

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 14, 2021**

A regular meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held in Council Chambers on December 14, 2021.

1. **CALL TO ORDER** : The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM by Madam Chair LeBlanc.
2. **INVOCATION OR MOMENT OF SILENCE** : Dr. Gerald Calnen
3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** : Dr. Gerald Calnen
4. **FIRE EVACUATION ANNOUNCEMENT** :
5. **ROLL CALL** :

MEMBERS PRESENT : Jean Acree, Dr. Gerald Calnen, Janet Cushman, Joshua Hamre, Jonathan LeBlanc (arrived at 8:30 PM), Amanda Pickett, Scott Ryder, John Unghire and Tina LeBlanc

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

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

6. **BOARD GUEST(S)**

a. **Jean Haughey, Director of Youth Services**

Mr. Drezek welcomed Jean Haughey to the Board meeting. She will retire at the end of the month. She has been a constant to our district and a great partner and friend. On behalf of the Board, administration and district, he thanked her for everything she has done for our students and staff. She will be greatly missed. He wished her well in her retirement.

Madam Chair presented Mrs. Haughey with a gift from the Board and Administration.

Mrs. Haughey stated she appreciates the partnerships and collaborations she has had with Mr. Drezek, Mr. Longey, the administration and the Board. We have accomplished so much and established so many great committees that help our youth. We have had such a great relationship. She truly loved working with Mr. Drezek and supporting the student's mental health needs. Thank you for everything.

Board members thanked her for everything she has done.

b. **Lori Gates - Wreaths Across America**

Madam Chair welcomed Lori Gates and Pam Townsend to the Board meeting.

Mrs. Gates stated the Wreaths Across America convoy will pass by all of the schools in Enfield on December 15th and will make one stop at the Enfield Town Green. The truck drivers asked if they could come to Enfield again. The last convoy was done in 2018. She started being involved with this when they first came to Enfield in 2010 with a presentation at Edgar H. Parkman school. She thanked Mr. Drezek for everything he has done and this year our plan is a little different than in the past. We are so lucky they are stopping in Enfield. This year they have 4 Walmart trucks and several safety vehicles. Three trucks will go to Arlington, VA and one smaller truck will go to Shanksville, PA. There will be a ceremony at St. Patrick's Cemetery on Saturday, December 18th at noon to lay wreaths on Veteran's headstones. Across the country they will lay 2.4 million wreaths on veteran's cemeteries. There are 3,136 locations that will hold this wreath laying ceremony on the same day and time. This year's motto is "Live up to their

Legacy”.

Mrs. Townsend stated it is an honor and privilege to be part of this. It takes a lot of people to make this happen. She also thanked Mr. Drezek, Chief Fox Sgt. Meyer and the Mayor. Each wreath represents each branch of the military and this year we are including the space force. Saturday's event will be held rain or shine. She thanked the PTO's for fundraising for the wreaths. This town is truly amazing and very supportive of our servicemen and women.

Mrs. Gates added Enfield celebrates their Veteran's. She loves to honor and remember our Veteran's. It is great when the kids understand why we are doing this. You are making connections with our youth by passing the torch to them. We are lucky to have such support going into this holiday season. Thank you for all of your help.

Mr. Hamre thanked them for what you are doing. It is amazing to see this and the tremendous support that is given to our Veteran's. He has visited several Veteran Cemeteries for the wreath laying ceremonies. This is one heck of an undertaking. Thank you both for what you are doing, and you are living up to the motto.

Mrs. Cushman thanked them for being here. She was deeply touched by reading what Wreaths Across America does by creating opportunities to connect the generations with hope. She thinks of our youth as the generation of hope by passing on inspirational stories from our Veterans to the leaders of the future. This is very powerful. She is curious about if our Veterans would be part of the ceremonies in non-Covid times to share their stories.

Mrs. Gates stated one year at Parkman, we hosted some Veterans in the library so the students could meet and talk with them. It was very well received. There is a lot involved to do this at a school. This is something she would like to revisit again because the students have a one-to-one experience. Meeting a Veteran is different than reading about it in a history book. It makes a lasting impression with the students.

Mr. Unghire admires what you are both doing. Where does the convoy start from? Mrs. Gates stated it starts in Harrington, Maine from the Worcester Wreath Company. This started 30 years ago when they had a truck load of extra wreaths. Mr. Worcester decided to bring them to Arlington, VA for the Veterans. This all started from an idea and has turned into this giant undertaking.

Mrs. Townsend added the truck drivers are all volunteers. These wreaths are being moved from Maine to Virginia, to California and all over. This is an amazing feat accomplished with the help from many volunteers.

Mrs. Gates stated several of the truck drivers still contact her. They loved coming to Enfield. This is a big deal. You need to see this to truly understand it. Mrs. Townsend is a retired Sergeant Major. The Shanksville truck means a lot to her. She was at the Pentagon on 9/11. The trees on the property in Harrington, Maine have the dog tags of the Veteran's. You can ask to have dog tags placed on a tree. Every three years, the trees are tipped, and they make the wreaths and move the dog tags up on the tree for three more years of growth. Her late husband's dog tags are on a tree in Maine. She knows that her husband's tree is making wreaths to be placed on a Veteran's grave somewhere is heartwarming. This program is very personal to her.

Mr. Ryder thanked both Mrs. Gates and Mrs. Townsend. You will always have our continued assistance behind this project, and he is looking forward to seeing the convoy. This is something we all look forward to. He has been to all of the Enfield convoys. He will remind the PTO's to refresh for next year. We all enjoy promoting this event. This is another good thing we do each year. Thank you.

Mrs. Acree asked if a wreath is placed on every grave site in Arlington, VA. Mrs. Townsend stated if they have enough wreaths, yes. Last year they laid them on all of the graves. If they don't, they will place them in sections.

Mrs. Gates stated we have 1,700 Veteran's at St. Patrick's Cemetery and a total of 5,000 in Enfield.

Mrs. Townsend stated we have about 2,000 wreaths. She thanked the small business and everyone that participated in fundraising. The Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Little League, Home Depot and the CT Valley Northmen will help us. They are thrilled to be part of this. It is going to be a great day.

Mrs. Gates added first responders will be at each of the schools.

Madam Chair stated she attended the events that were held at Parkman, and they were amazing. The ceremonies change you. The entire program is great. Watching the students reading their poems and singing songs is amazing. Honoring the gold star families is so poignant and hearing taps is very emotional. She has seen the truck drivers and how touched they are. They are just happy being there. This is a wonderful way to honor our Veterans and teach our children. This is another way for our town to come together. We definitely need more of this, especially after last year. She cannot thank you enough for everything you have done to assist with this event. Thank you, Mrs. Townsend for your service.

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

a. EPS Update

Mr. Drezek provided the Board with an update regarding the Screen and Stay initiative being more involved than we anticipated. We are doing whatever we can to get the kids back in school. A lot of our students do not qualify for this initiative. This initiative applies to only being a close contact in a school building. This is just one of the steps. We still will conduct contact tracing. You will also need to be properly masked at all times during the exposure. Certain requirements must be met in order for the Screen and Stay initiative. We have posted information about this on our website in our school newsletters. A lot of parents are questioning this.

Mr. Drezek reviewed our current numbers in Enfield, and they are high. He has consulted with our local health department, and we are looking at everything while trying to keep everyone safe and our kids in school. In person learning is best. We will reassess this at the start of the new year. Winter sports programs are also being reviewed. We have a plan, and he is not sure if things will change. We are doing what is best for our kids and know that keeping them in school is important. Communication from your child's principal will be coming out shortly. We will need to tighten our belts. Students can get tested weekly for those that are not eligible to receive a vaccine. We do not conduct the testing. There is also a testing shortage. We are doing everything we can. Everything is subject to change.

b. iPad Update - as presented

c. Christmas Break - as presented

8. AUDIENCES

Madam Chair read a prepared statement about expectations for audience participation. For now, we will continue to utilize a 3-minute time limit for audience participation.

Matt Schmitt, Bigelow Commons - Mr. Schmitt stated he is here as an Enfield resident. He is concerned with the state mandate and data. He submitted an FOI request about data. This Board does not have a mask policy or a policy about mask breaks. We are looking for cooperation from the Board. Our enrollment numbers have declined. We need to work together. Solutions are needed and they should be transparent like other districts. You highlight the positives but are missing the mark regarding masks. Please unmask our kids.

Rob Anderson, Bass Drive - Mr. Anderson stated he is a taxpayer and has the right to speak at these meetings even if he doesn't have any children in our schools. He will not be bullied by anyone. He urged us to stop feeding our kids with fear and let them be kids. Hate draws a divide and does no good to anyone. This is not the military, and we will ask questions. When you are a soldier you will do what you are told. We all need to work together. We will not silence our kids. Activism and politics should be kept

out of our schools. Checks and balances are needed to offer a balanced education for our children. We are not promoting fake news about masks.

Amanda Marquez, Hoover Lane - Mrs. Marquez asked about how many students and staff have tested positive. She asked about mask breaks. She asked about how the funds will be spent that school system will receive. We have been here for the past 5 months expressing our concerns to you. She asked about the Board policies and if you following them. We need to work together. Our concerns are being ignored. She will continue to advocate for our children. She previously spoke about critical thinking as well as others. The Board believes in critical thinking and problem solving. If you choose to wear a mask than do so and those that don't won't.

Kim Anderson, Bass Drive - Mrs. Bass stated the Ellington Board of Education has approved a letter to the Commissioner of Education about masks and has posted it on their website. Their Board is concerned about vaccinated students and an opportunity for violating student privacy rights. A welcoming culture is needed for all students. We seem to keep doing the same thing over and over in Connecticut. Enfield should stand along by Ellington and by your mission statement. She hopes this is something Enfield will do and be pro-active.

Ryan Schuetz, Church Street - Mr. Schutz stated Ellington has taken a stand and he hopes that Enfield will do the same. Masks and vaccines do not work. He has spoken to the Board about the data. These mandates are not working. We must wakeup to these controlling agendas. Please do the right thing and unmask our kids.

9. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Hamre thanked everyone involved in the Wreaths Across America program. This is very personal to him. His brother is laid to rest in Arlington, VA. Their memories continue on. Before they lay the wreaths down, they say their name. All the Veteran's names are read outloud.

Mr. Hamre attended the JFK PTO meeting tonight. He appreciates everything Mr. Ryder does for our PTO's and the website information. JFK sponsored purchasing wreaths for the ceremony and they also have the That's My Brick fundraiser that is still going on. These events support the JFK PTO. Thank you.

Mrs. Acree wished everyone a Merry Christmas, Happy Holiday and enjoy your time with your families. She looks forward to seeing you all in 2022 and trying to resolve these issues. Thank you.

Mrs. Cushman stated she has reflected on being a board member and finding her voice. She never expected to be here in Council Chambers. Many residents have come to voice their concerns and opinions to us. This chamber is a safe place to express your opinions. Your voices are being heard. There are things that are happening behind the scenes in our committees.

Mr. Unghire dittoed comments made by Mrs. Acree, Mrs. Cushman and Mr. Hamre. He thanked everyone that has spoken tonight. These are important issues. He is also aware of what Ellington is doing. We also need to address this.

Mr. Unghire stated he reached out to Mr. Dague, Mrs. Marr and Ms. Jefferson about our robotics program. He has also reached out to Mrs. Carroll about our special education department to learn about the programs being offered.

Mr. Unghire wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to students, staff and residents. He looks forward to 2022 and getting things done. Thank you.

Mrs. Pickett stated she would like to reflect on the December 14th and the 26 lives that were lost nine years ago. Nationally and locally there are concerns regarding safety and mental health issues.

Mrs. Pickett wished everyone a Happy Holiday. This season holds many special cultural celebrations.

There are many special holidays that are happening throughout the year like Hanukkah, Kwanza, Three Kings Day and New Year's. This is a special time of the year.

Mrs. Pickett would like to hear from our high school students at some point about the voice for change effort. Students are given a chance to submit proposal about how to spend the \$20K in their schools to enhance academics, support mental health, connect with communities and technology use. She would love to hear what our kids have come up with. Our kids have an amazing opportunity to come up with some creative solutions that we could all learn from.

Mrs. Pickett thanked Enfield's Congregation Church for the blessing they offered last Sunday. It was the same night as the Torchlight Parade. The Torchlight Parade is such a great event. She also attended the Lego Robotics event on Saturday. This was awesome to see what the student's projects were.

Mrs. Pickett stated Parkman held a PTO Vendor Fair and their next PTO meeting will be held on December 15th in library at 6:30 PM. They will hold a fund raiser event at Moe's on January 18th from 5:30 - 8 PM. Enfield Street will hold their next PTO meeting on January 12th.

Mrs. Pickett thanked Mr. Drezek for discussing the Covid protocols regarding Screen and Stay. She knows the guidelines are shifting constantly. She would like us to give these instructions to the parents when their child has been deemed as a close contact. It is challenging as a parent when your child needs to quarantine. Seeing the information would help. She is also looking for a creative solution regarding testing. She knows there is a shortage. We are participating in the voluntary testing program. She is not sure if there is a way to expand on this for students. This is a state run program, and she is sure you do not have answers for this. She would also like to see us list testing and vaccine locations. Sharing as much information we can is extremely helpful.

Mrs. Pickett stated the State Department of Education and CCMC are holding a webinar on the most up to date medical information to help keep our kids safe, healthy and in school. This information can be found at SERC.info@housecall1216. This webinar will be held on December 16th.

Mrs. Pickett stated this is a concerning time. We have had our own behavioral and safety concerns like what is happening across the state. She is hopeful with the funding we receive and support from the Board, we can address the proactive work to support our students and staff by creating a safe and nurturing environment including social and emotional learning work to help our kids.

Mrs. Pickett stated Mrs. Haughey and her paths crossed before she ever lived in Enfield professionally. She heard about the great work she was doing here in Enfield regarding substance misuse and prevention. She is an asset in our community, and she just wanted to thank her for everything she has done professional and personally.

Mrs. Pickett stated Kite has their community resource guide and has posted it on their website. There is a lot of great information listed. They will hold their next meeting on January 5th. They are also holding a dive into diversity event. Please check out their website at enfieldkite.org. Thank you.

Mr. Ryder stated all our schools are very excited about the Wreaths Across America convoy. He is hoping that the Enfield community will also come out for this event. Eli Whitney is still holding their 12 days of raffles. The CT Invention Convention is starting up again. A lot of our K-5 schools will be holding spirit wear days. JFK is also doing something. This information can all be found on our enfieldpto.com website. We will have an early release day on December 23rd. Eli Whitney will hold an assembly and a Bingo event. They will also hold another PJ Day.

Mr. Ryder wished everyone a Merry Happy Holidays to everyone and a Happy New Year.

Mr. Ryder stated we have 2 Enfield students that attended Suffield Vo-Ag and they were awarded the American Degree. This is the highest degree students can earn through the FFA. They will be presented this award on December 21st at 10:30 AM at Suffield Vo-Ag.

Mr. Ryder stated a couple of us are wearing white tonight in support of the Enfield Girls Basketball White Out Day. They will hold their first basketball game tonight. He wished them good luck.

Mr. Ryder stated our PJ Day that was held on December 10th was quite successful. This event is dear to so many of us. Our goal was \$7,777.77 and we raised over \$9K. He is very proud of everyone that participated. We are the #2 fundraising group in our State. Coventry was #1. This is the town that started this event. This event continues to grow each year just like the Wreaths Across American program. He thanked all of the groups that participated.

Madam Chair attended the First Lego League Robotics, and it was such a great event. The imaginations of our students are amazing.

Madam Chair also wished the EHS Girls Basketball team good luck tonight. She agrees that PJ Day was another great event. She Thanked Mr. Ryder for everything he has done for this event. We all know families and children that benefit from this. This event means a lot to everyone.

Madam Chair attended the Torchlight Parade and Carol Sing. It was another amazing event. This event definitely put you in the Christmas spirit. EHS Safe Grad Auction did great again

this year. She thanked the Board for donating a basket. This event is run on donations and the small businesses are amazing and gave so generously. Enfield High is also having a spirit wear day.

Madam Chair stated this is the anniversary for the Sandy Hook tragedy and this is always heavy on our hearts. She bumped into one of our teachers and her students are going to do one kind act of kindness. This is a nice way to commemorate and remember the victims of Sandy Hook. This is a hard day for all of us.

Madam Chair wished Board members, students, staff and families a safe and healthy Merry Christmas, Happy Holiday and however you celebrate with your family and friends. She wishes everyone a better 2022. We will let the new year come in quietly. Thank you.

Mr. LeBlanc arrived at 8:30 PM.

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS : None

11. NEW BUSINESS :

a. Action if any, regarding John F. Kennedy Calendar Modification

Mr. Drezek reviewed the information with the Board about modifying the JFK calendar. He has confirmed this information with the JFK administration and Gilbane. The Board has the authority to waive the 181st student day. He is recommending that December 22nd be an early release day for JFK at 11:00 AM without lunch; December 23rd is a regularly planned early release day for all K-12 students and on January 3rd only JFK students will not attend school. JFK will attend 180 school days and the Board will need to waive the 181st student day. June 16th will be the last school day for the entire district except for JFK. JFK students will need to make up this day. JFK students will resume attending school on January 4th.

Mr. LeBlanc apologized for being late. He has heard some of the parent concerns about this. The students have already missed enough school already. This will take away another in person day of learning for the students. The other concern has to do with the communication about this. He knows this was placed in the JFK newsletter and Mr. Drezek spoke about this at our last Board meeting. The parents were upset about not getting enough information about this.

Mr. Drezek stated he has not received any complaints about this. The communication from Dr. Berrios was this was being considered. He does not have the authority to make this change. The only person that can alter the calendar is the Board. He can change a day to a half day but that will not work for

Gilbane to get everyone transitioned into the new wing. The original proposal concerned him because of the amount of days Gilbane was requesting. We tried to find a compromise that best suited the needs of everyone. This request is not uncommon when dealing with school construction projects. We dealt with this at EHS.

Mr. Hamre asked if there are any projected changes that might affect the school schedule? Mr. Drezek stated not that he is aware of or any other concerns at this time. The reality is we don't know what might happen. During the summer we ran into problems with rain that impacted the roof. At this time, there is nothing that we are anticipating.

Mr. Hamre moved, seconded by Mrs. Pickett that the Enfield Board of Education approves making Wednesday, December 22nd an early release day for JFK students only at 11:00 AM without lunch; Thursday, December 23rd is a planned K-12 early release day with lunch; Monday, January 3rd only JFK students will not attend school; and that we waive the 181st day for JFK students only.

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

12. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Curriculum - Mrs. Pickett reported the Curriculum committee met on December 9th. She was quite impressed with what was being presented regarding the program of study changes. We approved the proposed changes and will be adding state mandated Black Latino studies elective. Many revisions were made to the high school mathematics, course names and prerequisite courses. We will be adding a health sciences and foundation of health sciences electives. We encourage families and students to discuss the program of studies with their school counselors. We are excited with the work moving forward. Our next meeting will be held on January 20th.

Madam Chair also added she thought the Curriculum meeting was great. The two new health science classes they will be offering are for the students that do not want to spend a lot of time in college because of the number of certificate programs our community colleges are offering. Adding these 2 half credit courses for exploratory health science is good news for our EHS students.

Finance - Dr. Calnen reported the Finance committee met on December 6th. We will review financial reports later this evening. We discussed the TAG program and the funds received from the estate of Abraham Simcovitz that supports projects for students with extraordinary abilities. We will be revisiting this with the investment company (Wolf Financial Group) to discuss our options at our next meeting. This will just be the start. We will need to meet with the members of the Curriculum and Policy committees to determine how the program can be improved or expanded in light of available funding. We will look at if the project should be limited to just JFK, determining student eligibility, and should expenditures be limited to one project per year. Our next meeting will be held on January 10th.

Policy - Mr. Ryder reported the Policy Committee met on December 7th. We finalized some of the policies we received from CABA and will place them on our next Board meeting agenda for a first reading. We also received several additional policies from CABA to review. Our next meeting will be held on January 18th.

Leadership - Madam Chair reported we are in the process of scheduling Board Leadership meetings. We cancelled tonight's Leadership meeting so the Board could hold a special meeting.

Joint Facility - Madam Chair reported the Joint Facility Committee meetings will resume after the first of the year.

JFK Building - Mr. Ryder reported that JFK Building committee members meet on Thursday. At our last meeting, we were able to see the progress that has been made. We will have an updated power point presentation. You can check the website and their Facebook page to view the progress. The Thursday meeting might be postponed until the first of the year unless there is pressing business that needs to be addressed.

Joint Security - Mr. Ryder reported the Joint Security Committee was supposed to meet on December 1st. The meeting was cancelled. Our next meeting will be held March 2nd. He believes we will meet before March 2nd.

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

Youth Mental Health - Madam Chair reported this committee is also slated to meet in March also.

13. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Madam Chair stated, we will postpone approving the Special and Regular meeting minutes for November 23, 2021, until the next meeting.

14. APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS AND PAYROLL

For the Month of October 2021

Mrs. Pickett moved, seconded by Mr. LeBlanc that the Enfield Board of Education accepts the superintendent's certification for:

- The month of October 2021 total expenditures amount to \$6,044,169.85 broken down between payroll totaling \$4,468,442.10 and other accounts totaling \$1,575,727.75; 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.

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

- The month of October the total Grant and Head Start expenditures amount to \$721,237.24, broken down between payroll totaling \$466,968.19 and other accounts totaling \$254,269.05 and;
- All payment 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 - None

16. EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

17. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hamre moved, seconded by Mr. Ryder to adjourn the Regular Meeting of December 14, 2021.

All ayes, motion passed unanimously. Meeting stood adjourned at 8:47 PM.

Jonathan LeBlanc
Secretary
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary