

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
MAY 26, 2020**

A special meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was virtually on May 26, 2020.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 5:32 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, Tina LeBlanc, 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. **BOARD GUEST(S)**

Mr. Drezek stated we have invited out 2019-20 Teacher of the Year Pam Estes to tonight's meeting. She will share her perspective on how distance learning is going from a teacher's point of view.

Mrs. Estes thanked the Board for this opportunity. She hopes everyone is doing well. She thanked the administration for giving the teachers the opportunity to distance teach. She prepared a power point presentation and reviewed things to celebrate; the challenges with distance learning; synchronous vs. asynchronous; and what teachers need to improve distance learning.

Mr. Ryder thanked her for sharing the teacher's side of distance learning. He understands the limitations of working from home and working with his children. Both of his children learn differently. Distance teaching can be different by grade, class and subject. The process is getting better.

Mrs. Estes asked if his children are feeling overwhelmed. Mr. Ryder stated his daughter is okay with this type of learning style. His son is feeling overwhelmed at times. Seeing his classmates remotely helps. Some of his neighbors have consistency issues with distance learning. It has been challenging for the younger students. It varies by grade levels. The parent feedback he has been receiving is more positive now.

Mrs. Estes added her child in grade 4 is doing better than her child in grade 1 who is struggling with distance learning. Mr. Ryder has heard that from the K-2 school parents.

Mrs. Thurston congratulated Mrs. Estes for a job well done and for everything you are doing for our students.

Mrs. Hall also congratulated Mrs. Estes for adjusting to such a significant change in delivering instruction to our students. Our future is looking brighter. She can see that this will still be a problem for some parents that are working from home sharing the same equipment that their children need to use for learning. Fortunately, this is something she has not had to experience.

Mrs. LeBlanc thanked Mrs. Estes for her presentation. Both she and Mr. Ryder have been receiving e-mails and correspondence from parents about synchronous learning. She has a good explanation to give them now. Parents want the best for their children. As a parent, distance learning and working from home can be overwhelming. Parents and children are missing human connection as well as the connection our teachers and students have developed. You became a teacher to be involved and make those special connections with your students. Socialization components are also missing from our students lives now. She thanked her for her wonderful presentation and everything she is doing for our students.

Mrs. Costa thanked Mrs. Estes for all the extra efforts you have put into this. She knows this has not been easy for teachers, parents and students. Do you feel teachers need additional training on TEAMS and what other training could be helpful for distance learning if it is required again in the future?

Mrs. Estes stated both she and her colleagues are happy with the TEAMS platform. Additional professional development exploring TEAMS and using OneNote would be helpful. She would like to see synchronous learning in the future. Her husband works in a district where synchronous learning is being used. All these students had devices in place before we went out and were used to receiving instruction this way from the start of school. She knows 1:1 devices for our students would be beneficial but based on the economy, she knows this might not be possible. Further discussions on how we can do our best with student learning and delivering the best instruction we can would be helpful to all teachers.

Mrs. Costa added 1:1 devices would still pose problems with learning with parents working from home and kids being in daycares. It might be hard for a synchronous delivery. Mrs. Estes stated it is hard for a synchronous delivery. Some parents are working outside of the home and come home and are helping their children with distance learning. A lot of students need assistance with the work. Additional discussions on this topic would also be helpful.

Mrs. Costa asked about the students that are struggling academically and emotionally. Mrs. Estes stated she has a few students that she has not been able to connect with. We are concerned about these students. These are the kids that we were putting extra time with before we went out at JFK. These students need that adult connection helping them. She is not sure about EHS or the elementary students.

Mr. Rutledge thanked her for the great presentation. You mentioned the need for parent involvement with distance learning, what advice would you give to parents with dual roles of teaching and working?

Mrs. Estes stated your mental health comes first. Parents need to relax. They are doing a great job. The teachers know what the students are not getting and are missing. We will pick up the pieces. We will address this when they get back to school.

Mr. Salazar thanked Mrs. Estes for her informative presentation. Teachers are also providing some technical support to the students. Mrs. Estes stated we have some students that are unsure how to submit their work. They are using videos and directions made by staff members. Parents are overwhelmed. She is assisting the students with how to turn in projects and formatting materials. Teachers are also spending a lot of time correcting materials turned in and commenting on the materials. This is a very different way of doing things compared to being in a classroom setting.

Mr. Salazar asked what kind of learning would work best. Mrs. Estes stated if our technology situation remains the same in Enfield, asynchronous learning because it is very flexible. She holds office hours for her students that would like to connect with her and ask questions. If we go back in the fall and we have 1:1 technology, teachers could teach on TEAMS platform. She

would recommend synchronous learning. This has worked well in her husband's district. We need to do the best with what we have. She would prefer to teach on-line classes. Our school system is larger than other districts and needs to be considered as well.

Mr. Salazar thanked Mrs. Estes for her explanation. Please share our heartfelt thanks to the other team members and teachers.

Mr. LeBlanc thanked Mrs. Estes for your presentation. You are approaching distance learning the best that you can and have a hybrid model. This has been an eye opener and we will not take going to school for granted. You cannot replace the importance of 1:1 technology. This is something he would like to see in our district.

Chairman Kruzel thanked Mrs. Estes for another wonderful presentation. He thanked Board members for asking all the questions he was planning to ask. Please share our regards with the JFK faculty and thank them for keeping our students as motivated as they can and for working so hard.

Mr. Drezek also thanked Mrs. Estes for her presentation. There is a reason that you are our teacher of the year. He asked her to share the challenges of distance learning with the Board and public. No one knew how to do this. He is glad to hear that we are starting to do this a little better. We will be moving in the direction of 1:1 technology. This has now become a necessity.

Mrs. Estes thanked them for the opportunity to speak to the Board. She appreciates your comments. This is new to us and it is important to hear from the community.

Chairman Kruzel thanked her. Everyone is doing such a great job for our kids.

5. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT
a. EPS School/Distance Learning Update

Mr. Drezek stated the Governor from Massachusetts is allowing in person graduations. He listened to Governor Lamont's discussion today regarding graduations requirements. There are some misconceptions about opening Connecticut and graduations. We are prohibited from large gatherings up to June 20th. He would like things back to normal but we are prohibited from doing this. He reviewed the restrictions that would be required and added there are many additional things listed in the small print regarding graduations.

Mr. Drezek stated we are going forward with Enfield High School's drive-thru Commencement and Diploma Ceremony over multiple days and a Virtual Graduation on June 17th. There are no guarantees with Phase II. We have approximately 360 students that will be graduating. We wanted to make sure our kids received the recognition they deserved. Our plan has been shared with the Health Director and they are happy with it. Our kids will be able to cross a stage and pickup their diploma. Safe Grad will be there to give kids their gifts. Family members can be present in the car with the graduate. Additional information will be forthcoming from Principal Clark.

Mr. Drezek stated that Mrs. Estes summed up our distance learning. We are doing the best we can and are doing better. Enfield has qualified for a \$735K Cares Act based on Title I enrollment for Federal Cares Money. There are strict guidelines for this to be used for technology assistance. We have been actively looking into purchasing devices for all students. Electronic devices are also now a shortage item just like toilet paper. Mr. Bourassa and Mrs. Cisneros are working on a way to purchase these devices. We are starting this process now. There will be still some virtual learning done in September. He will update us on our progress at the next meeting.

Mr. Drezek stated we also need to do a better job of explaining how to use our technology devices. Virtual learning will never replicate classroom learning. Virtual learning is going as best as it can.

Mr. Drezek stated we received draft information from the State of Connecticut for summer school. This is a precursor for what is coming in September. He shared this with our Health Director. This is going to be a significant challenge. We will need to plan for virtual learning or a hybrid of both. We are going forward with the virtual learning. We have 2 months to figure this all out. All our energy needs to be focused on what the fall will look like. Curriculum, policy, attendance, transportation and finance will all need to be looked at. We cannot wait any longer, we need to prepare for what the fall might look like.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked if the \$735K we will receive from the Care Act is for Enfield Public Schools or will it be divided between us and the Town. Mr. Drezek stated this is funding for schools. The Town is aware of our technology needs for students. It is based on Title I numbers.

Mrs. LeBlanc added this will help us out greatly. Based on what both you and Mrs. Estes stated we are taking an approach for virtual learning.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked if parents can get out of the car to take pictures. Mr. Drezek stated the graduate can exit the vehicle. This plan was approved by the Health Department. All other passengers must stay in the car. Parents can take pictures from the car. We are asking that everyone follows the rules that will be in place. There will be professional photographer there.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated there is a misconception that we have not explored other options for graduation. We need to follow the guidelines that are in place. If we don't comply with the State's guidelines, it might affect us later. Mr. Drezek stated in the draft guidelines we received, there is a Safe Harbor and liability considerations. There is something for districts that comply with making good faith efforts with the guidelines presented for indemnification.

Mrs. LeBlanc other districts have smaller graduating classes and are offering alternative graduations. Our plans are in line with some of the larger schools. Mr. Drezek agreed that our graduation plans are in line with the larger school districts.

Mrs. LeBlanc thanked Mr. Drezek for sending us Massachusetts guidelines. These guidelines will be difficult for them to follow. She has received a lot of parent questions regarding graduations.

Mrs. Hall asked if we have any tentative summer school plans? Mr. Drezek stated the guidelines were restrictive. After discussing this with his colleagues and administrators, we will still hold summer school for our students virtually. A letter will be going out to parents from Julie Carroll our Special Education Director who oversees our summer school program. A lot of districts will hold virtual summer school due to the restrictions.

Mrs. Hall stated just reading about the transportation for the students was enough. Doing this virtually make sense.

Mrs. Costa agreed that we need 1:1 devices. She is concerned about our Kindergarten and first grade level students. They are going to miss out learning about things that are not easily taught on a device. They are missing out on sharing and getting along. She is in full support of 1:1 devices.

Mr. Salazar asked for clarification regarding graduation – one graduate and as many family members that can fit into a car. Mr. Drezek stated we are allowing one car per family. His concerns are that we make sure we follow the guidelines that are put in place. Principal Clark will elaborate the rules for the drive thru graduation.

Mr. Salazar stated we need to make sure that the guidelines in place are adhered to.

Mr. Salazar stated some of the JFK students have not be contacted. Mr. Drezek stated there are some students in the district that we are struggling to contact. Our principals are trying to reach out to them in any way they can. This is a heartbreaking fact. We have also used community resource officers. Our teachers are constantly reaching out to their students. There are some families that do not have devices. It is challenging.

Mr. Salazar asked if the 1:1 devices we will purchase will be iPads? Mr. Drezek stated we chose iPads because we were using a google platform. iPads can use any kind of platform. This would also be a good device for our little ones in grades K-5 to use.

Mr. LeBlanc stated as a town, we are doing everything we can for our graduates. He is proud of the options we have provided them. The students can forward any questions they have to our State Representatives and they can send them to the Governor. That is what they did in Massachusetts.

Mr. LeBlanc is all for meeting weekly. We should keep our alternate Tuesdays available until school starts. We can start addressing the many unknowns. There is a lot to cover.

Chairman Kruzel stated the guideline number is 5. Our Council Chambers are vacant and we are meeting remotely because we are prohibited. There is no way we can hold a graduation for 360 students with the restrictions that are currently in place. We cannot do what they are doing in our bordering states like Massachusetts. We are doing the best that we can for our graduating students.

Mr. Drezek stated Board members received an e-mail from the EHS student council regarding graduation. As you read their e-mail, it is heartbreaking. They just want their day. He copied Board members with his response. We are open for anything, but the rules are what they are. The students wanted this addressed on the agenda. He explained that it could not be added since this is a special meeting. If the rules changes, we can call a meeting and do something different. We are doing the best we can for our graduating students.

Chairman Kruzel stated he has been watching the YouTube feed and 50 people are watching this meeting. Thank you for watching.

6. OLD BUSINESS:

a. Policy Revision #5113 Students – Attendance Policy K-12 – Second Reading

Mrs. Hall moved, seconded by Mrs. Costa that the Enfield Board of Education approves Policy #5113 Students – Attendance Policy K-12 as a second and final reading.

Discussion:

Chairman Kruzel stated this is from the last meeting we were live from Council Chambers on March 10th. We are cleaning up some items.

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

7. NEW BUSINESS:

a. Discussion and Action if any, Regarding the Last Day of School

Mr. Ryder moved, seconded by Mrs. Hall that the Enfield Board of Education approves Friday, June 12th as the last day of School for Students.

Discussion:

Chairman Kruzel stated our last day of school for distance learning will be Friday, June 12th. This is per state regulations for attending school 180 days. We are waiving the 181st day of school.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated this is one of the many parent questions she has received. Distant learning will end on Friday, June 12th. Mr. Drezek stated the last day for student learning would be June 12th.

Mrs. Thurston thanked the teachers and parents for everything they have been doing. They did not sign up for this and have been working extremely hard. Congratulations, you have your last day of school date. She is glad we could do this now.

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

b. Discussion and Creation of a Subcommittee for Reopening Schools

Mr. Salazar moved, seconded by Mrs. Hall that the Enfield Board of Education to discuss the Creation of forming a Reopening School Subcommittee.

Discussion:

Mrs. Costa stated she brought this idea up at the last meeting for us to be better prepared when we open school up in September. She believes there will be restrictions and limitations. She has seen that a lot of towns are doing the same thing. We need to be prepared. She does not feel that we should wait until August 15th to address everything. We could also collaborate with our State Representatives. She is hopeful we will receive some formal guidelines.

Mrs. Costa added that Mr. LeBlanc has expressed in interest on being part of this committee. We can include as many people as needed on this committee. She highly recommends forming this committee.

Chairman Kruzel would like to see 2 Republican and 2 Democratic Board members on this committee. We do not need to set dates yet.

Mr. Drezek stated we have an initial road map regarding guidelines. There are many areas that need to be addressed. There are also financial implications that will affect our counterparts at the Town. Testing for employees and students, we will need no touch exit and entrances, masks for staff and students, bathrooms, etc. These are the types of questions we will need to address. He applauds your efforts and willingness to start this committee up.

Chairman Kruzel would also like to open this up for one Republican and Democratic Town Council member to participate on this committee.

Mr. Ryder stated he would like to be part of this committee. We will continue with our Board meetings during the summer. He suggests that this committee can meet on the alternate Tuesday nights. We can bring this information back to share with the public at the Board meetings. He does not feel meeting weekly is warranted now.

Mr. LeBlanc agrees with Mr. Ryder. This way members of the Board will be meeting weekly in some form of a committee or meeting.

Mrs. Hall asked if this committee should include teachers, parents and other stake holders? We need input from a variety of participants. We should not be just talking about what we have been reading. She believes we need more than elected officials on this committee.

Mrs. Costa agrees that certain membership is needed on this committee. She does not want to see 30 people at every meeting. This will be a public meeting and agendas will be posted with topics. She agrees with including parents and teachers when needed. The structure for distance learning might need to be discussed.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked if we are going to form that large of a committee won't we need a resolution that is passed by the Town Council where citizens can apply to be on the committee?

Mrs. Hall asked who would setup the resolution. Mrs. LeBlanc stated that committees that include residents would include a charge of the committee and a resolution. Residents would apply to be on the committee.

Mrs. Costa stated we will need parental input. We will form the committee and we would bring in guests to discuss agenda topics.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated we are going to form the committee with Board members and based on what the topics are, that would dictate who the guests would be at any particular meeting.

Mrs. Costa stated that is correct. We will bring in the appropriate personnel to discuss certain topics. We will not need everyone at each meeting.

Mr. Drezek stated the Board has the authority to create special advisory committees like the Fermi Committee. This committee had a resolution because the members of the committee could vote. This would be a subcommittee of the Board that would be soliciting input from invited participants. We have a Town council liaison for the Board.

Chairman Kruzel believes it is Mrs. Riley.

Mr. Drezek will check but he believes the liaison can be part of sitting subcommittee in an advisory role. In year's past, we have had a Town Council member sit in our contract negotiations committee meetings. There was no resolution. He believes we could do the same here.

Chairman Kruzel stated this is going to be more of a working committee than anything else. They will not be voting on anything. They will be gathering information and hashing it out.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated she understands the concept better as a Board of Education subcommittee.

Mr. LeBlanc stated we will have guest speakers at each meeting like the Health Department, etc. We can bring in other guests like town workers to gain their input on topics.

Mr. Drezek stated it is the same as when we invite people to attend our meetings. Our meetings are open to the public. He recommends having members of this committee that are also on the BOE standing committees. Wendy is on the Finance Committee, Scott is on the Policy Committee and Joyce is on the Curriculum Committee. We can keep the lines of communications open with our standing committees this way.

Chairman Kruzel would like the Board to create this committee.

Mrs. Costa moved, seconded by Mr. LeBlanc that the Enfield Board of Education Creates a School Reopen Subcommittee as discussed.

Discussion:

Chairman Kruzel will be appointing Mrs. Costa as the Chairperson for this subcommittee. Mr.

LeBlanc will also be on this committee. He would like the Democratic side to notify Mrs. Costa their two members for this committee.

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

Chairman Kruzel agrees with Mr. Ryder regarding the meetings being held between Board meetings on alternate Tuesdays.

8. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:

Mr. Ryder stated we have 13 distance learning days left. He encouraged staff, students and parents to hang in there. We are almost there. The Enfield Public Library is now open for curbside pickups.

Mr. Ryder congratulated our EHS Valedictorian – Sean Suleski and EHS Salutatorian – Arvind Kasiliya for their outstanding academic achievements. The EHS class of 2021 has started fundraising. They have started flocking again. If you are interested, you can go to the EnfieldPTO.com page for information.

Mr. Ryder stated we have not received the dates for report cards and device returns. This information will be forthcoming.

Mr. Ryder stated the Enfield Family Resource Center is a great resource for families. They are holding virtual events and meetings. We have their links available on EnfieldPTO.com. You can also reach them on their Facebook page. They are available if you need assistance and are here to help. He thanked Erin Grimes and Amy Morales for everything they are doing at the Family Resource Center.

Mrs. Hall stated she may need to sign up for Facebook. She might be missing out on things. On the other hand, she really doesn't need anything else to read online with all the many articles about reopening schools, guidelines and regulations. She added that many colleges have started to open virtually and some classes are being held in person for the same subject.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated her children's colleges are opening in the fall. She is wearing a Mila Strong t-shirt to support a family whose grandchild has Leukemia. She is 2 years old. They are selling these t-shirts. Her heart goes out to their family during this tough challenging time.

Mrs. LeBlanc has also been asked about device and textbook returns. Mr. Murray sent out an e-mail about this and Mr. Ryder and I posted it on Facebook and on EnfieldPTO.com. Parents will need to hold tight for a bit longer.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked about the essential workers getting time off from work to see their children graduate and walk across the stage. They will need to know the times being assigned for their child in order from them to inform their employers to get the appropriate time off from work.

Mrs. LeBlanc thanked the parents that have e-mailed and contacted her. The last day of school is June 12th. We are listening to you and take what you say to heart. We understand how you are feeling. Don't be so hard on yourselves. She reminded everyone that we are all in this together. She thanked the parents and teachers for everything they have done.

Mr. Rutledge stated he looked at 17 random Board of Education meeting agendas. All these Boards are allowing public communication at virtual meetings. We are currently using virtual meetings in Enfield with guests. He wants us to get onboard with this by sharing the link or residents they can e-mail us. Enfield P&Z is allowing this. He is hoping we can get onboard and allow this at our meetings. In times of crises, it is important to be visible and accessible

for our elected Boards. He would like us to offer our citizens an opportunity to speak virtually even when we come back to live meetings. E-mail comments can be read into the minutes. The only problem with this is your passion will not be relayed by you. Someone else will be reading your words for you. We need to give people an opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns. He would appreciate some feedback about how we can do this. He mentioned this at our last meeting and our attorney was looking into this. Other Boards and commissions are doing this. He will continue to ask about this at each meeting.

Mrs. Costa asked how you contacted these 17 towns? Mr. Rutledge stated he looked at a map and randomly picked towns. He then looked at their Board and Town Council agendas online. If you wanted to participate remotely, there were instructions that needed to be followed. He would like us to make this an option for our residents. This would send a message that we are accessible.

Mr. Salazar added that he also received a lot of e-mails inquiring about the last day of school. He thanked them for contacting him. He reminded citizens that we cannot comment on a particular way we may be voting on items. We are not ignoring your questions. We cannot engage in this level of conversations. He encourages residents to continue contacting us.

Mr. LeBlanc stated we are here for the residents 24/7. He also encouraged them to reach out to us. He added that it is so nice to see all the One Community signs from Kite that are everywhere in Enfield. He is extremely proud of how our town is supporting each other.

Mr. LeBlanc stated he is hoping June 20th will be the date to resume sports for our youth. He would like to see if we could do something for our athletes. He knows there are guidelines that would need to be followed. This would be great to do for our students.

Chairman Kruzel stated he went into Enfield High today to record his speech for the graduation. His speech is very short like last year's speech. He thanked the graduates from all the Board. He saw Principal Clark and gave them all air high-fives for a job well done. Board members will not be on the stage to help keep the numbers as low as possible. Mrs. Clark will look into us being allowed to watch from the hill. The drive-thru graduation will span over 2-3 days. He agrees with Mrs. LeBlanc about essential workers getting the appropriate time off from work. This is something they will look into.

Chairman Kruzel stated we currently have 31 people watching our virtual meeting. He cannot wait for us to hold our meetings in Council Chambers again.

9. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Curriculum Committee – Mr. Salazar reported the Curriculum Committee met virtually on May 21st. We discussed the need for us to continue to meet during the summer. We will review any curriculum related plans for reopening schools. Our next meeting will be held on June 4th at 5:30 PM virtually.

Finance, Budget Committee – Mrs. Costa reported the Finance, Budget Committee will meet virtually on June 15th.

Policy Committee – Mr. Rutledge reported the Policy Committee will meet virtually on June 16th. We will continue to review the 5000 series and we will place Policy #9132 on the next BOE agenda for a first reading.

Leadership Committee – Chairman Kruzel reported that Board Leadership did not meet.

Joint Facilities Committee – Chairman Kruzel reported the Joint Facilities committee meet last week and had a presentation on solar plans. We are also working on the 3rd phase for

Barnard's Roof. We are also looking into a possible referendum for the other roofs.

JFK Building Committee – Chairman Kruzel reported we met last week and the trailers have arrived at JFK. We have the contracts in place and are currently \$9 million dollars under budget. This is a great start. Now we will work on the on-time part like we did with the high school project. We are in great hands with Gilbane Construction.

Mrs. Hall asked if we have started construction yet? Chairman Kruzel stated we are waiting for the permits and will start construction work soon.

Joint Security Committee – Mr. Ryder reported the Joint Security Committee will meet virtually on June 3rd.

Joint Insurance Committee – None.

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mrs. Thurston moved, seconded by Mrs. Hall that the Special Meeting Minutes of May 12, 2020 be approved as amended. A vote by **show-of-hands 9-0-0** passed unanimously.

11. APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS AND PAYROLL: None

12. CORRESPONDENCE & COMMUNICATION: - None

13. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Thurston moved, seconded by Mrs. Costa to adjourn the Special Virtual Meeting of May 26, 2020.

All ayes, motion passed unanimously. Meeting stood adjourned at 7:25 PM.

Tina LeBlanc
Secretary
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary