Board members sentiments and does not think there is anything thorough and efficient with this process. He thinks it is time for the Board to have a meeting with the Regional Superintendent and our Board Attorney to discuss this.

Mr. English said we now have a change in the budget and the Board has no vote on it. Mr. Schectman said the Board has a vote on it and we have been directed by the Regional County Superintendent to put these changes in. He said we are trying to save as many jobs as we can by doing this. Mr. English said he questions the entire process and has lost some faith in central administration. He feels the Board is being told what to do with the district's funding and does not feel any compromise has been made.

Mr. Medio said in 1989 the State took over the Patterson School District. He said the first thing they did was raise taxes 7 million dollars. Mr. Medio asked Mr. Schectman what today's date is. Mr. Schectman said May 14, 2014. He asked Dr. Gruccio from January 1<sup>st</sup> until today at what point in the budget process was the Board allowed to make changes on their own, unilaterally according to State code and statute. Dr. Gruccio said we made changes throughout the entire process working with the Finance Committee. She said that to say there was no compromise was incorrect.

Mr. English asked Dr. Gruccio how she would get the word out that the earthquake is coming. Dr. Gruccio said we do not know that for sure but her philosophy is that we submitted a budget that had cuts of staff but not critical cuts. She believes that if we could survive for one more year with people keeping their jobs who are supporting families one more working year is better than nothing. Dr. Gruccio said if next year we have to make those cuts then we will.

Mr. Medio asked Dr. Gruccio on what date was the Board able to put input into the budget before the public hearing. Dr. Gruccio said the Finance Committee had input throughout the process and we were told that we could not open up the budget until after the public hearing. She said after the public hearing took place we were able to open the budget and put changes in. Dr. Gruccio said when the Board presented an entirely new list last Wednesday and voted on it at that point the budget had to go to the County. She said the County and State reviewed it and we did hear anything back until 3:45 p.m. this afternoon.



Mr. Medio said so the Board never had a chance as a Board to have a meeting and discuss what they wanted to change in the budget. Dr. Gruccio said she thinks there were several meetings with discussion as to what the Board did or did not support. Mr. Medio agrees with Mr. DiGiorgio and feels a meeting should be held with the Regional Superintendent. Ms. Morello asked if that meeting can be held at a place and time convenient to the Board members who will be attending as opposed to at the County office in the middle of the work day. Mr. DiGiorgio asked if this meeting can be held in public. Ms. Morello said she does not want to use the word inconvenienced but she has no idea what other word to use at this point. Mr. DiGiorgio said he has a word and it is called being played by someone and he is not sure who it is yet. Ms. Morello said she would like the meeting to be at the convenience of the Board Members who are most deeply involved in this, which is Finance. She said in a show of good faith she certainly hopes that whatever title this gentleman holds that he would understand after his years in education that Boards of Education are volunteer members of the community and that he would be willing to meet with our Finance Committee members or our Board leadership at a time they do not have to take time away from their work.

Mr. DiGiorgio said we do not want the public to get the wrong impression because we are not here to take away any ones job or try to get a group to back us up. He said we are here to preserve every job that is in our district. Mr. DiGiorgio said there is no problem with compromise and the interpretation from the State is totally different from the way our legal person is interpreting it. He said there is a lot of confusion and we are just as confused as you are when it comes down to making these types of decisions.

Mr. Medio said there is one thing he would like to say about that state meeting. He said we went into that meeting and we wanted to put back the computer teachers and itinerant nurses. Mr. Medio said the administration said they have a plan/program and a way to do it without those jobs, which could be eliminated. He said that Mr. Bumpus went along with that. Mr. Medio said it was the Board who fought to get them back and put them back in. He said all of a sudden Mr. Bumpus has flip flopped on this and those positions are being put back into the budget. Mr. Medio said that is not consistency.

Mr. Medio said he will be voting “yes” on this because he does not see where we have a choice and does not want another seven million in taxes put on the taxpayers of Vineland.

Mr. English said this is the Superintendent’s budget and in speaking with Board members in other districts he questioned if we are too involved in the process. He said we are put here by the taxpayers and this is spending taxpayers’ money. Mr. English asked how we start prepping for next year.

Ms. Morello said we sat here and pretty much said to UAW you are going to have to give some concessions. She said and then we get contracts for Administrative employees with 2% increases that we knew nothing about. Ms. Morello said everybody wants to keep their jobs and everybody better strap in their seatbelt and get ready for some very uncomfortable rides.

Mr. English said every year around this time we seem to get a big group of people and he wished that these people knew ahead of time what is really going to happen here. He is really concerned about next year. Mr. English said Mr. Bumpus said that the budget process should start in October so by the time May rolls around people should not be wondering if they have a job tomorrow. He said that is the communication piece that he is hoping we can develop moving forward. Mr. English said he puts his faith in the Superintendent to make the right decisions and will question some of those decisions. He said when it comes to the educational background he does not have the answer and hopes that Dr. Gruccio along with her staff can sell him on it.

Ms. Morello said the Camden School District let 300 people go. She asked if we are going to be Camden in 2015-2016 because we have not planned effectively and efficiently. She said it is our job to run this school district efficiently and one would hope that we would be having everybody doing a job that is absolutely vital to the district. Ms. Morello said to say that you want to operate on an as is basis until you are forced to the wall in order to save jobs is a statement that is quite short-sighted and fiscally irresponsible in her opinion.

Dr. Gruccio said she believes we have done that in the process.

Mr. DiGiorgio said Mr. English and Dr. Gruccio are right. He said there are a lot of unknowns here and we do not know what things are going to look like a year from now. Mr. DiGiorgio said if anyone thinks that it is going to look better then you have not been reading the newspapers. He said the State is in no better position today than it was a year ago and do not expect a fantasy bucket of money to fall out of the sky.

Mr. Schectman said he would like the Board's authorization to go into the NJ Department of Education's website and make these changes.

Dr. Gruccio recommends approval for the Business Administration to make the recommended changes 3 itinerant nurses and 8 computer teachers to our budget that was shared with the Board this evening.

Mr. DeWinne asked if we are voting on a budget that we did not vote on last week. Dr. Gruccio said she does not think we are voting on a budget but voting on an amendment to what was submitted last week with the approved budget. Mr. DeWinne asked if the changes that were voted on last week were in that budget that was submitted. Dr. Gruccio said we put those changes in and received this email today stating which changes the Executive Regional and County Superintendent would support.

At this time, a member of the audience accused the Board of violating the sunshine law by not disclosing what was being discussed off of the microphone.

Mr. DeSanto explained that he asked Mr. Schectman whether the motion that he is proposing would be for the changes that were voted on last week and believes that to be incorrect. He said if the County Superintendent took what was voted on last week and said you cannot do that then these are the only changes. Mr. DeSanto said the Board needs to vote on the budget that was submitted before last week's changes plus these changes. He said that is the only way to make this correct.

Dr. Guccio said the County Superintendent has the budget that was voted on last week because Mr. Schectman made those changes and submitted them to the County.

Mr. DeSanto said it is misleading to the public and the Board to say the only changes that are being made tonight are the changes on this sheet. He said the Board approved changes last week, which also have to be eliminated by the Board. Mr. DeSanto believes that the motion should be that the Board adopt an amended budget, which reverts to the budget that was submitted prior to last week's changes. He said those changes are now eliminated and the changes substituted are for those changes.

The Board recessed for five minutes.

The meeting resumed.

Dr. Guccio recommended the adoption of the district budget that was approved by the Regional Executive Superintendent prior to the public hearing with the following amendments:

Restore 3 Itinerant Nursing positions  
Restore 8 Computer Teacher positions

For a total of \$825,545.00

Eliminate Bayada Nursing Contract  
Eliminate 9 positions based on attrition

For a total of \$825,545.00

Motion:

A motion was made by Mr. DiGiorgio, seconded by Ms. Rios, to approve the adoption of the district budget that was approved by the Regional Executive Superintendent prior to the public hearing with the following amendments: Restore 3 Itinerant Nurses and 8 Computer Teachers. Eliminate the Bayada Nursing Contract and 9 positions based on attrition. All Members voted "yes" except for Mr. DeWinne, Mr. Jennings and Ms. Morello.

The motion passed.

Mr. Baruffi voted “yes” and is very happy the itinerant nurses and computer teachers are coming back.

Mr. DeWinne voted “no” and is happy that the computer teachers are coming back but does not like the fact that 8 teachers will now be eliminated.

Mr. DiGiorgio voted “yes” and echoes Mr. Baruffi’s sentiments and sympathizes with Mr. DeWinne.

Mr. Jennings asked Mr. DeSanto if he could “abstain” on this. Mr. DeSanto said it is generally better that you state your conflict. Mr. Jennings said he did a lot of work on this by himself and with other people. He said it appears that none of it goes together. Mr. Jennings said the State, Board and Administration are all going different ways so he will have to vote “no.”

Mr. English voted “yes” and said he is happy that the itinerant nurses and computer teachers are restored. He questions this process and can only hope that the Board receives a better explanation when and if we meet with the Regional Superintendent.

Ms. Morello made a point of clarity and said the computer teachers and itinerant nurses were added back in the budget that the Board approve on May 7<sup>th</sup>. She said it is not like the “no” vote does not support that.

Solicitor’s Report:

Mr. DeSanto suggested an amendment to the resolution adopted earlier for executive session. He said the resolution that was read was the resolution that was passed last week concerning contracts for central office administrators. Mr. DeSanto said the Board is not proposing to discuss the contents, terms and conditions of the central office administrative contracts in executive session. He said an amendment should be entertained to the resolution that will now read as follows:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Education of the City of Vineland School District will convene into executive session on Wednesday, May 14, 2014 for the following reasons as outlined in N.J.S.A. 10:4-12:

Discussion of the actions and performance of the Superintendent and Business Administrator in connection with the preparation of the proposed 2014-2015 contracts for central office administrators and the process of submission of those contracts to the Regional Executive Superintendent.

Motion: A motion was made by Ms. Morello, seconded by Mr. DiGiorgio, to approve the amended executive session resolution. All Members voted “yes.”

Mr. DeSanto said we continuously strive to honor the words and spirit of the Sunshine Law. He said our resolutions adopting executive session and conduct of meetings are in compliance. Mr. DeSanto advised the Board that it is not a violation of the Sunshine Law for the Solicitor to speak to the Business Administrator or Board President. He said that he along with the Business Administrator are not voting members. Mr. DeSanto said the Sunshine Law involves the conduct of Board Members. He said the Solicitor often has confidential privilege communications to be engaged in and he wanted to make it clear that the conduct this evening was not a violation of the Sunshine Law regardless of what others may think.

Public Comments: Glenn Muller, Vice President of VEA  
Mr. Muller said all the student presentations this evening were fantastic. He expressed his concern and frustration as to Board’s cut list that was presented at the last Board meeting.

Karen McKinney, Guidance Counselor at Johnstone School  
Ms. McKinney spoke in support of guidance counselors in the schools.

Harry Meyers, D’Ippolito School Teacher  
Mr. Meyers said he is frustrated and spoke in support of all positions that are vital to the children.

Pat Gale, Wallace School Social Worker  
Ms. Gale read a letter from a colleague, who was not able to stay for the meeting, in regards to the guidance counselor cuts and middle school computer classes.

Adrienne Possenti, Child Study Team Secretary  
Ms. Possenti spoke in support of school secretaries.

Shirley Santos, Sabater Kindergarten Bilingual Teacher  
Ms. Santos asked the Board to reconsider their decision on all the proposed layoffs and spoke in support of a 2% tax increase.

Danielle Weir, Landis Middle School Guidance Counselor  
Ms. Weir expressed her concern in regards to the proposed cuts for the elementary guidance programs.

James Fern, VHS German Teacher  
Mr. Fern spoke in support of the World Language Program at Vineland High School.

Samantha Galletta, VHS Sophomore  
Ms. Galletta spoke in support of the German Language course at Vineland High School.

Ryan Rizzo, VHS Junior  
Mr. Rizzo spoke in support of the World Language Program at Vineland High School. He asked if the recent addition of the glass making and sculpture classes have an effect on any of the cuts in Vineland High School. Dr. Gruccio said we did not add any classes. Mr. Rizzo said last week Mr. Panas mentioned the recent addition of these classes with two teachers in each class for next year. Dr. Gruccio said that is not happening and no World Languages have been cut.

Dr. Rossi wanted to clarify that we are working with the World Language Supervisor on alternative delivery of the language and trying to be more concise with the staffing necessary to deliver. He said we are not cutting German but are exploring the possibility condensed person who has dual certification. Dr. Rossi said we are mandated by a certain date to notify in case that is pursued.

Mr. English said there needs to be a clarification on the way the communication is being given to the students.

Dr. Rossi apologized and said that he does not know what is being said to the students. He said we are trying to do more with less.

Bill Hartman, Guidance Counselor at Mennies School  
Mr. Hartman saluted the teachers that he works with at Mennies School for the work they are doing with our children in making our school academic challenging and a fun place to be. He spoke in support of Guidance Counselors in the schools and a tax increase.

Louis Bramante, VHS Teacher

Mr. Bramante said we regretfully lack communication in this district and there has to be a new model of communication from all levels. He spoke in support of a tax increase to help better fund Vineland Public Schools. Mr. Bramante said there was an announcement that was broadcast over Vineland High School that we are adding additional electives such as dance, glassmaking and other art programs in September 2014. Mr. Bramante asked what the shortfall may be for next year so we can prepare. Dr. Gruccio said it is way too soon to predict what the shortfall will be. Mr. Bramante said we all want our positions to be safe. He said everyone has a family and needs to provide an education for youth so the future for tomorrow is brighter than it is today.

Lou Russo, President of VEA

Mr. Russo expressed his concern that in this budget there are still very painful cuts such as positions and services to our students that will not be there next year. He also expressed his concern in regards to maintaining our facilities. Mr. Russo said he lives in Vineland is a taxpayer and wants his taxes raised, schools funded and programs saved. He said we are woefully under what the state deems we should be funding under the School Finance Reform Act and it is time to pay our share.

Lee Burke, Vineland Resident

Mr. Burke said he regrets his earlier outburst but there is a lot of frustration in this room. He expressed his concern to the Board that a lot of time is being spent that could be better spent honoring their oath to obey the laws of the State of NJ whether they like what a Regional Superintendent has to say or not. Mr. Burke said on tonight's agenda is the Safe Routes to School Grant, which is something he has been interested in and is federal funding. He asked for the gotcha type of game to end tonight. Mr. Burke said there is a chain of command. He said if you do not like the laws or recommendations in his opinion it creates an attitude with the public that you are not in tune with what really needs to be done. Mr. Burke believes that anything that gives the appearance of secrecy in any form is just not right.

Bill Hartman, Guidance Counselor at Mennies School

Mr. Hartman presented data to the Board in regards to guidance counselors.



James Fern, VHS German Teacher

Mr. Fern said he is not a resident of Vineland but feels school is not a tax burden but an investment in the future of the community. He said the more people that understand that the easier time we are going to have investing in our students' future.

Patricia Ocasio, Teacher

Ms. Ocasio urged the Board to reconsider the personnel cuts and to raise the taxes.

Recommendations:

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

Approval of Bills: Upon motion by Mr. DiGiorgio, seconded by Mr. DeWinne, 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.”(\$6,066,121.44)

Emergent Item(s)

(with prior approval) Ms. Morello said she would like to have a full report on all of this course selection drama and who does or does not have a job drama.

Dr. Guccio explained that at this point in time it is not finalized and asked Mr. Frey for an approximate date.

Mr. Frey said he is not sure how the miscommunications occurred. He said as soon as they found out that those statements were made it was corrected immediately. Ms. Morello asked if there are no glass, dance or sculpture courses. Mr. Frey said that is correct. He said it is way too early to say which languages are going to be here or not. Mr. Frey said we posted for dual certified positions and depending on what we received will make a drastic change in our decision. Ms. Rios asked if that is a recommendation from the language supervisor. Mr. Frey said that is correct. Ms. Morello asked if a course had zero students for this year it is not taken off the books but closed out for this year. Mr. Frey said that is correct. Dr. Guccio said if it is under 12 students we usually do not run the course unless it is an AP course. Ms. Morello asked if the language and arts students will be combined. Mr. Frey said that is the plan. Ms. Morello asked if the Board will be kept updated. Mr. Frey said most definitely.

Mr. English asked if classes can be combined that have low numbers. Mr. Frey said absolutely. Mr. English asked for an update in the future on how the scheduling is going. Mr. Frey said yes.

Mr. DiGiorgio asked if it can be considered that if a student is in their third or fourth year of a class to allow them to finish out their course work.

Board Member

Remarks:

Mr. Jennings said he voted “no” on the budget because it did not make sense. He said it appears that everything fell apart in the eleventh hour. Mr. Jennings said the reason he asked for the addresses of all the public speakers is because the Board is privy to what town you live in especially if you want to discuss raising taxes. He thanked everyone who came out tonight and spoke.

Mr. Baruffi congratulated all the Teachers of the Year. He congratulated Vineland High School Teacher of the Year, Lou Bramante, who he knows does a good job. He said he was a teacher for 33 years and knows that the guidance counselors are needed. Mr. Baruffi said there are some Board members who do not know everything that is going on as far as the cuts but they try to make their decisions on things that they hear.

Ms. Morello said we started the meeting tonight with a sweet heart of being here honoring students and staff. She said the students who spoke are a testament to what goes on in this district with teaching them how to speak their mind and share their feelings/opinions. Ms. Morello said this is not an easy process and there are lots of different perspectives to take into consideration. She said nobody wants to cut anything but sadly cuts have to be made, which is a very emotional and passion producing situation. Ms. Morello said we are elected to make those decisions and to lead this district forward. She said it is shameful that at the public hearing on the budget there were a handful of people in the audience relative to the number of residents. Ms. Morello said any teacher or classroom aide who goes to work every day and gives their all in a classroom is teacher of the year.

Mr. DeWinne said he enjoyed hearing the choir sing. He said Mr. Bramante asked a question about the shortfall. Mr. DeWinne said there is a ten million dollar shortfall this year and we are funding that through the surplus expected for this year and past years. He said next year if everything remains the same we will be at least ten million dollars short. Mr. DeWinne said he does not foresee an increase in funding from the state next year. He said it is frustrating to sit up here and be told that we need to raise taxes. Mr. DeWinne said maybe we should poll the taxpayers because ten million dollars is a 25% increase. He suggested for anyone who is willing to donate money to just write a check to the tax collector, earmark it for education and they will accept it.

Ms. Rios thanked and congratulated the flag salute students, special presentations and award recipients. She also thanked all the speakers. Ms. Rios said she has no conflict of interest in the school district or any personal agendas. She tries her best to communicate with anyone who wishes to communicate with her. Ms. Rios said that does not mean that she will always agree either with fellow Board Members or Administration. She is one voice and will continue to do her best to fight for what she thinks is best for this district.

Mr. DiGiorgio said he agrees with many things said tonight and we face many challenges. He thinks the State of NJ is a unique place to do business. Mr. DiGiorgio said we may have to raise taxes in the future. He said unfortunately today we have things like Charter Schools and School Choice that are not helping our district. Mr. DiGiorgio said the presentations tonight were wonderful and he attended several district events that were outstanding.

Mr. English congratulated and thanked all the Teachers of the Year on behalf of Mr. Ulrich and himself. He thanked Mr. Bramante and Ms. Cummines who continue to put out a product that is second to none. Mr. English thanked the UAW for their generous donation along with community/staff members and students for speaking tonight. He said with all the end of the year events going on this is his favorite time of year to be a Board member. Mr. English said his attitude has changed a lot towards the budget process and it will be interesting in the years to come to see how this district, county and state handle it.

Dr. Gruccio congratulated everyone who was recognized tonight and said we have a lot to be proud of in this district. She thanked the UAW for their generosity.

Board President  
Remarks:

Mr. Medio thanked everyone who spoke and congratulated everyone who was honored. He wanted to point out some facts that some may find distasteful. Mr. Medio said if someone said they cannot tell you what the projected shortfall is that is correct. He said Mr. DeWinne explained quite clearly that we are ten million dollars short this year and the vast majority was made up by surplus from last year and this year's budget. Mr. Medio said we are going to have very little surplus to put in the following years budget. He said the five million dollars on top of that is the 2% that comes from the increase in salaries and health benefits.

Mr. Medio said it is easy to come up here and say do not cut this or that and to raise taxes. He said there are a couple of myths that he would like to dispel. Myth #1 – Raising taxes will help ease the deficit. Mr. Medio said it is less than 10% that you can raise taxes without going out to vote. He said that his recommendation for the past two years has been a hiring freeze. Mr. Medio said he does not think it is possible to save jobs. He asked as a community what are you interested in saving social services or education. Mr. Medio said education is what we are here for and the number one priority should be to teach students. He said some of the cuts that were made are cuts to positions at Coney, Plum Street and Administration. Mr. Medio said how the Regional Superintendent could say any of those things involve thorough and efficient education is beyond him and we will deal with that when the time comes. He would like someone to tell him what they think should be cut over the next few Board meetings. Mr. Medio said he does support languages but sometimes you cannot win no matter what you do. He said sooner or later some of those unpleasant decisions will have to be made.

Adjournment: The Board adjourned the meeting to executive session by voice vote at 10:58 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Herbert G. Schectman  
Board Secretary

HGS:df



