

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 8, 2020**

A regular meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held in Council Chambers on December 8, 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
3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Scott Ryder
4. **FIRE EVACUATION ANNOUNCEMENT:**
5. **ROLL CALL:**

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bill Salazar and Stacy Thurston

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

Chairman Kruzel stated both Mr. Salazar and Mrs. Thurston will not be attending tonight's meeting.

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

Mr. Drezek thanked Mr. Ryder for his invocation about the loss of two Enfield Public Schools educators – Scott Bacon and Ralph Peterson. Our thoughts and prayers are with both of these families.

Mr. Drezek updated the Board and TV viewing audience members regarding COVID data and its impact. He reviewed the leading and secondary indicators color coded charts with a 14-day rollout. They are encouraging districts to stay in school as best as we can. All decisions are now being made by each district. He reviewed the indicators for the State and the data through 12-3-20. We are now at 47.6 or 6.4%. This does not include the Thanksgiving numbers. There was an increase of testing done prior to the Thanksgiving holiday. Thanksgiving numbers will start to be included in the numbers going forward. He reviewed the Hartford county indicators and we have gone from 44.9 or 6.2%. He reviewed Enfield indicators and we have gone from 34.4 to 6.4%. We have been following the State guidelines up to this point.

Mr. Drezek stated the prison population numbers are not included in our numbers. This question was asked at the last meeting by Mr. Unghire.

Mr. Drezek stated we just came off of being remote for 2 weeks due to staffing levels. A lot of our staff live in this community. Since December 1st, 17 students and 7 staff members were notified to quarantine. During the break we did not send out any letters. We did not want to

increase anxiety levels for parents and students. We did our contract tracing and notified those that needed to quarantine. Tomorrow, you will start to receive letters again.

Mr. Drezek stated a lot of people have asked why did we open? This was a hard decision to make. We knew the numbers would be increasing. People are scared and some parents are keeping their children home. When we shut down, we had a lot of staff that were out before the break. That is why we needed to shut down JFK before the district shut down before Thanksgiving. We were doing everything we could to keep JFK open up to this point.

Mr. Drezek added the apex of COVID-19 cases will be felt in January and February. This information is coming from the public health experts. Getting our kids back in school helps everyone. It helps their mental health. Our kids are struggling. He credits our staff for being here and for everything they are doing for our students. He wanted to get the kids back in during December. The information that is available now is predicting that January does not look good. In Connecticut, you can have 10 people in your home. More and more people are opting to travel during the Christmas break. January will be a big question.

Mr. Drezek stated keeping our kids out does not help. We are trying to give our kids as much normalcy as possible. Kids need that connection with their teachers and being in-person. He hopes this will all go away but that is not possible. He appreciates our staff. You are all making sacrifices. He does not know how long this will last. The information does not look promising. The Thanksgiving break gave us a little leeway.

Mr. Drezek stated he is considering the week of December 21st going fully remote. This will help us with contract tracing. Our administrators have done an amazing job with contract tracing before a holiday. This will allow people to be able to interact with other family members during the Christmas break. This is why he is recommending this. January does not look promising. Help is coming with the vaccines.

Mr. Drezek stated we have met about preparing for vaccines. The first doses will be given to group 1A on Monday for medical professionals and residents in nursing homes. The only way we can keep our schools open is with the vast majority of people getting vaccines. He cannot make staff get vaccines, but he strongly encourages it. School staff will be in group 1B. Group 1B is for essential workers. There is discussion that teachers will be moved to the front of the group. Being in Group B is a good thing. We will know about any possible side effects. If we can come back in January, we will come back. We are watching the numbers very closely. The two vaccines will have an impact on future decisions.

8. AUDIENCES: None

9. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS:

Mr. Ryder thanked Mr. Drezek for the information. He asked if a family member would like to opt back in, is there another date they must do this by?

Mr. Drezek stated the elementary schools are working on compiling numbers. If a parent would like to opt back into our Hybrid plan, they can contact their child's principal. We are not seeing a lot of kids coming back.

Mr. Ryder stated today is PJ Day to raise money for the Connecticut Children's Medical Center that are battling blood disorders. In the past, we have done flyers and have gone to the schools in-person. This year, all donations will be done on-line. Just go to the enfieldpto.com website for the link. Last year we raised \$5,100. We are currently at \$2,376. He is blown away by every one's generosity and passion. Today was Cohort A's PJ day. Friday will be for Cohort B.

He is hoping people will continue to make donations. We are doing this as a school district this year again.

Mr. Ryder thanked Mrs. Hall and Mrs. LeBlanc for joining him tonight by wearing your PJ's.

Mr. Ryder thanked the Enfield Patch for sharing the PJ Day information. They also have posted the honor roll for Enfield students at JFK and EHS. He also reminded parents that students can receive free meals – breakfast and lunch. For more information, go to the enfieldpto.com website.

Mr. Ryder stated Wreaths Across America will lay the wreaths on Saturday, December 19th at noon across the country at area cemeteries. Please join us at St. Patrick's cemetery or by sponsoring a wreath. Again, you can go to enfieldpto.com website and click on any of the schools. He thanked Lori Gates for all she does for our veteran's and military members.

Mr. Ryder thanked JFK and teacher Mr. Delaney for everything you are doing. The Whitney teachers started a reading night on teams at 7:30 PM. This has been a huge success and we will continue to do this throughout the school year.

Mr. Ryder gave his PTO updates. We will also hold a PTO spirit week next week for all students. He thanked everyone that donated to PJ day.

Mr. Ryder relayed a message from Mrs. Thurston – she wishes everyone a safe and healthy happy holiday. He echoes her sentiments.

Mrs. Hall stated she is wearing her favorite color – red plaid. This is her happy plaid.

Mrs. Hall stated that last week, the Head Start Policy Committee and KITE met. KITE received a 3-year \$50K per year grant from the fund from Greater Hartford that will go into effect at the beginning of this year. She would love to see more Head Start parents attending the virtual Policy Meetings. Your children can attend, and we would love to see them. We are all there for the children. So please come.

Mrs. Hall urged everyone to watch the virtual musical video of the EHS Fight song that is posted on the Enfield Public Schools website. It is quite entertaining and enjoyable.

Mrs. Hall reminded everyone about the ERfC Cupcake sales that are still going on until Friday, December 11th to place orders. You can pickup your cupcakes on Tuesday, December 15th.

Mrs. Hall stated breakfast and lunch are available for all Enfield children until June 16th. There is no application you need to fill out. All you need to do is just let them know before the Monday and Wednesday pickup days at EHS. Go to the Enfield Public Schools Nutrition services link at enfieldschools.org.

Mrs. Hall stated the season for contributions is upon us. Donors Choose provides support for teachers. You can go to donorschoose.org to contribute to any organization. There is also the local Enfield Loaves and Fishes, Warming Center and Foodbank center that you can send donations to.

Mrs. Hall wished everyone a happy holiday.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated she also wore her PJ's tonight. She thanked Mr. Drezek for the information about opting back into the Hybrid plan for parents.

Mrs. LeBlanc added the State is taking a different role this time. We have gone from one extreme to the next. The State wants the kids in school as much as we can get them there. She asked if you foresee the State making any executive decisions? Mr. Drezek stated he does not see them making any decisions at this time. They are referring all decisions to local authorities.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated our neighboring towns are small. Do you see us doing some remote and some in-person learning? Mr. Drezek stated yes. We have discussed this and there is an equity piece to this. He will not rule anything out. We have families at multiple schools. We also need to look at transportation and staffing concerns with Smyth Bus. We do not know what tomorrow will bring us. We will do whatever we can and provide the best opportunity we can. We owe it to our kids.

Mrs. LeBlanc added you are establishing consistency for our children when everything is inconsistent.

Mr. Drezek stated we are partners with organizations like KITE and ERfC. We were able to open due to Clair. Hall's quick thinking and the distance learning center. The decisions he makes will impact this program at the annex.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated she saw a video of teacher talking about students that were distance learning during the end of their senior year and now they are distance learning at college. The curriculum is geared towards in-person learning and can be frustrating.

Mrs. LeBlanc expressed her condolences to the Bacon and Patterson families. Mr. Bacon was a teacher at her elementary school. Both Mr. Bacon, Mr. Underwood and Mr. Reveruzzi were the three teachers that everyone wanted at Prudence Crandall.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated Lori Gates has done so much for our veteran's and military families. This year she baked cookies for the Cookies for Camouflage. This is the 11th annual Cookies for Camouflage drive. The postage was donated for sending the packages out - \$2,665 to our active service men and woman. She thanked everyone involved with this.

Mrs. LeBlanc congratulated Enfield High School North Central Kindness Awards. She thanked the students – Sydney Hamre, Ryan Miller, Kaitlyn Landry and Anthony Okraska.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated the Enfield Safe Harbor is accepting donations. You can also donate to Enfield Loves & Fishes and Safe Harbor. They are wonderful groups to donate to.

Mrs. LeBlanc gave her last comments for 2020. She read a prepared statement about the year that included the changes and challenges that have occurred during 2020. She also addressed what our students, staff and administration have faced. She thanked the parents, students, staff, administration, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, paras, secretaries, guidance counselors and school psychologists, and central office staff for everything they have done.

Mrs. LeBlanc also thanked Mr. Drezek and Mr. Longey. Enfield is a diverse town, and she is glad to be part of it. We have gone through many challenges as a town and country. She addressed concerns about policies and she will continue to fight for our students and parents. She hopes that she has been able to effectively communicate to any parents that have reached out to her during the year. She thanked her family for their continued support – you rock. Without your support, she would not be able to do what she has been doing.

Mrs. LeBlanc wished everyone a safe and happy holiday season.

Mr. LeBlanc thanked Mrs. LeBlanc for her comments. He added that there is a strong desire for students to be in person at least 2 days a week. He is grateful that we can also offer fully remote learning for some of our students.

Mr. LeBlanc asked about the mental health of our students and have we been reaching out to our students? Mr. Drezek stated if we are aware of any students that are having difficulties, we are doing everything we can do for them and we also have Youth Services working our students.

Mr. LeBlanc asked about our special education students with IEP's and are they being met? Mr. Drezek stated we are legally bound to follow the student's IEP. Our special education students are receiving in person instruction four days a week and our special education teams are doing everything to meet the needs our kids.

Mr. LeBlanc asked about remote student attendance. Mr. Drezek stated the teachers know when the student is present or is not participating and if there is a concern the administration will reach out to the students.

Mr. LeBlanc asked about staffing shortages and using college students. Mr. Drezek stated there is a program the State is offering called the step-up initiative for college kids and Kelly services is working on this. We are reaching out in many areas to help with staffing. Some of the college kids are still quarantining.

Mr. LeBlanc stated there was an article in the Washington Post about mental health and an increase with suicides. The article was about a child that never had mental health problems and committed suicide. Not seeing each other and not being able to play sports can be contributed to this. This is why he talks about sports and theater extracurricular activities for our students. There is a mental health crisis out there. All of this helps to keep our kids healthy. This can happen in Enfield. We will feel these effects for years to come. He will reach out to our three State officials about funding for mental health and substance abuse. There is help out there. Contact your school staff or call 1-800-273-TALK if you need help.

Mr. LeBlanc recognized Enfield student athletes Justin Beiler and Alex Martinez as the first Enfield High Wrestlers to achieve being an Academic All Americans. He thanked our wrestling coach, Jason Flynn.

Mr. LeBlanc stated our Stowe Early Learning Center Families have been busy making wreaths. He congratulated our Eaglets. There is a St. Bernard's Family that watches our meetings and he thanked them for your acts of kindness.

Mr. LeBlanc wished everyone a Merry Christmas and wished them Happy Holidays.

Mr. Unghire stated he is not wearing his PJ's tonight. He doesn't want anyone to think he sleeps with a jacket and tie on.

Mr. Unghire thanked Mr. Drezek for your report. It helps us to understand what you and our administrators are facing daily. The vaccines will hopefully bring us back to some kind of normalcy and he believes 2021 will be a better year. 2020 will be the year we would all like to forget. He also likes your new charts you added to your report.

Mr. Unghire wished the Board, Administration, audience members, Mr. Drezek and Mr. Longey a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and all the best in 2021.

Chairman Kruzel stated with everything that has been going on, the First Readers have missed the last few ceremonies. We are looking at May for the next ceremony to recognize all of our first readers. The details are being worked out.

Chairman Kruzel agreed that KITE is a phenomenal group, and he thanks them for everything they are doing and meeting with zoom now.

Chairman Kruzel stated he was able to fix his mallet from the last Board meeting. He thanked everyone for their continued support.

Chairman Kruzel does not believe the Governor will close schools down again. He will leave this up to local decisions.

Chairman Kruzel thanked everyone for the work you have all done keeping our kids in school and safe. He wished everyone a merry Christmas and happy healthy new year.

Chairman Kruzel also asked everyone to consider getting a vaccine so we can control this virus. God bless you all.

Mr. Drezek also thanked Mrs. Gates for everything she does for our town and our veteran's. She is great. He forgot to bring the picture for Cookies for Camouflage to share tonight with the Board.

Chairman Kruzel echoed the comments about the Wreaths Across America program being held on December 19th.

Mrs. Hall added you can also make donations to Toys for Tots. The Enfield Police Department are collecting toys for their toy drive.

Chairman Kruzel recognized retired police officer Thomas Pycrz that recently passed away. Your family is in our thoughts and prayers.

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

11. NEW BUSINESS: None

12. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Curriculum – Mr. LeBlanc reported the Curriculum Committee will meet on December 17th.

Finance – Chairman Kruzel reported the Finance Committee met on November 16th and will meet on December 14th at 4:30 PM. He will have financial reports that will need to be approved later on the agenda.

Policy – Mr. Unghire reported the Policy Committee will meet on December 15th at 5:30 PM and we will discuss the 5000 series policies.

Leadership – None

Joint Facility – Chairman Kruzel reported the Joint Facility Committee will meet on December 10th. We are looking at the roofs at Eli Whitney and Hazardville Memorial.

JFK Building – Chairman Kruzel reported the JFK Building Committee met on December 4th. The meetings are held on YouTube now for audience and community members to watch. The project is progressing. He thanked the group for all the work they are doing.

Joint Security – Chairman Kruzel reported the Joint Security Committee is scheduled meet in March.

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

13. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mrs. Hall moved, seconded by Mrs. LeBlanc that the Regular Meeting Minutes of November 10, 2020 be approved. A vote by **show-of-hands 6-0-0** passed unanimously.

14. APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS AND PAYROLL

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

- The month of October 2020, total expenditures amount to \$5,985,880.17 broken down between payroll totaling \$4,024,529.94, and other accounts totaling \$1,961,350.23. 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 6-0-0** passed unanimously.

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

- The month of October 2020, total grant Head Start expenditures amount to \$518,291.12, broken down between payroll totaling \$326,303.33 and other accounts totaling \$191,987.79. 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

15. CORRESPONDENCE & COMMUNICATION

Chairman Kruzel thanked the 124 viewers on YouTube for watching the Board meeting. He also wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

16. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None

17. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. LeBlanc moved, seconded by Mr. LeBlanc to adjourn the Regular Meeting of December 8, 2020.

All ayes, motion passed unanimously. Meeting stood adjourned at 8:28 PM.

Tina LeBlanc
Secretary
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary

