

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 27, 2020**

A regular meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held in Council Chambers on October 27, 2020.

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jonathan LeBlanc (arrived at 8:38 PM), Bill Salazar, Tina LeBlanc, Joyce Hall, Stacy Thurston, Scott Ryder, John Unghire, and Walter Kruzel

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

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

Chairman Kruzel stated Mr. LeBlanc is running late and will join us later.

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

Mr. Drezek gave the Board and TV viewing audience members an update regarding COVID data and its impact from Hartford county. He reviewed the leading and secondary indicators color coded charts. He showed a line graph for the State that was updated on October 22nd. State data shows them in the orange zone that encourages you to reduce person density, which is to reduce the numbers in buildings. Enfield is doing better than the State on a 14-day rolling average. We will receive updated information this week on Thursday. Hartford County is now at 10.4 or the orange zone. Enfield is at 5.3. We are doing everything we can to mitigate the numbers in Enfield.

Mr. Drezek reviewed staff absences due to COVID related matters. As a district, we had 26 staff members that were asked not to come to work due to a COVID related matter. This does not mean that 26 staff members had COVID. There are other factors we must consider. The safety and health of our students and staff is our concern along with keeping our buildings open.

Mr. Drezek added that just because someone is a contact of a contact, that does not mean they need to quarantine. Each case is unique. He reviewed a situation with a staff member's child that was in direct contact. We asked the staff member to quarantine and get a test. The child tested positive and the staff member also tested positive a couple of days later. The definition of a close contact has changed to 15 minutes cumulative. Some might think we are being too aggressive. But the safety of our students and staff is important. We want to keep our doors open. We are not at full capacity, but we are open. We do not want to close like some of the

surrounding towns. This is why we are being aggressive with keeping staff members' home.

Mr. Drezek added he makes decisions based on the numbers which are 10 days old. He showed them a chart he keeps with daily infection rates the Governor announces daily. The numbers are not going down they are going in the wrong direction.

Mr. Drezek stated Thanksgiving will have an impact on COVID numbers and schools. Family gatherings and youth sporting events will also have an impact on numbers. Family gatherings will be held in doors due to the change in the weather. College students will be coming home. We can anticipate a large spike around Thanksgiving. We might need to do something around Thanksgiving if the numbers dictate it.

Mr. Drezek stated when you are quarantining for 14 days it impacts our kids. He reviewed a case where a student needed to quarantine. He wanted to distance learn due to a family member that was in a high-risk category. The student was also a fall athlete. His athletic season was then over. This student also needed to take required standardized tests that cannot be done remotely. When the student took the test, unfortunately the student was in direct contact of someone that tested positive. This student needed to quarantine again for 14 days. We have kids that have been quarantined for 28 days due to circumstances. We can't fix or change this. This affects the students overall mental health.

Mr. Drezek stated none of this is perfect. Every decision is important, and we need to balance our kids needs by keeping them in school. He does not want to shut things down. He shared these experiences with you. We have had several close calls and have been lucky. We are doing what we can to keep our buildings open and the kids coming to school 2 days a week in person.

Mr. Drezek stated November 9th is just around the corner. We can wait until Thursday for me to make a decision with new data from the State. A lot of districts are working on reducing the density in their buildings. We are currently using a Hybrid Plan and stayed with this plan. He does not want to take anything away from our students and would like to stay the course with our current Hybrid Plan. He does not see any indicators to make a change. He could wait until the data comes in. This is where he is at this point.

8. AUDIENCES: None

9. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS:

Mr. Ryder thanked Mr. Drezek for the information. Is it official we will continue with the Hybrid Plan through the Thanksgiving break?

Mr. Drezek stated he was going to wait until Friday to make an official decision. Today's information was concerning. Thanksgiving is going to be a red flag. He understands the frustration parents are dealing with by juggling everything. He does not see anything changing his mind. Other districts are putting things on hold. He will make this official tonight.

Mr. Ryder thanked him, as a parent your decision sooner rather than later is appreciated. His next question has to do with snow. They are predicting snow on Friday. Has the State made a final decision regarding snow days and distance learning?

Mr. Drezek stated Commissioner Cardona announced today we can use remote days for snow days. He added that some people enjoy snow days. We will use remote days and some snow days. If there is snow on Friday and it prompted closing school, it would be a remote day. We will not be extending the last day of school.

Mr. Ryder asked if we would use our Wednesday remote learning schedule for snow days? Mr. Drezek stated yes. If we are forced to go into a remote schedule due to being in the red zone that forces school closures, we would formalize a remote learning schedule.

Mr. Ryder announced the Enfield Public Schools, and the Town of Enfield are holding a webinar on October 29th at 6:30 PM with Riverside Trauma “Coping with Uncertainty, supporting the mental health of children and teens during this pandemic”. He has also shared this information with the PTO’s and has posted it on your webpages and Facebook pages. You will need to pre-register if you would like to attend.

Mr. Ryder gave the Hazardville Memorial PTO school update. Picture day for Cohort B will be held on Friday, October 30th; and picture day for Cohort A will be on November 2nd.

Mr. Ryder gave the Eli Whitney PTO school update. Picture day for Cohort B will be held on Friday, October 30th; Cohort A will be held on November 2nd and Cohort D will be on November 2nd after school gets out. The Whitney zoom PTO meeting will be held on November 4th at 5:00 PM.

Mr. Ryder reminded everyone about enfieldPTO.com. We will be holding the Wreaths Across America wreath donations again this year. Please go to our website enfieldschools.org and click on any of the schools for additional information about purchasing a wreath to be donated here in Enfield.

Mr. Ryder stated COVID testing will be done at the Enfield Loaves & Fishes from 3-6 PM tomorrow and at CHC on November 4th from 9-1 PM and every Wednesday’s through Thanksgiving.

Mr. Ryder added we will be holding PJ day again this year on December 8th for Cohort A and on December 11th for Cohort B. All donations will go to CCMC and will be done on-line for \$1. Enfield has been the 2nd or 3rd highest in the State with donations for the past 2 years. He thanked everyone for donating.

Mrs. Thurston added the Board should also do this. Mr. Ryder stated he will wear his PJ’s.

Mr. Ryder stated our staff are wearing shields and masks. Mr. Drezek stated masks are required to be worn by all staff. Shields will be worn when needed for delivering instruction to students.

Mrs. Hall asked if the State has modified our Corona Virus Relief Fund and did this affect any of our accounts or had we already spent the funds?

Mr. Drezek stated yes it has helped to offset some of the expenses that we have incurred due to this. Lorena Cisneros has put us in a better fiscal place with the funds we received. There was some guidance from the State on what we could use the funds on for reimbursement and the way they classified some of the items that did not make any sense. Friday, they made some changes that will work to our benefit. Mrs. Cisneros was able to enter our numbers on Friday to meet the deadline.

Mrs. Hall asked about student attendance. Do you have regular attendance information? Mr. Drezek stated the attendance at the high school is easier to get. The percentage of students that have 3 or more absences as of last week is 6.2%. This number is lower than when we were back in normal times. Students are being counted if they are working remotely. Our principals are tracking our elementary students. He does not have the numbers for the elementary schools or JFK available for tonight.

Mrs. Hall stated you are thinking about extending our Hybrid plan until Thanksgiving or longer. What modifications would be needed in order to bring our students back fully? Distance between students would be a big concern.

Mr. Drezek stated our hands are tied with our space restraints. The more students we have, the closer together they will be. If there is a case, the chance of other students catching this will be increased because of them being in direct close contact. Currently 50% of the students are in the building and we can spread them out more. Students at the high school are not always 6 feet apart. More of our students would be 3 feet apart per State guidelines if we were back fully.

Mrs. Hall asked about maintaining remote learning. Mr. Drezek stated based on the data we have after the first positive case; we saw a dramatic increase in students that were distance learning. This is an individual choice for parents. He has seen what other districts have done. More people are opting for remote learning that is working well for some families. We have seen more families opting to remote learning than opting back into Hybrid learning.

Mrs. Hall added that the full student body might not be as large. Mr. Drezek agreed. We won't really know what class sizes would look like without conducting another survey asking parents if they will be sending their children back. He added that some staff are having difficulties managing their specialist caseloads now. If we went back fully, this could create problems with the density in the buildings.

Mrs. Hall stated she attended a CREC meeting last Wednesday. They discussed some policy changes with health and safety protocols due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is to codify what is being done to provide the needed health and safety for students during the pandemic. She will share this information with Mr. Salazar and the Policy Committee.

Mrs. Hall stated elections will be held next Tuesday and we could have a new legislature in January. CABA has a list of priorities they will present to the Legislators as potential changes or modifications. CABA's Governor Relation Committee will hold this year a virtual Delegate Assembly on November 19th. CABA has proposed resolutions that will be discussed at the Delegate Assembly. She will attend the Delegate Assembly as Enfield's delegate. There is a consent agenda that the various committees have already approved the resolutions. Unless we object, these resolutions will be approved. If anyone would like to read the proposed resolutions or offer an opinion on them, please let her know. She will make recommendations for us. They can be found online at caba.org.

Mrs. LeBlanc some districts are allowing high school students to opt in for four days due to the number of students that are remote learning. If this were done, it could impact cohorts and student density.

Mr. Drezek stated we have discussed this and bringing students back in and extending days at the high schools. It brings up concerns with cohorting. Transportation is a concern with a higher density. We are trying to come up with creative ideas and we are faced with many roadblocks. This is a decision he never wanted to make. If we do something else will it jeopardize what we currently have. We are holding athletic events.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated parents have expressed their opinions to her that if we go back fully, they will opt their child out to remote learning. Parents have the right to decide what is best for their families.

Mr. Drezek added it can go both ways. Trying to find the balance is not easy. There have been challenges. We are seeing our kids physically. He would rather be where we are now instead of what we went through last spring. We need to stay the course.

Mrs. LeBlanc spoke to Principal Clark and her son about this. She feels it is more important to go to school two days a week than not go at all. It is important for kids to get out of the house and socialize. The students can see their classmates and learn. There is an emotional piece to this.

Mrs. LeBlanc attended the EHS senior night for football. It was a lot of fun seeing people and the students. She asked if the recommendation from the CIAC will cause more confusion about spring football?

Mr. Drezek stated it was clear that if we held football in the fall, they would not be penalized if they also played in February for spring football. This has gone better than he anticipated, and the experience was better than they anticipated. It might have curbed the appetite for the need for football in February.

Mrs. LeBlanc added the senior night held Friday was such a normal night for everyone just like the way it used to be. We were able to recognize our eight senior football players and cheerleaders. Our coaches have done an amazing job making sure our kids are safe. The parents are happy and there weren't too many complaints. They have built up team camaraderie. She thanked our coaches and the school district for everything they have done for our student athletes.

Mr. Drezek stated our coaches have monitored each kid's physical well-being. They were on the front line. The proof is we have received e-mails from our coaches with all kinds of explanations about the student athletes. He agreed with Mrs. Leblanc that our coaches are amazing as well as our Athletic Director Cory O'Connell.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated Massachusetts has been added to the list of States that you must quarantine from. She has two kids that are going to school in Mass.

Mr. Drezek stated the Governor of Rhode Island and Massachusetts have announced they will not ban interstate travel as long as you do not stay there for more than 24 hours. If you stay longer than 24 hours you will need to quarantine and get tested. They are doing what is similar with New York and New Jersey.

Mrs. LeBlanc added the COVID cases in colleges are growing. Colleges are encouraging kids to not leave. Her daughter's college tests weekly and her son's college tests randomly.

Mrs. LeBlanc thanked Mr. Drezek for making the decision to continue with our Hybrid Plan through Thanksgiving. This is smart decision. Flu and cold season are upon us. Nothing is perfect and as she has said before, this school year is perfectly imperfect. We need to roll with the punches and be ready for changes.

Mrs. LeBlanc added EHS seniors took their SAT's today; Thursday, sophomore and Juniors students will take the PSAT's. Parent/Teacher conferences will be held virtually on November 4th. Parents can e-mail their time preferences until November 2nd. Students are also encouraged to attend the conferences.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated Elijah Swanson was a pleasure to know. Many students and adults have been posting memories and comments about him. She wished the Swanson family and his friends her condolences and prayers.

Mr. Unghire toured the JFK worksite and building. He was impressed with what they are doing and the quality of work they have done. They have made several efficiencies and cost reductions to the project. This has given us more flexibility with the project as we move forward. They should be commended for the great job they are doing. As a taxpayer of Enfield, Gilbane Construction is doing a great job.

Mr. Unghire thanked Mr. Drezek for his presentation and thanked Mr. Bourassa for his additions. The graphs as presented can be visually misinterpreted. You have done a great job and you are not taking the credit that is deserved. We are in the low rate area. If the graph range can be expanded, visually it would look better. He thanked him for the hard work has gone into this.

Mr. Unghire thanked Mr. Drezek for keeping the safety and health of our students and staff as a priority and keeping our kids in school. He agrees our students are better off in school.

Mr. Salazar asked if it is possible to share the numbers of students that have opted out and are remote learning?

Mr. Drezek stated it fluctuates and we are in the process of looking at these numbers. We are looking at expanding the numbers to make it easier going forward. We are looking at different options. He will look into this further.

Chairman Kruzel stated he also attended the walk through at JFK. He thanked Mr. Drezek for his presentation. He has a presentation he would like to give under committee reports. He reminded everyone to vote next Tuesday on Election day.

Mr. Drezek stated the more he is thinking of this, he will make this official if Board members are comfortable with this. He needed extra time to make this decision and does not take this decision lightly. We will continue with our current Hybrid Plan until Thanksgiving.

Mr. Ryder asked about the early release days on November 10th and 12th. Mr. Drezek stated we will follow our early release schedule. Mr. Delaney mentioned at a past Board meeting the impact this is having on teachers. Teaching students in person and online at the same time is doing two jobs at the same time. He has a fear about what this will do to the teaching profession. The biggest resource we can give our staff is time. Anytime he can give our teachers time, he will do it.

Mr. Ryder stated students will come home like you usually do on early release days. This also goes for students that are remote learning.

Mrs. Hall asked Chairman Kruzel to give his report now.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated November 9th was the last day for parents to make changes for in person or remote learning changes. Can parents opt in if they want to make a change?

Mr. Drezek stated yes, he will communicate this with an update to parents about this decision to remain with our current Hybrid Plan. Some parents will not agree with him. We need to be responsible and make decision we never thought we would need to make. He will send something out at the end of the week.

Mr. Salazar asked if citizens of Enfield would like to become substitute teachers, what do they need to do?

Mr. Drezek stated they can go to our website at enfieldschools.org and there is a link to Kelly Services and apply to be a substitute. You can designate that you would like to substitute in Enfield.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated the Wednesday teaching schedule is for asynchronous learning. For a snow day it would be different. Mr. Drezek we would follow the old way of learning on Wednesday.

Mr. LeBlanc arrived at 8:38 PM.

Chairman Kruzel showed slides of the progress that has been made at John F. Kennedy Middle School in the Blue Wing First Floor and Second Floor; Science Rooms; Restrooms; Mechanical Room; Auditorium and Stage; Cafeteria and Kitchen; bricks that were replaced where PCB's were found around the windows; new Public Entrance; and Orchestra and Band Room.

Mrs. Hall asked how much time have they cut off of the end of the project by starting earlier?

Chairman Kruzel stated the Blue Wing will be completed in February and they will then start the next wing. It is a tight project schedule that will be completed in August of 2022.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated it is amazing to see what they have done. She also attended the walk through. They are ahead of schedule and can't wait to see the next steps. This is a case where COVID has helped us out.

Chairman Kruzel stated the bids for the project went out in March and April and due to COVID, we received great prices for the jobs. He will bring the Board more updates as we go along with the project.

Mr. LeBlanc asked if the JFK Building Committee could give us a presentation in the spring of 2021. Chairman Kruzel will try to have them attend a meeting in December.

Chairman Kruzel asked if the kids won. Mr. LeBlanc stated yes, and it was a great way to end the season.

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

11. NEW BUSINESS:

a. Approved FY 2020 State Head Start Grant

Mrs. Hall moved, seconded by Mrs. Thurston that the Enfield Board of Education approves the FY2020 State Head Start Grant as presented.

Discussion:

Chairman Kruzel stated this information is included in your packet and is something we approve every year.

Mrs. Hall added this is a separate grant from the State. The Board also will approve a large Federal Head Start grant at a later date.

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

b. Approve Regular BOE Meeting Schedule for 2021

Mrs. Thurston moved, seconded by Mr. LeBlanc that the Enfield Board of Education approves the Regular BOE meeting schedule for 2021.

Discussion:

Chairman Kruzel stated this information is also included in your packet. We will meet 18 times before the 2021 election.

Mr. Ryder asked if the proposed dates follow our policy. Chairman Kruzel added that he has confirmed the dates and there are no conflicts.

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

c. Approve 5000 Series Policies – First Reading (This item was tabled on 09-29-20)

Mr. Salazar stated the members of the Policy Committee met last night and have finalized the remaining policies in the 5000 series. There was not enough time to get this information out and posted. This item will be addressed at our next meeting.

Chairman Kruzel added the Board members will receive the remaining policies in the 5000 series.

12. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Chairman Kruzel announced that the Board Curriculum, Policy and Finance Committees are now meeting in person unless otherwise posted differently.

Curriculum – Mr. LeBlanc reported the Curriculum Committee met on October 15th and we discussed incorporating equity in the grade 6-11 lessons. We also reviewed the AP scores that have improved significantly from last year. Our next meeting will be held on November 19th.

Mrs. Hall added we will also incorporate social and emotional learning into the lessons.

Mr. Salazar stated the AP scores were a cause for celebration. We are doing better than the average. There are a couple of areas we are looking at. He congratulated our teachers and staff for all the hard work.

Finance – Chairman Kruzel reported the Finance Committee met on October 19th. Tonight, we will approve financial reports.

Policy – Mr. Salazar reported the Policy Committee will met last night and finalized the 5000 series that will be presented to the Board for approval. We also discussed our plan for the 6000 series. Our next meeting will be held on November 17th.

Leadership – None

Joint Facility – Chairman Kruzel reported the Joint Facility Committee is working on the plans for our next summer roof renovations that will be let out to bid. Barnard's roof has been completed and we are waiting for State reimbursement.

JFK Renovation – Chairman Kruzel gave presentation tonight and they are working hard keeping everything on track. Gilbane's staff was present at the walkthrough for the Board and Town Council. He thanked them for all the hard work they have been doing.

Joint Security – Chairman Kruzel reported the Joint Security Committee is scheduled met in December.

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

9. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mrs. Thurston moved, seconded by Mr. LeBlanc that the Regular Meeting Minutes of October 13, 2020 be approved. Mrs. Hall has submitted a recommendation for changes. A vote by **show-of-hands 8-0-0** passed unanimously with the amended changes by Mrs. Hall.

10. APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS AND PAYROLL

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

- The month of September 2020, total expenditures amount to \$5,612,240.58 broken down between payroll totaling \$3,918,300.99, and other accounts totaling \$1,693,939.59. 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 September 2020, total grant Head Start expenditures amount to \$303,340.02, broken down between payroll totaling \$271,743.80 and other accounts totaling \$31,596.22. 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: None

11. CORRESPONDENCE & COMMUNICATION

- Mrs. LeBlanc reported that KITE will hold a parent webinar "Where am I, and How did I get Here" with Dr. Peg Olivera on November 2nd at 6:30 PM. You can register at EnfieldKite.org if you would like to attend.
- Mrs. LeBlanc reported KITE also welcomes everyone to attend their monthly collaborative meetings. They will meet on Monday, November 4th at 5:30 PM.
- Mrs. LeBlanc reported that our Jaclyn Valley, Director of Early Childhood Initiatives has provided each Board member with a memo and a Stowe Early Learning Center mask (SELC) to wear.
- Chairman Kruzel wished his wife a Happy Anniversary – 27 years.

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

13. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Thurston moved, seconded by Mrs. Hall to adjourn the Regular Meeting of October 27, 2020.

All ayes, motion passed unanimously. Meeting stood adjourned at 8:58 PM.

Tina LeBlanc
Secretary
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary