

**BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
SEPTEMBER 26, 2023**

A special meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held in Council Chambers on September 26, 2023.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM by Madam Chair LeBlanc.

2. **ROLL CALL:**

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Jonathan LeBlanc

**ALSO PRESENT:** Mr. Christopher J. Drezek, Superintendent; Mr. Andrew B. Longey, Assistant Superintendent; and Ellen Zoppo, Town Manager

3. **INVITED GUESTS:** Gina Cekala (arrived at 7:24 PM), Robert Cressotti, Matthew Despard, Douglas Finger, Nick Hopkins, Michael Ludwick, Cynthia Mangini (arrived at 7:24 PM), Ken Nelson Jr, Marie Pyznar, John Santanella and Lori Unghire

Madam Chair explained that Johnathan LeBlanc, Gina Cekala and Cindy Mangini will be late

4. **SCHOOL MODERNIZATION COMMITTEE UPDATE & PRESENTATION**

John Dague, Director of Strategic Development and Partnerships for Enfield Public Schools provided an in-depth presentation regarding the PK-5 School Modernization – feasibility study. He provided an overview of the School Modernization Committee members progress touring each PK-5 school and consultation with the contracted design team at Russell and Dawson. He reviewed the committees goals and priorities; the scope of the feasibility study; renovate to new (71.79%) advantages & disadvantages; new construction (61.79%) advantages & disadvantages; items not estimated in assessments; key draft findings from Russell & Dawson; Hazardville Memorial & facility condition analysis rankings; estimates from facility conditions analysis for the PK-5 schools; costs could reach 100 million dollars; indoor air quality & air quality general recommendations; demography report; projected enrollment; estimated costs; site recommendations – Stowe Early Learning Center, Eli Whitney & Henry Barnard; challenges with site recommendations; site for consideration – advantages & challenges; PK-5 School Modernization Site & Phasing proposal; Phase 1 – Central Zone; Phase 2 – Southern Zone; Phase 3 – Northern Zone; current vs. final site use; anticipated reuse outcome benefits; challenges; systemic change; and recommendations.

Councilman Finger commented that the Town has turned down businesses that have wanted to use the wetlands behind Mark Twain. How would we proceed? This was an excellent presentation. He is behind this and wants to make sure the tax dollars will be spent wisely. This will be a major expense for our town. We renovated the high school, JFK and now the grammar schools. He has concerns with the location.

Mr. Dague responded if the Town Council authorizes a pre-referendum building committee, in that phase there would be a site assessment that would evaluate the site by hiring an environmental engineer. They would determine if this site is suitable for building on. There would also be an estimate for the cost to remediate and the cost could be considerable. All of our sites have wetlands on them. The acceptance of a site does not 100% bind us if the site comes back unusable.

Mr. Dague added when we were looking at which site to use for the high school, the costs to remediate the soil at Enrico Fermi was extremely high due to the soil contamination. It is worth looking at the site because the benefits of our plan with the use of a swing school is excellent. A school will have a broader benefit to the community than a business when it comes to using the wetlands. We will be using a smaller portion of the site than a business would have used, which will not have such an impact on the wetlands.

Councilor Finger asked about the cost. Mr. Dague stated the costs are estimated repair costs and that is if we do nothing. We need to bring the buildings up to modern standards. We know that approximately \$42.6 million dollars needs to be spent but that does not include HVAC. If you add all of this including security and IT you could be around \$100 million for just fixing the 7 schools.

Councilor Finger added he has been in these schools, and they are in need of major repairs. He agrees with this but just wants the taxpayers to know what the anticipated costs may be for transparency purposes. Everyone needs to understand this is a good project, but the costs will be substantial.

Mr. Dague stated we are doing this responsibly. We have a feasibility study. We know that a portion will not be reimbursable. We are looking at 3 potential sites and a more significant scope is needed to include engineering and soil sampling. A lot of this work will be done in the Pre-Referendum phase. This will also include public input from the community by bringing in all the stakeholders, community members, and businesses. This will also affect sports teams if fields that are being used. The pre-referendum phase offers a lot of opportunities for communication. If the site assessment comes back at too high of a cost for using a portion of the wetlands, we still have two other sites. We would then need to look at an alternate site.

Councilor Finger stated these sites are just options to consider for use. Mr. Dague stated they are our suggestions to adopt for further study, but we are not 100% committing to these sites.

Councilor Finger thanked Madam Chair and Mr. Dague.

Mrs. Pickett added it will cost approximately \$100 million to repair our schools. This would be a capital improvement project on the taxpayers. Would we receive any reimbursements. Mr. Dague stated there is potential for some reimbursement like the roofs. When you do piece meal projects, you need to consider the full project for cost effectiveness. We will get some portions of the projects for reimbursement.

Mrs. Pickett thanked the members of the School Modernization Committee, John Dague and others for the work they have done. She appreciated this partnership approach. She is looking forward to seeing this project progress holistically for this long term investment in our community. She is concerned about the impact on Thompsonville families. We need to meet the needs of our families. Including HVAC and security is also a must. We need to be mindful on how we repurpose unused buildings and how we will sustain our new buildings. This is a long term investment in our community. Supporting this project makes sense. She appreciates the plan to not disrupt students. Student and staff supports will still be needed during the construction transition. She supports this plan and thanked everyone involved.

Mr. Dague stated are classrooms now are around 820 to 840 sq. feet. We can decide to take back some of the square footage to use towards additional classroom space to increase the number of total classrooms. We can also look at reducing space in cafeterias and hallway space or circulation space. One of the plans at the high school was to have open space between the 3 floors for interior lighting. This option was not chosen. The final design had narrower hallways and less circulation space which allowed for more program space.

Mrs. Pickett asked if the sizes of the schools will vary by zone. She likes that this plan will not

redistrict the zones. Does this take into consideration additional housing developments.

Mr. Dague stated the northern zone is for around 800 to 825; the central zone is for around 800 to 825; and the southern zone is for around 725 to 750. We do not have a districting problem, we have a program location problem. Henry Barnard offers a lot of special education programs where we are transporting students to. We would like these programs in each of their home buildings. We will strategically place our choice students and he does not believe we would need to redistrict. The southern zone has around 3-4 less classrooms.

Mrs. Pickett asked about the HVAC grant. Mr. Dague stated the grant application deadline is December 30, 2023 for starting projects in 2024 and completing projects in 2025. HVAC projects would be 3 separate projects. The eventual reuse of the building may impact the score with the scoring rubric. There is a potential for reimbursement. This is worth exploring.

Mr. Ryder echoed the comments about the School Modernization Committee members. He would like to bring up some of our parent volunteers on this committee to say a few words.

Kurt Stroiney – SMC Member. Mr. Stroiney discussed the many benefits about this modernization plan besides the benefits to our town, our children's education and well-being. We will potentially close 2 schools. The committee members do not want to see more vacant buildings. Re-utilizing these buildings is an integral part of our plan. We can regionalize our Pre-K programs and Eagle Academy. Our plan includes closing both Hazardville Memorial and Prudence Crandall. By closing Prudence Crandall, this can create opportunities for another housing development. This would bring more families to Enfield and increase our tax revenue. This building could also be for another Mark Twain style development housing. Mark Twain currently has a waiting list. By closing Hazardville Memorial the site could be used for more recreational space. Our parks are constantly being used and this could create more available space for our residents to use.

Mr. Stroiney added this project is different from EHS & JFK because of the children's young ages. Both the EHS & JFK projects were distracting for the students and would not be beneficial for our youngest learners to go through. Our plan will start by building our new central school at a site that would not interfere with any of our elementary schools. Once the building has been completed, students from both Eli Whitney and Hazardville Memorial will attend the new central school. This would allow us to use Eli Whitney as our swing building for another other building that is being renovated. By closing Hazardville Memorial one of the added benefits is saving taxpayer money. Hazardville Memorial needs the most work done and then Prudence Crandall in order to be operational. Repairs will be needed to make the building operational, but by building the new building first, we can minimize the costs.

Mr. Stroiney stated our plan includes opportunities for revenue. By moving the Eagle Academy to the current Enfield Street School we will be able to accommodate more students eliminating the need to bus our children to out of town programs and pay tuitions for specialized services. We will also be able to provide services for students from surrounding towns generating an income revenue source.

Mr. Stroiney stated the expansion of our Pre-K program is long overdue. The State will eventually mandate universal Pre-K program. We can accomplish this by moving Stowe to the renovated Edgar H. Parkman building and eventually moving ECDC to the renovated Eli Whitney building.

Mr. Stroiney added the renovations at EHS & JFK are two shining examples of what this town can achieve when we think about the future and work together as a community. We saw how parents brought their children back from magnets and re-enrolled them at EHS & JFK. Let's continue phase III and make our elementary schools just as fantastic. His children will not attend the new elementary schools, but they will attend JFK & EHS. He looks forward to his grandchildren attending our state-of-the-art schools and hearing his children brag about how

great our schools are. One of the most important questions homeowners ask is how are the schools.

Councilor Nelson asked if they should give their names and address before they speak.

Madam Chair stated they are not audience members, they are presenters and members for the School Modernization Committee. They are all Enfield residents or staff members and have been properly vetted.

Councilor Nelson added stating your name and address is proper protocol. Mr. Ryder added this is all part of the presentation.

Shannon Steere – SMC Member – Ms. Steere discussed some of the benefits for our youngest learners at Stowe that include Head Start, Integrated Pre-K, and STEAM and how we will be able to expand our programs including ECDC. Infant and toddler care is at a high need, and this will allow for expansion in this age group. When universal Pre-K is mandated, we will be ready. Having additional and affordable Pre-K seats will allow families to enter the workforce and will support community and social cohesion. Regionalization will allow for easier access to our programs and increase our revenue streams for Enfield.

Vicky MacLeod – SMC Member – Ms. MacLeod discussed some of the benefits to our students and families. By changing our current K-2 and 3-5 model to a K-5 model and adding a new school will ease transition changes for our students going into grade 3. It will also consolidate PTO's, open house events and student assemblies lessening the burden on parents to choose which events to attend. This will allow for more engagement at our 3 elementary schools. Our students will have more space to learn in their schools with the proposed renovations. Another benefit is we will not need to redistrict any of our schools. Using the swing school will not cause distractions to our children's day-to-day learning. This is the best decision for our children and town moving forward.

Mr. Ryder received an e-mail from the PTO's, and they said the same things that Ms. MacLeod said about combining PTO's, the many benefits and increased engagement for our students, families and staff members. Anything we do to help our staff members will help them educate our children.

Mr. Hamre thanked Mr. Dague for his great presentation. Currently Thompsonville does not have a walking school anymore and it is unfortunate. Our kids are bussed to other schools. How will this new proposed structure affect transportation and students that are walkers. Students that can walk or ride their bikes come to school more alert and ready to learn.

Mr. Drezek stated at this point we do not know about transportation. This is a recommendation. We can only go so far with this. Our current bussing structure is a 4 tier system. This system also affects athletic events and start times since other districts are also dealing with transportation issues. At this point, we do not know exactly where the boundaries will be for walkers and bussed students. With our current 4 tiered bus system, it creates a greater need for drivers and logistical nightmare getting our students to where they need to be. We have certain programs in some of the buildings and students are being transported from their home schools to these programs that are offered in other buildings. Consolidating is another advantage for this proposed plan.

Mr. Hamre added the proposed K-5 model will alleviate a lot of parent concerns and simplify transportation concerns. Our families will need to make adjustments again.

Mr. Drezek added with our current 4-tiered system we are limited. Structure changing will allow for reallocated resources and expanding transportation services with better outcomes for our families.

Deputy Mayor Cekala apologized for being late. She previously saw the presentation as a SMC member and in leadership. She thanked Mr. Dague for the presentation. It was amazing to see the ideas come together by committee members for this common goal to make our town and education system a little bit better. This is amazing. She believes this plan will reduce bussing and make our schools for the littles better. This will complete our schools comprehensive plan. We started at the high school and then JFK. She is very excited about this. Owning the property at Mark Twain is a benefit. Having a swing space to use for our elementary students is extremely important. Children that lived through the construction at EHS and JFK can deal with it better than our youngest children. She believes when we update our elementary schools, we will see an influx of people coming back to our district including students that left us to attend magnet schools. We should plan for more classrooms than 102 to accommodate this bump with enrollments. She is in favor of this plan. She thanked everyone on the committee and Mr. Dague.

Councilor Nelson added we need to look into how we acquired the industrial park land. Is this open space? Was it donated to the town? Are there any restrictions to keep this as open space? He supports the new school and K-5 model. We do not have any formal numbers, we have rough numbers. This plan will cost us less money than fixing our current elementary schools. The rough number for this project is around \$180 million.

Mr. Dague added that number does not include any ineligible costs. The number may be higher.

Councilor Nelson stated at \$180 million dollars, Enfield taxpayers will be responsible for approximately \$62 million. We currently have several bonding projects on the books. What will it take for the Town Council to fund this \$62 million dollar referendum? He would love to say this is a no brainer, but we are the ones that will write the check. We need to figure out where this money will come from so we don't break the taxpayers. He supports the project, but it is not that easy. We will have 3 new elementary schools and reconfigure back to a K-5 model. He does not believe it will be less bussing. Parkman is surrounded on all sides by neighborhoods. Stowe is not. Crandall is also surrounded by neighborhoods on all sides. Whitney is not. The industrial park is not. Every student that goes to Parkman and Crandall will need transportation. He does not want to mislead anyone. He wants this to pass next year. He would like a study for the new location to include transportation. This was not taken into consideration with the consulting firm about the industrial park. We are discussing placing a school in the industrial park. Our residents and parents should know about transportation. The \$62 million dollars is a big discussion for the Town Council members. Putting air-conditioning in a school we will tentatively close is something to consider. The deadline for the HVAC grant is December 30<sup>th</sup>. You will need a check for \$5.2 million now. Our charter only allows us to issue so much that we can spend in a year without going to a referendum. This was set up to give the people of Enfield a choice and let the voters decide on large projects. A \$20 million dollar HVAC project is a good thing for our schools, but it needs to go to a referendum so we can commit to \$5.2 million.

Madam Chair asked Town Manager Zoppo to address this. Councilor Nelson stated we will address this at our special meeting next. Madam Chair would like Mrs. Zoppo to provide an explanation.

Mr. Dague added we have asked the School Construction & Grants at DAS (Department of Administrative Services) about us having potential referendum after the grant application date. They are looking to see if this will meet the needs of the HVAC grant. The town would be saying we are committing to a certain amount of dollars, and we plan to bring the additional funds for reimbursement for this grant and bonding purposes. We took your concern to DAS, and they are weighing in on this now.

Mr. Drezek also discussed this with the finance director who is also exploring what the Town Council's options may be and if it will become a risk for reward. Do we want to apply for a

grant or not? The timeframe is very short for doing this and it is due December 30<sup>th</sup>. The finance director has mentioned there are some possibilities if the Town Council were to authorize us to do this and would meet the needs and requirements of the town charter and Town Council. There has been some diligence done about this.

Councilor Nelson thanked Mr. Dague for doing this. This is something we discussed the other night.

Madam Chair added the next steps will come from the Town Council members at your meeting.

Councilor Nelson supports this project and wants this to pass. He agrees about the plans for reusing the schools and Hazardville Memorial would be a nice park. Mark Twain is full and there is a waiting list. There is no money with renovating these schools. Look at Nathan Hale and the empty school on Brainard Road, they are just sitting there. How do we tell the residents we have a great plan when both of these buildings are just sitting there vacant. We need to do better. He would like to get this done soon rather than later so we can address questions.

Mayor Cressotti thanked Mr. Dague for the presentation and for addressing Councilor Nelson's questions. Receiving the information from DAS will be vital. Hazardville Memorial has the most problems with the building and Prudence Crandall is next. Levelling Memorial and creating more recreation space is the right idea. As far as Prudence Crandall, this is something we will discuss further. He is in favor of the school modernization plan. We will be looking at a pre-referendum committee. By having a pre-referendum committee we will receive reimbursement with the work the committee does in regard to this project.

Mr. Dague added as part of the pre-referendum work, you will have a more comprehensive design for the building and a comprehensive cost estimate for your site and systems. The feasibility study will provide you with rough estimates. Some of the designs can be potentially picked up in the final design that can be reimbursable. This depends on contracts, etc. There is potential for some reimbursements as part of the pre-referendum work. There will also be some ineligible items. You will also have some design work that could be used towards the school which can reduce some future fees for the project.

Mayor Cressotti added this is important information and this will be our next step moving forward with a resolution for the pre-referendum committee later on for the next phase of this project. He likes the regionalization and the increased revenue stream that will be generated with this project. With the Eagle Academy and Alternative Education programs, he can see the growth. Studies are showing that renovated and new facilities create a different atmosphere for students. This is what we are trying to create in Enfield by enticing families to move to our town. There are no surprises with a new building. When students and staff feel comfortable in our buildings, they are more productive and happier. That also includes students test scores. He likes all of the project proposed plans including the HVAC. You mentioned this can be done in 3 phases.

Mr. Dague stated this can be done in 3 projects for the indoor air quality study. As part of the grant, we need to submit for consideration a long-term strategic plan. He will be back to present that. The Pre-K/5 Modernization Committee final report will be an addendum to the plan to be submitted to the State. They will be looking at the long-term use of the facility and may score some of the projects higher or lower based on the eventual use. It is wise to split this up into 3 projects. Whitney might receive a reduced rate or might not be eligible because the site will be used for ECDC. It is worth applying for it. Each project will have a separate number and application.

Mayor Cressotti thanked Mr. Dague for the presentation and the information.

Councilor Santanella thanked Mr. Dague for the presentation and for everyone that worked on

this committee. We now have more questions than answers. Mr. Dague stated future studies will be needed. We need to work through the pre-referendum process to get to the final dollar amount and make sure our sites are appropriate for our schools. This is a recommendation, and it is not final.

Councilor Santanella asked to get through step #1 what are you asking for and how much will it cost us so you will be able to answer all our other questions? Mr. Dague stated for the next phase, it would be best to put out a formal bid. We will solicit bids for the scope of the work for this project that will still need to be defined further. We will receive estimates from design professionals which is one of the required criteria for possible reimbursement in the future. He cannot give a dollar amount. Both EHS & JFK needed additional allocations for additional assessments and work that was needed. Through the bid process you will be able to adopt the appropriate bid and you will know the exact amount.

Councilor Santanella stated we need to go out to bid immediately to complete stage 1, adoption of the site selection and phasing for future study and for the pre-referendum committee.

Mr. Dague stated we need to put the recommendations in order. Will you approve this, or do you anticipate or want further studies for this proposal and if you will authorize a pre-referendum building committee. In this phase, they will solicit an architectural, engineering and design firm to work on the recommendation. We did this at both EHS & JFK. We would use a similar process by moving forward with these potential sites, forming a pre-referendum committee and then come back with a full scope of the project, put it out to bid and then come back with a final number.

Madam Chair added as part of the pre-referendum committee, we will include members from the town, Enfield Public Schools staff, BOE/TC liaisons. There will be an application process for this.

Councilor Santanella understands that. The question is we are getting into a lot of detail level that is premature. We are not in a position before the pre-referendum building committee to answer with any degree of certainty. Are we agreeable with this idea, are we open to repurposing the buildings and restructuring our elementary schools and needing further investigations. It seems like that is what you are asking us, and all the other issues will flow from that point.

Mr. Dague said that is it essentially. We are just trying to be more targeted in this phase. We have made the investment to evaluate our facilities. We have selected the sites, further studies are needed which will get us to the final dollar amount and a final recommendation.

Councilor Pyznar also thanked Mr. Dague for the presentation. A lot of thought has gone into this, and you have covered a lot. She does drop off at Stowe and Memorial as a retired grandparent and we have a hard time doing this. She is not sure how parents are doing this. She is behind changing the current configuration to a K-5 model. She also has concerns like Councilor Nelson regarding Mark Twain. She was a member of Inland/Wetlands and there is a reason why the wetlands have not been used. If this site is determined unusable, do you have another site in mind?

Mr. Dague stated the town owns 2 adjoining lots. One is Memorial Park, and the other lot backs up on the north side that backs up to the houses along the road. There are possibilities with the site. There is additional land and we have not determined any other additional sites at this time.

Councilor Pyznar is also concerned about additional funding, and this will now need to go out to bid for the pre-referendum. Regarding HVAC, the Town Council will need to discuss that further. We also need to remember the two separate referendum items that passed in 2021 that haven't started yet. This is a big number, but this is something we need.

Mr. Unghire thanked Mr. Dague and the committee for this presentation. He supports the plan and concept. Crandall is located near many neighborhoods. Now you will move this school even further from this area. This will also increase bussing for the students that live near and attend Prudence Crandall. Have you considered the property on Brainard Road, the old Noah Webster building?

Mr. Dague stated we looked at a lot of lots when we started this process. The site you mentioned is below the minimum acreage. We need at least 10 plus acres. Crandall is also below that minimum acreage. If we put a K-5 school on the current Crandall site, we would be doubling our bussing. Our site selections are around main roads so we will not be backing up onto the main roads. That is why we determined this site was not useable for a potential site.

Mr. Drezek added the families that live in that area send their K-2 students to Henry Barnard and are already receiving transportation. This is the same zone for both Barnard and Crandall students.

Mr. Unghire added this is a long way for students to travel to school. He was looking at improving things and making things more convenient for our families and students.

Councilor Pyznar added when her children were in school, the schools were K-6. Have you thought about renovating what we currently have. Mr. Dague stated it would cost more than \$100 million and you would not receive as much in reimbursements.

Councilor Mangini also thanked committee members and Mr. Dague. This has been a tremendous effort and it will produce a wonderful outcome. We have been piecemealing our roofs, boilers and buildings. We did have money set aside for these projects, but it is now gone. We need to move forward and apply for grants and referendums. She is in the schools a couple times of week working with the students. Grade 5 students are working on the Kid Governor project. One of the main themes is about how hot it is in the schools and how can we fix it. Our children are trying to learn, and they are uncomfortable. It is also uncomfortable for the teachers delivering the instruction. We need to move forward. She supports this plan.

Councilor Hopkins thanked Mr. Dague for the presentation. The committee has really done their homework. In the air quality study was there any discussion about climate change impact on air temperatures and humidity levels? This can be costly and concerning in the hotter months. We have to constantly fight with other towns for tax revenue back for our projects. If we can save millions of dollars from the State, we need to act on this. He appreciates you considering these things with the HVAC grants.

Councilor Ludwick thanked Mr. Dague for the presentation. Did the finance director give an estimate on what the town can afford for debt?

Town Manager Zoppo stated we do not have a presentation available tonight. We have reviewed the last two years of our financial statements and our debt load. We have looked at our debt level. We can do this. 2027 will be one of our peak years with our debt repayment schedule. We can have auditors attend a Town Council meeting so we can hear directly from them about this. They are the ones that are monitoring our money.

Councilor Ludwick would like to see this in writing first. One of the reasons we couldn't do the elementary schools and JFK at the same time was because we couldn't afford to do it all at once. We need to fully understand this for our taxpayers. We need to look at the money and see if we can afford this project. He does not want this to affect our bond rating. We can all support the project, but can we afford it. We do not know how much we are on the hook for the police department. He understands the conversations about the roofs. He looks at the money first. Can we afford this? He does not disagree with the concept.



Town Manager Zoppo added we do not have an answer now. We are showing we can manage this capacity. There are other ancillaries we need to look at. We need to look into the detail on the debt, cost of other projects and revenue potential. We have revenue generating programs that were discussed tonight. We have reuse and could potentially have cost avoidance, cost effective pieces, a regional hub, revenue generation, the cost of real estate, and the reduction of footprint on our operating expenses. There is a high demand at the Annex. We know improvements are needed with ECDC for more space. The Town Council needs to discuss the overall financial picture. The debt capacity question if this project is approved tonight, the finance director will have some answers based on projections for Tuesday's meeting. He will also address the efficacy for the HVAC grant.

Councilor Ludwick would like to see that information. If we lose a bond rating, it will add a significant amount to our debt. This is something everyone needs to understand fully. Regarding the Eagle Academy, we currently have 27 students there. Can we receive an estimate regarding revenue for this now and what we saved by not sending our Enfield students to another school.

Mr. Dague stated the costs for students is based on their needs. Outplacing the students will cost around \$70K - \$150K per student. You can kind of figure out the range for a rough estimate.

Councilor Ludwick supports Eagle Academy and what we are doing. He would like to see the figures. Mr. Dague added we need around 6-8 students to break even. We surpassed that the first year. Mr. Drezek added we do not have that information on us tonight.

Councilor Ludwick would also like a copy of the demographic study. Mr. Dague stated it is currently in a draft form and we will not share any draft documents. He will only put out final documents. All this information will be posted on the School Modernization website.

Councilor Ludwick asked if you looked at the demographic study that was done around 2015 and the estimates? Mr. Dague stated we did and used those in conjunction with this demographic study. The Enfield High number was predicted to be lower. We have more students now. Our K-5 numbers are accurate. The last projection that was done is very close to the predictions. There might be some changes with the pre-referendum because we have changed the sites. If the town approves additional housing development, that will impact enrollment numbers. There are no hard answers tonight. We need to know what direction to go in for further studies. There is no commitment or referendum yet. You will receive information as this progresses. A decision for a referendum should be made in August and that would include a final number with a bonding amount and the cost share for the Town. The pre-referendum building committee will make a recommendation to this body who will make the final decision.

Councilor Ludwick added before we go out to bid, we need to know about the scope of the work. When we changed the configuration previously from K-6 to K-2 and 3-5 there were some concerns we needed to address. Do you see this as a concern now. Will the schools be multi-level buildings? He is in favor of keeping our schools in neighborhoods. What will be the design.

Mr. Dague stated for efficiency, the schools will be multi-level. The floors will be split by the grade levels. We have seen some excellent models with clever ways to manage the flow. The first floor would be for your lower grade level students and special programs. The buildings would be either 2 or 3 floors depending on your site. An Alcorn style building is more efficient. The more surface area you have on a building, the more energy will be lost. It would increase glass coverage which is expensive, and you lose heat from them. Multi-floor buildings are better for security purposes. Circulation is also important. You can keep students in certain areas for shorter transition times between classes. As you build up, you are using less

physical distance. If we were to add a wing at Henry Barnard, that would be a long distance for students to get to the library or gym. It is efficiencies with educational minutes, building materials, construction and energy use. This would give you the best return on your dollars with the best outcome for our students.

Town Manager Zoppo added it is important for everyone to understand it is going to cost the taxpayers a minimum of \$100 million dollars for needed projects at a minimum. We cannot add on, modernize or abate our buildings that are 60 years old. We cannot go up on our buildings. This is a real number from our project list, capital improvements that look at safety and abatement which are priorities adding HVAC, will bring us to \$101 million dollars. She knows there will be more costs. The question is \$100 million dollars to tread water, or do we look at our debt structure and what can happen.

Councilor Ludwick added moderate work does not mean it has to be done. We still need to be able to afford this. The taxpayers need to know this. He does not want to affect our bond rating. Mrs. Zoppo added this community is not going to put our children, staff members and teachers at risk in buildings that should have been renovated and remediated many years ago.

Councilor Unghire also thanked Mr. Dague and committee members for this presentation. She supports the K-5 model and our buildings are well beyond their years. She supports this plan. You mentioned there would be 8 less classrooms with a projected increase in attendance. Will this affect our teachers job security?

Mr. Dague stated anyone can take the square footage and enrollment numbers and use the information from the Office of School Construction and Grants to figure out numbers. We will need to make decisions on how we allocate space. There was a certain amount of un-reimbursable program space at EHS. There is a process to make sure we are utilizing the space effectively and maximize the number of classrooms. We anticipate using more than 102 classrooms.

Councilor Unghire asked about a public hearing. Mr. Dague stated the pre-referendum committee will do this once we receive more solid information about the project. For the JFK project they had renderings to show the public with accurate cost estimates. We did this for EHS and JFK and envision us doing the same for this project.

Mr. Drezek added he knows this will be a concern, we do not have enough staff now. We will not lose any staff members. We will be better utilizing our staff now. Our teachers are traveling long distances to provide services for our students. Having a more consolidated building structure will give our teachers more time to work with our students.

Dr. Calnen thanked Mr. Dague for this wonderful presentation. The plan is to move ECDC and Stowe to Parkman and eventually move ECDC to Eli Whitney. It would be great to keep these two programs together. Having early childhood services located at one building would be ideal.

Mr. Dague stated there are benefits to having the programs together. We cannot serve as many families and students as we possibly can now. If universal pre-k comes to fruition, we will need more space. Having the space available will benefit us and we can expand both programs. If everything goes as planned, we will be able to transition services to Eli Whitney so both programs can expand.

Madam Chair explained that our Eagle Academy is a therapeutic day school. We were sending our students to out of district facilities for special education services. The cost for these services is very expensive. We moved this program to our old head start building and they are completely maxed out with 27 students. These students are being bussed to Alcorn to use the gym since we do not have one at Eagle Academy. We receive calls from other towns looking to place their students here. They will pay us instead of other facilities for these services. This long term plan captures regionalization in a positive way.

Madam Chair asked Mr. Dague to address the reason we are not using Nathan Hale. Mr. Dague stated we looked at Hale and this site does not meet the size needed.

Madam Chair stated we toured each of our buildings. Memorial was the worst and then Prudence Crandall. There are space issues in every building. We are providing services by using dividers. There is no privacy. Our buildings are maxed out and falling apart. When the committee presented, they never mentioned using a neighborhood model. They looked at using a K-5 model only.

Madam Chair stated this is about choices and what got us to this point. Our schools have been historically underfunded and taking money from CIP projects and not repairing our schools. That is why we will need a referendum and we will do it in phases to fix our schools and will need to pay more for it. We need to educate our taxpayers about how much it will cost to repair all of our buildings and keep them at status quo. During the pre-referendum committee for the high school, there was contention about using Fermi or Enfield High. The pre-referendum committees job is to compile numbers and community conversations. We were able to show people the costs and why Enfield High was the better site. We will get more answers as we progress.

Madam Chair stated Councilor Unghire mentioned reduction in staff. The pre-referendum committee met with teachers from Enfield and Fermi, and they discussed program changes.

Madam Chair asked for everyone's undivided attention. She listened to everyone speak when it was your turn. It is her turn to speak now.

Madam Chair further stated she previously spoke about Eagle Academy and Nathan Hale. The School Modernization Committee never mentioned a neighborhood model only a K-5 model. Underfunding CIP projects got us here. We have used the CIP funds to keep our taxes low. Now we have all these buildings that need to be repaired. We have been placing band aides on our buildings. Now we will need a referendum. This is what long term vision and planning looks like. This is a proposal. The answers will come along the way. This is a starting point. We will have a pre-referendum committee to hold community conversations to discuss the costs and educate our community. We had 3 during the Enfield High School project. She was not in favor of the K-2 and 3-5 model because of what it does to our students, families and staff.

Madam Chair added one of our buildings was cited and it was Alcorn. That is when the discussion started about going to a K-2 and 3-5 model for our elementary schools. We did not need to do that. We could have just stayed as a K-5 model and the parents would have supported that. The K-2 and 3-5 model does not work. Having grade 6 at JFK has proven to be successful.

Madam Chair stated Mr. Dague suggested that when we are going through this process, we create a building reuse committee so we can identify how these buildings can be repurposed. We have time to discuss this and how important open space is. Saying we are not being honest, or we will not inform the taxpayers is something she cannot accept. Moderate work is important work. There is urgent, high and moderate. How can you say this to our students and teachers that this is not needed. There is a reason our infrastructure is the way it is in our town. This is an opportunity to revisit the K-5 model which has been strongly supported by a committee of Enfield residents that are not elected officials. We need to start somewhere, and this is our starting point.

Madam Chair stated this is as far as we can go and as far as this committee can go. The committee has done a lot of honest work. She appreciates each one of you. We need the Town Council to tell us what our next steps will be.

Madam Chair addressed reduction of staff and as part of the pre-ref committee for the high school, each department at both high schools got together and discussed what we could offer at a combined high school. Since we combined our schools, our culinary arts program, graphic arts, and technology education programs have all grown. Everything these teachers said has happened. This would be an amazing opportunity for our K-5 teachers to talk to us about improving our K-5 model and education for our students which will bring up our test scores and be a more productive environment for student learning. Your building does make a difference as said by Mayor Cressotti.

Madam Chair thanked Town Council members for coming and sharing your perspectives. It is very important to have these kinds of group discussions together. The Town Council has bigger decisions to make tonight. She appreciates you all being here. She thanked Board members for giving up our regular meeting to be here to participate in this group discussion and to see the presentation. We are under some time constraints with the HVAC grant. She also thanked the members of the School Modernization Committee.

**5. ACTION IF ANY REGARDING SCHOOL MODERNIZATION COMMITTEE PRESENTATION - None**

**6. ADJOURNMENT**

Dr. Calnen moved, seconded by Mr. Hamre to adjourn the Special Meeting of September 26, 2023.

All ayes, motion passed unanimously. Meeting stood adjourned at 9:35 PM.

Jonathan LeBlanc  
Secretary  
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary