

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, June 8, 2016 at 7:05 p.m., pursuant to notice with Mr. English presiding and the following members present: Ms. Acosta, Mr. Bordley (present through Skype), Ms. Codispoti, Mr. DeWinne, Mr. Jennings, Mr. Pagano, Ms. Rios and Mr. Sbrana. Absent: None.

Also present: Dr. Guccio, Superintendent, Mr. Frey and Mr. Frangipani, Assistant Superintendents, Mrs. Haley, Board Secretary, Dr. Rossi, Executive Director of Personnel, Mr. DeSanto, Solicitor, press and public. Absent: None.

Mr. English 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, the Grapevine, Clerk - City of Vineland, and Administrative Office Public Bulletin Board.

Flag Salute:

Resolution: None.

Special

Presentation (s): Dr. Guccio introduced Mr. Don Robbins, Athletic Director, to honor Vineland High School senior athletes for their achievements.

Mr. Robbins said it is always nice to honor our student athletes and coaches for the hard work that they do. He introduced each of the coaches along with the student athletes and discussed their accomplishments.

Dr. Guccio introduced Dr. Joanne Negrin, Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction, to recognize the Bilingual Program Grades K-5.

Dr. Negrin said the Bilingual Program received the Award of Excellence Model Program Designation from the State of New Jersey. She said this honor was bestowed on five districts in the State of New Jersey and our district was the only district in South Jersey to receive this honor. Dr. Negrin thanked the Board, Dr. Guccio and Administration for the recognition and discussed the award that was received.

Dr. Guccio introduced Mrs. Jennifer Frederico, Petway Elementary School Principal, to present a plaque to the Vineland Board of Education for the Honorable Mention Award the district received for School of Character.

Mrs. Frederico thanked the Board for giving her the opportunity to speak tonight on character education, which she feels passionately about. She discussed character education and the 2016 New Jersey Honorable Mention District of Character.

Dr. Guccio thanked and congratulated Mr. Stanger for all of his efforts and work on this.

Dr. Guccio recognized and wished the best to Mrs. Nancee Bleistine, Preschool Principal, on her retirement and for her contributions to the Vineland Preschool Program.

Mrs. Bleistine thanked the Board, Dr. Guccio and Central Administration for their continued support of the Preschool Program over the years.

Approval of Minutes: Upon motion by Mr. Jennings, seconded by Mr. DeWinne, the minutes were approved from May 4, 2016, Executive Session, Special Meeting, Work Session and May 11, 2016 Regular Meeting. All Members voted “yes” except for Mr. English who voted “yes” on all minutes but “abstained on May 4, 2016 executive session and work session and Ms. Acosta who voted “yes” on all minutes but “abstained” on May 4, 2016 minutes.

Solicitor’s Report: None.

Public Comment on Agenda Items: Lisa Arena
Mrs. Arena spoke in support of not transferring Mrs. Kristen Speakman from Mennies Elementary School.

Danielle Burns
Ms. Burns spoke in support of not transferring Mrs. Kristen Speakman from Mennies Elementary School.

Robin Cohen

Ms. Cohen spoke in support of not transferring Mrs. Kristen Speakman from Mennies Elementary School.

Lauren Geisser

Ms. Geisser spoke in support of not transferring Mrs. Kristen Speakman from Mennies Elementary School.

Elena Greenwood

Ms. Greenwood spoke in support of not transferring Mrs. Kristen Speakman from Mennies Elementary School.

Karen Morvay

Mrs. Morvay spoke in support of not transferring Mrs. Kristen Speakman from Mennies Elementary School.

Tara Myerson

Mrs. Myerson spoke in support of not transferring Mrs. Kristen Speakman from Mennies Elementary School.

Recommendations:

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

Approval of Bills: Upon motion by Mr. Jennings, seconded by Ms. Codispoti, the bills for April 2016 were approved and warrants issued for same. All Members voted “yes” (\$22,236,565.71).

Emergent Item(s):
(with prior approval) It is recommended that the Board of Education approve the participation of all eligible Vineland Public School athletes during NJSIAA approved summer recess, effective Monday, June 13, 2016 through September 1, 2016.

Mr. English asked for clarification on this item.

Mr. Don Robbins, Athletic Director, said the NJSIAA which is the State Athletic Association breaks up the sports seasons into fall, winter and spring. He said after the last spring state championship game is played on Saturday it would then be summer recess, which is the day after the last championship game until the last day in August. Mr. Robbins said in order to participate in a scrimmage you have to have six practice sessions and you cannot start counting until August 10. He said this is really a housekeeping item so that the student athletes are covered. Mr. English said these are coaches that have been approved and will be doing additional work that they will not receive a stipend for. Mr. Robbins said this does not involve any funds at all nor is it mandatory. He said no coach will be held accountable if they do not have summer work outs and it will not reflect in their evaluation. Mr. Robbins said this just gives the coaches the ability to work with our student athletes during the summer.

Motion: A motion by Ms. Codispoti, seconded by Ms. Rios, to approve the participation of all eligible Vineland Public School athletes during NJSIAA approved summer recess, effective Monday, June 13, 2016 through September 1, 2016. All Members voted “yes.”

Public: Adrienne Possenti
Ms. Possenti expressed her concern in regards to the distribution of circus tickets to the Vineland Public School students.

Mr. Bordley signed off of Skype at 8:30 p.m.

Ronald Walker

Mr. Walker said he hopes that whatever changes are made we always remember that the students are first and must always be the priority. He said there is no accountability at the high school because not every student is wearing a uniform. Mr. Walker said on Saturday the Military Ball was held and he thanked the ROTC for a phenomenal event.

Mr. English asked if any Board member had a committee report since there was no time last week.

Ms. Rios said at the Policy & Personnel Committee held on May 11, 2016 Mr. Frangipani explained the changes in the mandated policies. She said Dr. Rossi and Mrs. Haley discussed an upcoming vacancy in the accounting department. Ms. Rios said also discussed was a VEA grievance and two layoffs. She said Dr. Rossi delivered letters to non-tenured staff.

Mr. DeWinne said discussed at the May 16, 2016 Finance Committee meeting was request for proposals for substitutes, accounting position and comparable process in regards to audited services.

Mr. English said in January he mentioned changing the committees around half way through the year so Board members could gain experience on another committee. He asked the Board if they were good with that thought process. Ms. Rios said she thinks it is a good idea but the chairs of the committee need to make sure that they inform the newcomers when the meetings are scheduled.

Ms. Codispoti said a curriculum meeting was held and Mr. Frey is revising the minutes.

Mr. English said the Board retreat will be held on July 12th with a NJ School Boards Association representative. He said there will be a light dinner at 5:15 p.m. and the meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m.

Board Member

Remarks:

Ms. Acosta thanked Mr. Robbins for the presentation and said it is wonderful to hear the wonderful achievements of our student athletes. She said she is very proud to hear that our Bilingual Program has been recognized as a model of excellence. Ms. Acosta thanked Mrs. Bleistine for all her hard work and dedication to our students.

Ms. Acosta said as far as the transfers she understands when schools are very close they become like families. She is a firm believer that as a Board member it is our job to oversee the district in terms of policy and accountability. Ms. Acosta said she supports Dr. Gruccio and everything she does to help each and every child succeed. She said we have to work together as a district and Board. Ms. Acosta said we have to do what is best for our students to ensure that when they graduate they can achieve more than you could possibly imagine. She congratulated the seniors and hope they always remember that they have a Vineland family that will support them in everything that they do. Ms. Acosta hopes all the teachers enjoy their summer and thanked them for their hard work. She thanked central administration and Dr. Gruccio for everything they have done.

Ms. Rios left briefly at 8:55 p.m. and returned at 8:58 p.m.

Mr. Sbrana thanked the Mennies flag salute students along with the presenters. He wished Mrs. Bleistine the best on her retirement and Mrs. Monteleone the best in her new job. Mr. Sbrana wished everyone a safe happy summer and urged the high school students to please make good decisions.

Mr. Jennings commended Dr. Gruccio for all that she does in overseeing the district with nearly 2,500 employees. He said to discuss with your team moves that you feel are going to be beneficial to the district took a great deal of time and many sleepless nights. Mr. Jennings said you see good things with change and he is sure our district will move forward.

Mr. Pagano commended all the district staff for a job well done. He wished the students the best and to enjoy their summer. Mr. Pagano said it has been a pleasure to work with Mrs. Bleistine and knows Mrs. Monteleone will do a fantastic job.

Ms. Codispoti thanked everyone who spoke tonight. She thanked Mrs. Bleistine for all of her hard work and wished her the best in the next phase of her life. Ms. Codispoti said she is looking forward to working with Mrs. Monteleone. She congratulated the seniors for all of their hard work and wished them the best. Ms. Codispoti wished the students, teachers and staff members a fun filled safe summer. She thanked everyone who reached out to her during her illness.

Ms. Rios thanked Mennies and all the flag salute students throughout the year. She congratulated all the students and educators that received awards tonight. Ms. Rios said it has been a pleasure working with Mrs. Bleistine and thanked her for the opportunities she gave her when she was the preschool liaison. She wished everyone a safe summer and congratulated the class of 2016.

Mr. Jennings departed the meeting briefly at 9:02 p.m. and returned at 9:05 p.m.

Mr. DeWinne said that Dr. Negrin's accomplishments are uncharted and he thanked her along with her staff. He thanked and wished good luck to Mrs. Bleistine on her retirement. Mr. DeWinne requested for Dr. Guccio to ask Mr. Robbins to compile all the records that athletes have set this school year for all sports. He said these student athletes deserve to be recognized. Mr. DeWinne said he would like to have a list of the estimated financial awards given to athletes. He thanked Mr. Weaver for all his work. Mr. DeWinne wished Mr. Provenzano and his staff well during this next week and a half. He said the class of 1983 challenges the class of 2016 to establish a scholarship fund to perpetuate and go forward. Mr. DeWinne encouraged the high school staff to inspire the high school students to be well prepared for whatever life's challenges may be. He wished everyone a safe summer.

Dr. Guccio thanked Allen Associates for their \$5,000 donation towards Project Graduation. She recognized Sabater, Wallace and Leuchter Schools for being nominated for the Safe Routes to School Goal Level Award. Dr. Guccio said it has been a pleasure working with Mrs. Bleistine and she wished her the very best. She congratulated Mrs. Monteleone on her new position. Dr. Guccio wished everyone a successful close to the school year and hopes it is safe and happy. She wished all of the seniors a wonderful future. Dr. Guccio said our Food Service Director, Purvesh Patel's, wife has had a very serious operation and she urged everyone to keep her in their prayers. She said that she has heard a lot of things tonight in reference to change in which she is a firm believer of. Dr. Guccio said she does not like to be misquoted and never stood before this Board and fought with a superintendent to not make change. She said she did speak to the Superintendent on behalf of VASA when she was President saying that our Principals should be treated equally.

Dr. Guccio said she finds it very hurtful that people come to a Board meeting two weeks in a row in tee shirts that disrespect the Superintendent for trying to make change. She said that she is here for the entire district not for one school. Dr. Guccio said she did not see the whole district here fighting against her plan only one or two disgruntled schools. She said you got what you wanted and she wished them the best. Dr. Guccio said that she thinks change is healthy and positive. She said that she has changed many times and grew from it. Dr. Guccio said every opportunity makes you a better, stronger, different person. She said that she has buried many people that she loves in her life and they are the priorities that you need to keep straight not being afraid of a little change. Dr. Guccio said this is a Vineland district and we are in it together. She said spread the change around and take your accomplishments and share them with others. Dr. Guccio said just because there is change it does not mean the next administrator that comes in your building would not be good or care about the students. She said principals in the district move teachers all of the time. Dr. Guccio said a teacher can be moved in a second and no one does anything about it. She said nine people can stop the district from moving when a Superintendent who is hired to run the district is trying to do her job. Dr. Guccio thinks that she has gone above and beyond trying to explain to each one of them and be open. She said it is difficult to make a change and move forward when you cannot do what you are trying to do in your job. Dr. Guccio thanked the Board and said the majority of the time we have been on the same page. She said that she will keep the students first and keep trying to make change because she believes it is the right thing to do.

Report/Remarks by
Board President:

Mr. English said Mennies School started the meeting with the flag salute and every school does the flag salute which has not changed. He said we see great things with the athletes and their accomplishments. Mr. English congratulated Petway Elementary School on their award. He thanked Mrs. Bleistine for her years of service. Mr. English congratulated and wished the best of luck to Mrs. Monteleone. He said during the budget time he spoke about the players and pretenders. Mr. English said to the players keep playing you figured it out and know exactly what you do day in and day out to earn your paycheck. He told the pretenders to figure it out and get in the game. Mr. English said the pretenders are making big money. He asked central administration for some change and to hold the pretenders accountable.

Mr. English wished Ms. Miller a Happy Birthday and thanked her for coming out each week. He said tonight was not an easy decision for him and he considers Dr. Gruccio his friend. Mr. English said for the most part we agree but he is here for the students and taxpayers. He said last year this Board supported the moves but there were a couple transfers listed tonight that would have kept him from sleeping, which is why he chose to vote the way he did.

Adjournment: A motion was made by Ms. Codispoti, seconded by Ms. Rios, to adjourn the meeting at 9:21 p.m. All Members voted “yes.”

Respectfully Submitted,

Helen G. Haley
Board Secretary

HGH:dt

