

PUBLIC MEETING

March 28, 2022

The Verona Board of Education of the Township of Verona, in the County of Essex, New Jersey, convened in regular session on March 28, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Jorge Cruz. A statement was made that the meeting had been properly advertised in the designated newspapers and the agendas were posted at the appropriate locations.

The following members of the Board were present: Mrs. Lisa Freschi, President, Mrs. Pamela Priscoe, Vice President, Mrs. Sara Drappi, Mr. Jim Day and Mr. Christopher Wacha. Also present was Dr. Lydia Furnari, Interim Superintendent and Mr. Jorge Cruz, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary

There were 58 members of the public present. There was 1 member of the press present.



CONFIDENTIAL EXECUTIVE SESSION –6:00 pm
SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING AGENDA – 7:00 pm
VERONA HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM
March 28, 2022

1. Call to order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Reading of Meeting Notice
4. Roll Call Attendance
5. Agenda Item - Appointment of District Superintendent
6. Public Comments on Agenda Action Items
7. Discussion Items
8. Roll Call Vote on Resolutions
9. Public Comments

Live streaming link: <https://youtu.be/VI7gRk0GvKA>

The next scheduled Special Meeting will be held on **Tuesday, April 5, 2022** beginning with Confidential Session at 6:00 pm, followed by Public Session at 7:00 pm in the Verona High Auditorium

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Pledge of Allegiance**
3. **Reading of Meeting Notice**

This meeting is being conducted in compliance with the open meeting session that the Verona Board of Education passed a resolution at its annual reorganization meeting held on January 4, 2022. The meeting set forth the schedule of its regular meetings which resolution was within 7 days of passage. The schedule was sent to the Verona Cedar Grove Times, the Star Ledger, the Township of Verona and the VEA. Postings of this meeting setting forth the time location and agenda were posted at the Verona Board of Education Office and on the Verona Public Schools district website. The Verona Board of Education operates under a consent agenda format, any board member has the right to have an item pulled to be voted upon or discussed separately. Copies of tonight's agenda and resolutions have been made available to the public and press.

4. **Roll Call Attendance**

Mr. Wacha X

Mr. Day X

Mrs. Drappi X

Mrs. Priscoe X

Mrs. Freschi X

5. **Agenda Item - Appointment of District Superintendent - The Board of Education**

anticipates the appointment of a new district superintendent effective July 1, 2022.

The Board will introduce the new superintendent and pass a resolution to approve the superintendent's contract at this meeting.

6. **Public Comments on Agenda Action Items**

Nicholas Fierro - 10 Ravine Rd. - Shared concern about DEI and selecting Grand River Solutions about the organization's views, suggesting that they're not the right fit.

Reese Sahadow - VHS Student - Shared comments in support for the board to approve the selection of the DEI initiative.

Derrek Czupak - 11 Durrell St. - Shared comments on the use of funds for DEI and

Casey Harris - VHS teacher - shared support of having a DEI consultant for the initiative that will benefit marginalize

Maria Squilanti - 6 Belleclaire Pl -

Brook Orosz - 66 Woodland Avenue - shared support for DEI

Joe Haggerty - 44 Morningside Rd. - shared concerns of the consultant being proposed for the DEI work.

Gabrielle Zebrowski - 1 Valhalla Way - shared concern about a middle school HIB incident that was fabricated and affected her son in a negative way.

Reese Sahadow - VHS Student - voiced students' concern that was shared last week.

Joseph Fierro - 10 Ravine Rd. - shared concern that the DEI consultant being proposed for the initiative asking the Board not to approve Grand River Solutions.

Abby Miller - VHS Student - shared support for DEI in our schools.

Gary Pearl - 78 Lynwood Rd. - shared concern about the program that is being proposed.

7. Discussion Items

Mr. Day shared the alignment of the diversity committee with our Verona Township committee and concerns about the consultant being based out in California and not able to conduct all meetings on site.

Mrs. Drappi shared comments on the importance of DEI and having a consultant provide the administration recommendation to improve diversity, equity and inclusion in our school district.

Mr. Wacha shared that the DEI proposal is not a program, it is an assessment to provide the board with recommendations that the school board can then take into consideration and decide to take further action after June 30th.

Mrs. Priscoe shared thoughts about the DEI consultant on the agenda and reason why she will vote no for this agenda item. Diversity, equity and inclusion is important but we need the right fit for Verona.

Mrs. Freschi shared thoughts on the process and the need to evaluate and have an objective view of what we have in place. She also thanked everyone for their comments and emails over the last few months.

8. Roll Call Vote on Resolutions

9. Public Comments

Please note that the public participation portion of the meeting affords an opportunity for the public to share thoughts and comments about school related topics. By law, administrators and Board of Education members are not permitted to publicly discuss personnel matters, student discipline, or other issues requiring confidentiality. While we may not respond to comments during the meeting, all input that is shared with the Board of Education is taken very seriously, and helps inform future deliberations and work by the Board and its committees. Answers appear in many forms including, but not limited to: email, Superintendent/ Committee reports, Board statements, FAQs on website, or after public comment is closed. We appreciate and thank all members of the public for your input.

Motion by: Mr. Wacha

Seconded by: Mr. Day

Be it **RESOLVED** the approval of Resolutions #1.

Mr. Wacha X Mr. Day No

Mrs. Drappi X Mrs. Priscoe No

Mrs. Freschi X

VERONA PUBLIC SCHOOLS – SPECIAL BOARD OF EDUCATION
RESOLUTIONS
March 28, 2022

The following resolutions have been recommended by the Interim Superintendent to the Board of Education.

EDUCATION

#1 **RESOLVED** that the Board approve based on the recommendation of the Interim Superintendent the agreement with Grand River Solutions at a cost not to exceed \$25,000 for the 2021-2022 school year.

Motion by: Mrs. Drappi

Seconded by: Mrs. Priscoe

Be it **RESOLVED** the approval of Resolutions #2 - 6.

Mr. Wacha X Mr. Day X

Mrs. Drappi X Mrs. Priscoe X

Mrs. Freschi X

FINANCE

- #2 RESOLVED** that the Report of the Secretary for the period(s) as follows be approved:

January 2022

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:20-2.13(e), that as of January 31, 2021 after review of the Board Secretary's monthly financial report (appropriations section) and upon consultation with the appropriate district officials, to the best of our knowledge, no major account or fund, has been over-expended in violation of N.J.A.C 6:20-2.13(b) and that sufficient funds are available to meet the district's financial obligations for the remainder of the fiscal year.

- #3 RESOLVED** that the Board approve the Report of the Treasurer of School Monies for the following month:

January 2022

- #4 RESOLVED** that the Board approve the attached list of individual transfers of line items in the 2021-2022 budget for:

January 2022

- #5 RESOLVED** that the Board approve based on the recommendation of the Interim Superintendent of Schools the transfer of funds exceeding the 10% transfer limit for the General Administration accounts and Central Services & Administrative Information Technology with the approval of the Executive County Superintendent in order to meet fiscal operating obligations.

- #6 RESOLVED** that the Board approve based on the recommendation of the Interim Superintendent to award the Utility contracts to Aggressive Energy for natural gas supply at a fixed rate of \$0.7463 per therm for 36 month term (5/1/22 - 5/1/2025) and Constellation Energy for fixed electricity supply rate with capacity cost passed through at \$.0774 per kWh for 24 month term (4/5/22 - 4/28/24). (long term sustainable energy)

#9 Public comments

Please note that the public participation portion of the meeting affords an opportunity for the public to share thoughts and comments about school related topics. By law, administrators and Board of Education members are not permitted to publicly discuss personnel matters, student discipline, or other issues requiring confidentiality. While we may not respond to comments during the meeting, all input that is shared with the Board of Education is taken very seriously, and helps inform future deliberations and work by the Board and its committees. Answers appear in many forms including, but not limited to: email, Superintendent/ Committee reports, Board statements, FAQs on website, or after public comment is closed. We appreciate and thank all members of the public for your input.

Peter Hughe - Kinnelon Resident - shared appreciation for Ms. DiGuisseppe and her advocacy for children. She is a servant leader and serves from the front and communicates honestly. Congratulations to Verona Board of Education.

CONFIDENTIAL SESSION IF NECESSARY

RESOLUTION TO ADJOURN

- #7 **RESOLVED** that the Board meet in private session, from which the public shall be excluded, to discuss the topics of negotiations and personnel or potential litigation which private discussion is being held pursuant to Section 7b and 8 of the Open Public Meeting Act. The matters under discussion will be disclosed to the public as soon as final decisions are made and voted upon.

Motion to adjourn the meeting:

Motion by: Mr. Wacha

Second by: Mrs. Drappi

All in Favor: AYE

All Opposed: None

This meeting is adjourned at (TIME) 8:05 P.M.

VERONA PUBLIC SCHOOLS – BOARD OF EDUCATION
ADDENDUM RESOLUTIONS
March 28, 2022

The following resolutions have been recommended by the Superintendent to the Board of Education.

Motion by: Mrs. Drappi

Seconded by: Mr. Day

Be it RESOLVED the approval of Addenda Resolution #1.

Mr. Wacha X Mr. Day X

Mrs. Drappi X Mrs. Priscoe X

Mrs. Freschi X

The following resolutions have been recommended by the Interim Superintendent to the Board of Education.

PERSONNEL

#1 **RESOLVED** that the Board appoint **Diane DiGiuseppe** as the Superintendent of Schools for the Verona School District for a term effective on July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2027 as per contract at a salary of \$220,000.