

**PUBLIC MEETING**

**October 27, 2022**

**The Verona Board of Education of the Township of Verona, in the County of Essex, New Jersey, convened in regular session on October 27, 2022 at 7:07 p.m.**

**The meeting was called to order by Jorge Cruz, Board Secretary.**

**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, Mr. Christopher Wacha, and Mrs. Sara Drappi. Mr. Jim Day was absent. Also present was Diane DiGiuseppe, Superintendent and Mr. Jorge Cruz, School Business Administrator.**

**There were 6 members of the public present. There were 0 members of the press present.**



CONFIDENTIAL EXECUTIVE SESSION –6:00 pm  
REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING AGENDA – 7:00 pm  
VERONA HIGH SCHOOL LEARNING COMMONS  
October 27, 2022

1. Call to order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Reading of Meeting Notice
4. Roll Call Attendance
5. Superintendent Report - Diane DiGiuseppe
6. Business Administrator Report - Jorge Cruz
7. Committee Reports -
  - Facilities
  - Finance
8. Public Comments on Agenda Action Items
9. Discussion Items
10. Roll Call Vote on Resolutions
11. Public Comments

Live streaming link: <https://youtu.be/vjlfeKed41U>

The next scheduled Public Meeting will be held on **Tuesday, November 8, 2022** beginning with a Confidential Session at 6:00 pm and 7:00 pm Public Session in the Verona High School Learning Commons.

- 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   ABS  

Mrs. Drappi   X                        Mrs. Priscoe   X  

Mrs. Freschi   X  

**5. Superintendent Report - Diane DiGiuseppe**

Mrs. Symmons will be joining us in November as the Director of Special Services.

- Ms. Symmons has spent the last ten years serving as the Director of Special Services in the West Essex Regional School District, she will begin her tenure with our district on or about November 21, 2022.
- Previous experience includes serving as a School Psychologist for the Morris County Educational Services Commission and Morris Hills High School in Rockaway and as a CST Case Manager/School Psychologist at Livingston High School.
- Ms. Symmons has been a presenter at the annual conference of the Association of Middle-Level Educators in Nashville, TN (2019): WE Rise A School-Based Program for Emotionally Fragile Students, presented at this month's annual conference of the National Association of Pupil Services Administrators in Pittsburgh, PA on the topic of School Avoidance and Emotionally Fragile Students.
- She holds her BA in Psychology from North Carolina State University, a Master's in Psychology from Fairleigh Dickinson University, and a second Master's in Educational Leadership from Montclair State University.
- Ms. Symmons' extensive background in educational leadership coupled with her enthusiasm and creativity will be an asset to our students. She will surely create

educational opportunities that will lead to greater student success. Please join us in giving her a warm welcome!

#### **CRG - Critical Response Group**

Ms. DiGiuseppe showed a profile video of the Critical Response Group (CRG). In 2016, Critical Response Group was formed in order to transition and implement innovative technology and training techniques to increase the state of national preparedness. It is their goal to enable better decisions faster and to ensure collaborative communication during critical incidents. They consist of a team of decorated Special Operations veterans and public safety experts who are passionate about what they do and why they do it; the work that they are doing today will save lives tomorrow. CRG will be mapping Verona schools and many other schools across the state, using a process that produces a Collaborative Response Graphics® (CRGs®). These CRGs are simple visual communication and collaboration tools, usable under stress, to coordinate emergency response both outside and inside a building. CRGs enhance response time and improve command and control during an incident.

This safety tool will be at no cost to the district, as Governor Murphy pledged \$6.5 million in federal funds to finish creating digital maps of all the state's schools that law enforcement can access in case of school emergencies.

#### **National Merit Scholarship Program**

High School students enter the National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®) at the specified time in the high school program, usually as juniors. Each year's PSAT/NMSQT is the qualifying test designated for entry to a particular year's competition. For example, the 2021 PSAT/NMSQT is the qualifying test for entry to the competition for scholarships to be awarded in 2023. The 2022 PSAT/NMSQT is the qualifying test for entry to the competition for scholarships to be awarded in 2024.

Of the 1.5 million entrants, approximately 50,000 students are considered the highest scorers on the PSAT/NMSQT® Selection Index scores and qualify for recognition in the National Merit Scholarship Program. In September, these high scorers are notified through their schools that they have qualified as either Commended Students or Semifinalists.

#### **National Merit Commended Students:**

In late September, more than two-thirds of the approximately 50,000 high scorers on the PSAT/NMSQT received Letters of Commendation in recognition of their

outstanding academic promise. Commended Students may become candidates for Special Scholarships sponsored by corporations and businesses.

**National Merit Semifinalists:**

Approximately one-third of the 50,000 high scorers are notified that they have qualified as Semifinalists. To ensure that academically talented young people from all parts of the United States are included in this talent pool, Semifinalists are designated on a state-representational basis. Semifinalists are the highest-scoring entrants in each state. To be considered for a National Merit Scholarship, Semifinalists must advance to Finalist standing in the competition by meeting high academic standards and all other requirements

Verona High School is proud to announce that **Stephen Bartell** and **Sophia Nunez** have been named National Merit Commended Students.

**VHS Students of the Month for September**

Grade 12 **Dylan Toriello**

Grade 11 **Charlie Fjeldal**

Grade 10 **Ella Barchie**

Grade 9 **Lea Bache**

**HBW - 5 & 6 Grade Author Visit**

Sayantani DasGupta, a New York Times bestselling author, to speak to our students at HBW on November 15. Dr. DasGupta, who has her MD and MPH from Johns Hopkins School of Medicine has been published widely in academic and literary outlets and journals including JAMA, The Lancet, and Ms. She is the co-author of a book on Bengali folktales, the author of a memoir about her education at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and the co-editor of an award-winning collection of women's illness narratives. Her debut middle-grade novel, *The Serpent's Secret* (Kiranmala and the Kingdom Beyond #1) published by Scholastic came out in February 2018. Her second book, *Game of Stars* (Kiranmala and the Kingdom Beyond #2) published in February 2019, entered the New York Times Bestseller list in its debut week and released the 3rd book in the series, *The Chaos Curse*, in March 2020.

**6. Business Administrator Report - Jorge Cruz**

Good evening, I have a few updates for my report tonight.

In finance, we have our August 2022 Board Secretary, Treasurer's, and Budget Transfers Report, and they're all in agreement. Earlier this month, our auditors, Nisivoccia

completed the 2021-2022 fiscal audit. They will be presenting at our December meeting and I look forward to that report as we continue strengthening our fiscal position.

I'm also happy to report that we finally received delivery of our 54-passenger gas engine bus last week. The new bus is in operations and replaced a 14 year-old diesel engine bus. This new bus is predominantly used for athletics and field trips.

Lastly, as we approach the end of the calendar year, we also begin preparing for our 2023-2024 school year. Resolution #14 is the tentative budget calendar to guide our budget development timeline for our new fiscal year. I'm looking forward to building my second Verona budget alongside our Superintendent to support the goals and vision in the 2023-24 school year. This concludes my report for tonight. Thank you.

## **7. Student Representative Report - Reese Sahadow**

Ms. Sahadow shared an update on the student representation and voice at each school throughout the district. Provided a summary that will be posted on the student newsletter. She also shared upcoming events taking place at each school and athletics.

### **I. Student Report**

#### **A. Want to focus not only on board understanding of students, but also student understanding of the board**

1. Meeting with Superintendent DiGiuseppe and Pres. Freschi to go over expectations of the role and preliminary student feelings
2. Began reaching out to elementary and middle schools
  - a. Working on scheduling a meeting with middle school's student council
3. Published summary of last meeting on school newspaper

#### **B. At the high school:**

1. Student Council elections in Middle and High
  - a. Middle school just wrapped up
  - b. Speeches, posters. First time in a while that the high school's run an election like this.
2. In school college visits
  - a. Instate, out of state. Community colleges, art and design schools, public and private.
  - b. Advertising on announcements, bulletin board in front lobby, and weekly emails
3. Cheer for a Cure, volleyball's Dig Pink game, Minnette's Angels at football game, and student council ran Pink Day fundraising for breast cancer research
4. Next week is spirit week at high school, kicking off on halloween
  - a. Planning a prep rally
5. Band: Oct 16, band were overall grand champions at West Orange Invitational

6. Ian Zalewski, Essex county champion for cross country, Liam McEnerney won freshmen race against 78 other competitors
  - a. Girls and boys teams going to sectionals this Saturday
7. Fall Cabaret: First ever for VHS. Theme was “villainous,” very Halloweeny, in season. Student performances last night. Was unable to attend, but from what I heard, they did a fantastic job

## **8. Committee Reports**

- Facilities - Mrs. Drappi provided the update regarding the Architect RFP (resolution #13), the sale of the old small bus (reso #), Alpha Solutions facilities assessment, and
- Finance - Mr. Wachka asked Mr. Cruz to provide the highlights. Mr. Cruz share an overview of the committee agenda.

## **9. Public Comments on Agenda Action Items**

**Christian Strumolo - 153 Morningside Rd** - (Resolution #11 & #13) asked about the appointment of the board attorney and architect prior to the Board election and reorganization.

## **10. Discussion Items** - Mrs. Freschi shared the NJSBA Workshop experience and the value add for the board and district leadership.

Mrs. Drappi provided highlights of the workshops and the importance for board members to participate annually to strengthen the board's governance role. She also highlighted the importance of in-house training and support to strengthen our district.

Mrs. Priscoe shared her biggest takeaway from the workshops.

Mrs. Freschi requested to create an ad-hoc committee to review the board policy. The Policy Committee will resume until our reorganization meeting, January 2023.

Mrs. Freschi thanked Mrs. Venezia for her years of service and wished her well in her new chapter as a retiree.

Mrs. Drappi also shared a lesson learned from the NJSBA Workshop around the success of another school district success of including student voice and representation.

Ms. Sahadow echoed the importance of student involvement will include GLI - Girls Learn International, and Black in Verona among other student groups to include their voice.

## **11. Roll Call Vote on Resolutions**

## 12. 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.

**Mark Surgio - Verona, NJ** - Share concern about about a candidate for Board of Education, Mrs. Denise Verzella, as she has posted offensive comments on social media.

**Mike Dupree - 47 Cypress Avenue** - shared that the policy review committee is a great idea. Asked about the process.

Mrs. DiGiuseppe provided a thorough review of the process.

**Motion by:** Mr. Wacha

**Seconded by:** Mrs. Priscoe

**Be it RESOLVED the approval of Resolutions #1 - 18.**

Mr. Wacha X

Mr. Day ABS

Mrs. Drappi X

Mrs. Priscoe X

Mrs. Freschi X

**VERONA PUBLIC SCHOOLS – BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**RESOLUTIONS**  
**October 27, 2022**

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

- #1     **RESOLVED** that the Board, upon on the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the minutes of the following meetings:

Confidential and Regular Public Meeting     October 11, 2022

**PERSONNEL**

- #2     **RESOLVED** that the Board, upon on the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the following:

- 2.1     **New Hires** -pending successful completion of pre-employment paperwork.

Name	Location	Position	Salary	Committee	Term of Employment on or about
Rachel Alessandro-Cordasco	District	Sub Teacher	\$110/per diem	Education	SY 22-23

2.2     **Extra Class**

Name	Location	Course	Amount	Term of Employment on or about	Notes
Alyssa Boldurian	VHS	English IV Resource Center	\$11,235.60	Nov. 1, 2022 - Jun. 22, 2023	RESCIND Pensionable
Alyssa Boldurian	VHS	English IV Resource Center	\$12,038.94	Nov. 1 2022 - Jun. 22, 2023	APPROVE Pensionable

### 2.3 Leave of Absence

Name	Reason	Begin Date	Estimated Return Date on or about
#105454	Extension of Maternity Leave	Jan. 3, 2022	Sept. 1, 2023
#102166	Admin. Leave with pay	Oct. 19, 2022	Nov. 18, 2022

### 2.4 Retirement

Name	Position	Location	Reason	Effective Date of Retirement
Gina Venezia	Supv. - Spec. Ed.	District	Retirement	Feb. 1, 2023

### 2.5 Without Pay

Name	Date/s	No. of Days/Reason
#105689	Oct. 31 and Nov. 1, 2022	2 days/Unpaid Personal Days

## EDUCATION

#3 **RESOLVED** that the Board, upon on the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the following:

### 3.1 Movement on the Guide

Name	CURRENT LEVEL/STEP	SALARY	NEW LEVEL/STEP	SALARY
Kathleen Amora	BA/Step 5	\$56,600	BA+30/Step 5	\$61,147
Pamela Banta	BA+30/Step 15	\$91,276	BA+60/Step 15	\$100,981
Alyssa Boldurian	MA/Step 5	\$62,420	MA+30/Step 5	\$66,883
Nicole Castelbuono	MA/Step 5	\$62,420	MA+45/Step 5	\$67,977
Anthony Chierici	BA+30/Step 5	\$61,147	MA+30/Step 5	\$66,883
Claire Duffy	MA/Step 16	\$98,317	MA+30/Step 16	\$106,282
Christine Garson	BA+30/Step 13	\$82,984	MA/Step 13	\$84,307
Steven Munoz	BA+30/Step 5	\$61,147	MA/Step 5	\$62,420
Erica Tavaglione	MA/Step 6	\$63,186	MA+30/Step 6	\$67,804

### 3.2 Home Instructors

Name
Jason Atkins
Trisha Basak

- #4 **RESOLVED** that the Board, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve to accept the HIB report for October, 2022.
- #5 **RESOLVED** that the Board, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the attached September 2022 Monthly Statistical Report.
- #6 **RESOLVED** that the Board, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve placement at Passaic County Technical-Vocational Schools for student # 2517366 for the 2022-2023 school year at the tuition rate of \$14,132.
- #7 **RESOLVED** that the Board, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the attached revised 2023-2024 District School calendar.

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

- #8 **RESOLVED** that the Board, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve to contract with Social Work p.r.n. to provide temporary personnel services on an as-needed basis for the 2022 – 2023 school year.

### **ATHLETICS/CO-CURRICULAR**

- #9 **RESOLVED** that the Board, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the following:

#### **9.1 Co-Curricular**

<b>Advisor</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Club Name</b>	<b>Stipend</b>	<b>Term of Employment</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Rachael Weir</b>	VHS	Spotlight Players/ Fall Drama	\$1,500.00	22-23 SY	
<b>Matthew Rosa</b>	VHS	Co-Class Advisor - Grade 9	\$1,301.00	22-23 SY	
<b>Ashley Enste</b>	VHS	Co-Class Advisor - Grade 9	\$1,301.00	22-23 SY	
<b>Chris Tamburro</b>	VHS	Advisor - National Honor Society	\$3,769.00	22-23 SY	RESCIND
<b>Chris Tamburro</b>	VHS	Co-Advisor - National Honor Society	\$1,884.50	22-23 SY	APPROVE
<b>Ashley Enste</b>	VHS	Co-Advisor - National Honor Society	\$1,884.50	22-23 SY	

<b>Marisa Albano</b>	HBW	HBW Musical/ 45% Play Director	\$2,210.00	22-23 SY	
<b>Barbara Piercy</b>	HBW	HBW Musical/ 44% Choral Director	\$2,156.00	22-23 SY	
<b>Brian Michalowski</b>	HBW	HBW Musical/ 11% Play Director	\$515.00	22-23 SY	
<b>Brian Michalowski</b>	HBW	HBW Musical/ 35% Choral Director	\$1,695.00	22-23 SY	
<b>Grace Minervo-Buneo</b>	HBW	HBW Musical/ 44% Play Director	\$2,135.00	22-23 SY	
<b>Jacqueline Dilkes</b>	HBW	HBW Musical/ 21% Choral Director	\$1,009.00	22-23 SY	
<b>Noel Piercy</b>	HBW	HBW Musical - Volunteer	-	22-23 SY	
<b>Floyd Bussie, Jr.</b>	HBW	HBW Musical - Vendor	-	22-23 SY	
<b>Audio Inc.</b>	HBW	HBW Musical - Vendor	-	22-23 SY	
<b>Image Market</b>	HBW	HBW Musical - Vendor	-	22-23 SY	

## **FINANCE**

- #10 RESOLVED** that the Board, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the enclosed checklist(s) in the following amounts based on the recommendation of the Superintendent:

<b><u>Amount</u></b>	<b><u>Description</u></b>	<b><u>Check Register Date</u></b>
<b>\$ 8,323.70</b>	<b>Referendum</b>	<b>October 27, 2022</b>
<b>\$ 5,389.71</b>	<b>VSEA</b>	<b>October 27, 2022</b>
<b>\$ 3,730.21</b>	<b>VHS</b>	<b>October 27, 2022</b>
<b>\$ 1,569.24</b>	<b>HBW</b>	<b>October 27, 2022</b>
<b>\$980,463.60</b>	<b>General</b>	<b>October 27, 2022</b>

- #11 RESOLVED** that the Board, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve Apruzzese, McDermott, Mastro & Murphy, P.C. as the Board Attorney's effective December 1, 2022.

- #12 RESOLVED** that the Board, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve Bid #TRANS 23-02 for the sale of the Verona Board of Education Bus #2, a 2008 Thomas/GM Wheelchair-Lift 17-passenger school bus (VIN 1GDJG31U671153811), with sealed bids received on October 13, 2022 at 12:30 p.m., at the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission as per attached bid results in the total amount of **\$8,008** per the following high bid awards:

HUNTERDON COUNTY EDUCATIONAL SERVICES COMMISSION					Results						
Sale of School Transportation Vehicles #TRANS 23-02, Bid Opening											
Thursday, October 13, 2022 - 12:30 PM											
Unit	YEAR	# pass	VIN #	Make/Model:	Nelvi Trans.	Car Country USA	Holcomb	Garas Trans.	Emmanuel Trans.	Jersey One Auto	Road to Success
Verona	2008	17/W C	1GDJG31U671153811	Chevy/Thomas Dual Rear Wheel Small Wheelchair Lift Bus	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 1,947.00	\$ 8,008.00	\$ 7,502.00	\$ 7,100.00	\$ 3,667.00	\$ 2,000.00

Hunterdon County Educational services will collect a 10% commission of \$800.80 of the total high bid amount directly from the Holcomb (Buyer), and Verona Board of Education will collect the remaining 90% of the total high bid amount directly from the Buyer, and all funds will be cleared prior to release of the buses and titles.

- #13 RESOLVED** that the Board, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve DiCara Rubino as the Architect of Record effective November 1, 2022.
- #14 RESOLVED** that the Board, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the attached Tentative Calendar for the 2023-2024 Budget.
- #15 RESOLVED** that the Board, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the Report of the Treasurer of School Monies for the following month:

August 2022

- #16 RESOLVED** that the Board, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve Report of the Secretary for the period(s) as follows be approved:

August 2022

- #17 RESOLVED** that the Board, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the attached list of individual transfers of line items in the 2021-2022 budget for:

August 2022

- #18 RESOLVED** that the Board, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the acceptance of FY22 NJ School Development Authority (SDA) Emergent Needs and Capital Maintenance in School District Grant in the amount of \$53,643, used to offset capital and maintenance costs in the 2021-22 school year.

**#11 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.

**CONFIDENTIAL SESSION IF NECESSARY**

**RESOLUTION TO ADJOURN**

- #19 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:** Mrs. Drappi

**Second by:** Mr. Wacha

**All in Favor:** AYE

**All Opposed:** NONE

**This meeting is adjourned at (TIME) 8:20 P.M.**