

**BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
SEPTEMBER 28, 2021**

A regular meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held in Council Chambers on September 28, 2021.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM by Walter Kruzel.
2. **INVOCATION OR MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Tina LeBlanc
3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Tina LeBlanc
4. **FIRE EVACUATION ANNOUNCEMENT:**
5. **ROLL CALL:**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Jonathan LeBlanc, Jean Acree, Janet Cushman, John Unghire, Tina LeBlanc, Amanda Pickett, Stacy Thurston, Scott Ryder, and Walter Kruzel

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

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

6. **BOARD GUEST(S)**

**a. EHS Teacher Joshua Ogradowski**

Mr. Drezek welcomed our three special guests to tonight's meeting. He introduced Mr. Dague our K-12 STEAM Science and Technology Education Coordinator. He will introduce Chef O and our other guest.

Mr. Dague, Mr. Ogradowski or Chef O, and Mr. Sirard, EHS Junior introduced themselves to the Board.

Mr. Dague stated that we have had great success with our post-secondary career readiness programs. This includes our AP/UCONN ECE program. We are currently offering 20 AP courses. We also provide partnerships with Asnuntuck Community College, and Springfield Technical and Community College. Our dual enrollment programs offer college career pathways (CCP) courses, college connections and articulation agreements with a number of universities for Enfield students. We also offer workplace experience programs for our students through our School-to-Career program.

Mr. Dague stated tonight we will highlight our career and technical education courses. We have grown our program for the students since 2015. In 2020, 89.7% of the students have met this expectation. The reason for the growth is from continued Board and community support, adopting the schedule at EHS with 8 periods, our great community partners with ACC, STICC, UNH, UCONN, continued support from our career counselors, and engaging pathways for our students.

Mr. Dague stated when we had two high schools, our culinary program was relatively small. Now we have 331 students that are participating in our culinary programs.

Mr. Ogrodowski stated he started working at Fermi in 2013. We moved into our larger high school with our new state of the art culinary kitchen. Our students are involved with career readiness and getting into colleges or into the workforce. We have a lot of food service opportunities in Enfield. Students will learn the home economic skills in one section and another section in culinary kitchen. We are moving rather quickly and would like to see this program continue to grow into possibly a vocational program. He attended a vocational school. Your continued support is amazing.

Mr. Ogrodowski stated we will continue to develop and grow this program. Students can gain access to scholarships to colleges in CT and some scholarships at Johnson & Wales University and the Culinary Institute. Students will develop their skills over the 2 years with three courses. Students can also earn certificates for Serv Safe, Certification of Achievement Level 1 & 2. Mr. Sirard is learning the Serv Safe program now. This is a fast moving industry. Students are also showcased in the Advanced Culinary program with seasonal food for faculty/catering for the district including NEAS&C, ETC, Loves & Fishes and more. Mr. Sirard has made a menu he will talk about. We are looking at QR Codes now for the teachers to look at the menu and order food items.

Mr. Ogrodowski reviewed student achievements. This is a pathway for students to get into college. We have a student that will be working at the new Jersey Mikes as a manager in Enfield. He is currently taking classes at MCC. There are many avenues for employment for our students. Close to 90% of the students are certified after the course completion. Students can rank in top seeds in the CT Pro-Start competition. Our students are learning 21<sup>st</sup> century skills as they work in a team by using effective communication skills, problem solving, critical thinking about safety and sanitary kitchen practices.

Mr. Ogrodowski highlighted the student café for teachers with on-line ordering. Mr. Sirard will talk about his experiences. He has taken summer courses at MCC that I teach during the summer.

Mr. Sirard stated he met him at MCC during a summer camp. This was the start of his adventure in the culinary arts. He took the basic course and that was a blast. That was the start of the dream. He then took the next course – transitional. During Covid, we did home cooking. It got him to be very comfortable cooking. He is now in advanced culinary. We are working on menu planning and cooking items for each different season. We will cook for the teachers. He is looking forward to cooking for competitions with Chef O and to pursue the dream in any way he can. He will continue to learn and has another year to go. This is what he would like to continue to do. This is his dream career. He credits Mr. Ogrodowski for helping him decide what he wants to do with his life. He is convinced this is his calling. He has had a lot of opportunities over the summer with working with other restaurants and catering events. He was able to work at Max's Tavern at the Basketball Hall of Fame and see how an actual kitchen runs. He can't wait to see what happens with this program.

Mr. Ogrodowski thanked Mr. Sirard for talking about his experiences.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated when we started talking about combining the high schools, every department told us what they wanted to accomplish. They have delivered what they wanted to do in all areas. What you are doing for our kids is amazing, you are giving them opportunities. She is glad Mr. Sirard has found his niche. When you open your restaurant, let us know. Thank you for going the extra mile.

Mr. LeBlanc stated that is great that we will have a student at Jersey Mikes. What other businesses do you have ties with? Mr. Ogrodowski stated the career office connects the students with a lot of local businesses like Panera, restaurant chains, and Figaro's. We try to give our students opportunities. He works with our career office and if he hears about any

opportunities, he lets them know. Our career office is perfect for doing this. They help the students with resumes and what to wear for job interviews. We partner with the National Restaurant Association. We try to have the students get employment. Many businesses are currently looking for help now.

Mrs. Pickett thanked them for coming. Your comments resonate with her. You are creating options for our students like vocation, college, and career. She thanked them for the demonstration of relationships. She thanked Chef O for the relationship you are building with students. She hopes Mr. Sirard continues with this path and your dream.

Mrs. Pickett asked about students with accessibility and or disabilities issues with IEP's and are they included with this course work? Mr. Ogradowski stated many students' flock to this area. They enjoy cooking it also gives them a niche.

Mrs. Pickett stated it is an opportunity for those employment skills. Mr. Ogradowski added we work with our special education students as well as the general education students.

Chairman Kruzel stated in 2013 when he was on the EHS building committee, he saw the kitchen designs and knew this program would be a great success. Keep this program going. Thank you.

Mr. Unghire thanked them for coming. We support what you are doing. You are providing career opportunities for our students. There are many opportunities for our students to cook and potentially own their own business. One of his first jobs was as a cook here in Enfield. Your work is to be applauded. Thank you.

Mr. Ogradowski thanked the Board for their continued support.

Chairman Kruzel thanked EHS student Eric Sirard for coming to tonight's meeting

## **7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

### **a. EPS Update**

Mr. Drezek thanked Mr. Dague and Chef O for everything they are doing for our students. He reported that Governor Lamont stopped by Enfield High School on his way to the Big E for Connecticut day last week to see exactly what Mr. Dague and Chef O discussed. The Governor had a great time meeting and talking with students. He apologized to Board members that we needed to limit the number of guests. We were able to highlight some of our programs at EHS like the culinary program and AP classes. We were very proud to show off Enfield High to him. The Governor was very impressed with our students and the high school and would like to come back to see JFK when it is completed.

Mr. Drezek reported that Enfield is not exempt from the bus crises. He thanked all our colleagues at Smyth Bus. We did not need to shut down the district. We did shut down Stowe. We received some support from the state regarding us shutting down Stowe. They offered us some resources to use for drivers. We are currently using them. We check with Smyth Bus each day and it is our reality and hope, we won't need to shut down. This is our reality. Smyth Bus has been doing everything humanly possible to get our kids to school. They helped us during the pandemic by driving our kids to school and are continuing to do this now.

Mr. Drezek reported that we distributed iPads to all students last week. We are not shutting down and we are not going remote unless it is a quarantine related issue. If an entire class needs to quarantine, that class could be remote. If Smyth Bus needs to completely quarantine, or if Smyth Bus drivers could not come in, that would be another issue – we would use a snow day. We expedited the distribution of iPads for just in case, so we would be prepared for a

worse case scenario. We look like we are good, and we are doing everything we can to stay open.

Mr. Drezek reported that Board Leadership reached out to him regarding an assignment that was given at JFK. This assignment was a social identity assignment and was meant to help students. The question was brought up about this assignment being age appropriate. He is not questioning parents about this and understands their concerns. All our kids are welcome to the table and should not be made to feel excluded in any way. This assignment was not done to make anyone feel uncomfortable.

Mr. Drezek stated that Mr. Unghire forwarded him a parent e-mail about this. The parent would like this removed from the curriculum and also wanted to know how it go into the curriculum.

Mr. Drezek reviewed the process for setting Board policies, delivering curriculum and instruction, and tenure. The Board sets and makes the policies and we deliver the instruction based on the standards set by the State. He reviewed several policies with the Board and the procedure for adopting and approving policies - first starting with the Policy Committee for reviewing any policy. Then the policy is brought to the Board for a first and second reading where public comments can be made. If the Board is unhappy with any current policy, it can be referred to the Policy Committee for discussion.

Mr. Drezek does not feel any changes to our current policies are needed. We have done a lot of work around equity and diversity. Former Board member and retired JFK teacher Mr. Jonaitis visited us, and critical race was discussed. We do not teach this. We are teaching equity and diversity. This is important to do. You are all entitled to your opinions. We have a rule to handle discussions with decorum. We are not in cahoots with anyone. We are not trying to limit your discussions. Our priority is to do what is best for our kids and keep our schools open.

Mr. Drezek added nothing will change unless the policy is changed. We owe this it to our kids. Our staff is doing everything they can.

#### **AUDIENCES:**

Chairman Kruzel reminded audience members to refrain from personal or individual attacks. We will allow Enfield residents 3 minutes to speak.

Ryan Moore, Ryefield Drive – Mr. Moore stated he attended a previous meeting, and he sees that your hands are still tied. He has witnessed people standing up for what they believe in. Keeping masks on does not work and our children are not at risk. The truth matters. Small acts of courage also matter. He urged Board members to display your courage and tell us what you can do for us and the sacrifices you will make.

Declan Moore, Ryefield Drive – Mr. Moore does not want to be forced to wear a mask.

Izzy Moore, Ryefield Drive – Ms. Moore stated she does not like wearing a mask. We should have a choice. If you want to wear a mask you should have the choice if you don't want to wear one than don't.

Nick Hopkins, Varno Lane – Mr. Hopkins spoke about George Washington, and how he did an incredible job. He made a hard decision about vaccines and mandated the smallpox vaccine for his men. We need leadership in the same vein as George Washington and not conspiracy theories. Mask packaging has a warning label because we have become sue happy. Masks reduce the spread of viruses. If you have questions, ask for help. He thanked the parents,

staff, and teachers for speaking up. Let's all do our part and help to keep our kids in school during this pandemic. Thank you.

Evangeline Flaherty, Jackson Road – Mrs. Flaherty stated her daughter showed her an English and French class assignment she received that made her feel uncomfortable. She reached out to the teacher about this assignment on identities. She does not understand the purpose of this assignment. Her daughter is now confused and concerned. Who decides on these assignments? Racism and discrimination does not belong in a classroom. Parents of Enfield have questions. These are personal questions. Sexuality should not be brought into the classroom.

Amanda Marquez, Hoover Lane – Mrs. Marquez also spoke about masks and the harm they pose at the last meeting. We are in a great crisis. These measures are just band aids. Masks are ineffective and prolong wearing of masks causes many health-related concerns. Being masked is child abuse. We are forcing our kids to wear masks for 8 hours a day. Is this political? How many studies are needed? We have a moral obligation to speak up for our children.

Matt Schmitt, North Main Street – Mr. Schmitt is here to speak about masks again. He only has 3 minutes to talk to you about these mandates. Many parents have spoken about the harms of wearing masks and provided you with data. Can you provide us with data regarding COVID in our schools, how many students and staff have needed to quarantine, how many tested positive? Share this information on the district website. Providing data will show the community you are willing to work with the community. This will not violate any laws and it might keep him from coming to Board meetings.

Peter Jonaitis, Farmstead Lane – Mr. Jonaitis would like the time limit to be expanded for audience participation. The Governor came to EHS. That is nice he saw AP classes. What about bringing a vocational education program at the Annex? Policies come from the Board and the Board can change the policies. Doing this would be in the best interest of our kids. We are teaching equity and diversity because of systemic racism. Some are perceiving this as racism. We are creating racist feelings. When he was a Board member, we dealt with some big issues, and we let people talk about it. People want to talk about big issues now. What is the appropriate age to talk to students? This should be done at home by the parents. He urged Board members to look at our curriculum and to see what is going on in our schools. Let the parents teach their kids about equity.

Liz Davis, North Maple Street – Ms. Davis thanked Mr. Drezek. She has watched other town's BOE meetings. Thank you for being here for our kids. Thank you for attending these Board meetings. Listen to the words. This election is very important. You need to vote. Petitions have been made to get things done in our Town. We need to separate Church and State. She read a message from Regina LeBlanc congratulating her mother for being the Enfield Democrat of the Year. We are very proud of you for serving on the Board. Continue to use your voice for our community and students. Courage is sitting on the Board of Education for 10 years. Thank you.

Shiela Monroe, Stacy Lane – Mrs. Monroe would like to know with the funds Enfield will receive, can we put air conditioning and filtration system in our schools. Now is the time to do this.

Kelly Jackson, Meade Lane – Mrs. Jackson is very upset with systemic racism. We held equity meetings last year at the high school. There are only 10 students of color in AP classes. Parents were told to call the school about this. This is a problem. CRT is a theory and is not a curriculum. It should not be brought up. We need to separate Church and State.

Josh Hamre, New King Street – Mr. Hamre thanked Mr. Drezek for everything you have been doing for our students and staff. He has addressed the Board about this before. He is addressing the ones at home that are questioning themselves and their identities. They need to do this on their own. He hopes they have the support of their families while they develop into who they are. He is glad we have a policy of inclusion and diversity. Continue to develop this for all students so they can become the best they can be. He hopes they can do this without fear, restrictions and with the support of those they love when they are ready to have this conversation. Thank you.

Marcy Taliceo – Coolidge Drive – Mrs. Taliceo requests that data about COVID be shared. She thanked Mr. Drezek. He is doing what is best for us. He has done more for our kids than any other superintendent has done. We need him. Letting him go would be foolish. She is very familiar with what other towns are doing. She spoke about the petition about Church and State. We are hearing about one particular church and the work they are doing at every meeting. That is a violation of the constitution. We are asking that it stop. Thank you.

Rich Regnier, Abbe Road – Mr. Regnier congratulated Mrs. LeBlanc. He thanked the teachers, superintendent, Board members and bus drivers for the work you are doing. He was the Policy Committee Chair when we approved the 0000 series. This series was done for the benefit of our kids. We should not be bias because of any differences. It matters, you are all equal no matter who you identify with. The policy was provided by CAGE and was not intended to create curriculum. The social identity wheel that was given to middle school students and the questions are something we address at universities with social work students. Some of the questions are appropriate regarding differences. If a child questions, who they identify with and need to ask their parents about it, is probably not the best idea to keep that in the materials. The policy was intended to be inclusive and not to create curriculum. He was a member of the Board when we limited audience participation to 3-minutes. He apologizes for doing that and if he could go back, he would make sure the public had every opportunity to speak before the Board. The chairman has the authority to expand the time limits. Thank you for all your hard work.

Bill Delaney, JFK Social Studies Teacher – Mr. Delaney is a social studies teacher at JFK and is the Vice President of the Enfield Teachers Association. He thanked Mr. Drezek for being a rock for us during the pandemic. We have all looked up to you during this crisis. He thanked the bus drivers for keeping our kids safe and getting them to school. He thanked Board members for your public service. As a teacher our first consideration is about our kids and their comfort. This material is controversial. We are given materials to teach. Our goal is to make the underrepresented people and all kids feel comfortable. These are uncomfortable conversations. We are doing our best. He feels a bit attacked by what we are trying to do. This material should be reinforced at home. Maybe people are too young for this material. We need to look at this. We are trying to make all kids comfortable in the classrooms. Suggesting that we are harming your children is an insult. Thank you.

Joe Golish, Jr., Stardust Drive – Mr. Golish has lived in Enfield for many years. He has a degree in Chemistry and Science. He taught science and as a scientist, we question everything. Not allowing us to question is not an option. Education will lead the individual. The teacher will lead the students and should not indoctrinate them. We have hope and will continue to question everything. He taught about the atom. Science will always have questions. We should question genetics. Cynicism will bring on hopelessness. He hopes Enfield science teachers are questioning everything. Thank you.

#### **BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS:**

Mr. Ryder reported that Eli Whitney and Hazardville Memorial both held open houses last week. Eli Whitney will hold their next PTO meeting on October 19<sup>th</sup>. The third Monday of each

month. iPad insurance is due on October 15<sup>th</sup>. Picture day will be held on October 29<sup>th</sup>. We will also hold a walk-a-thon and bookfair in October. These dates can be found on [enfieldpto.com](http://enfieldpto.com).

Mr. Ryder reported that Hazardville Memorial will hold a spirit week. Their next PTO meeting will be held via teams on October 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM. Their picture day will be held on October 29<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Ryder stated his team, and some parents went out and thanked our Smyth Bus drivers for everything they are doing and for taking care of our children. You have our heartfelt appreciation for keeping the ship afloat. You are taking care of our children. Thank you.

Mr. Ryder reminded parents and students that tomorrow is an early release day. You can also pre-order wreaths for the Wreaths Across America program that he will talk about again in October. There are links on each PTO page about this.

Mr. Ryder thanked the audience members for speaking tonight. We appreciate you attending our meetings.

Mrs. Pickett thanked Mr. Drezek for what he said. She needed to hear this as a mom about how policy and procedures work. She also appreciated your comments about all children are welcome.

Mrs. Pickett addressed the audience by reading a statement. We need relationships and trust. We need to continue working in this area. We should not be discussing a theory. The Board voted on this policy back in 2017. We committed to these issues as Board members. Using misinformation does not help. We are not perfect. We need to listen and become a more perfect union. We have committed leadership in Enfield. Let our administrators do what they need to do. Let our students feel welcome no matter how they identify. She believes that Enfield offers so much to our residents. We have amazing resources and partners. We can and must do better.

Mrs. Pickett added comments were made about masks, the assignment, and vaccines. She takes her role as a Board member seriously. She is invested in our schools. She is speaking as a mother of bi-racial students. We have work to do in Enfield. It is okay to acknowledge this and not everyone will agree. We are going to make a better tomorrow where all children feel welcomed.

Mrs. Pickett stated the ERfC Fall for Enfield festival and Farm to Table Community Dinner will be held on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Kite will hold a meeting on October 6<sup>th</sup>.

Mrs. Pickett stated Enfield Street will hold their PTO meeting on October 13<sup>th</sup>. The Stowe Early Learning Center will hold an open house on October 7<sup>th</sup>. The first FEO meeting was held on September 21<sup>st</sup>. She thanked Ms. Beckstrand for organizing this. Their next meeting will be held on October 19<sup>th</sup>.

Mrs. Pickett thanked all our bus drivers for everything they are doing.

Mrs. Pickett stated that students and staff will have October 11<sup>th</sup> off for Indigenous People Day and October 12 for a staff professional development day.

Mrs. LeBlanc reported the Enfield Eagles have had some home football games. The outcome of the game does not reflect the heart that was displayed by the players. It is great to see the band and the cheerleaders. Playing under the lights is exciting and it is great to see everyone again.

Mrs. LeBlanc thanked Mr. Drezek for your report and your honesty and for backing our staff. We are implying that our staff is lying and not being truthful about what they are teaching in a classroom. She started on the Board of Education when her kids were little. Before becoming a Board member, she was involved in the PTO and volunteered in the classrooms. One teacher changed her daughter's learning. She is now a nurse and that is her science. She credits our teachers and staff for everything they are doing for our kids. She never felt our teachers were ever dishonest with her. My kids were never made to feel less than by our staff. Kids can be mean to each other. We are the leaders of this district, and we represent them. Suggesting that our staff is not being honest with us is wrong. Our teachers have made it their mission to teach our kids and change lives every day. Our teachers are frustrated. Teachers are being accused of something they are not doing. We must support all our educators and students. CRT is not being taught in our schools. Enfield Public Schools is committed to teaching our kids to be prepared self-reliant honest and respectful and responsible members of a diverse and global society.

Mrs. LeBlanc added she is not in a classroom and is not a teacher. She is aware of what they have learned. She asked her pediatrician what is best for her kids regarding vaccines and masks. She appreciates you coming out and you are passionate about your beliefs. This is where she takes her stand. She is frustrated with this false narrative as a Board. Thank you, Mr. Drezek.

Mr. LeBlanc thanked two Enfield Public School students for speaking tonight – Declan and Izzy. Your role at this young age is needed and appreciated. You are both very brave. Thank you for speaking. He also thanked the audience for speaking.

Mr. LeBlanc stated the Governor's executive orders have been extended again for the 6<sup>th</sup> time. We are the only state besides Rhode Island that has a State of Emergency order in our area. The Governor has done a great job, but we will have dealt with this for 2 years in March. Let our legislators do what they were elected for and let new ideas flourish. This is a bi-partisan issue. It is time for the orders to end.

Mr. LeBlanc addressed public comments made by Ms. Flaherty. He saw the sheets you discussed, and he was uncomfortable with some of the wording. Our staff listens to parent feedback and changes will be made for this assignment next year. Mrs. Jackson spoke about AP classes. Our Curriculum Department has recognized this concern, and this is a top priority for them. We listen to parent feedback and will do what they can to adjust and adapt to make Enfield Public School successful.

Mr. LeBlanc is the chair of the Curriculum committee and works closely with Ms. Middleton to review the curriculum monthly. CRT is not in our Enfield Public School curriculum. Any assignment is based on community development and community building. He has full trust in our administrators and staff and our superintendent. We are teaching all our children to be respectful involved citizens in our community, schools, and outside school. This is where he stands on this.

Mr. LeBlanc gave a shout out to Brianna Beckstrand and for everything she is doing at KITE and for the FEO. He added PLA is conducting parent signups until December 1<sup>st</sup>. You can go to their website at [enfieldkite.org](http://enfieldkite.org) for additional information.

Mr. LeBlanc asked about the jersey that our middle school girl soccer teams are using. They seem to be a bit old and worn. Can we look into replacing these? Mr. Drezek stated he will look into this with our Athletic Director who has all our teams looking sharp. He believes they will be changing the logo and that might be why they are using older uniforms.



Mrs. Acree spoke to some high school students about riding the buses with the windows down now for airflow. What about when the weather turns, what will be done? Mr. Drezek stated this can be a problem. The Department of Public Health is recommending the windows be cracked. We are hopeful the numbers continue to decrease.

Mrs. Acree stated she spoke to a parent about uniforms. Is this an option? Mr. Drezek referred this question back to the Board to discuss.

Chairman Kruzel stated that was discussed a few years ago. It can be discussed after elections if the Board would like.

Mrs. Cushman stated we all came here tonight with expectations of what we might be discussing. Our staff, teachers and Board of Education members have the best interest of your children in mind.

Mrs. Cushman thanked the parents that came tonight and those that e-mailed us. We appreciate you attending our meetings. A discussion needs to take place. Transparency is needed. She thanked them for reaching out. This assignment is a concern. Some of the parent concerns are based on the constant barrage about race and what is being taught in our schools. We need to ask ourselves about what is being taught. Is it age appropriate? Are we addressing things that should be discussed at home? She knows that CRT is not a curriculum, and it is a theory. We have been learning about both sides to understand this and to be better informed. She trusts our teachers and wonders why this was in the classroom.

Mrs. Cushman discussed this at a Curriculum meeting with Ms. Middleton and Ms. Burr. She also reviewed past meeting minutes to be better prepared. They explained this is a one week mini unit and this work fits in with our social and civics expectations and the work of our EHS equity team and goals. These are valued goals for our students. At the October 15, 2020, Curriculum meeting, the Board was informed about this mini unit. This was first presented as a pilot program and the response from students and staff was very positive. Curriculum members received sample lessons at the January 2021 curriculum meeting and approved this mini lesson.

Mrs. Cushman added after seeing these assignments, we want transparency. Seeing these assignments is important to parents. It will allow parents to be proactive instead of reactive. Our current policy does not address mini units or Board approval. She met today with Ms. Middleton and Mr. LeBlanc about this and to keep parents better informed. She would like to know if the Board can review this mini unit in its entirety before it is taught in our classrooms next year.

Mrs. Cushman stated the staff wants what is best for our students. Seeing what is on these sheets and what is happening around our country is alarming. Thankfully this is not happening in Enfield, but we are on a slippery slope. We are doing things to make our kids feel welcome while not going down that road. We can look into other organizations like FAIR where we can reach those same goals but by different means and to not cause division. FAIR is a Foundation Against Intolerance and Racism. Her children are experiencing this in college. She is seeing this happening in other schools and colleges. She is thankful to all our staff for bringing this vision to our students. We just need to be careful of how we are reaching these goals.

Mr. Unghire stated our COVID numbers are going down and he is hoping this is a trend and we will start to see some benefits. He hopes the numbers continue downward.

Mr. Unghire reported that mid-week he received e-mails about the lessons being taught. Parents expressed their concerns to me. He forwarded it the Superintendent. He thanked Mr. Dredek for addressing this concerns tonight.

Mr. Unghire addressed audience members comments about separating Church and State. Our two new Board members are not here because they go to church. Mrs. Cushman was a special education teacher, and she has 5 children. She belongs here and is qualified to be here. She brings a valuable perspective to this Board. Mrs. Acree is a woman of color and was also a teacher for 40 years. She wanted to serve on the Board and bring her experiences to us. We are trying to include everyone. They should both be embraced. We are fortunate to have good people on this board. Attending church on Sunday should not disqualify you.

Chairman Kruzel asked for audience members to refrain from making comments.

Mr. Unghire thanked audience members for speaking tonight. We will not always agree, but we live in a county where we can voice our opinions. He will consider everything that was said tonight. Thank you.

Mr. LeBlanc stated the uniforms are from the 90's. Chairman Kruzel added they are classic uniforms.

Chairman Kruzel stated the day after our last meeting he visited family out of state. They are having the same problems we are experiencing there with staff and bus drivers. We are not alone.

Chairman Kruzel stated he received a phone call from Mr. Dredek about the drive by media and the tick tock challenge where items being stolen from our schools. We have renovated EHS for \$103 million and \$86 million at JFK. We have invested a lot of money in our schools. This is wrong. Social media should not be encouraging this behavior as well as the drive by media reporting on this.

Chairman Kruzel stated we are not wearing masks because we received our vaccines.

Chairman Kruzel stated the Governor came for a visit at EHS. It was a great visit. He visited an AP and culinary class. The students were great. He spoke to several students during passing. Our students were great – kudos to the EHS students.

Chairman Kruzel stated the Governor shook everyone's hands. He did not think we were supposed to do that. He had the opportunity and asked the Governor about the masks. He asked him to let the parents decide about the masks. He said he would take it into consideration.

Chairman Kruzel stated on Sunday, he wrote an e-mail to his legislators about the special session and asked them to vote against the mandates and masks. He reminded them that the government works best with 3 equal branches. He questioned them about parenting our kids – let the parents, parent their children. They voted 80/60 to extend the executive order. Today the vote was 18/15 to extend this order. He has invited the Governor to attend a Board meeting and explain the vote to us and why the executive order has been extended 6 times. The emergency is over.

Chairman Kruzel added Representative Arnone will attend the next Board meeting as our guest.

Chairman Kruzel read a quote – “the government is not the solution to the problem; the government is the problem”. This quote is from Ronald Reagan.

8. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None

9. **NEW BUSINESS:** None

10. **BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Curriculum – Mr. LeBlanc reported they met on September 16<sup>th</sup>. We will offer an EMR and EMT course for students at the high school. Students will have the opportunity to become certified in both areas. We reviewed the books that will be used at Asnuntuck for these courses.

Mr. LeBlanc added we will offer a construction basic instruction course in Wood Tech. Job safety, costs and development of projects and planning and zoning will be taught in this course. The students will also build a shed to be used at the schools. We are doing some great things in our schools.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked about items from the table. Mr. LeBlanc stated that a lot of what was discussed tonight was discussed at the Curriculum meeting under items from the table.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked for clarification or correction if it was suggested that the Board review and approve the curriculum for the social civic assignment. Mr. LeBlanc stated we did discuss that topic.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated if government is not the solution, and government is the problem, then we need to let the people know that they will need master's degrees and doctorates to lead this district. Every two years a new Board will sit up here. We are not as qualified as the people that show up everyday and lead this district for us.

Chairman Kruzel stated we do have leadership with advanced level degrees. Mrs. LeBlanc stated the Board doesn't. They are saying the Board needs to review and approve curriculum.

Mrs. Cushman stated if the assignments that are causing parents' concerns were seen, we would have been better prepared.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated our role as a Board member is to bring it to Mr. Drezek and Mr. Longey and let them deal with this. It is not for us as Board members to decide what is taught in the classrooms.

Mr. Ryder stated we do not audit classrooms. Mrs. LeBlanc agreed. Our teachers and administrators know more than we do. They are the ones writing this curriculum. There are state mandates we must follow whether we like them or not. Suggesting that we start micromanaging curriculum baffles her especially if government is the problem.

Mrs. Acree stated if parents are uncomfortable with curriculum, they should have a say.

Mrs. LeBlanc agreed they definitely can, but it is our job as Board members to contact our superintendent about any concerns. They will handle it. Board members should not be telling our teachers what they can or can't teach.

Mrs. Pickett added that a lot of the items taught about identity are Title IX requirements. There are requirements about training staff and students. It is an obligation of the district that is coming from Federal mandates and is important work around inclusion. She agrees with Mrs. LeBlanc when it comes to making decisions about what is being taught in our classrooms,

that is why we have a superintendent and curriculum director. She agrees that sharing with families and transparency about what is being taught is important. Encouraging community conversations around this are important aspects of this work and can be continued to be developed. She trusts our leadership about what is being taught in the classroom.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated we have certain roles as Board members, and we need to know what they are. We need to trust our leadership. She has not come across this with her kids in our school system. She is not saying that this has not happened to other parents. We cannot change curriculum. The Board makes the policies.

Mr. Unghire stated we have a Curriculum Committee that approves curriculum. The superintendent said we are teaching this because the Board approved it. We did not see this lesson. If we did, we never would have approved it. In his opinion, asking students about their sexual orientation is not appropriate and is unacceptable. He does not believe anyone on the Curriculum Committee was aware of this particular lesson. This is like a tree that all of a sudden produced bad fruit. We are looking at this to see how it happened. This is what we are trying to get at. We do not want this to happen again. If we are going to take responsibility for approving curriculum, then let's take a look at what we are approving. That is what he believes is being said.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated what is being said is our policy was approved not the curriculum. Curriculum is brought to you by Ms. Middleton. You need to have faith in your Curriculum Committee. Mr. Drezek was talking about the policy that was approved.

Mrs. Pickett added that curriculum is tied to standards that our state sets. The lesson she saw definitely could be adjusted for age appropriateness and is connected to the standards. We must teach them to all our students. This includes our next generation standards, college and career readiness standards, academic standards, social and emotional learning standards. These are all aligned to standards that we are obligated to teach in our schools. Writing curriculum supports all of our students.

Mrs. Cushman stated at the curriculum meeting, we looked at textbooks to approve. Looking at mini units and the resources that will be used and assignments is reasonable.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked if it would be reasonable to look at these kinds of assignments, or all of it?

Mrs. Cushman stated we were given the woodworking textbooks and Latin textbooks at our last meeting to look at. It is not just this topic.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked what were your expectations when they gave you the Latin and Woodworking textbook? Mrs. Cushman stated we were to look at the materials and see if they align with our goals and how they would be taught and does this resource reflect what we are trying to teach our students.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked if you felt comfortable with that. Mrs. Cushman stated yes.

Mr. LeBlanc added Ms. Middleton offers valuable resources and answers to our questions. Both Ms. Middleton and Ms. Burr address all our questions. He does not want people to think that our Curriculum Committee is helpless, and we just sit and listen. We are engaged and ask valuable questions. As the Curriculum Committee chair, he appreciates them and the work they do for us.

Mrs. Cushman agrees with Mr. LeBlanc. We had a great discussion and continued that discussion with them today. She felt very positive about it.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated if there is something that was not approved by the Curriculum Committee what would happen? If it is a state mandate, doesn't it need to go through?

Mr. LeBlanc stated if it is a state mandate, the curriculum must go through. We did have a couple of courses that we had concerns with the curriculum in the past. If it is state mandated, it is mandated. During his time on the Curriculum Committee, we have not approved anything like what was presented. If we have any questions, Ms. Burr, Mr. Dague or Ms. Middleton would address it. This is why we have had such a cohesive subcommittee.

Mrs. Leblanc thanked Mr. LeBlanc for the clarification.

Mr. Drezek stated the Curriculum Committee approves new courses. We have a textbook adoption process. The textbook is shared with the committee and with the public. The Board will approve the course offerings. Any course interacts with our course offerings and the program of studies.

Mr. Ryder stated the textbook is a tool for any subject being taught. You are looking to approve all items including worksheets and dittos. That is not what we do.

Mrs. Cushman stated I am not looking to approve dittos.

Mr. Ryder stated you have taken an issue with materials from a lesson. You want to audit these classes. That is not what we do. When you have a concern from a parent, it should be brought to the attention of the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent to address.

Mr. Ryder added what ever happens after November 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Board needs to have an orientation immediately. We need to know what our roles are and aren't.

Finance – Mr. Unghire reported the Finance committee will meet on October 18<sup>th</sup>.

Policy – Mr. Unghire reported Policy Committee met on September 21<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Longey presented 30 policy recommendations from CAFE for Board consideration. We have broken them down and are looking at 15 policies and will continue this discussion at our next meeting on October 19<sup>th</sup>. These would be approved by the subcommittee first and would then be brought to the Board through our approval process with a first and second reading.

Leadership – No meeting was held – Chairman Kruzel had nothing new to report.

Joint Facility – Chairman Kruzel reported the Joint Facilities Committee has not met. We are still waiting for roof approvals for Eli Whitney and Hazardville Memorial.

JFK Building – Chairman Kruzel reported the JFK Building Committee has not met.

Joint Security – Chairman Kruzel reported the Joint Security Committee has not met and we have not scheduled the next meeting date.

Joint Insurance – Chairman Kruzel reported the Joint Insurance Committee met today. They will meet again on October 19<sup>th</sup>.

Youth Mental Health – Mr. LeBlanc reported the first meeting will be held on October 6<sup>th</sup>.

## **11. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mrs. LeBlanc moved, seconded by Mrs. Thurston that the Regular Meeting Minutes of September 14, 2021, be approved.

A vote by **show-of-hands 9-0-0** passed unanimously.

**12. APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS AND PAYROLL** - None

**15. CORRESPONDENCE & COMMUNICATION** - None

**16. EXECUTIVE SESSION** - None

**17. ADJOURNMENT**

Mrs. Thurston moved, seconded by Mrs. LeBlanc to adjourn the Regular Meeting of September 28, 2021.

All ayes, motion passed unanimously. Meeting stood adjourned at 9:55 PM.

Tina LeBlanc  
Secretary  
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary