

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 28, 2020**

A special meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was virtually on April 28, 2020.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM by Walter Kruzel.
2. **INVOCATION OR MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Walter Kruzel
3. **ROLL CALL:**

MEMBERS PRESENT REMOTELY: Jonathan LeBlanc, Bill Salazar, Chris Rutledge, Wendy Costa, Joyce Hall, Stacy Thurston, Scott Ryder and Walter Kruzel

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Christopher Drezek, Superintendent of Schools and Mr. Andrew B. Longey, Assistant Superintendent

4. **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**
 - a. **School Closure/Distance Learning Update**

Mr. Drezek stated at our March 10th meeting he updated the Board about us closing school for up to 14th days. We pulled our staff together to prepare distance learning packets for our students. Students left with 14 days of materials to continue their education at home. We applied for a waiver from the State of Connecticut Department of Education for distance learning. The state granted us permission for our distance learning plans. The first phase of our distance learning was on paper because not all students have computers. Our first 14 days of distance learning would be considered as regular school days.

The purpose of the paper packets was to get us through to our April vacation week. High School students have 1:1 devices. JFK and elementary students do not have computer devices. We reached out to every family to see if they had devices for their children to use. Mr. Drezek thanked our principals and staff for reaching out to every family and arranging for them to receive a device for online distance learning. The vast majority of our families have devices in order for us to transition to a virtual platform. We need to be flexible during this time for families and staff when communicating.

Mr. Drezek added when we left on March 12th, we did not know what was going to happen. It is like we are building a plane and learning how to fly it at the same time. We understand that we must be flexible. The only way we are going to get through this is by doing what is best for our kids. Phase II and phase III were paper and electronic. We will eventually transition to a virtual platform. Our teachers are being trained on TEAMS virtually. We are in a better position than some of the other towns.

Mr. Drezek gave an update on grading for our students. This is new and everything is being done in the best interest of our kids.

Mr. Drezek added that so many of our staff and teachers have stepped up. He especially thanked our Nutrition Services Staff – Diane Edwards and Judy Januszewski for everything they have done. They came up with a plan and have not missed a step when it comes to feeding our students. He is so proud of how our staff have been interacting with our students

and families from the start. He knows this isn't perfect, but everyone is doing their best. This is a lot to ask of parents and students. Health and safety is our most important concern for our families and staff. We are learning as we are going. He understands your frustration and reminded everyone that we must remain flexible and we will get through this working together. He is extremely proud of how we have all banded together.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked about the special education students and their packets for distance learning. Mr. Drezek stated he knows this is not perfect for our students. He just received work that the Federal Government has denied the waiver for IDEA. Working directly with our students is not allowed. Direct contact with our students cannot be replaced. Our staff are doing the best they can reaching out to their students. It is not perfect, but it is as good as we can get it at this time.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked about the future for snow days since we are using distance learning now. Will snow days be eliminated? Mr. Drezek stated we should never need another snow day since we are all experts now. Moving forward we will focus our professional learning opportunities on distance learning. We are training as we go. Our teachers will be better prepared for distance learning. We might receive a phone call next school year that we will need to go out again. We will be spending our summer preparing for this if it happens again, so our kids will have as normal of a school day from their homes. If we do this correctly, we shouldn't have any snow days. This decision will fall upon the State.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated that is why she was asking about this. It is her understanding that there might be a surge in the fall. There are many questions about school continuing in the fall including at colleges. The initiatives we have taken has been very proactive. She appreciates what everyone has done.

Mrs. Hall asked about students receiving Art, Music and Physical Education. How have we been addressing these supplemental subjects. Mr. Drezek stated they are up and running. Staff have created enrichment activities for the kids to do at home. Our teachers are always reaching out to the students and supplemental subjects have become more formalized. Grading at the high school will allow our students the opportunity to increase grades with these enrichment opportunities.

Mrs. Hall asked when there is a gap in this ordeal, do you plan to recover the equipment that has been distributed to families? Should we start to looking into iPads or having other devices available for all our students? Mr. Drezek stated yes and yes. The buildings did a great job taking devices from each building for families to use. There is a chance they will not come back to us in the same condition. Our next phase, we will need to prepare for the worst and have a process in place for devices. Our shift as a district will need to be on distance learning plans for the future.

Mr. Ryder stated with phase III, Art, Music, Physical Education and Technology lessons have been sent home with supplemental materials. Mr. Drezek stated our computer teachers have gone above and beyond and are assisting Mr. Bourassa with how to videos. We are utilizing our staff and everyone is doing the best they can.

Mr. LeBlanc is wondering if there are any updates regarding the communication you have had with our graduating seniors and if any plans have been made. Mr. Drezek stated he has been meeting with Ms. Clark and Mr. Longey about alternative graduation options. We also met with around 35 senior students via TEAM about their preferences for graduation. Our students would like to graduate on the field. We are planning for both including a virtual graduation ceremony and postponing the graduation date. Our students have worked hard and deserve recognition. It breaks his heart about this. Large gatherings will not be allowed in the future. Ms. Clark and her team are exploring many different options. We will give you more information in the coming weeks.

Mrs. Hall stated a group of students asked about holding all graduations on a specific date for a statewide graduation. Chairman Kruzel stated that he also heard the same thing. Mr. Drezek stated that questions was raised by the media to the Governor. He has not heard anything else regarding this. We are currently focusing on input from our seniors and what they would like for their graduation ceremony.

Mr. LeBlanc stated based on what Ms. Hall mentioned, graduations might be held on the same day. Mr. Drezek stated that is the idea that was floated. This sounds good but what about parents and security issues. What happens when they all show up? The Governor has not officially said anything about graduations. We are still looking at alternative options for graduations.

Mr. LeBlanc is glad to hear we are looking at multiple options for graduation. We value the work our students put into obtaining their diplomas. Our students deserve to be recognized for their hard work. He believes the ceremony should be done before August. Seniors will be gearing up for heading off to college or other options.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked about the projected last day of school. Mr. Drezek stated the last day of school will most likely be made by the Board. We need to see what will that last day be like? Will students still be learning remotely? What if the Governor says we can go back? At some point, we will want to create normalcy for our students. The attendance policy has also been waived across the state. Some parents will make the decision to keep their children home. Currently, June 17th is our last day of school. We have waived the 181st day. We do not need to decide about the last day of school now. He has also received that question as well.

Mrs. LeBlanc agrees with Mr. Drezek about waiting until we hear from the Governor about students coming back.

5. Budget Update

Mr. Drezek stated we had our budget in place previously. But since this public health crises erupted, he has been meeting with the Town Manager. We started looking at our finances and we decided to work together and to support each other during this time. Mr. Bromson shared this with his leadership and I discussed this with our Board leadership. Nothing is official and does not require the Board to vote on this until the Town adopts the budget. We are working together to support the Town and the school and do what is best for our Enfield community. We will still be allowed to carryover 2% which will help us. One of the benefits of our Eagle Academy was allowing us to save money from bringing back our outplaced students. If we didn't have this option, we would be looking at layoffs. We will be down some positions but we will not need to lay off any staff.

Mr. Drezek believes we can survive on a 0% budget next year if needed. This is not something we can do often but we want to do what is fiscally responsible for our town and community. We have money in our budget now. We are trying to do this without any non-renewals. We have looked at our budgets, professional development, supplies, curriculum needs and contracts. Both Mrs. Cisneros and Mr. Bourassa are currently working with our vendors arranging for credits for next year. Based on this, we could reduce our line items in the way we are paying our bills now. Our budget will be fluid until we adopt it. Mr. Bromson does not want to decimate our budget. Some areas will be hit. This is a one year hit. He hopes the State will honor our ECS funding. We are working with our Town to do what is fiscally responsible for our community during these unprecedented times.

Mr. Drezek stated the Town Council will hold a virtual public hearing on April 29th at 5:00 PM. This will look differently than what we have done in the past. Both Mr. Kruzel and he have been invited to attend. Questions need to be submitted to the Town Manager and will be

addressed by Mayor Ludwick at the public hearing. The community conversation on the budget will not be held but we will do something for the public. It will look different than what was done in the past.

Ms. Hall asked if Mr. Drezek will need to present the Board's budget at the hearing? Mr. Drezek stated no. The Board's proposed budget is on the website. Both he and Mr. Bromson will make a statement. We will not be making any remarks.

Mr. Ryder thanked Mr. Drezek and Mr. Longey for making the numbers work.

6. JFK Schedule Changes

Mr. Drezek stated we would have held several discussions regarding scheduling and looping at JFK by this time. Looping normally affects the grade 7 teams. With the number of grade 8, 7 classes and incoming grade 6 students for next year, along with the construction that will occur next year, we have decided not to loop classes. Dr. Berrios will go ahead and make the schedules without the traditional looping process for the next school year. Dr. Berrios will send out communication about this to the families. This is not a decision the Board needs to make. We are limited with our swing spaces at JFK. This may cause questions about this change. We would have held parent meetings about this to address parent concerns. We will do something to address parent concerns.

Mr. Salazar asked about looping concerns. Is the concern for only during the construction process? Mr. Drezek stated normally, when you enter JFK you are with the same group/team the entire time you are at JFK. We are being forced to make this change now due to logistics and will continue with this change from now on.

Mr. Salazar asked if this is because of the lack of space in the building. Mr. Drezek stated not completely. It is because of the way the teams are configured and where they will be going in the swing spaces. We need to separate teams because there are too many in certain grade levels. There are a lot of exciting changes that will be happening at JFK, similar to the changes at EHS. This is all part of the JFK Building Project to enhance learning in a new building.

Mr. Kruzel stated the JFK Building Committee is still meeting. Bids are coming in and we are looking to breaking ground for the project soon.

7. Board Members' Comments

Mrs. LeBlanc stated we hear what our seniors are saying loud and clear. She is glad the superintendent and Mrs. Clark put together the student survey about graduations. She is hoping everything goes smoothly. She thanked our principals for their communications to their students. We know this has not been easy. The teacher parades were amazing. She wishes our families, staff and students good health. Our teachers miss seeing their children. Seeing everyone tonight was great. One of our Board members is in the front lines and goes to work every day. Please send us your questions. Stay safe and healthy.

Mrs. Hall thanked everyone starting with our nutritionists up to our Superintendent for dealing with this extreme situation so well. She thanked the Elementary Principals for their newsletters. They are very creative and entertaining, especially the new Eaglet from the Early Learning Center. She wished everyone good luck in the future.

Mrs. Thurston thanked everyone for doing a great job. It is emotional seeing everyone. Mr. Drezek and Mr. Longey you are amazing. She does not know what we would do without you both - thank you for everything you are doing. Our parents are doing a great job homeschooling our kids. They did not sign up for this. She is happy to report that her facility

is COVID free. We are talking with our resident's family members daily using iPads. Our staff is amazing. We are doing what we can to stay healthy and COVID free.

Mr. Kruzel thanked Mrs. Thurston and the staff at her facility. Please thank your staff for all the hard work they are doing for the residents.

Mr. Ryder thanked the Enfield Police Department for assisting with the teacher motorcades. The staff parades were amazing. He thanked everyone that participated in these caravans. He also thanks our nutrition services staff for the amazing job they are doing feeding our kids. You can go to www.enfieldpto.com/meals and we have the hours posted and have placed pictures of the staff on Facebook. He thanked the parents for what they are doing. They did not sign up for this. The kids love seeing each other remotely with Zoom and TEAM calls. He knows how frustrating this is. Enfield PTO is holding spirit weeks for families. He thanked the parents that have contacted him.

Mr. Ryder stated Enfield Unplugged will be renamed to Enfield Recharged. They will have different events for each day. The events will be posted on the www.KITE.org website and the www.enfieldpto.com website. He added that our posts are reaching many people. We have become a resource for our parents. He thanked everyone and wished everyone to stay safe.

Mr. LeBlanc also thanked everyone. There is something special in the way we are doing things in Enfield like our motorcades. Our staff was prepared by preparing the distance learning packets. Graduations are important. He knows we are doing everything we can to insure something is done for our graduates. He feels for our athletes. We are all in this together and we will get through this together. There is a light at the end of the tunnel. Stay healthy and safe. Let's get back to work. He also misses seeing everyone.

Mr. Salazar stated these are difficult historical times. We are sharing our strengths and encouragements with each other. He encourages you to support everyone in our community. Everyone is doing a great job for our students and staff. Our parents and staff deserve a lot of credit. We are available and are listening to your concerns. Hang in there. We will get through this together.

Mr. Rutledge echoes the comments that were made tonight. He thanks our front-line people for what they are doing. Stay safe and healthy. Look at the silver lining, this allows us to spend more time with our families. This is also bringing our technology together. He hopes this technology trend will continue and our subcommittees can start meeting remotely also. Stay safe and healthy. He also wishes everyone the best.

Mrs. Costa stated our administration and faculty members have done a bang-up job. She also echoes the comments made. Our parents are doing a great job working with our students at home. We are all trying to find our way while working from home has it challenges. She is glad this didn't happen when her kids were younger. Do the best you can. That is all we can do for our kids. She is worried about the children and what they are being asked to do. This is something we never imagined. Our seniors are missing out. Our work is just beginning. The communications we have been providing to our families are important. She thanked Mr. Drezek for the updates. We need to look at any upcoming roadblocks and look at different ways for learning. We need to help our kids get ready to come back to school and what we are going to do to get our kids ready. How do we make these last few months for our graduating seniors special? Stay safe, healthy and stay home.

Mr. Longey wished everyone well. Stay home. Virtual meetings are boring. He misses being in the schools. Stay safe everyone.

Mr. Kruzel thanked Mr. Drezek, Mr. Longey, Mr. Bourassa, ETV and Mr. Russell. He also echoes the comments made tonight. We have been meeting since January with the Town. We

knew something was going to happen. We were prepared. He thanks our staff for all the work they have done. He thanked the staff for the motorcades. This was an awesome thing to do for our kids and staff. He agrees with Mr. Drezek, we are building the plane and learning how to fly it at the same time. Opening the schools is not going to be easy. We need to do something special for our graduates. He thanked Connecticut Masks for Heroes. They donated masks and we picked them up and gave them to our EMT staff.

Mr. Kruzel thanked the Town Council members, the Mayor and Mr. Bromson. Enfield First. We make a difference in Enfield, every child and every day and for every resident as well. He thanked Board members. Now we need to get back to work. He would like our subcommittees to start meeting remotely. Thank you all during this difficult time.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Thurston moved, seconded by Mrs. Costa to adjourn the Special Virtual Meeting of April 28, 2020.

All ayes, motion passed unanimously. Meeting stood adjourned at 6:57 PM.

Tina LeBlanc
Secretary
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary