

**PUBLIC MEETING**

**July 6, 2021**

**The Verona Board of Education of the Township of Verona, in the County of Essex, New Jersey,**

**convened in regular session on July 6, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.**

**The meeting was called to order by Mr. Ernest Turner. 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, Vice President, Mr. Timothy Alworth (Absent), Mrs. Pamela Priscoe and Mrs. Sara Drappi, Mr. Day was absent. Also present was Dr. Rui Dionisio, Superintendent and Mr. Jorge Cruz, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary**

**There were 0 members of the public present. There were 0 members of the press present.**



CONFIDENTIAL EXECUTIVE SESSION – 5:30 pm  
REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING AGENDA – 7:00 pm  
VERONA HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM  
July 6, 2021

1. Call to order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Reading of Meeting Notice
4. Roll Call Attendance
5. Presentations - None
6. Superintendent Report - Dr. Rui Dionisio, Superintendent of Schools
7. Public Comments on Agenda Action Items to be Approved
8. Discussion Items
9. Roll Call Vote on Resolutions
10. Public Comments

NOTE: The next scheduled Public Meeting will be held on **Tuesday, July 27, 2021** beginning with a Confidential Session at 5:30 pm and 7:00 pm Public Session in the Verona High School 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 5, 2021. 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. Alworth	<u>Absent</u>	Mr. Day	<u>X</u>
Mrs. Drappi	<u>X</u>	Mrs. Freschi	<u>X</u>
		Mrs. Priscoe	<u>X</u>

5. **Presentation** - None

6. **Superintendent Report** - Good evening everyone. I have a few updates this evening for the Superintendent's Report.

First, congratulations to the HBW 8th graders who had a wonderful promotion ceremony on June 24th on Sellitto Field and welcome to Verona High School in September. Congratulations are also in order for the VHS Class of 2021 who had a spectacular evening ceremony on June 25th. Thank you to all of the administrators, staff, students and parents who made the event so special for our graduating class. Best wishes on all of your future endeavors. We know you will make Verona and your families proud in all that you aim to achieve.

Second, last week (6/28/21) Governor Murphy & the NJDOE announced the **Road Forward** plan for next school year. The administrative team and I are reviewing several key items with the Montclair Department of Health to receive their recommendations on the new guidance and they are in agreement to proceed with masks being optional for September as long as the current public health conditions are maintained at current levels or improve over time. The administration is working closely with our District physician, Board attorney and our Board policy company Strauss Esmay to revise Board policies and set procedures and recommendations in place over the summer in preparation for the first day of school. We will have an update in August on the progress as we finalize details in accordance with Board policy and public health guidance. The District will send out an

update in an email communication to staff and parents on these measures as we continue to encourage vaccination for all eligible students and adults.

We have an update on the HBW Principal Search. As we have shared out over the past several Board of Education meetings, there were approximately 60 applicants for the HBW Olmsted

Principal position. 16 first round interviews were conducted followed by 6 candidates for round 2. Three finalists were then interviewed by a committee of HBW teachers and administrators. I am pleased to share with everyone that I have recommended Mr. Lancaster as the successful candidate to the Board this evening for Board approval.

Mr. Lancaster will begin his nineteenth year in education this September. Mr. Lancaster began his teaching career at West Essex High School, where he taught English for 4 years before moving to West Essex Middle School to teach English for 8 years. During his 12 years teaching, Mr. Lancaster served as an advisor for the National Honor Society, coached baseball for 12 years, coached basketball for 6 years, and was recognized as the 2013 - 2014 Teacher of the Year for West Essex Middle School. In addition to his experience at West Essex, Mr. Lancaster was an adjunct professor at Passaic County Community College in Paterson. He also taught English for grades 3 - 11 for School Plus's Saturday enrichment program in Teaneck and served as the Director for The Gifted Child Society's STEM summer program. Mr. Lancaster continues to serve as a board member for The Gifted Child Society.

In September 2015, Mr. Lancaster joined Verona High School, where he served as Assistant Principal working collaboratively with the administration, teachers, and staff to create innovative opportunities for Verona's students. Throughout Mr. Lancaster's tenure, he demonstrated a commitment to teamwork and a genuine belief that every student could not only succeed, but should have all of the opportunities to excel and maximize their individual potential. Mr. Lancaster worked with the VHS team to build upon the existing framework while helping bring to fruition the progress status Verona has today. Mr. Lancaster can be seen greeting students each morning and he plans to continue the same welcoming, encouraging, and supportive approach at H.B. Whitehorne Middle School.

Mr. Lancaster is excited to join Mr. Galbierczyk, the HBW teachers and staff, and the HBW students and families, to continue to build upon the school's great history. At this time I would like to welcome Mr. Lancaster to the podium to say a few words.

In anticipation of supporting the high school administration with Mr. Lancaster's transition as Principal to HBW, I am also recommending Mr. Merkler as our new Assistant Principal at Verona High School.

Mr. Merkler has served as the Director of Athletics and Special Programs for the Verona Public School District for the past 5 years and is entering his 16<sup>th</sup> year of education. Mr. Merkler prides himself on being able to create relationships in the Verona school

community that impact Verona staff and students in a positive way. He believes experiencing success in school, both academically and socially, can lead to our students becoming contributing, well-respected members of our community. In his role as the Director of Athletics and Special Programs, he maintained primary responsibilities including supervision of the district Health & Physical Education program, district nurses, HIB program, and the high school coaches and athletics program. Mr. Merkler was integral in working closely with our district nurses and Montclair Department of Health during the COVID-19 pandemic to establish safety protocols, monitoring COVID cases and their impact on the school district, and coordinating vaccinations for district employees.

Mr. Merkler oversaw many successful athletics programs during his time as Director of Athletics. One of his fondest memories will be witnessing the camaraderie amongst each team and watching our student-athletes compete with fervor and respect each and every day.

Mr. Merkler is excited about his new role at the high school and is looking forward to working over the summer to ensure a smooth transition in the Fall. Additionally, I have asked Mr. Merkler to lead the search for a new Director of Athletics and Special Programs and assist that individual in performing their new role beginning in August 2021. At this time I would like to welcome Mr. Merkler to the podium to say a few words.

I would like to publicly thank Mr. Lancaster and Mr. Merkler for their dedication to the Verona Public Schools. They are both intelligent, caring, kind, and amazing people and Verona is extremely fortunate to have them at the helm. I know I speak on behalf of the full Board and the community when I say thank you for your leadership and we look forward to your continued success in your new roles.

That concludes the Superintendent report this evening.

## **7. Public Comment on Agenda Items - None**

### **Committees - Finance**

**Discussion Items** - Mrs. Freschi acknowledged Ms. Graves contribution to the VPS community and wished her well on her retirement.

Dr. Dionisio also expressed gratitude for Ms. Graves' years of service and wished her well on her retirement.

Mrs. Drappi commented on resolutions #4-6 and explained that the Board didn't apply for the Title III funds because the amount was insignificant and provided details on Title II and Title IV funds.

Mrs. Freschi requested an edit to resolution #8 to replace "with a" to "plus an additional".

Dr. Dionisio commented on addendum resolution #1.2, Mrs. Sciacchitano's mural design and painting for the entrance of the VHS vestibule.

Mrs. Freschi commented on addendum resolution #7, VFEE donation to each school.

Mr. Day congratulated Mr. Merkler and Mr. Lancaster on their new positions for the 2021-22 school year.

Mrs. Priscoe congratulated Mr. Merkler and Mr. Lancaster on their new positions for the 2021-22 school year, as well.

Mrs. Freschi welcomed Mr. Cruz on joining the Board as the new Business Administrator and Board Secretary.

**9. Roll Call Vote on Resolutions**

**10. Public Comments - None**

**Motion by:** Mr. Day

**Seconded by:** Mrs. Priscoe

**Be it RESOLVED the approval of Resolutions #1 - 17.**

Mr. Alworth Absent Mr. Day X

Mrs. Drappi X Mrs. Freschi X

Mrs. Priscoe X

**VERONA PUBLIC SCHOOLS – BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**RESOLUTIONS**  
**July 6, 2021**

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

#1     **RESOLVED** that the Board approve the minutes of the following meetings:

Confidential & Regular Public Meeting    June 22, 2021

**PERSONNEL**

#2     **RESOLVED** that the Board approve the following pending pre-employment paperwork:

**2.1    New Hires**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Salary</b>	<b>Committee</b>	<b>Term of Employment on or about</b>
<b>Nicole Langan</b>	District	Sub Teacher	\$100/per diem	Education	SY 21-22
<b>Nicole Langan</b>	TBD	Paraprofessional	\$16,899.96	Education	SY 21-22
<b>Steve Gemma</b>	District	Sub Teacher	\$100/per diem	Education	SY 21-22
<b>Steve Gemma</b>	TBD	Paraprofessional	\$16,899.96	Education	SY 21-22
<b>Diane Bartell</b>	FOR	2nd Grade Teacher	MA Step 5 \$58,227	Education	Sept. 1, 2021 - Jun. 30, 2022
<b>Tricia Davis</b>	LAN	LOA Replacement 1st Grade	\$250/per diem	Education	Sept. 1, 2021 - Jan. 1, 2022
<b>Jennifer Grutta</b>	LAN	LOA Replacement 4th Grade	\$250/per diem	Education	Sept. 1, 2021 - Jan. 10, 2022

**2.2    Retirement**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>Effective Date of Retirement</b>
<b>Cynthia Graves</b>	3rd Grade Teacher	Forest	Retirement	Jul. 1, 2021

### 2.3 Without Pay

Name	Date	No. of Days/Reason
#105514	Jun 25, 2021	1/2 day Without Pay/Personal

### 2.4 Staff Changes

Name	Current Location/ Position	New Location/ Position	Effective Date on or about	Notes
Corrie Majestic	LAN/Grade 2	LAN/Grade 3	Sept. 1, 2021 - Jun. 30, 2022	Rescind
Corrie Majestic	LAN/Grade 2	LAN/Grade 1	Sept. 1, 2021 - Jun. 30, 2022	Approve
Kristine DePoe	LAN/Grade 1	BRK/Grade 4	Sept. 1, 2021 - Jun. 30, 2022	Approve

### 2.5 Resignation

Name	Location	Position	Reason	Effective on or About	Notes
AnnaMarie Marzullo	Board Office	Accounts Payable	Resignation	Jul. 22, 2021	RESCIND
AnnaMarie Marzullo	Board Office	Accounts Payable	Resignation	Jul. 23, 2021	APPROVE
Jessica Schram	VHS	Social Studies Teacher	Resignation	Jun. 29, 2021	

### 2.6 Leave of Absence

Name	Reason	Begin Date	Estimated Return Date on or about
#105245	Maternity Leave of Absence	Sept. 1, 2021	December 1, 2021
#102948	Extension of Maternity Leave of Absence	Sept. 1, 2021	Jun. 30, 2022



**2.7     Extra Class**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Course</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Term of Employment on or about</b>
<b>Jenny Qin</b>	HBW	Mandarin	\$19,763.60	Sept. 1, 2021 - Jun. 30, 2022
<b>Jennifer Patiero</b>	VHS	Spanish	\$11,828.80	Sept. 1, 2021 - Jun. 30, 2022

**EDUCATION**

- #3     **RESOLVED** that the Board approves the Superintendent's presentation of HIB report as follows:

<b>HIB Case</b>
VHS 221697
VHS 221767

- #4     **RESOLVED** that the Board approve not to apply for Title III funds under the ESEA Grant for the fiscal year 2021-2022.
- #5     **RESOLVED** that the Board approve Title II Part A funds for Professional Development for the district:
- Public:        \$ 33,017.00
  - Non-Public: \$ 2,623.00
  - Total:     \$ 35,640.00
- #6     **RESOLVED** that the Board approve Title IV Part A funds for Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) Program for the district:
- Public:        \$ 12,396.00
  - Non-Public: \$ 985.00
  - Total:     \$ 13,381.00
- #7     **RESOLVED** that the Board rescind the 2021-2022 contract for Dr. Charles Miller, Director of Curriculum and Instruction at a salary of \$156,347.
- #8     **RESOLVED** that the Board approve the 2021-2022 contract for Dr. Charles Miller, Director of Curriculum and Instruction at a salary of \$156,347 plus an additional Doctorate stipend of \$3,000.

**ATHLETICS/CO-CURRICULAR**

**#9 RESOLVED** that the Board approve the Board of Education of School District No. 5370, County of Essex, State of New Jersey, as provided for in Chapter 172 Laws 1979 (N.J.S.A. 18A:11-3, et seq.) hereby enrolls Verona High School as a member of the New Jersey Interscholastic Athletic Association to participate in the approved interschool athletic program sponsored by the NJSIAA.

**#10 RESOLVED** that the Board approve the following:

Advisor	Location	Club Name	Stipend	Term of Employment	Notes
Christopher Haines	HBW	Environmental Club Advisor	\$1,646.00	SY 20-21	RESCIND
Christopher Haines	HBW	Co-Environmental Club Advisor	\$823.00	SY 20-21	APPROVE
Alexander Domanski	HBW	Co-Environmental Club Advisor	\$823.00	SY 20-21	APPROVE
Isabelle Thomas	VHS	Pit Instructor/Band	\$2,500	Education	

**BUILDING AND GROUNDS**

**#11 RESOLVED** that the Board approve the 2021-2022 lease agreement between the YMCA of Montclair and the Verona Board of Education.

**FINANCE**

**#12 RESOLVED** that the Board approve 2020-2021 sick day payments for the staff listed below:

Name	Amount
Alina Dugan	\$18,256.06
Beth Foley	\$3,506.32
Allison Quick	\$9,910.43
Deborah Gero	\$8,142.78
George Sona	\$4,636.46
Cynthia Graves	\$10,547.95

**#13 RESOLVED** that the Board appoint the accounting firm of Nisivoccia and Company to perform the 2021-2022 annual school audit as per the engagement letter dated August 19, 2020 for a fee of \$35,700.

**FINANCE**

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

May 2021

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

May 2021

- #16 RESOLVED** that the Board approve the attached list of individual transfers of line items in the 2020-2021 budget for:

May 2021

- #10 Public comments**

**CONFIDENTIAL SESSION IF NECESSARY**

**RESOLUTION TO ADJOURN**

- #17 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.

**VERONA PUBLIC SCHOOLS – BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**ADDENDUM RESOLUTIONS**  
**July 6, 2021**

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 Resolutions #1 - 8.**

Mr. Alworth Absent                      Mr. Day X

Mrs. Drappi X                              Mrs. Freschi X

Mrs. Priscoe x

**PERSONNEL**

**#1      RESOLVED** that the Board approve the following pending pre-employment paperwork:

**1.1      New Hire**

Name	Location	Position	Salary	Committee	Term of Employment on or about
Nicole Tomo	FOR	3rd Grade Teacher	MA/Step 5/ \$58,227	Education	Sept. 1, 2021 - Jun. 30, 2022

**1.2      Summer Hours**

Name	Days/Hours of Work	Rate	Position	Notes
Theresa Allen	Jul. 6 - Aug. 16, 2021/180 hrs.	\$15.40/per hr.	Bus Aide	
Chrissy Sciacchitano	VHS mural design & painting up to 30 hours	\$41.73/per hr.	Industrial Arts	
Harriette Warshaw	5 days	\$2,636.10	Guidance Counselor	RESCIND
Harriette Warshaw	5 days	\$2,711.11	Guidance Counselor	APPROVE

### **1.3 Staff Re-Assignments**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Current Position / Location / Salary</b>	<b>New Position / Location / Salary</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>
<b>Thomas Lancaster</b>	Assistant Principal / VHS / \$125,538	Principal (Olmsted) / HBW / \$135,000	9/1/21 - 6/30/22
<b>Robert Merkler</b>	Director of Athletics & Special Programs / District / \$122,656	Assistant Principal / VHS / \$130,000	9/1/21 - 6/30/22

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**#2 RESOLVED** that the Board approve the following:

#### **2.1 Special Services Summer School**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Nicole Langan	Paraprofessional	\$1,113.00
Steve Gemma	Paraprofessional	\$1,113.00

### **EDUCATION**

**#3 RESOLVED** that the Board authorizes the submission of the ESEA application for Fiscal Year 2022, and accepts the grant award of these funds on the subsequent approval of the FY 2021 ESEA Application.

**#4 RESOLVED** that the Board approve Title 1 Part A salaries for the 2021-2022 school year for Claire Duffy and Heather Anderson who serve as our Elementary Academic Intervention/Coaches:

- Salaries: Claire Duffy - \$ 32,631.00  
Heather Anderson - \$ 32,631.00
- Health Benefits: \$ 29,368.00
- Total \$ 94,630.00

**#5 RESOLVED** that the Board approve the first reading of the following policy:

Policy 2415.30 Title I – Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care (M)

**FINANCE**

- #6      **RESOLVED** that the Board approve the enclosed checklist(s) in the following amounts:

<u>Amount</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Check Register Date</u>
\$3,650,034.97	Vendor Checks	June 29, 2021
\$ 35,269.61	Vendor Checks	July 2, 2021
\$ 15,359.57	Referendum Checks	July 2, 2021

- #7      **RESOLVED** that the Board accept a donation from VFEE for Inspiring Excellence to Brookdale Avenue, F. N. Brown, Forest Avenue, Laning Avenue of \$1,000 each and Verona High School and H. B. Whitehorne Middle School of \$1,500 each.

- #8      **RESOLVED** that the Board approve Title 1 Part A stipend for the 2021-2022 school year for Nicole Azzati who serves as our Homeless Liaison:

- Stipend: Nicole Azzati      \$ 3,000.00

Motion by:   Mrs. Priscoe  

Seconded by:   Mrs. Drappi  

Mr. Alworth	<u>  Absent  </u>	Mr. Day	<u>  X  </u>
Mrs. Drappi	<u>  X  </u>	Mrs. Freschi	<u>  X  </u>
	Mrs. Priscoe	<u>  X  </u>	

All in Favor:   \_AYE  

All Opposed:   \_None  

This meeting is adjourned at   7:36   P.M.