

**BOARD OF EDUCATION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
MAY 9, 2023**

A regular meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held in Council Chambers on May 9, 2023.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Madam Chair LeBlanc.
2. **MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Janet Cushman
3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Janet Cushman
4. **FIRE EVACUATION ANNOUNCEMENT:**
5. **ROLL CALL:**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Jean Acree, Dr. Gerald Calnen, Janet Cushman, Joshua Hamre, Amanda Pickett, Scott Ryder, John Unghire and Tina LeBlanc

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Jonathan LeBlanc

**ALSO PRESENT:** Mr. Christopher J. Drezek, Superintendent; Mr. Andrew B. Longey, Assistant Superintendent; and Student Representatives Morgan DiFronzo

6. **BOARD GUEST(S)**

**a. Student Artists**

Mr. Drezek welcomed Chris Scioscio, our K-12 Visual Arts Coordinator. He thanked him for being the heart and soul behind our Art Department and the art show. He has placed student artworks that are displayed at each of our schools.

Mr. Scioscio thanked the Board for inviting them. He passionately thanked our art teachers and the partnership they have with the Enfield Woman's Club. This was our 57<sup>th</sup> annual festival. The Woman's club has raised over \$120K in scholarships for our students that are pursuing higher education in visual arts. We appreciate their support. He also thanked community members for attending and for supporting the arts. He thanked our current and past teachers for their dedication to our students.

Mr. Scioscio welcomed students Lilly Ortiz and Amelia Place. They are part of our honors portfolio prep class. He is extremely proud of both of the accomplishments they have made this year.

Mrs. Pickett asked if any of their artwork is displayed here tonight. They both said yes. She thanked them for being here tonight.

Mrs. Pickett thanked Mr. Scioscio for the partnership with the Enfield Woman's Club. She also thanked the Woman's club for their continued support with Enfield Public Schools. She also thanked Mr. Scioscio and teachers for their commitment to our students. Our art show is a great tradition. Her family attended this and felt connected to our students even though Enfield is not their hometown.

Mrs. Pickett would like to see you expand your partnership with our older students working with the younger students. Ms. Place stated students can participate through the career

center. Ms. Ortiz added they can also participate during the summer art program. Mrs. Pickett thanked them and wished them good luck.

Mr. Hamre also commended them for the great art show. He only wished they had a larger venue to display more student work that includes both the culinary department and music department. By having all departments included, we have made the Art Show into a multimedia level event.

Mrs. Cushman agreed the Art Festival was amazing. She asked both Lilly and Amelia about their future plans and where does your inspiration come from for your artworks? Ms. Ortiz plans to attend Alfred University in New York and will study art sculpture and business. Her inspiration comes from all over. She looks at things differently and also loves to read and finds inspiration from that also. Ms. Place will attend Manchester Community College for her prerequisite courses and will then transfer to Mass Art or Maine College of Art and Design. She gets her inspiration from many different things.

Mrs. Acree thanked Mr. Scioscio for all that you do for your students and community. She thanked both Lilly and Amelia and congratulated them on their beautiful artwork.

Dr. Calnen also thanked them both for their wonderful artwork. Your work is an inspiration. He was really inspired at the Art Show. It is always a wonderful experience attending the show. His wife is part of the Woman's Club, and they love being involved with the Art Show. He hopes this partnership continues for many more years. His mother-in-law went to the Felician Sisters daycare, and she loved to paint. It would be great if you had a partnership with the Enfield Senior Center.

Ms. Place would love to work with the elderly. Madam Chair added that is a wonderful suggestion.

Mr. Unghire also thanked them for their wonderful artwork. He asked about the piece on the guest desk. Ms. Ortiz stated it is a praying mantis that was from her sculpture class, and she also made the giant gourd. Mr. Unghire added there is a lot of detail involved with them. It must have taken a lot of time to sculpt them. Ms. Place stated she was in the same class, and it took her around 2 months to make a dragon fly.

Madam Chair added she also loves attending the Art show each year. She appreciates your shout out to the Enfield Woman's Club and recognizing their support. They are going the extra mile for our students with the scholarships they provide. Your talents are amazing, and you are incredible artists. Your artwork opens up our eyes. She appreciates your imagination and loves looking at your portfolio work. Thank you.

Mr. Scioscio thanked everyone for your support and for inviting us here.

## **7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

### **a. Student Representative Update**

Student Representative Morgan DiFronzo stated AP exams have started and will end on Thursday. Senior Prom Tickets are sold out. The Senior Night and Class Picnic tickets are on sale now. Senior dues are needed as well as your Safe Grad fees. The EHS Chorus and Orchestra will hold a concert on May 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM and the Band Concert will be held on May 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM. EHS will hold a blood drive on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. Student Council applications and videos are due now. May 24<sup>th</sup> incoming grade 9 students (current grade 8 JFK students) will tour EHS, and the Awards and Scholarships will be held on May 31<sup>st</sup>. Grades have closed. She also thanked all our teachers and nurses for everything they are doing. She gave an update on EHS sports for Baseball, Softball, Track & Field, Golf, Boys Tennis, Girls Tennis, Boys Lacrosse and Girls Lacrosse.

### **b. EPS Update**

Mr. Drezek stated when we adopted our 2023-24 school calendar in February, we did not know that our April vacation did not align with districts within our athletic conference and area dance studios. We aligned our 2024 April vacation with districts close to us. We will place this item on the next agenda to revisit. We are looking at moving the April vacation week from April 15-19<sup>th</sup> 2024 to the week of April 8-12<sup>th</sup> 2024. This will align us with all districts within our athletic conference except for 2 districts. He will reach out to our bargaining units about this upcoming change, and he also wanted to inform families about this that may be planning vacations for April 2024.

Mr. Drezek thanked our teachers and nurses for everything they do for our students. They have been on our front lines. It was a year ago when he was begging for needed subs our buildings. Without our teachers and nurses, we would not have made it. Please take a moment to thank our teachers and nurses. He urged staff members to take a moment and thank yourselves for everything you do.

### **8. AUDIENCES**

Madam Chair will allow each speaker 4 minutes to talk.

Zach Zannoni, Howard Street – Mr. Zannoni spoke about the recommended budget cuts made by the Republican Town Council members. They want to cut \$1.4 million from the school budget. This information was not made public. He reached out to them about this. He is distraught over this recommendation. You are talking about cutting staff members and programs that will affect our students. The proposed BOE education budget maintains current programs. Rolling back programs will not allow us to move forward as a district. He asked if Republican Board members agree with this recommendation. Our value should be about our schools. This is very concerning to educators and students. He has never spoken at a Board meeting before. You are playing politics.

Marcy Taliceo, Coolidge Drive – Mrs. Taliceo agreed with what Mr. Zannoni said. She was not aware of this. There is concern with flags being displayed in classrooms and on doors. She encourages Board members to look at your policies. You are here to make a difference, every day for every student. You should be representing all children equally and every child no matter of their preferences. If you don't want to do this, you shouldn't run for the Board of Education. Look at your Policy #0523 and #9012. It is a disgrace that you want to take away supports for our LGBTQ students and it is wrong. Every Child, Every Day or don't run for the Board of Education.

### **9. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Mrs. Acree thanked our Enfield teachers for their dedication and for preparing our children for successful and productive lives and to achieve their goals and have flourishing careers. Thank you, teachers. She provided an update about upcoming events at Prudence Crandall. She attended the Spring Showcase on April 26<sup>th</sup> at Enfield High School with United Sound. The students sounded wonderful. She also thanked all of our amazing music teachers.

Dr. Calnen thanked our amazing teachers for everything they do. He also thanked our nurses. They are leaders of our health programs in our schools and also need to be recognized. As a pediatrician, he is worried about our town. The school system plays a critical role in our children's lives and opens up many learning opportunities for them. Families move to our town because of the school system. Cutting the school budget by \$1.4 million will cost us too much. Don't let them do this. He provided a detailed update about KITE, School Readiness Council Grant, Community Learning Plan, and Head Start Annual Self-Assessment.

Mrs. Cushman thanked our teachers and nurses. She also thanked anyone that works with our students. She cannot wait to hear stories of how you were appreciated. We were showered with gifts and well wishes at a previous meeting that were greatly appreciated.

Mrs. Cushman stated the Enfield Together Coalition will hold two virtual presentations - "Prevention in the Digital Age" on May 11<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 PM and "Raising a Drug-Free Teen" on May 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM. She encourages parents to talk to your teens. JFK will also hold an informational night for all incoming grade 6 students (current grade 5 students) on May 30<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM. You can go the JFK PTO website to submit questions to be addressed.

Mr. Hamre encourages families to attend the JFK information night for incoming students on May 30<sup>th</sup>. The JFK PTO is meeting tonight. JFK will hold a staff vs. students basketball on May 19<sup>th</sup> from 6-8 PM. He also encouraged everyone to look at the May JFK newsletter for other important information.

Mr. Hamre appreciates the comments made by Mr. Zannoni about cutting the education budget. That is just terrible. He asked for the Republicans to respond to Mr. Zannoni's question. They appreciate our nurses and teachers, but they do not want to support our budget. The best way to recognize our teachers is to support the budget. He also thanked Mrs. Taliceo for her comments.

Mr. Hamre stated a Youth Vote event is being held on the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment and will be held at EHS on May 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM. This event will be live and will be taped. He thanked everyone involved with the EHS lamplighters production and JFK production. We have some very talented students. He also discussed issues with the sound system at JFK. He would like us to look into this. He appreciates everyone involved with both of these productions.

Mr. Hamre also addressed his previous request from the April 25<sup>th</sup> meeting about removing a Board member from a subcommittee.

Mr. Unghire asked for a point of order. Madam Chair stated this is Mr. Hamre's time to talk and express his concerns. She has already spoken to Mrs. Cushman, Mr. Hamre and you about this. She will make a decision about this.

Madam Chair asked both Mr. Hamre and Mr. Unghire to stop the back and forth dialogue. Now there is a point of order.

Mr. Hamre respectfully requests that Mrs. Cushman be removed from the Policy Committee.

Mr. Unghire stated that Mr. Hamre criticized the Republican BOE Caucus for not addressing this. He addressed Mr. Zannoni by saying there is no back and forth. We have been instructed not to have a back and forth conversation with audience members. He is reminding Mr. Hamre of this process.

Mr. Unghire stated he was not aware of the internal negotiations. He was not aware of the dollar amount mentioned. The reason you found out about the amount was from a FOI request. He has faith in the negotiation process and the Town Council to come up with a reasonable budget. The majority of the Town Council members will pass the budget.

Mr. Unghire also thanked the members of the Woman's Club for the contributions they have made to the scholarships that benefit our students. He thanked our nurses for everything they do for our students. He also thanked his favorite teacher at JFK.

Mr. Unghire stated Buzz Robotics will hold an open house on Wednesday at the Annex from 6:30-8:30 PM. He encouraged everyone to attend.

Mr. Unghire added this is also national prevention week starting on May 7-13<sup>th</sup>. The virtual presentation on May 11<sup>th</sup> also addresses drug prevention, suicide prevention, mental health, smoking, drinking and vaping. He encourages parents to attend the virtual presentations on May 11<sup>th</sup>. If you have any questions, you can contact Tessa Ridel at 860-253-6382. He previously attended the community conversation held tonight on opioid substance use and misuse. Over 1,500 have died due to overdoses in Connecticut in 2022.

Mrs. Pickett thanked all our teachers and staff members that work with our students. This is your special week. She thanks them every day. She knows Enfield Street PTO has come up with some creative ways to celebrate them. Her daughter made this sign thanking her teacher and her son added all teachers. Thank you for what you do each day.

Mrs. Pickett received a school climate survey. Will that be going out district-wide and will this information be shared? Mr. Drezek stated it will go out to all parents. This survey is from CREC and is part of our equity district work with our Director of Educational Equity Altressa Cox-Blackwell.

Mrs. Pickett stated you had some meetings with your parent advisory group. How will this information be used with our equity efforts?

Mrs. Pickett stated it is teacher appreciation week. Enfield Street has many events planned and they can be found on the PTO Facebook page. She provided an update on upcoming events at Enfield Street.

Mrs. Pickett added we cannot engage in a back-and-forth conversation with audience members, but we can address comments they made during Board member comments.

Mrs. Pickett stated the proposed budget cuts is very worrisome and confusing based on the outcome from the April 5<sup>th</sup> special meeting where the entire Town Council supported our efforts. Now they are recommending more cuts. We do not have enough resources now. We rely on our partnership with our Town for many services. She urged voters and community members to address your concerns and get involved.

Mr. Ryder stated the budget the Board passed had a small increase for cost of living. There were no additional programs or staffing. Our budget was to maintain what we currently have. With the proposed \$1.4 million cut, we would need to cut around 30 staff members. We need more staff members, not less. He hopes our budget request is approved as requested.

Mr. Ryder thanked our school nurses and teachers, including any staff members that lends a hand with our children. We appreciate you all.

Mr. Ryder stated the Principal, Assistant Principal and Chief of Staff for the Day contest at Eli Whitney is done and the winners will take their places on May 11<sup>th</sup>. Congratulations to Maddie, Emma and Kiara. He also provided an update on Eli Whitney upcoming events.

Madam Chair addressed Mr. Hamre's request. The Republican Caucus wants Mrs. Cushman as the liaison on the Policy Committee. They support the policies Mrs. Cushman brings to the committee for consideration and they feel she is representing their caucus appropriately. No matter who you have on this committee, they will represent your caucus the same way. This is where she is leaving this. We as Democrats have members on the Policy committee that represent how we feel. Mrs. Acree is on the Curriculum Committee. She is a former teacher and loves curriculum. When we assigned Board members to our committees, we put who we felt would best represent each caucus. She understands Mr. Hamre's frustration. We need to work together and keep the workflow moving forward. She has listened to both sides. No changes will be made to any committee.

Madam Chair thanked our teachers and staff for everything you do for our kids. She also thanked our nurses for what they do including her favorite nurse Regina who works at Hartford Hospital. She provided an update on upcoming safe grad events. She also attended the Enfield High concert on April 26<sup>th</sup>. We have such talent in our school.

Madam Chair congratulated Dr. Calnen. KITE is recognizing him for his many roles in Enfield with a Buddy Bench that will be placed at the Pearl Street Library on Wednesday.

Madam Chair also thanked the Youth Vote group for hosting the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment and its Legacy event on May 10<sup>th</sup>. We have many events happening on May 10<sup>th</sup>, Buzz, Youth Vote Event, KITE dedication, PTO President's Meeting and Budget deliberations.

Madam Chair addressed the budget. The recommended \$1.4 million budget cut requested by the Republican Caucus is to reduce the Board of Education budget. She thanked Deputy Mayor Cekala for sharing information with her. They are also proposing to cut the Town budget by \$500K. They are requesting to cut our budget by \$1 million more than the town budget. She did some research and asked Mr. Drezek to prepare something for tonight. Each Board member received a document with Town and BOE budget request amounts and amounts actually received from 2011-2022 that also include percentages. She reviewed these amounts. We are staying afloat due to concessions made by our bargaining units.

Mr. Drezek stated one of our bargaining units is in year two of concessions.

Madam Chair stated the Town has increased their budget by \$20 million and the Board by \$10 million in the past 10 years. Where did the \$20 million go. We both have contractual obligations. The town covers shortfalls by using CIP funds and these CIP projects have been put on the back burner. We have OSHA complaints about our buildings. Our health fund was depleted, our parking lots, buildings and playgrounds are a mess. We have been kicking the can down the road for years. The blame is now being placed on the current Democratic Caucus. We have been robbing Peter to pay Paul for years. The Democratic Caucus does not support the \$1.4 million cut to the school budget. We are all on budgets and inflation is out of control. She has been on the Board for 10 years. She asked Mr. Drezek what will \$1.4 million cut look like to our school district.

Mr. Drezek stated we will need to cut staff and/or programs around approximately 26 staff members. It could be more than that based on seniority.

Madam Chair added we are looking at cutting staffing and programs. Mr. Drezek added we could not just cut supplies. We have leases and licensing agreements we need to maintain. We need staff to run our programs. We changed the process with color coding on our budget presentation to show this. We would need to cut staff and some programs.

Madam Chair asked how contract freezing impacts retention and hiring teachers. Mr. Drezek stated it is terrible. Our turnover numbers are high. With step movement freezes it will not allow us to compete with other districts. We have done this over the past dozen years with freezes. A neighboring town can offer our experienced teachers at a higher step and pay increase. He thanked our teachers for their loyalty. We have lost a lot of talent because we cannot compete.

Madam Chair asked if the lack of Alliance District funding affects anything. Mr. Drezek stated it does and he explained this at our last meeting. The Alliance district network was created 12 years ago. Our kids require additional resources to meet their needs. We need to make concessions.

Madam Chair stated our Town budget is high. It is because of the lack of long term planning and investing. She does not want higher taxes in Enfield. She wants to know where her

money is going. This document shows our investment and value we have put into Education. Your school system will bring new people to our town.

Madam Chair thanked Town Council members for not supporting this recommendation to cut our school budget. It is important to know what conversations are being discussed during budget deliberations. This is very upsetting, and people need to know this. We discussed this at leadership and our test scores have nothing to do with being an alliance district.

Mr. Drezek added the accountability index is when you have been designated as an Alliance District. Districts will receive additional funding via a grant to support your student's needs. We do not have the means or resources to support our needs to reach our kids financially. We need to meet the needs of our kids.

Madam Chair asked about open positions we are trying to fill. Mr. Drezek stated we have around 20-30 non-certified positions and 11 certified positions we have been unable to fill. Madam Chair stated those positions are needed. Mr. Drezek stated in the past when we have had budget challenges, we looked at attrition. This year there will be some consequences by not offering some programs in September. Where will we place these students. We do not have study halls. We might save money by not offering some programs. We also need to provide services to Special Education Students. We don't want to be penny wise and pound foolish. We are losing staff every day. These are challenges we are facing, and they are real.

Madam Chair stated this is hard for first year teachers that are in the process of preparing their resumes. Mr. Drezek added there is a process for non-tenure teachers where we need to notify them in writing about layoffs by March 1<sup>st</sup>. We as leadership did not do this. If we need to do this, the Board will need to provide them with an in-person hearing. We have not done this for the last 6 years. He can still see Mrs. Hall reading the teachers' names. He is very proud that we have not done this.

Madam Chair asked the Republican Board of Education Caucus how you feel about the recommended budget cuts made by the Republican Town Council Members. We are here fighting to keep what we requested.

Mrs. Acree stated that neither she nor Mrs. Cushman did not know about this. Madam Chair stated we discussed this at Leadership. If that information did not get to you, she apologized for that miscommunication.

Mr. Unghire stated we discussed the budget but not the specific number. Madam Chair asked if he is supporting the \$1.4 million budget cut to the Education budget? Mr. Unghire stated we have had many years with no increases and some years with increases. He has faith in the process. It is out of our hands now. None of us want to cut teachers and programs. This is all part of the negotiation process.

## **10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

### **a. Proposed New Policy & Policy Revisions – Second Reading**

Mrs. Acree moved, seconded by Dr. Calnen, that the Enfield Board of Education approves Policy #5145.54 Civility as a Second Reading.

A vote by **roll call – 8-0-0** passed unanimously.

Mrs. Pickett moved, seconded by Mr. Hamre, that the Enfield Board of Education approves Policy #6174 Summer School Policy as a Second Reading.

A vote by **roll call – 8-0-0** passed unanimously.

Mrs. Pickett moved, seconded by Mr. Hamre, that the Enfield Board of Education approves Policy #9321 Time, Place and Notification of Meetings as a Second Reading.

A vote by **roll call – 8-0-0** passed unanimously.

Mrs. Pickett moved, seconded by Mr. Hamre, that the Enfield Board of Education approves Policy #9325.2 Order of Business and Meeting Conduct as a Second Reading.

A vote by **roll call – 8-0-0** passed unanimously.

**11. NEW BUSINESS:**

**a. Approve EHS Safe Grad Donations for the Graduating Class of 2023**

Mr. Unghire moved, seconded by Mr. Ryder, that the Enfield Board of Education approves donating \$1,000 to the Enfield High Safe Grad for the Graduating Class of 2023.

A vote by **roll call – 8-0-0** passed unanimously.

**12. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Curriculum – Mrs. Pickett reported Curriculum Committee will meet on May 18<sup>th</sup>. We will review our new Health Curriculum and K-12 health scope.

Finance – Dr. Calnen reported the Finance Committee met on May 1<sup>st</sup>. We reviewed financial reports, nutrition reports, end of year budget projections and Tag investments. Our next meeting will be held on June 5<sup>th</sup>.

Policy – Mr. Ryder reported the Policy Committee will meet on May 16<sup>th</sup>.

Leadership – Madam Chair reported Board Leadership met yesterday and she would like to meet again prior to our next Board meeting.

Joint Facility – Mr. Ryder reported the Joint Facilities Committee will meet on May 25<sup>th</sup>.

JFK Building Committee – Mr. Ryder reported the JFK Building Committee cancelled their May 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. They will meet next week.

Joint Security Committee – Mr. Ryder reported the Joint Security Committee meeting date has not been set yet.

Enfield Mental Health Wellness & Workgroup – Dr. Calnen did not have anything new to report regarding the Enfield Mental Health Wellness & Workgroup.

Enfield Cultural Arts Commission – Mr. Hamre reported the ECAC supports the Woman’s Club Arts Festival and scholarship program. He provided the Board with a detailed report regarding the Gazebo, concert series, JFK and EHS productions, Valley Rep Theatre and the Opera House Players.

PK-5 School Modernization Committee – Mr. Drezek stated we are still waiting for the bids to go out from the town finance office. Once they go out, it would be prudent to recall the committee to meet and review the next steps.

**13. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**



Mr. Hamre moved, seconded by Mrs. Pickett, that the Regular Meeting Minutes of April 25, 2023, be approved. Mr. Ryder asked for a correction on page 10. Mrs. Pickett moved, seconded by Mr. Hamre to approve the minutes as amended. A vote by **show-of-hands 8-0-0** passed unanimously.

**14. APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS AND PAYROLL**

Mrs. Pickett moved, seconded by Mr. Unghire that the Enfield Board of Education accepts the superintendent's certification for:

- The month of April 2023 the total expenditures amount to \$7,098,088.08, broken down between payroll totaling \$4,669,185.99 and other accounts totaling \$2,428,902.09 and;
- All payments have been made in accordance with the approved budget and are properly accounted for within the books of accounts. Copies of approval for check invoices are properly document.

A vote by **show of hands 8-0-0** passed unanimously.

Mrs. Pickett moved, seconded by Mr. Hamre that the Enfield Board of Education accepts the superintendent's certification for:

- The month of April 2023 total Grant and Head Start expenditures amount to \$544,243.14 broken down between payroll totaling \$497,678.52 and other accounts totaling \$46,564.62; and
- All payments have been made in accordance with the approved budget and are properly accounted for within the books of accounts. Copies of approval for check invoices are properly document.

A vote by **show of hands 8-0-0** passed unanimously.

Line Item Transfers if any - None

**15. CORRESPONDENCE & COMMUNICATION - None**

**16. EXECUTIVE SESSION - None**

**17. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Hamre moved, seconded by Mrs. Pickett to adjourn the Regular Meeting of May 9, 2023.

All ayes, motion passed unanimously. Meeting stood adjourned at 8:50 PM.

Jonathan LeBlanc  
Secretary  
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary