

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 27, 2022**

A special virtual meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held on January 27, 2022.

1. **CALL TO ORDER** : The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Madam Chair LeBlanc.

2. **ROLL CALL** :

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: John Unghire

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Christopher J. Drezek, Superintendent & Mr. Andrew B. Longey, Assistant Superintendent

3. **SUPERINTENDENT REPORT**

- a. **EPS Update** - as presented
- b. **EPS 2022-23 Draft Calendar** - as presented
- c. **Superintendent 's 2022-23 Budget Presentation**

Mr. Drezek presented his proposed 2022-23 Budget Presentation to the Board. He reviewed: our philosophy; CORONA Virus Relief funds; ESSER Funds I & II (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds); American Rescue Plan; our Current Budget - \$72,109,522; our Fixed Costs; Additions at JFK (JFK Middle School Team, Special Education Teacher, Specialist & Bilingual Teacher); Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR); Unknowns; Value Adds; Historical Perspective and Superintendents Proposed Budget Request - \$73,775,252 or 2.31% increase over our current budget.

4. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- a. **BOE Policy Revisions - Second Reading**

Mr. Ryder moved, seconded by Mrs. Pickett that the Enfield Board of Education approves the BOE policy revisions as a second and final reading.

Discussion :

Mrs. Cushman stated in the fall an assignment was brought to our attention by concerned citizens. The Board is responsible for these assignments as they are a direct result of our policies. She is a member of the Policy Committee and is looking very critically at every aspect of these policies. She wants to look carefully for the safety and well-being of our students and what is ending up in our classrooms. At our last Board meeting, she expressed concerns about the principles and practices of SEL (social emotional learning) not being clearly defined. She also expressed concerns about Castle. We recently received e-mails from community members about suggestions and edits to policies #0200 Education Goals and #4131 Staff Development. She would like us to seriously consider these changes and taking these two policies back to the Policy Committee to discuss them further.

Mr. Ryder stated as the Policy Committee Chair, the members of the subcommittee approved the recommended changes, and the Board approved the first reading of these policies unanimously. He recommends moving forward with the vote and called for the vote, seconded by Mrs. Pickett.

Mrs. Cushman stated she objected at the Policy Committee meeting and at the previous Board meeting about the first reading. She went along with the first reading assuming the principles and practices would

be defined, and they have not. Our community members have submitted suggestions for edits. She would like us to look at them seriously.

Mr. Ryder stated that is fair, but he still calls for the question and move to vote on this item since we passed the first reading unanimously. He defaults to Madam Chair.

Madam Chair stated that both Mr. LeBlanc and Mrs. Pickett had their hands up before the motion to call for the question was made.

Mr. LeBlanc stated there have been concerns expressed about assignments from community members. The current policies being discussed are straight forward and self-explanatory to a degree. When it comes to social emotion learning, he did some research. Based on his experience over the last two years with the Enfield Public Schools and seeing how our schools integrate this, to him it is nothing more than teaching our students self-responsibility, social skills and decision making. This is important not only for our high school and middle school students but our younger students where SEL is an integral part. He is in favor of the policies as they stand.

Mrs. Pickett stated she would like to address the community parent e-mails with the policy suggested edits. Board members received these suggestions. This work has been ongoing in our district for a while. SEL is not a new work. This work has been broadly supported across the aisles in education for a long time. There are also State and Federal guidelines that outline standards that are research based. This information is public information. Most importantly, it assists our staff and students with life skills. That is important. The suggestions that she received as mentioned by Mrs. Cushman were inappropriate and harmful to members in our community especially those who identify on gender continuum or people of color. She wants those community members to know she affirms who you are. She will not stand for political stunts. We should be advocating for them, not making assumptions or false characterizations of who they are. This was not addressed appropriately in subcommittee. What is being proposed by community members is radical political ideology. She also suggests we move to vote.

Mrs. Acree stated she would like to table the two policies mentioned by Mrs. Cushman. We should look into these policies further because parents have been outraged by some of the lessons that have been presented especially the pizza lesson. She feels we should look into this further instead of voting first. We have parents that are concerned about certain things. We cannot use the language the parents presented to us. She believes we should look into this further.

Madam Chair stated she will also allow Mr. Hamre, Mrs. Cushman and Mr. Ryder comment.

Mrs. Cushman stated she is not against SEL. What is being defined in another policy about SEL is in line with what she hopes. There is a lot happening in our nation. If we look around and think the same materials are being used in other places, the same professional development materials, how can we end up with different results. We need to be careful about defining SEL and other things, so we make sure it is fair for everyone. She would encourage making a motion to bring these policies back to the Policy Committee.

Mr. Hamre stated we discussed this at our Policy Committee meeting, and we reviewed the policies thoroughly. He would like to address the pizza assignment mentioned by Mrs. Acree. He heard about this and would like to be very clear. This is not something that originated in our schools. This can be found using a computer. He did this earlier, and it took him less than a minute to find the source of the pizza thing. This is from a study that was done at Cal Poly Humboldt. The study is done through a program for a sexual violence bystander intervention program. The graphic that people keep referring to was taken from this website. It is under the section about consent and communication activities. He urged everyone to use due diligence about the sources that are generating this information. This information is not something a frontline teacher brought up. It was originated somewhere else with the ulterior motive to cause dissention among the teachers and parents. He wants to be very clear, consider your sources when you are referring to policy changes. Consider your sources if you think we should take action. This is very upsetting and if this is being taught in our schools, he would also be upset as any responsible parent would be. This is not being taught in our schools. He does not have any interest in bringing any of these policies back to the Policy Committee. They were approved at the subcommittee

level and were approved for a first reading unanimously. He would like to see this motion pass and the opportunity to vote on this. Thank you.

Mr. Ryder stated these policies passed for the first reading unanimously 8-0-0 and if he were present, it would have been 9-0-0. He calls for the vote, seconded by Mrs. Pickett.

A vote by vote by **roll call 6-2-0** passed with Mrs. Acree and Mrs. Cushman in dissent.

b. BOE Policy Adoptions - Second Reading

Mr. Hamre moved, seconded by Mrs. Pickett that the Enfield Board of Education approves the BOE Policy Adoptions for a second reading.

Discussion :

Mrs. Pickett stated this group of policies had revisions regarding attendance and the process. She is wondering how the district handles discipline and the impact it has on attendance. This can be a discussion we can have off table. She is fine with the policy. She is interested in the impact of discipline.

Mr. Drezek stated it might be more fruitful to have this conversation in another format. Mrs. Pickett is fine with this.

Madam Chair stated Mrs. Acree's hand was still raised and asked if she had any additional questions. Mrs. Acree stated no.

Mr. Ryder explained how to remove her hand from being raised remotely.

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

5. NEW BUSINESS

a. Discussion and Action regarding the FY2022-23 Budget

Mr. Hamre moved, seconded by Mr. Ryder that the Enfield Board of Education approves the Superintendents Proposed FY2022-23 Budget for a 2.31% increase as presented.

Discussion :

Mr. Ryder thanked Mr. Drezek and Mr. Longey for the budget presentation. He knows this is a team effort and it is not just one person doing this work. He thanked the administrators and staff at Central Office. He appreciates everything you are all doing. They presented their numbers and wish lists of wants and needs and the superintendent has given us the needs for the district. He has always given us what the needs are. He has rarely given us his wants and has never gives us his wish list. We all know if we had an unlimited budget, we would be doing all kinds of things. He wants to acknowledge the work that goes into the budget. This represents all of the work that goes on in our buildings and the staff members. He appreciates the input from our administrators, principals, assistant principals and teachers. He thinks the budget request is fair. We will have items that will need to be discussed. We cannot just say the government is giving us this to use as a band aide. That is not what that money is for. The Superintendent has explained that to us tonight. He has my support and my families trust. He believes this is a modest request. He looks forward to working with his fellow Board members as well as our Town Council partners. He has given a number for our district needs. Thank you.

Mrs. Pickett stated she is glad to hear about the legacy project with the Town. She knows this is historical, but this is an innovative time, and we have the ability to do things differently to rebuild with everyone in mind. She is excited to see this and that we are taking our time with how to spend these funds. She knows we will be involved in the discussions.

Mrs. Pickett stated academic needs and accelerating learning is something she and community members

are interested in. Will we have any summer programming for our students. There is a definite academic need.

Mrs. Pickett asked about supports for students and staff. You mentioned behaviors and the need for this. She would like to know about our prevention and building a system of supports.

Mrs. Pickett stated universal Pre-school and Stowe is an amazing place. If every student in Enfield had an opportunity to go there, it would be such a win-win. We are already ahead of the game because of our Pre-K program. She gives Mr. Drezek kudos for assisting with this program.

Mrs. Pickett would like some answers about designating funds and when they need to be used. Is there an end date or is this indefinite? Could we designate the funds to be used?

Mr. Drezek stated this budget is not just me as mentioned by Mr. Ryder. The process starts with the staff members making requests to the administrators. Just because I ask for certain items, it does not mean we are not going to try to get them what they asked for or need. There is a lot of time between now and when the budget will get passed. We can be creative in ways to get them what they need. He never wants a faculty member say I wish we could have done this because we did not have the money for it.

Mr. Drezek stated that Mr. Bourassa sent Board members the budget book and the presentation from tonight. These items have been posted on our website.

Mr. Drezek stated you mentioned summer school. Last summer we held summer school for students. He would love to do that again this summer and tying this together with academic progression. We need to look at the evolution of what our kids are coming out of, dealing with the immediate needs, dealing with the crisis, and regrouping. A lot of our folks realize the needs are going to change, reactions are going to change as well as professional development needs will change. What we look like today is not what we will look like next year or the year after that dealing with our immediate needs.

Mr. Drezek stated Mr. LeBlanc had mentioned social emotional learning. Our kids cannot learn at their potential if they are still dealing with mental health issues. We need to address the mental health issues and listen. I have sat through everyone one of our meetings and it has been traumatic for all of us. Imagine what this has been like for a 7 year old, 13 year old and 15 year old and those that are graduating and have lived through all of this. He has seen this in his own home. We can still do two things at once and try to maintain academic progress. We will not make enough academic progress until we address the immediate concerns of what our kids are coming out of.

Mr. Drezek stated the other piece is we have social workers, and we had a discussion with our colleagues at the Town and our social services director. This has always bugged him, we both have social workers. We have the students for six and a half hours each day and the other thirteen and a half hours a day they are home. That is when the Town social workers interact with them. We need to bridge the gap by having more resources in our hands. This is something that is on the table, and you will hear more about this and where are kids are. We have partnered with the Town with student surveys. We have been discussing this for some time. They are still our kids, and we need to be doing the same thing together.

Mr. Drezek stated we need to designate by the end date and for what we intend to use the funds. There are timelines associated with the funds. We are already hearing the end dates will be changing because of what we are dealing with. Even with the end date of 2024, we are thinking 2 years out from there. We are hearing 2026, we should be okay and do not need to rush to spend this out of fear of losing it. He has discussed this with Congressman Courtney, and we are not alone. They will work with us. Congressman Courtney has called us from the floor of representatives with questions. Our lines of communication are open. Everyone is facing the same issues. Everyone can breathe a little easier, it is not a use or lose it scenario.

Mr. LeBlanc thanked Mr. Drezek for the presentation. He was reading the Stowe newsletter where Ms. Valley highlighted student attendance is aimed for 85% and they are at 88% student attendance. Student attendance and student well-being has been on his mind during the pandemic. He looked at student absences on the State website. In 2019-20, we were at 94% attendance. In 2020-21 we were at 96%

attendance and ranked at 39th out of 203 school districts. For this school year 2021-22 we are at 92% attendance and rank 135 out of 203. He is not sure why our attendance has dropped. He believes anything over 90% attendance is good. It is encouraging that you mentioned it is a top priority and he hopes we can increase our student attendance.

Mr. Drezek agrees with Mr. LeBlanc. We have done a lot to address this. If our kids are not here, they are not learning, and we cannot support them. We have been creative. We have a social worker at our alternative education program. That is one of the programs he would like to bring before the Board. These are the kids we are talking about being on the brink of not coming to school or heading down a path of possibly dropping out of school. We have this resource for them. A traditional school day does not work for them. There may be things going on in their lives they cannot control. Maybe they need to work to help support their family so school is not a priority.

Mr. Drezek added our alternative education program does an amazing job of targeting these kids that need something non-traditional and make sure we are getting through to them. We now have 6 months of anecdotal data to look at. Now we are starting to get back to normal somewhat, this is an area he would like to expand. There are creative ways that we can address these kids that do not necessarily use a traditional schedule. There are options for these kids if we provide them. One of the good things about this program is it is working. We have proof and our numbers have increased since the program started. He gives credit to Mrs. Cressotti and her team and Mr. Malley for the incredible job they are doing. We are actually receiving tuition students from surrounding districts that do not have the resources to start a program like this.

Mr. Drezek stated the folks at Enfield High School like Mrs. Clark, Mr. Clark, Mrs. Gagnon and all the deans are making connections with our kids and getting them back into school. This is a concerted effort, and it is one of those areas that we have resources to support them more and this is an opportunity for us to expand upon. This is something else you will be hearing about in the coming weeks.

Madam Chair spoke about sustainability. Mr. Drezek mentioned when we started to receive funds, it was important to make sure any changes we were going to make were going to be sustainable. She is happy to see this with these changes and additions we are going to make. She is also interested about how the funds are not allowed to be supplanted. In the past when we received funds, which is exactly what happened. It was during a time when our budget was being cut by \$2 million dollars. What that means is the money was supplanted, we received a \$2 million dollar stimulus and that meant the State reduced our funding by that amount. So we did not receive \$4 million, only \$2 million. We just received the funds in a different way. She is very happy to hear this was thought about.

Madam Chair agrees about buildings and grounds and there have been a lot of concerns during Covid. She looks forward to working with the Town Council on this with these funds and moving forward.

Madam Chair thanked Mr. Drezek for his budget presentation. Do any Board members have any additional questions or concerns?

Mrs. Pickett stated the JFK team is in our operating budget and not listed in grants. Will this be a yearly need to expand a team?

Mr. Drezek stated no, once it is in the budget it will be ongoing in our operating budget. This is where we took it from originally.

Mrs. Pickett asked about the next year grade 7 team. Will we need to add more teams? Mr. Drezek stated no. No, no one really knows what it has been like at JFK during this time with the renovation and dealing with Covid. Once we have our set number of teams, and know what the enrollment numbers will look like, the teams will fluctuate per grade level each year. We run into the same thing when it comes to the number of elementary classrooms. There is always juggling that needs to be done with the number classrooms per grade levels.

Mrs. Pickett thanked Mr. Drezek for explaining this. What about the supports for our multilingual learners for our ELL teachers? This is something she would like us to think about when it comes to using our

funds for additional supports.

Mr. Drezek stated we were able to do something with our ESSER funds because there was a connection to the pandemic and the needs increased. Let's face it, when we shut down, students that needed ELL support were stuck at home and might not have had access to talking or interacting with their teachers every day. Bilingual teaching needs have increased. This position does not fit in this category. So this will need to be built into our operating budget.

Madam Chair stated she is happy to see the team at JFK being added back. We have talked about this for years and how it was going to be needed based on enrollment numbers. She is happy to see this included in our budget.

Madam Chair stated Mr. Hamre is having connections issues.

Mr. Hamre expressed his thanks to Mr. Drezek and his gratitude to the Enfield Public School staff and administrators for putting together the budget and for everything they have endured over the past 2 years. He feels the Superintendent's budget request is modest based on what we have gone through during this pandemic.

Mr. Hamre added what we do not see with social emotional learning, are student retentions. This is going to be a challenge. He is glad to see we will be keeping all our staff that have been here for our kids and doing the best to keep our children grounded. They are there to watch them with their education process. The retention piece stands out just as much as social emotional learning during the pandemic. He added that social emotional learning is important. Thank you.

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

b. February 22, 2022 Regular BOE Meeting

Mr. Drezek explained the needs about cancelling the February 22, 2022 Regular Board meeting. He added the Board has the option to hold a special meeting if a need arises for Board action.

Mr. Ryder moved, seconded by Mr. Hamre that the Enfield Board of Education cancels the February 22, 2022 Regular meeting.

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

6. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Curriculum - Mrs. Pickett reported the Curriculum committee met on January 20th. Based on previous concerns from surrounding social media challenges, a discussion on digital citizenship and internet safety was put on January's agenda. **Dr. Wiley discussed guidelines and recommendations for digital citizenship, internet safety, and media literacy. We are taking inventory of the Pre-K through 12 efforts and identifying gaps where all students have access to this material. We are working to align this work for families and parents to receive this information about social media and using the internet. We also discussed the TAG program.**

Mrs. Pickett reported she spoke with Ms. Middleton about the pizza assignment. This assignment came from a health class. Families have the choice to participate. Permission slips are given to students starting in grade 4 with the unit and topics are outlined along with EPS staff contact information for families that have questions. This is guided by the Healthy and Balanced Living Curriculum Framework. If you are interested in the standards and what they are, this is where you can find this information. Health begins in grades 4. It is done as a take home activity. It officially starts in grade 5 - 11 and parent permission slips are sent home with students. The second page of the assignment that was sent home was posted in error. It has been rectified and addressed. The first page topic is consent and this is in alignment with the Healthy and Balanced Living Curriculum Framework. She just wanted to clarify this.

Finance - Dr. Calnen reported our next Finance Committee meeting will be held on February 7th.

Policy - Mr. Ryder reported the Policy Committee met on January 18th. He read the minutes from this meeting. Our next Policy Committee meeting will be held on February 15th.

Leadership - Madam Chair reported Board Leadership met on January 25th. We discussed bringing back our student representatives to our Board meetings and the policy regarding audiences.

Joint Facility - Mr. Ryder reported the Joint Facility Committee met in January when he was away for work. He is not sure of the next meeting date

JFK Building - Mr. Ryder reported the JFK Building committee has not met since our last meeting. He is not sure of the next meeting date.

Joint Security - Mr. Ryder reported the Joint Security Committee has not met and will meet in March. He is not sure of the next meeting date.

Joint Insurance - Madam Chair reported the Joint Insurance Committee will meet in March 2022. Both she and Mrs. Acree will attend this meeting.

Youth Mental Health - Madam Chair reported this committee is also slated to meet in March. Both Dr. Calnen and Mrs. Acree reached out to her about this committee and expressed their concerns about the committee not meeting frequently. She will reach out to the Town Manager and Town Council Leadership to see where we are with this committee. We all feel it is very important to have this committee up and running.

Mr. Ryder complimented Madam Chair about her comments about this committee. He was copied on the e-mails. Thank you for reaching out to Town leadership about this committee. This is a really important committee, and he does not want to see it fall by the wayside.

Mr. LeBlanc added that co-chairs for the Youth and Mental Health Committee are Representative Arnone and Mr. Neville. They are both good contacts to reach out to. This is a committee that is certainly needed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Hamre moved, seconded by Mrs. Pickett that the Special Meeting Minutes of January 11, 2022, be approved. A vote by **show-of-hands 7-0-1** passed with Mr. Ryder abstaining.

Mrs. Pickett moved, seconded by Mr. Hamre that the Regular Meeting Minutes of January 11, 2022, be approved. A vote by **show-of-hands 8-0-0** passed unanimously.

Mr. Ryder moved, seconded by Mr. Hamre that the Regular Meeting Minutes of January 25, 2022, be approved. A vote by **show-of-hands 8-0-0** passed unanimously.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Ryder moved, seconded by Mr. Hamre to adjourn the Special Virtual Meeting of January 27, 2022. Meeting stood adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Jonathan LeBlanc
Secretary
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary