

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 26, 2021**

A regular meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held in Council Chambers on January 26, 2021.

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

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Stacy Thurston

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

Chairman Kruzel reported that Mrs. Thurston is unable to attend tonight's meeting due to a previous commitment.

6. **BOARD GUEST(S)** - None
7. **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**
 - a. **Staff PD's & President's Day - NS** - as presented
 - b. **EPS School Update**

Mr. Drezek stated a lot has happened since the last time we met. He has tried to shield his frustrations with everyone over the past several months. We developed a plan to bring students back fully in March with the data we had at that time from the department of Public Health. This plan was developed with our staff receiving vaccinations – hence the March 1st date. He knew that not all our staff would receive vaccinations before they would be spending 6 hours a day in classrooms. He took some comfort knowing that we would be adding a level of protection to our staff with the vaccinations. He added that 96% of our staff have expressed an interest in receiving vaccinations.

Mr. Drezek added we had our weekly meeting with the health department and were informed to start a plan for vaccines. He thanked Patrice Sulik and added she is a saint for everything she has been doing for us. We volunteered to hold a clinic at Enfield High School in the gymnasium. Our nurses graciously volunteered to assist with the vaccinations. This decision was not just our decision. It was made in partnership with the Town manager. Mr. Bromson also offered to assist in any way they could. We planned to hold the clinic on Thursday, January 21st. Then we were notified on Friday, January 15th that we would not receive enough doses. He came up with a painstaking list of who would receive the vaccines to be ready and submitted it to Patrice. Late Friday, we received a letter from the State saying individuals 75 and old would get the vaccinations first and we would need to cancel any planned clinics. Group 1B was unable to upload any staff members name into Federal Vaccinations Database. Mr. Drezek explained the process for registering for the vaccine and what occurred. Our staff

were going to get the vaccine on Thursday. Those that did, cut the line (he used an analogy of an amusement park). The State called an audible and got your hopes up. As of today, we are being told we will receive vaccines in late February early March.

Mr. Drezek expressed his frustrations. He added we all want our kids back in the classrooms. We will be the ones that will need to put our kids back together after being gone for a year. He is tired of hearing you have our teacher's backs. You need to have their arms. If you want schools to open, we need to get our teachers vaccinated. These meetings he has told you about are coming from the safety of their living rooms. They want us to pack our teachers and students together in a room. The same governing boards are telling the Board what to do while be safe at home. The Board is here in person trying to do the right things and risking your own wellbeing. Some of you have needed to quarantine yourselves. He can tolerate a lot of things by hypocrisy is not one of them.

Mr. Drezek stated our proposed plan will not work. Dr. Carter recommends us to continue doing what we are doing. We have a larger number of remote learners. He asked Emily Hulevitch, ETA President to get questions and concerns from our teachers. We are all working together. Our teachers will need to continue doing two jobs for the rest of the year. Our teachers will need to continue what they are doing. He is afraid that the roller coaster ride of trying to stay open will continue for us. Quarantine issues will continue for our teachers. The new strain of the virus might cause a shutdown.

Mr. Drezek added our staff are using Wednesday's to connect with our students and remote learners. Specialist are doing the same connecting with their students. His hope is the more we are open, the more students will come back. We are all stuck with this for the foreseeable future. We will continue with our remote asynchronous learning on Wednesday's. We will also have remote learners for the rest of the school year. He is pulling back our reopening plan. We will continue to work getting to a 4-day week in March.

Mr. Drezek stated during the fall, we had a case were staff and students were affected by COVID. Two of the staff members needed to be hospitalized. He has done everything he could to keep our staff and students safe. He knows that not everyone will like his decisions. Sending our staff back now would be hypercritical. He will send out communication about this change tomorrow and hopes you will try to understand why he made this decision.

Chairman Kruzel thanked Mr. Drezek for his update. He also thanked the 250 people that are watching this on YouTube. He added that as soon as he has the link to this meeting, he will forward this to our State Representatives and even the Governor if he has too. We are meeting in person and he would like them to know how we feel. Even the Legislators are at home meeting via zoom.

Mr. Drezek added that he sent some of his comments to our State delegation. Representative Hall responded to him immediately and Representative Arnone is also aware. They both support us completely. Representative Hall and Arnone are going to look into this.

Chairman Kruzel thanked both Representative Hall and Arnone for looking into this. He added he will also forward this meeting to them for them to pass along so they know what is going on in Enfield and it is very frustrating.

8. AUDIENCES:

Marcy Taliceo, Coolidge Drive – Mrs. Taliceo stated she has not always gotten along with the administration. She appreciates everything Mr. Drezek has been doing and really likes you tonight. She addressed hypocrisy with the Board clapping. The Board has been pushing for the students to get back to school. What Mr. Drezek said is in the best interest of our kids.

The Board should not be political, and it needs to stop. She knows that not all of you will run again in November. We need people on the Board that support our students and teachers. There is no room for egos and political positioning.

Emily Hulevitch, Cutter Lane – Mrs. Hulevitch stated she has children in our school system. She is a grade one teacher and is the ETA President. She met with the ETA Executive Board last night. We discussed all the things we accomplish on Wednesday's. Our teachers accomplish many things on our asynchronous Wednesday's with our district learners. Our teachers are planning, grading, collaborating with our specialists and meeting with SAT Teams and checking on student progress. Wednesday are important for PBIS Teams to meet and discuss student's needs. We also have resilience groups for staff. We started asynchronous Wednesday's on October 21, 2020. Our teachers cannot collaborate and talk during the day like they used to. These days help all our teachers. She thanked Mr. Drezek and Mr. Longey for everything you are doing for us and for having our arms.

Amanda Pickett, Guild Street – Ms. Pickett thanked Mr. Drezek and appreciates your honesty. She is a parent with biracial children. She discussed the need for equity work. Social justice does not end because of COVID. She shared some racial data information with the Board. She joined the EHS Equity group with Ms. Clark last week. An equity audit is needed. She expressed the need for a district equity team. She would like the Board to explore making their meetings more welcoming for families and students.

Liz Davis, North Maple Street – Ms. Davis thanked Mr. Drezek for everything he is doing. She thanked our teachers and for keeping our kids safe in school. She addressed the 5000 series policies and how she attended the last Policy Committee meeting. The Board received legal advice on the Transgender policy. You educated yourself about a small group of our student population. These are someone's children. How would you feel if this was your child? When you make a decision, make it from your heart. She would like you to feel what the other person is feeling before you make your decision. She thanked Mr. Ryder for being a continued voice for all our kids and teachers. You are a real champion. She also thanked Mrs. LeBlanc for what you are doing for our kids every day. You represent the right way and hopes others can learn from you. She thanked all our staff.

9. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS:

Mr. Unghire stated we held our policy meeting. He thanked both Mr. Drezek and Mr. Longey for providing us with legal guidance that focused on the transgender policy. This advice was valuable, important and necessary. He also thanked Mr. Salazar for his help and support with our policies.

Mr. Unghire added that he attended a CABE webinar on Relationships Matter. Having positive relationships helps us to work affectively and productively. They expressed the importance of positive relationships on the Board and with our teachers in order to be productive. Having dignity and respect for one another is needed with all relationships we maintain. This will benefit all of us.

Mr. Unghire stated the superintendent spoke to director at CABE about the importance of sharing these webinars with all Board members. They will be providing this to us at no charge. Thank you for doing this.

Mr. Salazar thanked Mr. Drezek for your honesty and his update. He understands the reasons why and your frustrations. The data we have received from our leaders have been misleading. We are at the worst place with this pandemic. Opening the schools does not make sense. It is unfortunate, but it is at the best interest of our staff and kids to continue the same course.

Mr. LeBlanc stated with everything our staff and administration have gone through, he feels for you all. Now we need to wait. The 96% of staff members wanting to receive vaccinations is good. Once this is in place, we will be able to go to school 5 days a week. Everyone's lives matter. Our kids are missing school and our staff are vulnerable. He feels for both sides. He also agrees with the superintendent.

Mr. LeBlanc stated he did not hear anything about mental health. He has been talking about this for the past several meetings. This also matters and needs to be addressed and discussed. Opioid use, drugs, violence, alcohol use, suicides and domestic abuse have increased since COVID hit us. The State put out a documentary about how to administer Narcan. We need to talk about this. He spoke about a situation that happened in Wallingford. He has heard from families in our town with real health concerns. He agrees with what our staff is doing. You are all amazing. This is a mountain he hopes we are on the downward slope. We need to look out for our kids.

Mr. LeBlanc stated that both he and Mrs. Thurston are liaisons to the Youth Mental and Wellness Advisory Council. He reviewed notes from their last meeting. During the pandemic, we are still doing things with Rachael's Challenge. Both EHS and JFK have resources in place to help our kids that are struggling. He would like to invite Jean Haughey, Connell Clark and Dave Iacobucci to attend a Board meeting in February for them to give an overview of their program.

Mr. LeBlanc stated the Stowe Early Learning Center will hold a Pop the Trunk event on February 17th. They are also accepting applications to the SELC Pre-K program. The application can be found on our website. He also reported that ERfC, KITE and Asnuntuck Community college are partnering together to provide daily activities that provide diversity and equity that will start on February 1st on the KITE Facebook page.

Mr. LeBlanc addressed Ms. Pickett that our schools are doing a great job. He agrees that we need a trickle down affect into our lower grades. You will be proud of the work this Board will be doing soon.

Mr. LeBlanc added we are posting our Board meetings on Facebook and on the Board website. Please go to our Enfield Public Schools website for future meeting dates. He thanked Mr. Bourassa for doing this.

Chairman Kruzel stated he will address the appointments when he makes his comments.

Mrs. Hall stated at the last meeting she spoke about the pizza contest. Tonight she will discuss another contest. Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz is inviting all students in grades 3-12 to "Code for Good" by participating in the 2021 Lt. Governor's Computing Challenge. This is the 2nd year for this contest. Students can submit three options for submission: concept challenge, prototype challenge and development challenge. They can work individually or as a team. The deadline to submit entries is on April 30th. She wished them good luck.

Mrs. Hall attended a CREC Council meeting on Wednesday. The HASA/CABE/CREC Legislative Forum will be held on Thursday, February 11th from 8:30 – 9:30 AM. She encourages our representatives to attend this. We will discuss the legislative priorities.

Mrs. LeBlanc thanked Mr. Drezek as a parent. She has an older child. Her niece has little ones and she is glad we have options for our parents regarding the education choices. It is hard for our families. Each family situation is different. She thanked Mr. Drezek for supporting the staff and students. She is proud to be a Board member and stands behind our decisions. We are compared to other districts. She wished things were different and our teachers received their vaccines. Our special education teachers are amazing. They are doing

everything they can to connect with our kids. Our teachers have lost so much during the day and have lost that collaboration. She appreciates everything they are doing for our kids.

Mrs. LeBlanc thanked Ms. Hulevitch for coming tonight and talking about the importance of asynchronous Wednesdays for our teachers. Our teachers have lost so much during this pandemic. She appreciates everything you do as teachers. Our teachers are working really hard for our students.

Mrs. LeBlanc thanked Mrs. Taliceo for attending tonight. She also agrees that politics should not be part of the Board. She has tried to not be political and speaks from the heart.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated that Mrs. Pickett joined us on the equity call held last week at EHS. We need more parents to get involved with younger students. She thanked her for the research she did on the suspension rates and systemic barriers. She would like the district to have an equity team at each school and a governing team to help bridge the gaps. If we start with the younger grades, it can help. She also believes in having peer mentoring in our schools where the older students can mentor the younger students. The equity team meeting was great. Parents could ask questions. It was a comfortable setting. Ms. Clarke addressed all their questions. She spoke to Mr. LeBlanc about this. This is something the Curriculum Committee is working on with our curriculum. She can't wait to start to work on equity work with the Board.

Mrs. LeBlanc thanked Mr. Drezek. She wears her Enfield mask with pride and that is because of the leadership of the staff. Thank you.

Mr. Ryder thanked the Enfield Rotary Club, Town Councilors Cindy Mangini and Joe Mueller for the extra adult masks. They have been delivered to the schools. We also delivered child size masks to the SELC and the elementary schools. We left some masks at Enfield Adult Ed and at Central Office.

Mr. Ryder thanked Mr. Drezek. You did speak about mental health. It will be our staff that will need to get our students back together when we finally go back full time. Better prepared teachers make will give us better prepared students.

Mr. Ryder thanked Ms. Hulevitch, Mrs. Taliceo and Ms. Davis for speaking tonight. We know you might be frustrated. Our teachers are superheroes. Too much frustration is pointed at our teachers now with having Wednesdays as asynchronous days. He thanked them for hanging in there for his kids and all the Enfield students.

Mr. Ryder stated we are here to represent our schools. We are all liaisons at a school. He is the PTO liaison. He needs to hear more about events that are happening at our schools.

Mr. Ryder stated the Eli Whitney PTO will meet on February 3rd. We will have a spirit wear days around the super bowl for students to wear their favorite football team items.

Mr. Ryder thanked all our teachers and for those that came to tonight's Board meeting. He supports all our teacher and values what they are doing for our kids. Our teachers need to be valued and receive vaccines. This is the safest thing we can do.

Mr. Ryder has extra adult size masks for any Board member to take.

Chairman Kruzal thanked councilors Mangini and Mueller for the masks. He also thanked Mr. Drezek and Mr. Longey for everything they are doing. He also thanked all the staff and teachers and everyone that works in our schools for everything you are doing.

Chairman Kruzel stated we have updated some of the subcommittee liaisons.

Curriculum – Mrs. Hall has been appointed as secretary and we still have an alternate position that is vacant.

Enfield Suicide Prevention Committee has been changed to the Youth Mental Health and Wellness Advisory Council – Both Mr. LeBlanc and Mrs. Thurston are our liaisons to this committee.

Finance – Mr. Unghire has been appointed as the chair and we still have a position for a member that is vacant.

Joint Facilities - Mr. LeBlanc and Mrs. LeBlanc are our liaisons to this committee.

Joint Insurance – He will fill the vacant position.

Policy – Mr. Ryder has been appointed as the secretary.

Chairman Kruzel added the updated committee list will be sent out to Board members tomorrow.

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

11. NEW BUSINESS:

a. SUPERINTENDENT’S 2021-22 BUDGET PRESENTATION

Mr. Drezek presented his proposed budget recommendations for 2021-22. He added the budget process is backwards. There is a lot of things we do not know about at this point. He reviewed the six-year historical budget perspective. The Board and Town Council work together and he works hand-in-hand with the Town Manager.

Mr. Drezek stated last year we asked for 0% due to what we were going through and the uncertainty we were dealing with. He added that we are in unusual times and this would be the opportunity where he would showcase what we accomplished. We have a lot to brag about, but he opted not to do that. He believes the Board and Town Council will be able to get us through these difficult times.

Mr. Drezek spoke about the Eagle Academy, Stowe Early Learning Center, Adult & Alternative Education Center, Technology and the accomplishments made. He thanked Brian Olsen, Lauren Andrews, Jaclyn Valley and Marilyn Cressotti for the phenomenal jobs they are doing. Once we can safely have guests at our meetings, he will bring some of these groups before the Board.

Mr. Drezek thanked Mr. Bourassa and Mrs. Cisneros for their hard work while working with a zero budget moving the district forward during a pandemic. We now are a one-to-one district. This has been a goal of the Board for years.

Mr. Drezek presented a 2.28% budget request or \$73,324,979. We were also allowed to carry over 2% from last year’s budget. We have built a relationship with the Town Council and are fiscally responsible. He reviewed our fixed costs. We also need to keep in mind of unknowns like retirements, health and other insurances, Grants ~ CARES Act Funds and Special Education Excess Cost Grant funding. If we receive additional funds, we will reduce the amount we will need from the Town Council.

Mr. Drezek stated the proposed budget will allow us to keep all existing staff and programs; enhance social and emotional supports for students; enhance learning opportunities at all levels and continuing with our PK-12 STEAM initiative; allowing for the compliance for NEAS&C accreditation; and provide athletic opportunities for students through the unified sports, varsity, junior varsity and freshman programs.

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

Mr. Salazar moved, seconded by Mr. LeBlanc to place this item – Election of Officer – Vice Chairperson of the Board of Education back on the table.

A vote by **show-of-hands 7-0-0** passed unanimously.

Chairman Kruzel moved, seconded by Mr. Salazar to nominated John Unghire as the Vice Chairperson of the Board of Education.

Chairman Kruzel asked if there are any additional nominations for the Vice Chairperson vacant position. There were no other nominations made.

Mr. Salazar moved, seconded by Mr. LeBlanc to close nominations.

A vote by **show-of-hands 7-0-0** passed unanimously.

Discussion:

Mr. Ryder stated that Mr. Unghire reached out to us about this appointment. We have had an absence with this position on the Board for way too long. Our leadership needs to meet. Our communication also needs to increase. This appointment could be a needed bridge. Our communication with leadership has been frustrating. He is hoping that by filling this position changes will be made and with this hope, he is supporting the nomination. His request to delay this decision was for us to talk about this. This is another example of the poor communication we have had. He is hoping this will change.

Mrs. LeBlanc welcomed Mr. Unghire to the Board in September at the JFK groundbreaking celebration. She expressed the board needed help to unify at that time. Mr. Unghire has reached out to us. He is new to the Board and has a lot to learn. We need a fresh face. She has only had 2 members that have ever reached out to her and this is a first step and both individuals were named John. Thank you for reaching out.

Chairman Kruzel added he supports this appointment. We have had more Board meetings this past summer than we ever had. We also met with the Reopening committee. With the Pandemic, the Superintendent was keeping us updated. We will start with our equity plan work with Board leadership. Going forward we will have more leadership meetings.

Mrs. LeBlanc added that leadership asked to meet without Mr. Drezek and Mr. Longey so we could discuss how to lead during a pandemic and leadership did not respond.

Mr. Ryder added leadership includes communication. Mrs. LeBlanc added that leadership did not respond to our request. Let's be honest. She is not going to sit here and not state that these reasons were not given.

Chairman Kruzel called for the question.

A vote by **show-of-hands 7-0-0** passed unanimously.

Board members congratulated Mr. Unghire on his appointment.

Chairman Kruzal asked for this change to be added to our committee list.

c. APPROVE 5000 SERIES – *First Reading*

Mr. Ryder moved, seconded by Mr. Salazar that the Enfield Board of Education approves the first reading of the 5000 series as presented:

Discussion:

Mr. Salazar stated it has taken us a while to get through these policies. We are addressing the needs of the district with these policies. He thanked Mr. Longey for his work with the Policy Committee. We put in place a policy that he thought could put us in legal jeopardy. We consulted with legal counsel and this policy will protect us instead of exposing us to any harm. He supports all the policies we are presenting tonight for a first reading. If you have any questions with the policies being presented tonight contact us. He feels good with what is being presented tonight.

Mr. Unghire stated he struggled with a portion of the transgender policy where if a teacher, administrator or staff member observes a student expressing their gender or themselves at school, we cannot notify the parents. He struggled with this and he knows many parents share this concern. As a parent, he would want to know this so he could be there to help his child understand better. He needed clarification on this from a legal point. This section needs to remain in the policy because it is the law. He is not in favor of this law, but he agrees with the overall goal of the policy. No student should be harassed or bullied. School should be a safe place. He had been a victim with some of this behavior before. He will use his authority on the Board to represent all students. He added that he has a heart and doesn't want any student to live in an environment that is not safe or be discriminated against. That type of behavior will not be tolerated at all.

Mrs. LeBlanc supports this policy not because they are some of our most at risk kids and not because the law tells us to. She supports all the policies being presented from CAGE. These policies are in place because other districts have encountered these situations. The attorneys at CAGE would not place any district in legal troubles with any policy they recommend. You are only now accepting these policies because it is the law. You didn't accept what we were recommending or saying about these policies. What scares her is, if there were 5 of you, the policies previously presented without these policies, would have passed. We have had to jump through hoops with these policies (transgender policy, military policy, freedom of information and speech policy). This is what keeps her up at night. She supports the policies from CAGE because they protect our district and our students. State laws are confusing. She sits here and owes this to all our students to have these policies in place. These policies are in place so we can understand better. We need to be a safe haven for these kids and their families. These kids and parents need support from their school system. She is doing this because she has a heart and not because it is the law and that is the difference.

Mr. LeBlanc stated we had a first reading on November 10th, and he voted no because he thought we already had these policies in place. He spoke with two families about the Military Policy. The discussion he had made him understand why we need this policy in place. The Policy Committee continued their discussion on these policies. He thanked Mr. Drezek and Mr. Longey for their help with these policies. We are presenting a package of policies that are appropriate for the district.

Mrs. LeBlanc appreciates Ms. Davis for coming here tonight and making us see a different side of this when she is fighting her own battle. She commends her for always fighting for our kids

and district.

A vote by **show-of-hands 7-0-0** passed unanimously.

Chairman Kruzel stated this will be placed on the Board agenda for a second reading.

12. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Curriculum – Mr. LeBlanc reported the Curriculum Committee met on January 21st. We discussed the new course “Contemporary Black Literature” being recommended by our students, staff and equity team. This new course will be offered in the fall of 2021. We also approved new English electives and made changes to our music program. We will also offer a Hybrid/Electric vehicle training program in our automotive classes. We are the first in the State to offer this program. Other towns will be looking at us for these programs like our STEAM program.

Mr. LeBlanc added we appointed Joyce Hall as our secretary and the next Curriculum Committee meeting will be held on February 18th.

Finance – Mr. Unghire reported the next Finance Committee meeting will be held on March 8th.

Policy – Mr. Salazar reported the Policy Committee met on January 19th. We will start reviewing the 6000 policies next. The Policy Committee will meet on January 16th.

Leadership – There is nothing new to report.

Joint Facility – Chairman Kruzel reported the Joint Facility Committee will meet on Thursday, January 18th. He thanked Mr. LeBlanc for joining this committee. We will discuss adding a referendum for roofs.

JFK Building – Chairman Kruzel presented slides of the JFK project. This 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. He thanked Gilbane for everything they are doing with this project.

Mr. Salazar asked when these pictures were taken? Chairman Kruzel stated at our first meeting in January. He will bring any new pictures to the next meeting.

Mr. Ryder added his daughter will be one of the students in the Blue wing on February 18th.

Joint Security – Chairman Kruzel reported they are scheduled meet in March.

Joint Insurance – Chairman Kruzel reported they will also meet in March.

13. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mrs. LeBlanc moved, seconded by Mr. Ryder that the Regular Meeting Minutes of January 12, 2021 be approved. A vote by **show-of-hands 7-0-0** passed unanimously.

14. APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS AND PAYROLL – Nothing to Report

15. CORRESPONDENCE & COMMUNICATION – Nothing to Report

16. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None

17. ADJOURNMENT

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

All ayes, motion passed unanimously. Meeting stood adjourned at 9:18 PM.

Tina LeBlanc
Secretary
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary