

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 12, 2021**

A regular meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held in Council Chambers on January 12, 2021.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Walter Kruzel.
2. **INVOCATION OR MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Stacy Thurston
3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Stacy Thurston
4. **FIRE EVACUATION ANNOUNCEMENT:**
5. **ROLL CALL:**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jonathan LeBlanc, Bill Salazar, John Unghire, Tina LeBlanc, Joyce Hall, Stacy Thurston, Scott Ryder, and Walter Kruzel

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Christopher Drezek, Superintendent of Schools; and Mr. Andrew B. Longey, Assistant Superintendent

6. **BOARD GUEST(S)** - None
7. **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**
 - a. **MLK - NS** - as presented
 - b. **EPS School Update**

Mr. Drezek gave the Board a recap of the back-to-school plan. All parents received a letter of my plan. He thanked Mr. Ryder for his assistance with the calendar. He previously referred to the plan as a 2/3 Hybrid plan. It is a modified Hybrid Plan. Parents will receive an e-mail about students returning to school fully in March. As he explained this, it might be challenging for the students in grades 6-12 to come back fully. If all the students returned, we would not be able to bring all the furniture back and remain socially distant. Returning fully will depend on the numbers. The principals will be gathering this data and he will make the final decision. This is our plan. We owe everyone to start planning. One of our schools did not make it back this week. We needed to start planning while keeping everyone safe. He knows everyone will not be happy with this. We will be moving forward with this benchmark.

Mr. Drezek stated the message coming from the State was to get the students back. He is trying to make a compromise while keeping everyone safe. The last time we were in Council Chambers, he shared charts with numbers. He will not be doing that anymore. He has heard from both sides on this. The last time we met, the Enfield number was 34.4 and today our number is 54.3. We have doubled our number for remote learning. This is the worst number we have had since the start of the pandemic. We have received conflicting information from the State. The State is at 54.5 and Hartford County is 54.3. He does not see this getting any better in January. He is hopeful the February numbers will decrease so it will be easier for us in March. Getting all students back will be a huge task. Having adequate staffing is needed. If the numbers stay high, we may need to make changes. Coverage will continue to be a task. We need to remain fluid. Our staff have been phenomenal. There is no perfect answer. Balancing the needs of our students while keeping everyone safe is why we will phase our kids back.

Mr. Drezek stated his letter was delayed because he wasn't sure about Smyth Bus having enough drivers. Smyth bus is no different than us and they have had staff that needed to quarantine. Jessie McCrewell is a saint. She keeps me updated daily. Smyth Bus lives by the motto they will never cancel school because of them. While he was starting his letter on Wednesday, the events at our nation's capital were occurring. He felt sending out a letter from the Superintendent while this was happening was not a good idea. Therefore, this is why he decided to wait.

Mr. Drezek added we were notified on Thursday morning that there were several Eli Whitney staff that were identified as close contacts and needed to quarantine. Several people responded to me that these teachers put themselves in jeopardy and they did this, so they didn't need to come back. This statement is untrue. They attended a funeral on Wednesday and were there for their students during the worst day of their students' lives. They were deemed as close contacts. He thanked these teachers for being for there for their students. He thanked Chairman Kruzal for attending the wake. He was unable to attend personally because he was waiting for test results for someone in his family. These teachers are doing what they normally do – take care of our kids. People are entitled to their opinions. He has heard from our unions and they have only asked what they can do to help. He knows what our staff has done and what they are doing. This accusation was unfair and needed to be addressed.

Mr. Drezek stated Smyth Bus was able to work out any staffing issues they had, because buses rolled on Monday. He thanked all the employees at Smyth Bus for everything they are doing for us. Everyone is doing everything they can. He has not questioned anyone's intentions. Our people are tired and worn down. They will continue doing everything they can for our kids.

Mr. Drezek spoke to Bob Radar from CAFE. Martha is available to start with our equity work. We will continue this conversation next week and will start planning. He hopes to start this up in the very near future with Board Leadership.

Mr. Drezek addressed the events that occurred at the State Capital. He is not looking at this as a political point. As Educators, we need to guide our conversations with our students while not crossing over that line. We need to let our students come to their own conclusions. Our teachers have been talking with our kids when difficult things happen. When things like this happen, we all reflect on things. We all witnessed this and wonder how did we get here?

Mr. Drezek stated he recalls years ago when the Board would get together at Christmas for a holiday gathering. Everyone put aside politics and no business were discussed at this gathering. We need to move forward. He has been here for 9 years as either the Superintendent or the Assistant Superintendent. There have been many people that have sat in the Board member seats. We have had some contentious discussions but have moved forward. How we react is how we can get through this. We have the power to lower the temperature. That is what this process is about. He asked himself if he could do anything differently. There was a time when you could shake hands and move forward. Everyone has the rights to their opinions. That is okay and that is what the process is. How we get through this is important. We need to get to a point to civility and agree and disagree with civil discourse. We can all be better and make a conscious effort to listen and treat people with civility.

8. **AUDIENCES:** None

9. **BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS:**

Mrs. Thurston is equally as frustrated by what Mr. Drezek stated about our teachers. She was born and raised in Enfield and went through our school system. She has never met a group of teachers that feel the way current and past Enfield teachers feel about their students. If you are questioning these teachers, you do not know them. They go above and beyond for their students every day. They will move heaven and earth for their students. She thanked our teachers for being there for their students.

Mrs. Thurston wished someone in this room a happy birthday.

Mr. Ryder stated he has updated the PTO websites with the calendar dates for January and February Hybrid learning. March 1st will be determined later for students in grades 6-12. He will update the website with any information he receives from the schools including school fund raising events. We just posted the Little Caesar's Pizza fundraiser event at Parkman school. This event is open to all schools. The Eagle masks fundraisers have arrived and will be delivered to the schools. Hazardville Memorial PTO meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 13th at 7:30 on zoom. Memorial progress reports will be going home this week and next week depending on your cohort. He will post the spring picture days on the website.

Mr. Ryder stated he is a parent at Eli Whitney and JFK. Whitney has an amazing staff from the top to the bottom. This is his 5th year at Whitney. He knows so many of the teachers personally. He did not hear about any negative chatter. If he had, he would have tried to set the record straight. Our teachers are great. He respects your opinion, but you got this one wrong.

Mr. Ryder stated that both he and Mr. Salazar are mentors. We need more mentors. If you are interested in giving one hour a week, please contact Jenn Howell at 860-253-4737 or at jhowell@enfieldschools.org. All meetings are done virtually now. He has been with his student for 5 years. Please reach out to Jen or any Board member if you have any question.

Mr. Ryder wished everyone a Happy New Year and to be safe.

Mrs. Hall also wished everyone a Happy New Year and we all need more happiness in our lives.

Mrs. Hall attended a CREC meeting virtually. We are modifying the CREC Constitution. The biggest change has to do with the pandemic and allowing Board and committee meetings to continue virtually.

Mrs. Hall attended virtually a Head Start Policy meeting. They had a guest speaker Dr. Peg Oliveira from the Gesell Institute at Yale attend. She discussed trauma and resilience and becoming more positive about everything. Doing what is necessary when it is necessary. This works for both students and adults.

Mrs. Hall stated KITE has met and has produced their Winter Community Resource Guide for COVID-19 for families. You can find many valuable resources for families in this brochure. You can find this information on their website at enfieldkite.org.

Mrs. Hall added ERfC has put out their annual report. Part of the report (page 7), is about how ERfC adapted during COVID-19. They were instrumental in setting up the ERfC Distance Learning Center at the Annex.

Mrs. Hall stated ERfC will hold a pizza contest in conjunction with Golden Irene's. She explained to the Board how it works. You order your pizza kit (860-627-5971) and pick it up at Golden Irene's. You will cook your pizza at home with any toppings you would like. Take a picture and post it to ERfC Facebook Album and tag ERFC Community News and #ERfCpizza by Sunday, February 7th. ERfC will post the pictures. The top 5 finalists by popular vote will

be given to Chef George Akkouris of Golden Irene's. He will pick the final 3 winners. The grand prize pizza will be placed on Golden Irene's menu as a specialty pizza. You will also receive a T-Shirt and gift card. She added that 10% from each sale of this pizza will go to the ERfC Scholarship Fund. The cost for the pizza kit is \$6 and \$1 from each kit sold benefits the ERfC Out-of-School Time Scholarship Fund. Voting will be held on February 8th and 9th just in time for National Pizza day on February 9th.

Mrs. LeBlanc loves that idea for a contest.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated she has been here for 10 years as a Board member. It is crazy to think how many Board members we have had and how many people have addressed the Board over the years.

Mrs. Hall added she remembers the Christmas parties. Mrs. LeBlanc does not recall them.

Mrs. LeBlanc added she has also taken time to reflect and moving forward starting with ourselves is good place to start. She appreciates Mr. Drezek sharing this tonight. We have set forth these plans. These are unplanned plans. The LeBlanc motto is "failure to plan, is a plan to fail". She knows the plans will not be perfect. Our teachers have been very fluid.

Mrs. LeBlanc echoes the comments about our teachers. They go into the teaching for helping our kids of all ages, not for the money. They go to students dance recitals, games and concerts. Teachers do so much for our kids, and this is what makes Enfield Public Schools so great. Our teachers make a huge impact on our kids. They spend a lot of time with our kids outside of their contractual hours. She appreciates our teachers and thanked them for being there for this family.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked about when there are positive cases, the department of public health gives us a directive. Mr. Drezek stated nothing has changed except for quarantining for 10 days now instead of 14 days. We still share our cases with the health department. Our school nurses have received their first immunizations and should be receiving their second shot next week. We get e-mails about cases even during the break. We will still go through the same process as before and will start sending out letters again.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated there seems to be 2 sets of rules. The Academy of Pediatrics also makes recommendations for school age children.

Mr. Drezek stated the CDC has moved quicker.

Mr. Drezek added he is glad Mr. Ryder did not see this. He has also received questioned from parents about the 10 days. He was referencing comments that were made to him directly. We can't just take what the CDC says. We need to confirm with our health department.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked if we are looking at half days on Wednesdays in February? Mr. Drezek stated we are still looking into this. There will be some adjustments made. First, we need to know how many students will come back. We will need to make changes to specialist's schedules. Cohorts will be gone. It will be a tall task for our teachers teaching 5 days a week to two different audiences. They will still be teaching our remote learners and our in-person learners at the same time. We will lose our asynchronous learning days on Wednesdays which helped our teachers greatly. We will need to be flexible.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked about the parent surveys for JFK and EHS, will the survey ask parents if they are planning to send their children back 5 days, Hybrid or remote? Mr. Drezek stated it will only ask them if they are planning to send their children back 5 days only. Only those that want to be back full time.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated the choice would then remote or 5 days only for JFK and EHS students. Mr. Drezek added if 100% of the students wanted to come back fully, he would need to make that final decision. Logistically, we cannot fit them all back with social distancing in place. If 50% of the population wants to go back, that could work. We are also looking at other targeted groups like students that are academically struggling, expanding the option for students with IEP's that could benefit from attending school 5 days a week. We might not be able to bring back the entire student population, but we might be able to bring in specialized groups. We are going to be as creative as possible to give our students the best experiences we can.

Mrs. LeBlanc added some of the students want to go back for normalcy.

Mrs. LeBlanc wished everyone a happy new year. She would like us to not use words like quarantine, cohort, pandemic, close contact, and direct contact in 2021. She thanked Mr. Drezek for the update.

Mr. LeBlanc stated if his pizza wins, Mrs. Hall can name it. He also does not get into national politics. This is the Enfield Board of Education and it should stay that way. American needs to take a deep breath and relax. Everything will be better moving forward.

Mr. LeBlanc stated the SELC FEO Stowe Family Educator Organization staff members and Board members have been reading stories at bedtime to students. He thanked Brianna Beckstrand for everything she does. They will also hold a Pop the Trunk Pre-K Grab and Learn event on February 17th. You can go to Kite Facebook page or enfieldkite.org for more information and updates.

Mr. LeBlanc spoke about mental health. Visits to the emergency room have increased from last year. He hopes returning back to school with our Hybrid plan and eventual 5 days a week plan will help with this. The State has recognized this. He spoke to Senator Kissel and Representative Arnone about this and they gave him information. He will stay on top of this. He expressed his extreme appreciation them both.

Mr. LeBlanc added it was nice going by St. Martha's pond and seeing kids playing pond hockey.

Mr. LeBlanc stated winter sports will start on January 19th. He hopes this will happen and it will give our student athletes a chance to play the sports they so desperately want to play.

Mr. LeBlanc stated he spoke to Ken Boulette from DPW and all schools are recycling paper, cardboard, plastic, and glass. JFK recycles milk cartons. He would love to see us expand recycling milk cartons at all our schools. Nathan Hale had a recycling program and he would like to see us start it up again.

Mr. LeBlanc added he would like to see us post our agendas on the main page of our website. Mr. Ryder and Mrs. LeBlanc post information about our meetings on the PTO website and Facebook page.

Mr. Salazar stated the events that occurred last week, and national politics have had an impact on all of us. If this opens our dialogue, it could be positive. He agrees that we need to do things differently, move forward and make things different.

Mr. Salazar understands parents are concerned with getting kids back to school and some want to keep them home. He has received phone calls about the plans changing. He would like Mr. Drezek to make them aware of what you are using when you make your decisions and plans. You have forecasted our plans up to March. This could help them understand better

about the plans being fluid. Do you expect our numbers to be at a certain level in order to return fully in March?

Mr. Drezek stated the information can be found on the State website. He can send you the link if you would like. He pulls the information directly from their website. Unfortunately, the goal post keeps moving. It is frustrating for parents and him. It is more now where is the line going. Between now and March, the data could change. We knew the holiday numbers would increase. Upcoming vaccinations will put us in a better place. Vaccinations will put us in the right direction with our forecasted plan. We started this process in July. The numbers were good at that time. We knew it was going to get worst before it gets better. He trusts the scientists and what they are telling us. Parents need to have an idea. That is why he is looking at March and having a larger plan instead of looking at this every two-weeks. This is a better plan. The curve has not flattened yet.

Mr. Salazar asked what if we start to see a downward trend and a good number of our population have been immunized? Mr. Drezek stated if there is a downward trend and it depends on how many of our staff can get immunized. They could potentially receive their second shot before March 1st. We would have a level of protection in place for our staff members. All these factors are why we are looking at March to bring our students back fully.

Mr. Salazar asked if Mr. Drezek could share this information with parents when it is available. It would be helpful.

Mr. Salazar stated the Enfield Family Resource Center has a parent group that meets virtually on zoom Monday's at 7:00 PM and on Wednesday's at 1:00 PM. They are available to assist families regarding the challenges many families are dealing with. He recommends this option for families and caregivers. You can call 860-253-5214 for additional information.

Mr. Unghire learned a lot tonight. He thanked Mr. Ryder for mentioning mentoring. He was glad to hear that both you and Mr. Salazar are mentors. January is mentor month. This is something he would be interested in and will reach out to Jenn.

Mr. Unghire stated he loves Golden Irene's. They have great food. He will be in-line for a pizza kit. He also loves to cook.

Mr. Unghire ditto's the comments made from Mrs. Thurston about our teachers and everything they do for our students. He personally knows how hard our teachers work. Our students are fortunate to have such dedicated teachers. He thanked JFK Bill Delaney for being at the Board meeting.

Mr. Unghire stated CABA offered a workshop on civility. We are members of CABA, and they provide many resources for Boards of Education in Connecticut. He attended the webinar workshop that promoted civility around the Board table and beyond. Both he and Chairman Kruzel participated together.

Mr. Unghire added civility and the lack of civility affects us in many ways. CABA stressed culture and respect is needed for one another. It impacts our culture and climate. It begins with mutual respect. Civility is important for our school culture. We need to respect each other's views. You can debate ideas but also need to respect each other's opinions. This is what we need. Board members should be a good role model for our community. Students need to see us being civil to each other. CABA will send him information from the webinar. He will share this information from today's webinar with the Board.

Mr. Unghire stated he would have loved to have attended a Christmas party this year. He wished everyone a Happy New Year and all the best to the Board and those watching this meeting.

Chairman Kruzel stated we currently have 70 people watching the Board meeting on YouTube. Thank you for watching us. He also wished everyone a Happy New Year and he prays that 2021 is better than 2020.

Chairman Kruzel recapped events starting with Wreaths Across America on December 19th. He thanked Pam and Lori for everything they do for our Veteran's and our town. Once again, they did a phenomenal job and the event at St. Patrick's Cemetery was well attended. He thanked E-TV for replaying a past ceremony from Parkman Elementary School with the convoy.

Chairman Kruzel stated we were unable to hold this year's Rachel's Challenge Pancake Breakfast due to social distancing requirements. He missed this event and hopes we will be able to hold it in 2021.

Chairman Kruzel stated he attended the wake for one of our students. He went in and out very quickly. This was the second time he has attended a student's wake during his term as a Board member. He is sorry for their loss. This is something he does not like to do.

Chairman Kruzel added the First Readers are still working on this year's event. Stay tuned.

Chairman Kruzel stated there are two pictures in Council Chambers. One is for the office of the President and the other is for the Governor. We will be getting a new picture and need to respect the office of the president. The president elect has been saying unity. We need that more than ever.

Chairman Kruzel added he will try to articulate his Board member reports differently so his words will not be taken out of context.

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

11. NEW BUSINESS:

a. ELECTION OF OFFICER – VICE CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Chairman Kruzel would like to table this item until the next Board meeting.

Mr. Salazar moved, seconded by Mr. Ryder to Table the Election of Officer – Vice Chairperson of the Board of Education until the next Board meeting.

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

12. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Curriculum – Mr. LeBlanc reported the Curriculum Committee met on January 7th. He was impressed with the presentations. Both Ms. Clarke and Ms. Burr discussed a unit that promotes positive school climate. The lesson used was on conflicting identities. Students are active participants on a voluntary basis for these discussions. Dr. Wiley presented a report on instruction goals for grade 7 and 8 music classes and the shift to develop individual instruction due to current restrictions. The cost for these resources will come from the music budget. Mr. Dague discussed the option to purchase a subscription to Business U that is covered by the Perkins Grant. This will supplement on-line course content for Business and Marketing classes. This will allow students enrichment opportunities while learning on-line. This

subscription is for one calendar year starting in January 2021.

Mrs. Hall added this was an English class and they used poem to base their discussion about conflicting identities.

Mr. Ryder asked who is the secretary for the Curriculum Committee? Policy #9132 Standing Committees of the Board list there will be a Chairperson and Secretary for each standing committee of the Board. The secretary would run the meeting in the absence of the committee chairperson. He is the secretary for the Policy Committee. He doesn't have this person for either the Curriculum or Finance Committees.

Mrs. Hall stated she is confused by this. Mr. Longey completes the reports for the Policy Committee like Ms. Middleton does it for the Curriculum Committee. Mr. Ryder added they are committee liaisons. Mrs. Hall stated you should be doing the committee reports as the secretary.

Chairman Kruzel added this is something we can address at our next meeting. We can vote in the new secretaries for these subcommittees.

Mr. Salazar stated these positions are missing secretaries for each subcommittee. At our next subcommittee meetings, we will assign secretaries to fulfill the requirements of the policy.

Mr. LeBlanc added the next Curriculum Committee meeting will be held on January 21st.

Finance – Chairman Kruzel reported as the acting Finance Chair, the Finance Committee met on December 14th and on January 11th. We will approve financial reports later on the agenda. Mrs. Cisneros is doing an excellent job keeping our budget intact.

Policy – Mr. Salazar reported Mr. Longey provided the members of the Policy Committee with his recommendations for the 5000 series. The Policy Committee will meet on January 19th at 5:30 PM and we will discuss his proposal and any additional policies.

Leadership – There is nothing new to report. Chairman Kruzel stated during COVID, he was unable to see everyone on zoom. Mr. Drezek has been bringing all the information directly to us. Leadership will start to meet with Mr. Radar about our Equity Tool Kit.

Joint Facility – Chairman Kruzel reported the Joint Facility Committee will meet on Thursday, January 14th. He thanked the Town manager for bringing the plans forward to the Town Council for our town buildings and for the Town Council to approve.

Mr. LeBlanc asked about combining Youth Services at Alcorn with our administration. He would like to see the sign in front of the building changed to reflect this. Chairman Kruzel will recommend this.

Mrs. Hall asked if all the changes made to the master plan were approved. We hired a firm last year. We discussed this at Joint Facility Committee and the Town Council will approve this on Monday. This is just the first stage. It was delayed due to COVID.

Mrs. Hall asked a Joint Facilities member about this. Chairman Kruzel stated this was presented back in October or November.

JFK Building – Chairman Kruzel reported that both he and Mrs. Thurston attended JFK Building Committee meeting. He had a presentation to share with the Board but had some technical difficulties with it. The presentation can be found on YouTube from our January 5th meeting. The plan is to open-up Blue wing after President's day to students. This project is

moving along nicely.

Joint Security – Chairman Kruzel reported he has nothing new to report.

Mr. Ryder stated the Joint Security Committee is scheduled meet on March 3rd.

Joint Insurance – Chairman Kruzel reported he has nothing new to report.

Chairman Kruzel stated our Town Clerk Suzanne Olechnicki is retiring. She started in 1988 and has been a great Town Clerk for Enfield. He wished her a great retirement. The new Town Clerk will start on February 1st.

Chairman Kruzel added we have the best and brightest staff in our school system. He wished we could go into our buildings again. The rules are the rules.

13. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mrs. Hall moved, seconded by Mrs. Thurston that the Special Meeting Minutes of January 5, 2021 be approved. A vote by **show-of-hands 8-0-0** passed unanimously.

14. APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS AND PAYROLL

Mrs. Hall moved seconded by Mrs. Thurston that the Enfield Board of Education accepts the superintendent's certification for:

- The month of November 2020, total expenditures amount to \$6,535,512.95 broken down between payroll totaling \$4,037,304.08, and other accounts totaling \$2,498,208.87. 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 documented.

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

Mrs. Hall moved seconded by Mrs. Thurston that the Enfield Board of Education accepts the superintendent's certification for:

- The month of November 2020, total grant Head Start expenditures amount to \$1,063,553.42, broken down between payroll totaling \$321,548.30 and other accounts totaling \$742,005.12. 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 documented.

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

Mrs. Hall moved seconded by Mrs. Thurston that the Enfield Board of Education accepts the superintendent's certification for:

- The month of December 2020, total expenditures amount to \$7,863,387.30 broken down between payroll totaling \$5,896,993.77, and other accounts totaling \$1,966,393.53. 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 documented.

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

Mrs. Hall moved seconded by Mrs. Thurston that the Enfield Board of Education accepts the superintendent's certification for:

- The month of December 2020, total grant Head Start expenditures amount to \$780,279.50, broken down between payroll totaling \$473,033.77 and other accounts totaling \$307,245.73. 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 documented.

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

Line-Item Transfers: Nothing to Report

15. CORRESPONDENCE & COMMUNICATION – Nothing to Report

16. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None

17. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Thurston moved, seconded by Mr. Salazar to adjourn the Regular Meeting of January 12, 2021.

All ayes, motion passed unanimously. Meeting stood adjourned at 8:53 PM.

Tina LeBlanc
Secretary
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary