

**ENFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 3, 2010**

The Enfield Board of Education held a Special Board meeting on Thursday, June 3, 2010 in the multi-purpose room at Henry Barnard Elementary School located at 27 Shaker Road, Enfield, CT.

1. **CALL TO ORDER** The Special Meeting was called to order by Greg Stokes at 6:30 PM.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** Greg Stokes

3. **FIRE EVACUATION ANNOUNCEMENT** Greg Stokes

4. **ROLL CALL**

Present: Judy Apruzzese-Desroches; Vincent Grady; Joyce Hall; Stacy Thurston; Peter Jonaitis; Tom Sirard (arrived at 7:03 PM); Donna Szewczak; Chuck Johnson and Greg Stokes

Also Present: John Gallacher, Superintendent; Tony Torre, Assistant Superintendent; and Chris Chemerka, Business Manager.

5. **EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR MATTER(S) RELATED TO PENDING CLAIMS/LITIGATION – ACLU LAWSUIT**

Mr. Grady moved, seconded by Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches that the Enfield Board of Education goes into executive session for Matter(s) Related to Pending Claims/Litigation – ACLU Lawsuit.

Dr. Gallacher, Mr. Torre, Attorney Gerarde and Attorney McCarthy joined the Board in executive session.

Mr. Sirard arrived at 7:03 PM while the Board was in Executive Session.

No Board action occurred while in Executive Session.

6. **APPROVE CONTINUATION OF APPEAL PROCESS TO THE DECISION OF THE U.S. DISTRICT COURT BANNING GRADUATION AT THE FIRST CATHEDRAL**

Chairman Stokes stated we are back in public session at 7:32 PM.

Mr. Johnson moved, seconded by Mr. Jonaitis that the Enfield Board of Education continues with the appeal process.

Vote by **Roll Call 4-5-0**, motion failed with Mrs. Szewczak, Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches, Mr. Grady, Ms. Hall and Mrs. Thurston in dissent.

7. **ACTION, IF ANY, ON THE 2010 GRADUATION SITE(S)**

Mr. Johnson moved, seconded by Mr. Sirard that the Enfield Board of Education set the graduation sites to the school gymnasiums.

Discussion:

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated we need to look at the graduations at the schools and allow the principals to establish within their budget range where they would like to hold the graduations. That could be indoor or outdoor and how they could facilitate it. Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches does not believe the Board should decide specifically in the gym.

Mr. Sirard agrees with Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches and would like the administrators to decide as long as they stay within the budget and does not exceed the budget.

Mrs. Szewczak stated by saying it will be held in the gymnasiums is a rash decision.

Ms. Hall asked Mr. Johnson to accept a friendly amendment to the motion to what Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated. Mr. Johnson stated that would be fine.

Ms. Hall moved to amend the original motion, seconded by Mrs. Szewczak that the Enfield Board of Education holds graduations on the school property and to allow the administration to decide the location while staying within the budget.

Chairman Stokes called for a vote on the amendment.

A vote by roll call 7-2-0, the amendment passed with Mr. Jonaitis and Chairman Stokes in dissent.

Ms. Hall moved to amend the original motion, seconded by Mrs. Szewczak that the Enfield Board of Education to hold graduations on the school property and to allow the administration to decide the location while staying within the budget.

Discussion:

Chairman Stokes stated the backup plan was always for graduations to be at the schools. Chairman Stokes stated it is a mistake to not continue with the appeal. Chairman Stokes will vote no.

Mr. Sirard agrees with Chairman Stokes and this is the backup plan. We voted not to appeal and as a Board member he will support the decision of the Board.

Mrs. Szewczak stated the case will still go on even though we decided not to appeal. Education is the most important thing we do. Many believe graduations are the most important thing, but it is not. It needs to be put into perspective. Public education is provided to the students by all the citizens in Enfield. This is a town event and celebration. To hold graduations anywhere else would be equivalent to holding the Taste of Enfield's Fourth of July in the next town.

Mr. Jonaitis is also disappointed that we are not appealing the case. After listening to everything and everyone, Mr. Jonaitis changed his original opinion. Holding graduations at the Cathedral was a good idea. It did not look like a church as most churches do. Mr. Jonaitis does not like being bullied by the ACLU.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated an appeal does not mean we would go to the Cathedral. It would mean that we would be still waiting to hear where graduations were going to be held. We could wait but we need to plan for graduations. Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated the Board needs to move on, establish graduation sites and get back to business like our budget. This has

taken a lot of our time and our attention that should be focused on our budget. Budget cuts are needed. What is education going to look like in Enfield and how are we going to do this. Graduation is a right of passage. We have spent way too much time on something that should have been handed over to the administration.

Mr. Sirard agrees with Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches that we have spent too much time on this. This is not because of us. It is because of the ACLU. This was an easy fiscal decision. We did our due diligence in finding a graduation location. That is why Mr. Sirard supported it. Mr. Sirard is not happy with the amount of time this Board has spent on this because of an outside organization.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated we chose to move forward knowing what could happen. Mr. Sirard stated we did it for all the right reasons. Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated she is also not happy.

Mr. Grady agrees with Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches. The vote was rescinded. It was the vote of the Board that put us in this situation not the ACLU. The Board made this decision.

Mr. Sirard agreed that the Board voted to rescind for all the correct reasons. The Board was accused of making an improper decision and rushed a judgment without doing our due diligence. We did our due diligence and came up with one location with six votes. This wasn't a party line vote. We have taken this much time because of the ACLU. We were told the students and our constituents wanted this. This is why we are still talking about this.

Mr. Johnson firmly supports going with the appeal process. We still have a law suit that is out there. There are legal fees that we will be responsible for.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated for clarification, if the Board loses the suit, we are liable for legal fees. Mr. Johnson stated the suit will go forward.

Mr. Johnson stated the appeal process would have put us in a process to maintain our budget for graduations. We could have had a nice graduation as done in the past. We are now put into a situation that we may need to hold them indoors due to weather. Seating will also be a challenge.

Mrs. Thurston stated even if we decided to go along with the appeal, there are no guarantees that we would be able to go to the Cathedral. Mrs. Thurston did not want to leave the students hanging with only 20 days till graduation. This is not fair to the students.

Mr. Johnson stated we would not have done that to the students. We could have voted to go forward with the appeal and motioned to have a backup contingency plan to bring the graduations back home. Mrs. Thurston stated this could not be guaranteed. Mr. Johnson stated we would be in no worse shape than we are in now. Mrs. Thurston stated at least the students will know where their graduations will be held.

Chairman Stokes stated on the agenda tonight was first the appeal and then to approve a plan for graduations. The appeal process is a legal process. Dr. Gallacher and the administrators would have begun working on the graduation locations the next day.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated it is also not true to assume that we would not incur any costs in order to secure a backup plan. We don't know the cost for renting chairs. We are supposed to be talking about the graduation site and not the appeal process. This should have been discussed before we voted on the appeal.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches moved, seconded by Mrs. Szewczak to call for the question.

Chairman Stokes stated a call for the question requires a 2/3 majority vote and it is not debatable.

A vote by roll call 5-4-0, failed with Mr. Jonaitis, Mr. Sirard, Mr. Johnson and Chairman Stokes in dissent.

Mr. Jonaitis stated we have the democratic process in place and we should move on to the budget.

Chairman Stokes stated the motion is to bring the graduations back to the school property at the discretion of the principals while staying within the budget.

A vote by roll call 7-2-0, passed with Mr. Jonaitis and Chairman Stokes in dissent.

Recess:

Chairman Stokes stated the Board will take a brief recess at 7:50 PM and will then proceed with our budget workshop.

The recess ended at 8:07 PM.

8. WORK SESSION FOR ARRIVING AT THE ADOPTED BUDGET FOR FY10-11

Chairman Stokes stated Board members will continue the FY10-11 budget discussion.

Dr. Gallacher distributed requested information regarding projected enrollments for 2010-11. Students are constantly moving in and out of the district throughout the school year. The numbers will fluctuate. Dr. Gallacher also reviewed the empty classrooms at each elementary school as requested by Board members.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches asked what the magnet school enrollments are and will they impact the sixth grade. Dr. Gallacher stated we have not received the official magnet counts yet. Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated there may be some students included in these numbers that will attend magnet schools next year. She heard that 17 Enfield students would be attending MLC. That should impact the numbers when we receive the magnet numbers.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches asked why will there be three classes at Crandall in grade 6 for 66 students. That equates to three classes of 22. We are proposing to have 1 class of 32 at Alcorn in grade 6. What is the logic behind this? Dr. Gallacher stated it has to go with the needs of the school and students. There are also support staff that are not included. Dr. Gallacher stated Title I buildings have additional support staff. Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches asked to see the support staff numbers for the next budget meeting.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches asked about the classroom teacher numbers in grade 3 at Crandall and Nathan Hale and the classroom teacher numbers at Crandall and Parkman in grade 2. Why is it ok to have larger class sizes at some of the schools and not the other? Dr. Gallacher stated that would be a decision for the Board.

Mrs. Szewczak stated the numbers at Parkman grade 2 are high also. Mrs. Mazzoli stated retentions have increased the numbers.

Mr. Grady asked about a drop dead date for magnet enrollments. Dr. Gallacher stated there isn't one. They can accept them continually as long as they have open seats.

Mr. Jonaitis is concerned about class sizes above 30. He would like to set a number not to exceed 30 in a class.

Chairman Stokes stated we have 4 classrooms that will be over 30 students. We would need the funds to add additional teachers.

Mrs. Szewczak stated there are 21 empty classrooms. We are running totally inefficiently and that is why we have overcrowded classrooms.

Ms. Hall asked if they counted the music and art rooms with the number of empty classrooms. Dr. Gallacher stated they were not included in the numbers. Balancing by tweaking will cost you more with your transportation costs.

Mrs. Szewczak stated we did a disservice by not closing a school this year. We will have overcrowded classrooms and program reductions now.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated no one likes any of the decisions that are facing us. We don't know what the magnet school draw will be that could potentially help us with the sixth grade class sizes. She agrees with Mr. Jonaitis that 30 is a better number in a classroom. Mrs. Szewczak stated 27 is an even better number.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated by not closing a school, next year it will be a transition year. That means we are willing to accept what normally would be unacceptable. Larger class sizes was a choice we made by not closing a school.

Mr. Sirard stated we did not vote to not close a school just to not transfer the sixth graders. The option is still on the table.

Mr. Grady stated the community does not want us to close a school next year.

Ms. Hall stated class sizes will be large whether we close a school or not due to the potential staff layoffs.

Dr. Gallacher stated Board members received information with various scenarios a few weeks ago that listed large class sizes at certain schools. This was based on the feedback from the community and that they were willing to live with larger class sizes for a year to avoid closing a school now and having to move students several times. We need an infusion of money.

Mrs. Szewczak is worried if we get rid of programs we will need to fight to get them back. We need to list the programs needed to show the Town Council next year.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated it will be a 2 step process. Redistricting will not solve the disparity in our classrooms. Redistricting without closing schools will not allow us to retain or expand programs. Doing both in September 2010 is impossible. Sometimes doing nothing is the lesser of two evils. We have a strong commitment for 2011. We will redistrict, restructure and

close as necessary to make it successful so we can grow smaller. Develop new programs and expand on existing programs. We need to stabilize our core.

Mrs. Szewczak is worried about this and back pedaling.

Mr. Sirard stated we listened to our constituents. There is no money coming. The State and Federal Government is putting more requirements upon us like in-school suspensions. It will only get worse next year. We are facing serious reality. We will have large class sizes. Mr. Sirard would prefer smaller class sizes. It is a trade off for a year.

Mrs. Szewczak stated the administrators did a great job with the information they have provided Board members. Chairman Stokes agreed with Mrs. Szewczak.

Mr. Jonaitis would not like elementary classes over 30. Mrs. Szewczak asked if we could work on the numbers.

Chairman Stokes stated we need to settle on a budget. Dr. Gallacher will continue to work on numbers and look at magnet numbers. The Board has put into motion change with reconfiguring that will save us money. The interim number will produce some larger class sizes. Chairman Stokes also does not want to see classes over 30 but the community is ok with it.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches stated the pain is shared district wide and is balanced at each level. The swing from the magnet schools will help with grades 6 and 7. Some of the positions could be moved around once we know our numbers to get a class size under 30. Dr. Gallacher stated we have moved teachers in the beginning of school before.

Mr. Sirard asked how much money will we lose when a student goes to a magnet school. Dr. Gallacher stated the cost is the tuition and any special education services at a CREC magnet school and just the special education cost for the Hartford Host magnet schools.

Mr. Jonaitis stated at the last meeting it was said that it cost more to educate a high school student. When it comes to dollars and cents, that statement is correct. In the long run, to reach students in a large classroom it will be more costly.

Ms. Hall asked Mrs. Chemerka how much are we allocating in the budget for magnet school tuition. Mrs. Chemerka stated we have \$526K budgeted for magnet school funding. This number includes the Vo-Ag students. There is some wiggle room.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches asked if we have budgeted for the In-School Suspension Program. Dr. Gallacher stated it is in the budget.

Mr. Sirard stated if we loose 17 students to magnet schools, would we lose a teacher. Dr. Gallacher stated it costs around \$55K for a teacher. At the in-town magnet school, we need to transport the students. This could be a wash. It would depend on where the students are coming from. If they all came from the same school and class it could save us a position.

Chairman Stokes stated if you need any additional information, let Dr. Gallacher know. We have meetings planned for Monday, June 7th and Tuesday, June 8th for the budget. We also have June 10th reserved if needed.

Mrs. Szewczak asked when do we need to vote on the budget. Chairman Stokes stated by June 10th. We could move the approval date to either Monday or Tuesday. We can set the budget with the wording of approve if needed.

Ms. Hall would like to drop the June 10th meeting and have a drop dead date to adopt the budget by June 8th. Board members agreed to place on the June 7th and 8th Board meetings action, if needed on both agendas.

Mr. Jonaitis would like Dr. Gallacher to see about reducing the classes of 30 or more for the next meeting. Mrs. Szewczak is also concerned with the class size in grade 2 at Parkman also.

Ms. Hall suggested sending invitations to those students in the larger classrooms with the requirement that they provide the transportation.

Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches would also like to see how this could be accomplished by reducing class sizes.

Chairman asked Board members to be prepared to continue our budget deliberations on Monday, June 7th at Fermi in the café at 7:30 PM. We are changing the location so Board members and parents can attend the Fermi awards ceremony.

Chairman Stokes stated the Tuesday, June 8th special meeting will be held at Enfield High School at 7:30 PM to accommodate Board members and parents that will attend the National Honor Society Dinner and student recognition program that starts at 5:30 PM.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Grady moved, seconded by Mr. Sirard to adjourn the Special Meeting of June 3, 2010. All ayes, motion passed unanimously.

Meeting stood adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Joyce P. Hall
Secretary
Enfield Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary