

**BOARD OF EDUCATION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
FEBRUARY 8, 2022**

A regular meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held in Council Chambers on February 8, 2022.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Madam Chair LeBlanc.
2. **INVOCATION OR MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Joshua Hamre
3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Joshua Hamre
4. **FIRE EVACUATION ANNOUNCEMENT:**
5. **ROLL CALL:**

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

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

Madam Chair LeBlanc reminded audience members if you would like to speak, please sign up before we get to the audience participation part of the meeting.

**6. BOARD GUEST(S) – Registrar of Voters**

Mr. Drezek welcomed Louis Fiore and Thomas Kienzler our Town Registrar of Voters.

Both Mr. Fiore and Mr. Kienzler updated the Board and audience members about moving voting back to John F. Kennedy in August 2022 and for the November 2022 elections. He is looking for your permission to use the JFK gymnasium area again. They would like to contact the JFK principal about using JFK again for voting.

Both Mr. Drezek and Board members were okay with moving the voting location back to John F. Kennedy. Mr. Fiore and Mr. Kienzler stated they will need to notify the voters that will use JFK 90-days in advance.

Mr. Unghire stated JFK is the place where he votes. He welcomes the opportunity to go back to JFK to vote. Mr. Kienzler added it was a challenge with a large turnout at the Senior Center.

Mr. Fiore would like to contact Dr. Berrios about arranging for a tour of JFK. Mr. Drezek stated that would be perfectly okay to contact him. They are still dealing with the construction, and you would need to work around when the students are in session.

Mr. Fiore and Mr. Kienzler spoke about using the schools for voting when they are in session and possible conflicts on September 5, 2023, April 23, 2024, and any special election that may be held due to vacancies.

Mr. Fiore reviewed the updates for fundraising and Youth Vote activities at voting locations. At the Annex and JFK we can accommodate any Youth Vote and fund raising events. Events

inside Enfield Street we can only handle this when we are in the All-Purpose Room, not in the back of the school. At Henry Barnard we can only accommodate Youth Vote. We support fund raising but it needs to be done orderly, so it does not interfere with the voting process.

Mr. Fiore added at Enfield Street the items are store in the All-Purpose Room. Due to Covid we were using the back area of the gym that is ADA compliant, but it is very difficult for us to hold elections there. He is hopeful that we can return to the All-Purpose Room. Mr. Kienzler added we ran into some issues with the elderly with the lighting for the stairs and ramp. We would like to avoid any potential issues in the future.

Mr. Drezek agreed with them both.

Mr. Ryder stated if voting returns to the All-Purpose room at Enfield Street, we can hold both Youth Vote and fundraising. Henry Barnard can only accommodate Youth Vote or fund raising (not both, due to space). Mr. Kienzler stated they can still fundraise at Henry Barnard outdoors as long as it is seventy-five feet away. Mr. Fiore stated they could set up a tent outside of the doors and we would encourage this.

Mr. Ryder added Youth Vote starts in grade 4. He asked if they could use the hallway for fundraising past the Youth Vote table. Mr. Fiore stated that would not work for us. We are responsible for everything within the seventy-five feet. It is a challenge at Barnard only.

Madam Chair thanked by Mr. Fiore and Mr. Kienzler for coming tonight and letting us know that we can use JFK again for voting.

Mr. Fiore asked if they can approach you about notifications for staff in August and November. We cannot use the Town Robo calls due to Federal regulations. We can use the school system for notifications. Mr. Drezek stated that is not a problem. Thank you both for coming.

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

### **a. PD's & President's Day – as presented**

### **b. EPS Update**

Mr. Drezek addressed the JFK pizza assignment sent out to grade 8 students. Parents have reached out to us about this. He notified Board members about this mistake. This was a mistake, and he knows that some of you do not believe this. He takes responsibility and this staff member immediately took action and tried to rectify this mistake. He asked if any of you have ever made a mistake. This person is a long-time respected staff member. He has received many suggestions about how he should handle this. This was not a malicious mistake. The material was inappropriate. Both he and this person agree this was inappropriate. He has seen the response that was given to parents about this assignment. This staff member has received many terrible comments and has been called horrible names. He apologized to this staff member for what people are saying. He cannot control what you would like to talk about. He is standing up for this person who is devastated and embarrassed by this mistake they made. There was no hidden agenda. A wrong document was sent out. We are not happy this happened. He owes it to this person and has your back. He would like to move on about this.

Mr. Drezek stated the Governor held a press conference yesterday at 4:15 PM. There have been times when we would have been notified about the content. He found out at the same time as everyone else. We added an item to the agenda about masks to address this item if needed. The Governor said that masks will come off on February 28<sup>th</sup>. The Governor clarified his intentions later during his press conference. He has received many messages about masks. He gives the local media a lot of credit at these press conferences. They are asking the correct questions. The Governor's emergency executive orders end on February 15<sup>th</sup>. The Governor would like to extend the executive orders until February 28<sup>th</sup> for schools. He does not have this power. The Governor does not have the authority to ask either him or Mayor Cressotti to do

this. The legislature will need to vote on this. This is the process. They can extend the emergency orders, or they can address certain executive orders and take action to extend them for a certain period of time.

Mr. Drezek stated as of now we know the emergency executive orders for schools ends on February 15<sup>th</sup>. If the legislature takes no action, masks will no longer be required in schools. Local Boards may have the opportunity to add masks if they felt compelled to do. This is the only thing we know for certain at this time. The powers rescind on February 15<sup>th</sup>. The legislature will need to decide if they will extend or rescind. The legislature goes back to session on Wednesday. The first day of session traditionally is ceremonial. He received notice from the Commissioner of Education at 5:30 PM tonight. The Governor will ask the legislator about voting to extend the executive orders.

Mr. Drezek stated there is some confusion based on how people have interpreted what was said by the Governor yesterday. The members of the legislature will introduce bills on Thursday. We received notification that the House of Representatives will take action on Thursday. It is anticipated the senate will take action on Monday. We will not know what the rules are until early next week. If the senate votes on this and it becomes law, there will be a lot to this law, and he is not a lawyer. The Board receives similar information when dealing with policy changes. We will receive similar information about law changes from legal counsel. Legal counsel will need some time to comb through it before they tell us what the rules are.

Mr. Drezek added at this time we do not know who will lift the mask mandate or what the actual date will be. The Governor expressed his desire to extend it until February 15<sup>th</sup>. This could be true. We need to wait for the legislature to act. It would be irresponsible for us to make a declaration today. This does not mean this will not happen. This decision may be made for us.

Mr. Drezek reached out to Representative Arnone. Representative Hall is an expert on financial and budget matters in the State and Representative Arnone has been sending me updates regarding school related items. I explained my concerns to Representative Arnone last night. He agreed that nothing will happen until the legislature says it does. They will look at some of the executive orders and combine them into one bill for the legislature to vote on. The school mask mandate will be included in this bill.

Mr. Drezek stated if the legislature takes no action, masks will go away on February 16<sup>th</sup>. If there is action, they will let us know when masks are able to come off.

Mr. Drezek stated it was asked at the press conference if local Boards will be given any help because they are not public health experts. The Department of Public Health will give us guidelines and metrics to use when making this decision. He has not received anything yet. We will need these if we are asked to make a decision. He just wanted everyone to know there is always more to the story than what you hear in the initial news clip.

Mr. Drezek stated during the press conference they mentioned how well everyone has done with mitigation strategies in our schools to slow the transmission rate of the virus with masks, vaccinations and social distancing. They hinted there would be guidance about what to do if masks are not required in schools. We need the information from them first before we make any changes.

Mrs. Drezek stated he received many calls that the Governor said he can make the decision. The reality is it is not my decision at the moment. He does not know what the legislature will do.

Mr. Drezek stated when you travel and fly, masks are required by Federal Law. Public transportation falls under Federal Law.

Madam Chair asked for the audience chatter to stop. There are a lot of people here tonight that would like to talk. Please give everyone the respect they deserve no matter what they are talking about.

Mr. Drezek thanked Madam Chair.

Mr. Drezek stated we can assume masks will continue to be required on public transportation. Our Head Start program operates under Federal Law. This also includes students and staff and programs like ECDC. We received a declaration today, but we do not know the rules yet. These programs are Federally funded, and we cannot violate these rules. Masks may need to be worn.

Mr. Drezek added there are still many unknowns, and he does not know when he will get this information. As soon as he receives enough information about the process and what the rules are, he will notify the Board. He spoke with Madam Chair about this and if a discussion with the Board and public input is required, we can hold a special meeting as soon as it is feasible if a vote about masks. The decision may be made for the Board.

Mr. Drezek stated people on both sides of this have been very passionate. There will be a point when masks will come off. He just does not know what the rules are about when and who will make this decision.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked for a brief recess if the comments do not stop from the audience.

Mr. Drezek stated in the event this becomes an issue where the Board will need to vote on this, we will. If it is left up to him, he will let the Board know as soon as he hears something. Until we have more information about the rules, we cannot react to a public statement that was made.

Mr. Drezek would like to start talking about what we are doing in our schools. He wanted to bring some of our students to participate in the process with us tonight. We did not have enough time to get students here based on our current fate with masks. He wanted to give them enough time to prepare. He wanted to talk about the progress we have made with our graduation rates tonight and the fact that we have a full house tonight, he will postpone this until our March 8<sup>th</sup> meeting and will bring students here to discuss some of the work we are doing.

### **Recess:**

Madam Chair called for a brief recess at 7:42 PM.

Madam Chair called the meeting back to order at 7:45 PM. She asked everyone to be respectful. She appreciates you being here tonight. Disrupting is not conducive to what we are trying to do here for our kids.

## **8. AUDIENCES**

Madam Chair stated we have a lot of people that would like to speak tonight. She read a prepared statement about expectations for audience participation. For now, we will continue to utilize a 3-minute time limit for audience participation.

William Delaney – JFK Middle School Teacher – Mr. Delaney stated he is not here to talk about pizza or masks. He thanked the Board and administration for working hard and for supporting our teachers. You are doing a great job. This has been the most challenging year for our teachers, students, administration and parents. Our kids are showing up every day and are

working hard. We are facing many challenges and deficits. This is what educators do. We are glad to be back in-person teaching. He thanked the parents and students for the last 2 years. Our students are doing an incredible job. The tone of this meeting is not helpful. He understands political differences, and this is not how we should be handling our problems.

Kelsey McGuire Bruce, Neelans Road – Mrs. McGuire Bruce thanked Board members, Mr. Drezek, Mr. Longey and added your leadership is outstanding. She was raised in Enfield, lives here and teaches here. She had great teachers when she was in school and wants to be that teacher for your child. We are so dedicated and are doing a lot for our kids. Our students are succeeding and academically growing. Her students are excelling. We are dedicating our time to teach your child. Words hurt. Teaching is an art, and we work very hard. Every teacher is loved by their students. We need to be respected again.

Jessica Soule, Brook Road – Mrs. Soule is a teacher at Prudence Crandall. Her kids can share opinions and respect each other. The last 2 years have been hard on everyone, and this is what she has been teaching her students that you can agree to disagree. Our kids are asking for attention, guidance and love in many ways. Behavior is a form of communication. It has taken years to understand their needs and to have respectful dialogue with them. Our students are excelling and are celebrating each other's accomplishments and are believing in themselves. We are finding their successes and are finding common ground. We are moving towards normalcy.

Matt Schmitt, Bigelow Commons – Mr. Schmitt thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak. The state school mask decision will be made soon. He has a special appreciation for teachers and what they have had to endure during the pandemic. Many of our teachers are against the mask mandate. Our crises is almost over. Masks and vaccines are widely available for those that want them. What is necessary to get rid of masks and get them off of our kids. Our teachers are compassionate, and he hopes the Board and Superintendent will do the same when it is the time to discuss masks. Our teachers need to be brave enough to stand up to their union and for our kids. He knows our teachers want to see their students faces again. It is time to let masks go.

Liz Davis, North Maple Street – Mrs. Davis apologized to the Superintendent and the Board for what happened earlier with the pizzas. An e-mail was sent out to another church trying to get more people to come to tonight's meeting and talk about the pizza assignment. The assignment was sent out in error, and they took ownership for it. Her child went to JFK and is perfectly okay. Ask our kids that attend Enfield Public Schools how they feel about the assignment and masks. These parents that are complaining about the pizza chart are the same parents that complained about our transgender policy. We need to stop the conspiracy. We have the best teachers and superintendent in our town. She is done with the disrespect and the elected officials that are behind this. Do what is right for all our kids or step down.

Charley Hulevitch, Cutter Lane – Ms. Hulevitch is 7 years old and wrote her speech that was read by her mother. Thank you for my good education. Thank you for working with my mommy and thank you for giving peace.

Tracey Jarvis, North Maple Street – Ms. Jarvis stated parents do not want to move away from the pizza assignment. She understands the assignment was given in error. How is this assignment teaching our students social skills? We should not be exploring this topic with students.

Madam Chair asked for audience members to allow this speaker to continue speaking.

Ms. Jarvis asked how this assignment is teaching responsibility, self-control, social skills and decision making. This assignment is inappropriate. You are giving them too much information that they are not ready for. All of our youth need a safe haven. She is a pastor who teaches

self-respect. Are there more assignments that will corrupt the morals of our youth. We will continue to fight for our kids.

Ryan Schuetz, Church Street – Mr. Scheutz stated it is great to be back here. The Board has tried to silence us. We respect our teachers, and he cannot imagine what they have had to endure. He started coming to Board meetings because of masks. He has attended a policy meeting and questioned the transgender policy and the safety of our kids. How did the pizza assignment get approved and get through? He understands it was a mistake. It should have been removed quicker. How can we make sure this does not happen again? Changes are needed to be made. Stand up for our kids and make masks optional. We received a chart about Covid and which masks work best. Let's give our kids their life back again and let them see their teachers and friends faces. Enough is enough. Those that choose to wear a mask can and those that don't won't.

Jonathan Grande, Spruceland Road – Mr. Grande stated masks have turned into complicated knot. The Governor spoke and the Board or he has the authority to make a decision about masks. He respectfully asked that you make masks optional. The pizza assignment was crude and offensive. It was a mistake, and we all make mistakes. He works in manufacturing, and we have something called turnback and escape. This allows for making corrections or an escape for a process. An escape is more serious. This assignment is very upsetting and should never have made it out to the students and it was an escape. Who developed, approved and issued this assignment.

John Power, Laurie Drive – Mr. Power has been watching your meetings on TV. He thanked the Board and Superintendent. He is a senior teacher at JFK. He has worked for many superintendents and Board members. This has been a difficult time for educators. You support us and he supports you. Every Board member, administrator and principal is here for our kids. We had our first middle school band concert last week in person and it was amazing. This is what we are about. He supports the Board. There are a lot of people out here on your side despite some of the comments you are hearing about.

Ryan Moore, Ryefield Drive – Mr. More stated now is the time to show your true colors. Ellington stood with the parents. The pizza assignment was given to our students at JFK. Instead of facing this issue, the Board has chosen to hide. The Board has used the police to try to silence us. Some of us chose to defend our first amendment rights. A young student in our town committed suicide. Our children are suffering and deserve better. History will look back on this in horror. Our Board has the opportunity to make this right tonight. We can still work together.

Emma Donn, Kennedy Drive – Mrs. Donn thanked the Board for supporting our teachers. Our teachers are really great, and they have overcome many obstacles and they meet the needs of every student. Her teachers challenge her and always support her when she thinks she cannot do something. She is proud to be part of Enfield Public Schools.

Sheila Monroe, Stacy Lane – Mrs. Monroe thanked you for abruptly closing the last meeting and going remote. It was truly in the best interest of the town and parents. Parents went to the internet and brought their concerns to the people. Many citizens are disgusted. Our teachers should not have been put in this situation. A topic like this is a distraction. Our staff should teach subjects like Math, Science, English, History, and the Arts. She is a grandparent and has a right to express her concerns. She is also a taxpayer. It takes a village to raise a child. Parents have been asking you to stand with them about masks. The board will need to live with these consequences. This is shameful. When will you make the decision to install air filtration systems to improve air quality in our schools? This should have been one of the first actions when using the funds from the State. She does not believe you have that kind of leadership to make this decision and if you cannot make this decision, step away from where you are.

Peter Jonaitis, Farmstead Circle – Mr. Jonaitis stated that none of the speakers have said anything bad about our teachers. The Town Council allowed us to speak for 2 hours the other night about a very controversial issue. This Board only allows 3 minutes of speech from audience members. He congratulated the Board for stifling the speakers talking about masks and masking our children in school. When the Governor or the legislature says the mask mandate is up to the districts to determine their own mask policy, will this Board commit to making masks optional. He is tired of hearing about this mistake. He taught in this town for 38 years and helped to negotiate teacher contracts and he knows how the system works. Curriculum is written and it is passed to the curriculum committee to review. How this got passed down and where the mistake was made, he does not know. He does not blame the teacher. He blames the coordinator. It never should have been there to get out by accident.

Amanda Marquez, Hoover Lane – Mrs. Marquez stated she has been talking about masks since August and the harm it is causing our children. The transmission rate in our schools is low. Proper mask wearing is not being adhered to. The Governor may leave the decision for the Board to make the final decision about masks. Masking is a personal decision and should be made by parents not governing officials. We are fighting for our freedom and for our children. The Board is elected to make educational policies and not medical interventions. These mandates are being forced upon our children. She reminded Board members about their mission statement. She has a solution, those that want to wear masks can and those that don't are not mandated against their own free will.

Patrick Flaherty, Jackson Road – Mr. Flaherty stated masks do not protect us. At the last meeting, we were asked to think critically. He sees transmission rates are low in our schools. There is a flaw here. Our school population is mostly children. He thanked the superintendent for the opportunity to talk to each other and engaging with each other to end mask wearing.

Dina St. George, Misty Meadow – Mrs. St. George thanked Board members for the job you are doing. Masking is a choice. Mandates are inconsistent. We are not free. We do not have choice or freedom when it comes to mandates. Our constitution protects us. Parents need to make the decisions about masks for their children. She reported data results about Covid. Mask mandates impose harm to our children. Follow the sciences and let parents make the decision.

Shari Jackson, Cottage Road – The Governor said we are in a good place. You have until February 28<sup>th</sup> to make a decision about masks. Local officials are noticing law suites. She spoke about safety regulations for air, oxygen and OSHA levels. Can you provide a mandate that OSHA will approve? Give the decision back to the parents to decide to mask their children.

Desiree Boulette, Brainard Road – Ms. Boulette has two children in our schools. She asked for the mask mandate to end and to not infringe on parents' rights. She makes the decisions for her children. Her son is autistic and has a speech delay. We can attend many events without wearing masks. Covid is not going anywhere. Let the parents make the decision for their children about masks.

Sophia Arel – Weymouth School Road – Mrs. Arel spoke about the pizza assignment. This assignment is inappropriate. What about the students getting an apology from the superintendent? Unmask our kids.

Marcy Taliceo, Coolidge Drive – Mrs. Taliceo stated if anyone in this room thinks that middle school students are not talking about these things in school or outside of school, you are mistaken. Making them aware is being very responsible. The school is very responsible. This particular assignment was not appropriate and was not intended to cause harm to any

student. For a grown woman to bring pizza here is grandstanding and she is trying to prove a point. She wants to talk about graduation rates, performance profiles and students development. Bringing personal grievances to these meetings needs to stop. They have nothing to do with the educational success of our students. This is why we are here and that is what the Board is trying to do. We all want success for our children and need to discuss this here at Board meetings. These other conversations need to stop. You can bring these kinds of conversations up the chain of command to the superintendent. Grow up and stop grandstanding.

Steve McGoldrick, Orchard Hill – Mr. McGoldrick stated it is important to know that your leadership is given by the residents. He thanked the Board for the work you are doing. He prays for you all and shared a prayer. He urged everyone to treat each other with respect.

Maureen Snook, Buchanan Road – Mrs. Snook stated over a hundred children have been pulled from our school system. Her kids did not like attending school and wearing masks. She will continue to come to the Board meetings about masks. Masks and vaccine mandates have not been successful. We need to learn to live with this virus. Unmask our kids.

Robert Kwasnicki, Wynwood Avenue – Mr. Kwasnicki stated he is here as a government official and supports parents that want to get rid of masks. A decision needs to be made. Take ownership and make a decision about masks. Leadership will make mistakes and it will happen. He looks for ownership for this mistake and how will this not happen again about the pizza assignment. He has not heard anything that will prevent this from happening again. We need to respect our parents that want masks to end. We need to unify and come together. He appreciates what Board members are doing. We all need to come together.

Francis Alfonso, Liberty Street – Ms. Alfonso stated the pizza assignment is inappropriate. She does not care if students are talking about this. Teachers should not be teaching this. Masking is up to you. You need to do what is right. You are responsible for our kids and what harms are being done to them with wearing masks.

## **9. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Mr. Unghire thanked the teachers for attending tonight's meeting. He appreciates everything you are doing, the hard work you are doing and the love you show to your students. We are very fortunate to have dedicated teachers in our town.

Mr. Unghire stated one of the audience members touched on something he is aware of, turnback's and escapes. We cannot afford mistakes. How did this happen. What is the root cause? It is important to find out the procedures and safeguards, so this does not happen again. There was also another assignment that caused concerns about social justice and many parents spoke about this. The Superintendent addressed that assignment at a Board meeting. The way he interpreted this was its not my fault but the Board's fault. The Board is responsible for policies. We brought this assignment to the Policy committee to make changes.

Mr. Drezek stated he did not say that it is your fault and not his fault.

Madam Chair asked the audience members to refrain from outburst. We listened when you spoke. Please be respectful.

Mr. Unghire addressed Mr. Drezek and stated that is how he thought it was explained. He will go back and rewatch that meeting.

Mr. Unghire stated now we are dealing with the pizza assignment, what can we do to prevent this from happening again? This has caused parental concerns again. It has also caused concerns for our students. Our teachers were also uncomfortable presenting this assignment.



What can the Board do to examine the root cause and implement changes so these kinds of escapes will not happen again.

Mr. Unghire suggested we form an Ad Hoc Committee and form a parental task force committee. It will be a bi-partisan committee comprised of parents, Board members, Assistant Superintendent, policy and curriculum liaisons to get to the root cause and prevent this from happening again. Permission sheets are given out to parents for lessons they may have concerns with. The Board could be responsible and form this committee out of respect for the parents that have spoken to us. This is the Enfield Public School. He would like this committee to include parents and get to the root cause.

Mrs. Acree stated she attended the JFK Choral Concert and was so impressed with the students' performance. There is nothing like children singing. She truly appreciated this concert. They held this special concert in the new auditorium. She congratulated teachers Kimberly Jacques and Michael Stuart for an outstanding job. She congratulated all the students that performed.

Mrs. Acree thanked Mr. Delaney and the other teachers who spoke about the challenges for our teachers. She was a teacher for 40 years and understands what you are going through. You all have such a great attitude. Kudos to all our teachers that spoke. You are all so dedicated to our Enfield Public Students. Thank you.

Mrs. Cushman stated we recognize our kids will encounter things on the internet we wish they never would have seen. She spoke about children that are being trafficked and how they are being exposed using iPads. The internet is where kids are meeting during the pandemic. What are we doing to protect our kids? During the pandemic, these numbers have increased drastically. She knows a child that was exploited through YouTube. She would like us to host an event to help recognize the signs of trafficking for our families. She is hoping this is something we can do with fewer mandates.

Mrs. Cushman connected with the First Readers Association. They held their first meeting on January 12<sup>th</sup>, and they will hold a drive through event on May 23<sup>rd</sup> at Asnuntuck Community College where our students will be recognized for being able to read. They are looking for volunteers. If you are interested, please contact her or you can reach them on Facebook. Our next meeting will be held on February 23<sup>rd</sup> via zoom at 5:00 PM.

Mr. LeBlanc stated it was great to see two of our students speaking tonight. During our term we have had three students speak. These students are pretty impressive. Our kids are engaged and know what is going on in the society. He applauds them.

Mr. LeBlanc stated the end is in sight for masks. If this is something we will need to discuss further, you can come back again. Whether it is February 15<sup>th</sup> or 28<sup>th</sup>, the end is in sight. Just give us a little more time.

Mr. LeBlanc stated the pizza assignment was a big mistake. We all recognize this. Going online and bashing our teachers is inappropriate. The individual that was responsible has apologized, and the mistake was recognized. He is not on the Forum. A lot of our community members are. He is on Facebook and heard about the comments. He was really disappointed by some of these comments. We all have opinions and adding your comments compounds the problem with misconstrued comments. Words can hurt.

Mr. LeBlanc stated without the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, administrators and teachers we would be out of luck. The superintendent can take the heat. Without him we would be in shambles. Enfield has a stronger school system than anywhere else. You are worried and he gets it. Enfield is light years ahead of other districts. We can debate and mistakes were made. Please look at the bigger picture. Our leaders are putting in the time for

us and our kids. We see what you are doing and appreciate you.

Mr. LeBlanc read a quote from Mark Twain. I heart my CT#.

Mr. Hamre asked everyone to consider this from our approach as Board members and our educators that are on the front line. We are trying to get our kids comfortable similar to learning how to tread water and swim. Use this analogy as compared to education. Think of what our teachers have had to overcome over the past two years. They have been limited to the water they have been treading and the situation that has been discussed tonight is like throwing chains around them. Our children and teachers will suffer. How long can they continue to tread the water? Please think of what this is doing to our staff. We are providing the best education to our kids. Our teachers are doing this for our kids and not the money or fame. They want our kids to be successful with their education. He trusts our administration. He has learned after the fact and did not know about this at our last meeting. Shame on me for not being aware of this and not knowing all the facts. He trusts the administration and our process. He appreciates the efforts bringing this information to his attention.

Mr. Hamre stated JFK newsletter has gone out and it can also be found on the enfieldpto.com website. Dr. Berrios included a topic about internet safety and digital identity. It is worthwhile looking at this information. The JFK PTO meeting will be held on Wednesday virtually which he plans to attend.

Dr. Calnen stated KITE has several events that will be happening – Stowe Pop The Trunk Grab & Learn Event will be held on February 17<sup>th</sup> from 7:30 – 10:30 AM and 3:30 – 6:30 PM. The Parent Leadership Academy will be closing applications soon, but there is still time to enroll. Stowe will hold a Family Education Organization Meeting will be held on February 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM via zoom. The monthly KITE Collaborative meeting will be held on March 2<sup>nd</sup> and all are welcome to attend.

Mr. Calnen spoke about the 2Gen Initiative program for parents to be the best they can when dealing with problems and crises that might affect the parent/child relations. This program is an initiative that was started by United Way. KITE will bring this program to Enfield. They will have a steering committee to address challenges. They will address affordable high quality childcare in our community. Many families are experiencing financial difficulties when it comes to childcare. The 2Gen Initiative will help to work with the families in Enfield.

Mr. Calnen spoke about the Circle of Security. The Board is committed to mental health awareness and welfare of all our students. It is more than crisis management. The Circle of Security creates a space for parents that are experiencing significant challenges. You will be able to talk to other parents experiencing similar concerns under the guidance of a trained facilitator. We will have a trained facilitator for 8 weeks at the Family Resource Center. This is not a parent support group; it is so much more. We are experiencing a childhood mental health epidemic. This could offer a modest but effective strategy. This program has not been approved by the Board. He has spoken about this program with Cynthia Guerreri, the Director of Social Services for the Town of Enfield and Amy Morales, Operations Manager for the Enfield Child Youth and Family Division about a pilot program and a possible program in our schools. This is just an idea, and he feels it is worthwhile to pursue. Circle of Security is not psychotherapy. It is designed to help parents understand childhood problematic behavior and relational challenges so parenting can become even more rewarding experience and to ensure the child the parent is always available when a safe haven is needed.

Mrs. Pickett thanked Mr. Drezek for explaining the process about masks. She thanked our teachers, Emily and Charlie for reminding her why she ran for the Board of Education. This has been a very trying few months. She is excited to see everyone there in person and having a voice. Before she was a Board member, she watched the virtual meetings from home and there were no public comments. She understands the frustration. She is an advocate for

partnership and collaboration. She supports our leadership, staff and community. We are all driven by a common goal. We support every student every day. She would like to see us expand on that by supporting each staff member and family member in our community every day. We are not perfect, and we have work to do. If we come together and be focused, we can do great work together.

Mrs. Pickett reminded everyone that this is Black history month. This is a great opportunity for us to celebrate the contributions of people of color in our community, state, nation and world. This year's theme is Black Health and Wellness. She encourages families, students and staff to check out our national museums of African American History and Culture. They have websites dedicated to this special month and resources and things you can do.

Mrs. Pickett stated our 100<sup>th</sup> day of school is coming up as well as Valentine's Day. Enfield Street School students will be allowed to bring in cards, pencils and erasers for Valentine's Day. They will celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> day of school on February 16<sup>th</sup>. The PTO is working on staff pick me ups. We love our teachers and staff members. You can nominate a staff member for them to receive raffle prizes. Families can contribute towards raffle prizes by contacting the PTO. The next PTO meeting will be held on Wednesday at 6:00 PM via zoom.

Mrs. Pickett stated Parkman PTO met on January 13<sup>th</sup>. Thank you, Bridgett, for the information. She is her PTO liaison. They will also hold their next meeting on Wednesday at 6:00 PM in the Parkman Library. The students will be making Valentine Cards for the residents at St. Joseph's, and they will be delivered on Friday. Both schools have a lot of fundraising events that will be coming up.

Mrs. Pickett stated Stowe has a new flip grid for the 100<sup>th</sup> day. Students from Hazardville Memorial are reading a book. She encourages families to take a video and post it on Flip Grid. Applications for STOWE are live for next year. If you are interested in sending your child to Stowe, fill out a pre-school application. Stowe is a blessing for our community.

Mrs. Pickett gave a shout out to the dolphins swim team. They held their championship swim meet last weekend. She added seeing our staff at the Board meeting reminds her that they not only teach our children during the day, but they are also coaching and supporting our children in our community. She thanked our staff for everything they are doing outside of the buildings for our kids.

Mrs. Pickett had a few families reach out to her regarding lunch options. She thanked our staff that are feeding our students meals for every student in our buildings. They are also affected by the supply chain issues. We are still delivering lunches to classrooms. She was excited to see some new items in our lunch menu this week. She encourages families to check out the lunch menus. Both of her children are eating breakfast and lunch at their schools.

Mrs. Pickett stated it is important to discuss root causes. We need to understand the concerns. She is hearing that the concerns are about the lesson that is being taught and the content of the lesson. We need to get to the root cause and that comes from the standards from legislation around health education. She addressed this at our last meeting and this all ties back to the standards and state law. This is always optional for parents to consent. She is in favor of family voice. The process for how we gather families perspectives should not be focused on one issue.

Mr. Ryder stated Barnard and Crandall will have PTO meetings on February 10<sup>th</sup>. They will also have spirit wear for sale, and it can be found on [enfieldpto.com](http://enfieldpto.com).

Mr. Ryder stated Hazardville Memorial spirit wear sales will end on February 11<sup>th</sup>. They will have a spirit wear for students next week. Eli Whitney will also have a spirit week next week. Both schools will hold a virtual Bingo February 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM via teams.

Mr. Ryder thanked all the teachers. He spends a lot of time in our buildings. He is proud of the personal and professional relationship he has with our staff. He appreciates everything that they are doing.

Mr. Ryder stated Eli Whitney is challenging Hazardville Memorial during the month of February to a food drive to see who will collect the most food for the Enfield Food Shelf. Classes will earn points for the items donate. Cereal boxes will earn five points and non-perishable items will receive one point. The Enfield Food Shelf is in dire need of cereal.

Mr. Ryder stated last week Eli Whitney celebrated 02-02-22 by wearing ties, tutus and tierras. You can view the pictures that were taken on [enfieldpto.com](http://enfieldpto.com). At the last PD day, Enfield Loaves and Fishes and the Eli Whitney staff made a donation of \$200. He thanked the teachers for doing this.

Mr. Ryder added Whitney grade 4 and 5 students will attend a presentation from the Sky Dome Planetarium on Friday and this is also sports theme day at Whitney and Memorial because of the Superbowl. Monday's theme is Valentine's Day – wear red or pink to school. Tuesday is Tie dye day, Wednesday dress to impress, Thursday wear school colors and PJ day for Paws and donations will be given to the Enfield Police Canine Unit. Tuesday at Memorial is silly sock day and Wednesday is dress like you are one hundred years old.

Mr. Ryder stated on February 22<sup>nd</sup> a blood drive will be held at Eli Whitney from 1-6 PM. They are looking for volunteers. Please go to the Red Cross website at [redcrossblood.com](http://redcrossblood.com) and use the code BGLAW to support donations from the Enfield Public Schools.

Mr. Unghire stated he met with Principal Hunter and Assistant Principal Duperre at Hazardville Memorial. He is the liaison at Memorial. They gave him a tour of the school. They focus on kindness and reinforce this. They are recognizing students each day for the kind acts they have done. They have a billboard for the 100<sup>th</sup> day of school and they will have a schoolwide celebration. They also have Paws Time where the classes are intermixed on Friday. This is a great experience for the students, and he is proud of how this school is managed.

Madam Chair stated we have a lot of items to discuss, and she will make her comments short. When should we make a motion to extend the meeting past 10:30 PM?

Mr. Drezek stated at 10:29 PM.

Madam Chair stated the Enfield High Safe Grad Sonny's Place fundraiser for seniors is going on. They are selling coupon booklets they are also having a Valentine's day purse bingo on Saturday.

Madam Chair stated Enfield High will hold a Black Out event on Wednesday for the Girls Basketball team. It is a town wide event and all students in grades 3-8 will have an opportunity to meet the players and the captains. You are being asked to wear black or your recreation travel tops and help fill the Eagle bleachers. This event is open to the public. She loves seeing the high school students reaching out to our younger students.

Madam Chair stated this is National School Counselor Week. Our school counselors have been dealing with a lot lately due to Covid. We have great counselors in our schools, and they are going the extra mile. We appreciate you and everything you are doing for our students and families.

Madam Chair stated that both Mrs. Acree and Dr. Calnen are looking for information about the Joint Youth Health and Wellness committees. She is asking for Mr. Drezek's assistance about this committee and when they will meet again. This work is extremely important.

Madam Chair stated we talked about digital citizenship at the Curriculum meeting. Mr. Bourassa was a technology teacher, and he would give internet safety classes for parents. We all need a course on this topic.

Madam Chair appreciates the teachers that are here. We hear you and support you. You make our school system great for our children.

Madam Chair addressed the members of the audience that spoke tonight about your concerns. She thanked them for expressing your concerns. The end of masks is in sight. We will need to address some of the mitigation strategies and address some questions about masks. She feels this will be an easy option for the district.

Madam Chair stated the Board is required to take a vote to extend the meeting past 10:30 PM.

**10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None

**11. NEW BUSINESS:**

**a. Approval of EPS 2022-23 School Calendar**

Mr. Hamre moved, seconded by Mr. LeBlanc that the Enfield Board of Education approves the 2022-23 School Calendar.

**Discussion:**

Mrs. Pickett stated she would like to make two changes on the calendar. She would like to change Christmas Vacation to Winter Break and remove Good Friday and just include that as part of the Spring Vacation Break.

She also asked about parent teacher conferences and possibly moving or adding them to December.

Mr. Ryder stated they are both called vacations and not breaks. You are proposing we call the Winter Vacation and Spring Vacation just for clarification.

Mr. Unghire would like to know why you would like these changes made.

Mrs. Pickett stated to be more inclusive with our calendar. Not everyone celebrates Christmas. They may celebrate other holidays in this month and throughout the year.

Mr. Ryder added there is more than one holiday during that week itself. He has no problem changing the name to Winter Vacation.

Mr. Hamre moved, seconded by Mr. Ryder to amend the motion by adding changing Christmas Vacation to Winter Vacation and removing Good Friday and including it in the Spring Vacation week.

A vote by **show of hands – 6-3-0** passed with Mrs. Cushman, Mr. Unghire and Mr. LeBlanc in dissent.

Madam Chair asked for a roll call vote on the amended motion.

Moved by Mr. Hamre, seconded by Mr. Ryder that the Enfield Board of Education approves the 2022-23 School Calendar by adding changing Christmas Vacation to Winter Vacation and removing Good Friday and including it in the Spring Vacation week.

### **Discussion:**

Mrs. Acree asked if this is for the calendar changes. Does Good Friday always fall during the Spring Vacation week?

Mr. Drezek stated this may need to be addressed in future years. Good Friday does not always fall during the Spring Vacation week, and this is a contractual holiday with our bargaining units. This change will work for this calendar.

A vote by **roll call – 7-2-0** passed with Mrs. Cushman and Mr. Unghire in dissent.

### **b. BOE Policy Revisions & Adoptions – First Reading**

Mr. Ryder moved, seconded by Mr. Hamre that the Enfield Board of Education approves the proposed new BOE Policy Adoptions as a first reading.

### **Discussion:**

Mrs. Cushman would like to discuss policy #6142.102 Administration of Social Emotional Learning Assessments to Students. A good policy is good for all students. She applauds an assessment that will help all students to grow emotionally and socially to make reasonable and responsible decisions. She is questioning the students that may be harmed by these assessments. She is thinking about the transgender group of students and transgender dysphoria. She reviewed data about this for students that transition and social contagion. Labelling students may lead to encouragement to transition or using hormone therapy puberty blockers. A percentage of children will outgrow this. Is this best for the students? That is her concern about this policy and if it is best for all students.

Mr. Unghire stated this is a state mandated policy. Social Emotional Learning applies to all students. You are discussing a demographic you do not understand. Your data about gender dysphoria is inaccurate and is doing a disservice to our students. He asked to end this discussion.

Mrs. Cushman asked if this policy is mandated and are we covered by another policy with required data we must comply with from the legislature? We are covered legally by having our grade 9 students team up with Youth Services. Mr. Hamre asked for Mr. Longey to verify this.

Mr. Longey stated we are not required to adopt this policy, but we follow state legislation.

Mr. Hamre appreciated this clarification. Mrs. Cushman added based on our conversation, we do fulfil what the state requires.

Mr. Longey added we have some students that are being screened for social emotional services.

Mrs. Pickett stated the social emotional learning that Enfield is participating with is a strength based assessment and is not based on deficits. It is a screening of approximately seven questions that are based on students strengths. Students would not be labelled, and it is not diagnostic. This is important because it is a universal screener.

Mr. Ryder stated even if this was mandated, it helps to clarify the law as mentioned by Mr. Drezek. It can be very complicated to understand. This is what we will give to administrators to guide them.

Mr. Unghire asked if this policy is required or not?

Mr. Longey stated we do not need to adopt this policy. It is state legislation. There are other policies that the state clearly states are needed. This does not mean he can tell our administrators that they can ignore state laws.

Mr. Unghire stated we need to fulfill state law. Are we fulfilling state law without adopting this policy?

Mr. Longey added we are hitting the top of the iceberg with the work we are doing. The standards are not out yet for the younger grades. The standards for grades 4-12 are still needed.

Mr. Unghire asked when these standards come out, we will be required by law?

Mr. Longey directed them to the policy and the way it is written in the first paragraph it says the Board may administer social emotional learning assessment. This is where the law is now.

Mr. Unghire asked if this is a proposed new policy? Mr. Longey stated the Board will need to approve this new policy. Mr. Unghire wanted to make sure this was not a current policy. Mr. Longey explained again this is new policy.

A vote by vote by **roll call 6-3-0** passed with Mrs. Acree, Mrs. Cushman and Mr. Unghire in dissent.

#### **c. Action if any regarding the Extension of the Mask Mandate in Schools**

Mr. Ryder moved, seconded by Mrs. Pickett to table this item – Extension of the Mask Mandate in Schools.

#### **Discussion:**

Madam chair stated since we do not have all the necessary information about this from the state, we will table this item.

Mr. Drezek agrees with Madam Chair. He read a message he just received from the Commissioner until legislation legislative process is complete, school districts must comply with the current mask requirement that remain in effect until February 15<sup>th</sup>. Should the legislature vote to extend the mask mandate until February 28<sup>th</sup> or another date, school districts will be continued to comply with legislation. This is coming from the Commissioner of Education.

Madam Chair thanked Mr. Drezek for this information. There was a lot of confusion about this.

A vote by vote by **roll call 9-0-0** passed unanimously to table this item.

### **12. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Curriculum – Mrs. Pickett reported the Curriculum committee will meet on February 17<sup>th</sup> and we will discuss the program of studies and bilingual changes and elementary reading changes. We will also discuss the Talented and Gifted program in March.

Finance – Dr. Calnen reported the Finance Committee met on February 7<sup>th</sup> and had a very productive meeting. We reviewed financial statements for nutrition and the challenges they are facing. We also discussed Head Start and the Simcovitz Estate.

Policy – Mr. Ryder reported the Policy Committee is scheduled to meet on February 15<sup>th</sup>.

Leadership – Madam Chair reported we are in the process of scheduling monthly Leadership meetings on the first Tuesday meeting of the Board.

Joint Facility – Madam Chair reported she believes the Joint Facility Committee will meet on Thursday. She will need to double check on this.

JFK Building – Mr. Ryder reported that JFK Building committee members met last Thursday. He thanked everyone for the progress that has been made on JFK. He thanked the teachers, parents and community members that are part of this committee. He thanked Mr. Daigle. They have a targeted date to complete this project in the fall. They are on time and on schedule. He is looking forward to opening the 2022-23 school year at JFK without construction.

Joint Security – Madam Chair reported the Joint Security Committee will meet on March 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Joint Insurance – Madam Chair reported the Joint Insurance Committee will meet in March 2022.

Youth Mental Health – Madam Chair reported hopefully we will put some things together about this committee. She appreciates your dedication getting this committee up and running.

### **13. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Hamre moved, seconded by Mr. Ryder that the Special Virtual Meeting Minutes of January 27, 2022, be approved. A vote by **show-of-hands 8-0-1** passed with Mr. Unghire abstaining.

### **14. APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS AND PAYROLL**

#### **For the Month of November and December 2021**

Mr. Calnen moved, seconded by Mr. Hamre that the Enfield Board of Education accepts the superintendent's certification for:

- The month of January 2022 the total expenditures amount to \$6,925,166.67, broken down between payroll totaling \$4,376,586.13 and other accounts totaling 2,548,580.54 and;
- All payments have been made in accordance with the approved budget and are properly accounted for within the books of accounts. Copies of approval for check invoices are properly document.

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

Mr. Calnen moved, seconded by Mr. Unghire that the Enfield Board of Education accepts the superintendent's certification for:

- The month of January 2022 total Grant and Head Start expenditures amount to \$846,546.03 broken down between payroll totaling \$444,963.11 and other accounts totaling \$401,582.92; and
- All payments have been made in accordance with the approved budget and are properly accounted for within the books of accounts. Copies of approval for check invoices are properly document.

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



**Line Item Transfers, if any** - None

**15. CORRESPONDENCE & COMMUNICATION**

Mr. Ryder reminded everyone about the Enfield High School Program of Studies night that will be on Thursday, February 10<sup>th</sup>. He thanked all the Grade 8 students for their hard work and all they have accomplished and living through the construction at JFK.

**16. EXECUTIVE SESSION** - None

**17. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Hamre moved, seconded by Mr. Ryder to adjourn the Regular Meeting of February 8, 2022.

All ayes, motion passed unanimously. Meeting stood adjourned at 10:25 PM.

Jonathan LeBlanc  
Secretary  
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary