

**ENFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 13, 2010**

A regular meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held at Town Hall in Council Chambers, located at 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, CT on April 13, 2010.

1. **CALL TO ORDER** The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by Chairman Stokes.
2. **INVOCATION OR MOMENT OF SILENCE** Donna Szewczak
3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** Donna Szewczak
4. **FIRE EVACUATION ANNOUNCEMENT** Chairman Stokes announced the fire evacuation announcement.
5. **ROLL CALL**

MEMBERS PRESENT Peter Jonaitis, Tom Sirard, Donna Szewczak, Charles Johnson, Judy Apruzzese-Desroches, Joyce Hall, Vincent Grady, Stacy Thurston and Greg Stokes

MEMBERS ABSENT None

ALSO PRESENT Dr. John Gallacher, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Anthony Torre, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Enrico Fermi High Student Representative Meghan Ruff and Enfield High School Student Representative Regina Casale

6. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Ms. Hall moved, seconded by Mr. Grady that the Regular Meeting Minutes of March 23, 2010 be approved. Motion passed unanimously by a **show of hands 9-0-0**.

7. **BOARD GUESTS** - None

8. **CORRESPONDENCE AND COMMUNICATIONS** - None

9. **AUDIENCES**

Bill Ballard, Abbe Road – Mr. Ballard thanked Board members for serving on the Board and everything they do. Mr. Ballard does not support the Board fighting the ACLU. Mr. Ballard would like the Board to address the items you were elected to do. Concessions are needed by our unions. Mr. Ballard lost his insurance just like everyone else facing hard times. Mr. Ballard was disappointed that the Board did not extend the meeting past 11:00 PM. Issues still needed to be addressed. Redistricting should be first and foremost. The law suit is the wrong decision at this time. Mr. Ballard thanked Board members.

Josh Hamre, New King Street – Mr. Hamre stated changes are going to be made. It is the same story. The budget will cut more jobs and possibly crossing guards. The cars travel too quickly on the roads and streets in Enfield. Liability concerns will arise without crossing guards. Board members are all doing a volunteer job that many do not want to do. Mr. Hamre thanked Board members for doing a good job. The art work in the room is amazing. Redistricting is

another topic that will be coming up. Mr. Hamre did not like the idea last year, but we need to make the best decision we can for the children. Mr. Hamre thanked Board members.

James Brislan, Oakwood Street – Mr. Brislan urged Board members to bring graduations back to the First Cathedral. Mr. Brislan stated the First Cathedral is the most fiscally responsible location to hold graduations. Mr. Brislan stated the injunction that the ACLU may impose was denied in a past case. Mr. Brislan urged Board members to fight the ACLU and return graduations back to the First Cathedral.

Michelle Nassau, Vernon Street – Mrs. Nassau is a teacher at Enfield High for the past 8 years and was at Parkman Elementary school for 6 years. Mrs. Nassau is here to support the art program in Enfield. Students that follow through the program will take portfolio art in hopes to pursue their career in the arts at the collegiate level. Mrs. Nassau stated Richard Fahey, the Visual Arts Department Chair challenges the students far beyond their expectations. The transformation the students attain when they take portfolio art is truly amazing. Mrs. Nassau urged Board members to support the arts.

Derrick Wright, Oakwood Street – Mr. Wright stated he is here regarding graduations. Mr. Wright would like to know why Board members would not want to use the most cost effective location for graduations. Other sites will cost more than what has been budgeted for.

Lisa Reda, Oakwood Street – Mrs. Reda thanked Board members and the Administration for your continued support for the music program in Enfield. These programs are needed. She attended the All State Program last weekend and was impressed with the students. Mrs. Reda thanked Mark Reppucci and Richard Sullivan for the many hours of support they give the students. Mrs. Reda is the FHS Safe Grad Chair and would like the Board to hold graduations on two separate days and asked the Board for their support. Mrs. Reda thanked Board members.

Lena Mack, North Maple Street – Mrs. Mack stated redistricting needs to happen in Enfield. The home school for her children is farther away from where she lives which is next to a school. She is currently providing transportation to and from school for her children. Mrs. Mack stated the school her children attend is a well run school and she would like to continue having her children attend this school. To popcorn and throw students around when redistricting, concerns Mrs. Mack. Closing smaller schools also concerns Mrs. Mack. Smaller schools can be a better school. Mrs. Mack would like the Board to include administration in your decisions regarding redistricting. They know what works best in the schools. Mrs. Mack thanked Board members.

Laura Montigny, Middle Road – Mrs. Montigny attended the TC/BOE Strategic Planning Committee meeting last week. Mrs. Montigny stated a question was asked at this meeting if the software can pinpoint how many children live at each house. Will students that are home schooled and parochial students be taken into consideration? It was also said at this meeting that students should attend their home schools so when they go home they can play with children they go to school with. Mrs. Montigny stated she lives across from Eli Whitney. The Eli Whitney district is in the presidential and Thompsonville sections. Mrs. Montigny liked what she heard at the meeting. Mrs. Montigny asked if the transportation software will take into considerations concerns for safety issues at bus stops like sex offenders. Mrs. Montigny would like the Board to redistrict first before closing any schools.

Chairman Stokes asked Dr. Gallacher to address the Bus Software during his Superintendent's Report.

10. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

EHS Student Representative Regina Casale thanked the members of the Invisible Children's Club and the members of the Darfur Awareness Committee for raising money and awareness by holding an assembly. Ms. Casale thanked Mrs. Nassau for speaking about the art program.

FHS Student Representative Meghan Ruff thanked Mrs. Nassau for her comments. Ms. Ruff also took Portfolio Art. It was the hardest and best class she has taken. Ms. Ruff also supports the music program. Ms. Ruff thanked everyone for speaking tonight.

Mrs. Thurston stated she attended an ice cream social at Eli Whitney to support the Grade 6 class trip to Boston. Mrs. Thurston stated the grade 3 class will attend a program at the Science Center for a minimal fee. Mrs. Ellen Smith applied for and received a grant for \$800 for the grade 3 students. The students will have a great time.

Mr. Jonaitis stated he received a letter addressing an issue at JFK but no one signed their name to it. Mr. Jonaitis further stated if you would like him to address an issue, you will need to give him your name.

Mr. Jonaitis stated union concessions are something that all towns are looking at. Redistricting has been discussed and is ongoing. Eliminating crossing guards is something that came from the Town Manager's proposed budget presentation. Mr. Jonaitis agrees that the portfolio and music classes are worthwhile. Board members support all classes but if the money is not there, how can we fund them. Mr. Jonaitis stated redistricting will not be done with a popcorn effect. Mr. Jonaitis has not heard anything about closing small schools. Mr. Jonaitis stated we are looking for help. If we can save jobs by working with the unions we will do that.

Mr. Grady congratulated the Enfield High Boys Basketball Team for winning the NCCC Conference title and for going as far as they could in the State Class M Tournament. Mr. Grady attended the Woman's Club Art Festival last week and was amazed by the art work from grade 3-12 students. We have talent in our schools and they all did a great job.

Mr. Sirard stated what he may say, might offend some. He has received many e-mails regarding redistricting. The economy is in dire needs. Mr. Sirard works in the construction field that intersects with all areas. We have been told that the economy will not turn around until 2013. Mr. Sirard predicts it will be 2015 before we will see any marketable improvements. We are in for a long rough ride. Stability is what we are striving for. Our system is not functioning properly. We have spending issues not revenue issues. Equity is needed.

Mr. Sirard stated he has been accused of not knowing what is needed to provide a quality education. Mr. Sirard cares about the end result. Mr. Sirard does not rank quality by class size. Mr. Sirard cares about how our students do on standardized tests. Mr. Sirard cares about our college acceptance rates and the need for remedial studies at the high school levels. Mr. Sirard cares about our school rankings.

Mr. Sirard stated that our infrastructure is too large. Our budget is mostly for salaries and benefits. Our infrastructure is designed for 12,000 students and we currently have 6,000 students. He understands the need for smaller class sizes but the average class load is 13 in Enfield. It should be around 19 students. Quality education starts at home. Students are coming to kindergarten not ready to learn. Parents need to start the process before students come to school. Active and involved parents are what can make or break an educational system. Standardized focused consistent curriculum throughout the district is needed. The curriculum should be same at all schools. Efficient use of resources is needed. This can be done as a team and with the help of the community. Redistricting is needed.

Mr. Sirard agrees with everyone, but changes are needed. Mr. Sirard is not out to gut the school system or fire teachers. Mr. Sirard cares about education for our children. Mr. Sirard further stated he is a steward to look out for the taxpayer's money. Changes are needed in our education system.

Ms. Hall disagrees with some of the information Mr. Sirard has made but does not have the information needed to dispute them. Ms. Hall stated State employees no longer have extraordinary pensions, they are now contributory pensions and are not guaranteed. Ms. Hall stated the current curriculum is based on developmental learning K-12. Each level is built on the prior level because students like repetition and they learn better because of this. The same curriculum is expected to be done in every grade school to school. The delivery of the curriculum may be delivered differently.

Ms. Hall stated grade 2 students were also included in the arts festival. The grade 2 students made pictures of different ways of water conservation.

Ms. Hall stated ERfC has a special offer for Alcorn and Enfield Street parents only. From now until the end of the school year any new students wanting to participate can do so for only \$35.00 a week. This is a bargain especially when you think of what daycare costs.

Ms. Hall agreed with Mr. Jonaitis that the crossing guards are not part of our budget. Ms. Hall is extremely enthusiastic about the arts in our schools.

Mrs. Szewczak also attended the Woman's Club Arts Festival and was lucky enough to win one of the paintings in raffle. This will be cherished. Mrs. Szewczak supports the arts. Mrs. Szewczak further stated that Board members do not want to make any cuts.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches thanked everyone that came out tonight. Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches asked Dr. Gallacher to have some of the artwork displayed in Council Chambers and thanked Mr. Fahey and Dr. Gallacher for arranging this. Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches thanked all of the students for participating in the 44th annual art festival. Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated Mr. Fahey does a great job with our art students by challenging them. Students also sang at the arts festival and they did a great job too. It was a phenomenal event that everyone should attend if you can.

Mr. Johnson stated several audience members spoke about graduation sites and the First Cathedral. Board members have looked at several locations and this will be discussed later on the agenda. Mr. Johnson stated at the end of the last meeting, Board members took a vote to extend the meeting. This was the first time such a vote failed since he has been a Board member. There were a lot of issues that still needed to be addressed. Mr. Johnson stated this was an outrageous thing to do. The budget for the First Cathedral was also addressed by an audience member. We budgeted for the First Cathedral last year anticipating that we would be going there. Anything above that budgeted amount will need to come out of our current budget and we need to save every penny that we can.

Chairman Stokes addressed an audience member's comments about the Joint Strategic Planning Committee. The committee will meet every Thursday night at 6:30 PM in the Board Conference Room located at Henry Barnard Elementary School. It is open to the public. We held our first organizational meeting last week. We may take the meetings on the road if we need to walk through a particular school. Any recommendations made by the Strategic Planning Committee would be brought back to the Board for approval. If you have any questions or comments, please either call us or e-mail us.

Chairman Stokes stated the crossing guards were in the Town Manager's proposed budget presentation. They also have cuts that need to be made. We will debate with them on some of these areas. Student safety is needed. We want all of our students to be safe.

11. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- a. Special Meeting – as presented
- b. Family Science Fair – as presented
- c. Spring Vacation – as presented

Dr. Gallacher stated the servers for the transportation software are currently being built. IT is moving forward with this. We will be working with the software in a bit. The actual bus stops need to be entered into the system. Dangerous areas or areas of concerns will also need to be taken into consideration.

Dr. Gallacher stated regarding home schooled children, they will be taken into consideration as long as they have filled out the proper forms. They would be coded differently in the database.

12. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS - None

13. APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS AND PAYROLL - None

14. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Ratify Clerical & Library Aides Contract

Mr. Jonaitis moved, seconded by Ms. Hall that the Enfield Board of Education ratifies the Clerical and Library Aides Contract.

Discussion:

Mr. Jonaitis thanked the Clerical and Library Aides negotiation committees on both sides. Mr. Jonaitis also thanked Chris Chemerka for assisting on the Board's negotiation committee and would recommend Board members approve these contracts.

A vote by **roll call 9-0-0** passed unanimously.

b. Ratify Cafeteria Employees' Contract

Mr. Jonaitis moved, seconded by Ms. Hall that the Enfield Board of Education ratifies the Cafeteria Employees Contract.

Discussion:

Mr. Jonaitis thanked the negotiation teams involved. Mr. Jonaitis also thanked Diane Edwards for her assistance. Mr. Jonaitis hopes that everyone will also support the approval of this agreement.

Point of Information:

Ms. Hall stated that Mr. Jonaitis thanked Chris Chemerka for assisting on the Board's negotiation committee is not correct. It was Carol Parmelee-Blancato that assisted on this committee.

Chairman Stokes thanked the members of the Personnel Committee and all negotiating committees on all sides.

A vote by **roll call 9-0-0** passed unanimously.

c. Discussion on RFP for Reorganization and Action(s), if any *(Tabled 03-23-10)*

Ms. Hall moved, seconded by Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches that the Enfield Board of Education continues tabling the RFP due to the ongoing discussions with the Town Council.

Discussion:

Mr. Johnson asked if this would be an indefinite tabling. Ms. Hall stated that is correct. Any tabled item can be brought back up at any time.

A vote by **roll call 8-1-0** passed with Mr. Jonaitis in dissent.

d. Discussion on Graduation Site(s), and Action if any

Mr. Jonaitis moved, seconded by Mr. Johnson that the Enfield Board of Education holds graduations at the First Cathedral.

Discussion:

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated we need to spend smart. Going to the First Cathedral is a reasonable cost but it opens up other financial concerns for liability and associated costs with a potential injunction.

Chairman Stokes stated we have budgeted \$32K for graduations. Board members have looked at other sites and options. The First Cathedral can provide us with one stop shopping. One price for a full service facility with everything we have been provided with before. The public response is in favor of this. The accommodations are wonderful.

Chairman Stokes stated Board members have been threatened by an organization (the ACLU) and we have been contacted by an organization (the ACLJ) that will represent us in any potential lawsuit from the ACLU. The ACLJ does not believe we are violating any rules. We are renting a location. The ACLJ is confident that they can win this case.

Chairman Stokes stated Board members are limited by budget constraints. We want to honor our graduates. We have dealt with attorneys on other areas. Chairman Stokes stated this will not distract Board members from redistricting. If we are contacted by the ACLU, we will contract the ACLJ and will meet in executive session to clarify and retain counsel. The ACLJ will report to us and we will give them guidance.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated the ACLJ will represent us but there will be more associated costs like court fees. Do we know what these other costs might be? Chairman Stokes stated dispositions and paper filings are minimal fees. Chairman Stokes believes the costs would be a fair investment of the Board.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated we have already spent money on legal fees. Do we know where we stand in our current budget for legal fees. This is above and beyond the norm.

Chairman Stokes states the blame is on the ACLU. It is the right thing to do. The First Cathedral can meet our financial needs. If we don't go to the First Cathedral, what would you recommend? Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches suggests finding the money to go somewhere else.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches would rather look at something without unknown risks.

Mr. Johnson stated the fees would be minimal. He asked for a specific number from the ACLJ and they estimate around \$7-8K for the paperwork that needs to be filed.

Mr. Grady stated the guesstimate is around \$7-8K. There is a possibility of an injunction. We had a slam-dunk case with another court case and it cost the fund a lot of money. We can possibly lose \$5K in deposits at the First Cathedral. If we win the first round, they can appeal the case and we do not know what those fees will be. Mr. Grady believes it is not a prudent decision to put ourselves on the hook for that much money. Mr. Grady stated attorneys will tell you one thing, but they are out for their money. Chairman Stokes stated we did see first hand what can happen in some court cases.

Chairman Stokes stated we want to honor our students. We have a budget with financial constraints. If an injunction is placed on us, Chairman Stokes will speak loud that this is not a long term thing. Next year we will look at one day graduations. Our students deserve a graduation site that is good for them.

Mr. Grady agrees but do we take the chance and gamble on this. Our students will be left with no graduation site. Do we want to take this chance.

Chairman Stokes does not believe that they will give an injunction with it being this close to the graduations.

Mr. Jonaitis stated the original suit evolved around two issues – a house of worship and did we look at other venues. Mr. Jonaitis stated we have done extensive work looking at other venues and no one comes close to what the First Cathedral can offer for the price.

Mr. Jonaitis further stated we can always setup the gyms at both schools. Mr. Jonaitis asked if we can ask the First Cathedral for an agreement regarding the deposit should we receive an injunction.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated we have received two different opinions from two different attorneys regarding holding graduations at the First Cathedral. The attorney's will tell you what you want to hear.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated the ACLJ offered to represent us. This is something the Board would need to approve. Chairman Stokes stated that is correct. First we need to decide if we are going to go to the First Cathedral. The ACLJ attorney would meet with the Board in executive session and the vote would be taken in public session.

Mr. Jonaitis stated we have listened to parents and students regarding this process. Mr. Jonaitis liked the process and the First Cathedral is the first place they would like to go to. This will truly save us money.

Mrs. Thurston stated she does not want to fight the ACLU and does not believe that we have the funds to fight the ACLU. Mrs. Thurston stated she has said from the start that she wanted to hear from the students. The students have spoken. If there is a vote, she will have to make her decision.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated she does not have any problems with the First Cathedral. The graduations were beautiful. From the very beginning she has stated that the graduations belong back home, on our school grounds. My son wants to graduate on the fields at Enfield High as do many students at both Enfield and Enrico Fermi want to graduate on their fields. It

was never intended to keep graduations at the First Cathedral. Graduations were to be held at the Cathedral for each building for one year during field renovations. Board members do not know what will be done for graduations next year. There has been no decision regarding this. This is all speculation at this time.

A vote by **roll call 6-3-0** passed with Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches, Ms. Hall and Mr. Grady in dissent.

15. NEW BUSINESS

a. Approve Head Start COLA Grant

Ms. Hall moved, seconded by Mr. Grady that the Enfield Board of Education accepts the Head Start application for the COLA Grant.

Discussion:

Mr. Jonaitis and Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches both asked if this will cost us any money. Ms. Hall stated no, we just need to apply.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated this is a one year grant and asked if it will reduce salary costs. Ms. Hall stated when the grant ends it can reduce salaries if it is not picked up by another grant.

Mr. Torre stated the Board subsidizes salary costs. It helps to offset salary costs incurred by the Board.

A vote by **roll call 9-0-0** passed unanimously.

16. EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

17. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Grady moved, seconded by Mrs. Thurston to adjourn the Regular Meeting of April 13, 2010. All ayes, motion passed unanimously.

Meeting stood adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Joyce P. Hall
Secretary
Enfield Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary