

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 27, 2024**

A regular meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held in Council Chambers on February 27, 2024.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 7:19 PM by Chairwoman Riley.
2. **INVOCATION OR MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Tina LeBlanc
3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Philip Kober
4. **FIRE EVACUATION ANNOUNCEMENT:**
5. **ROLL CALL:**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jean Acree, Dr. Gerald Calnen, Janet Cushman, Peter Jonaitis, Philip Kober, Tina LeBlanc, Amanda Pickett, Scott Ryder and Charlotte Riley

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Andrew B. Longey, Assistant Superintendent; Student Representatives Kayla Surprenant and Isabella Dinnald

6. **BOARD GUEST(S)**

a. Registrar of Voters

Both Mr. Louis Fiore and Mr. Tom Kienzler our Registrar of Voters in Enfield, addressed the Board regarding concerns for safety with the upcoming Primary Election that will be held on Tuesday, April 2, 2024 at some of our schools in Enfield. They are especially concerned with the traffic flow at both Henry Barnard and Enfield Street for bus and parent drop-off and pickup times. They showed pictures of the traffic flow at Henry Barnard that will interfere with the 75 ft. State Statute that is currently in place. They feel the traffic flow at the Annex and JFK would be okay. We have held primary's in the past, but this one is different since there will be voting for both Democrat and Republican candidates. School will be in session on April 2nd, which is another concern for safety. The voting locations for a primary and State elections need to be held at the same location. We do not have enough time to make any changes with voting locations at this time. We have discussed making a change in the future, but it would need to be approved by the Secretary of the State for any future elections or special elections. They urged Board members to close schools on April 2, 2024.

Mrs. Pickett stated if we do not close schools on April 2nd, voters will be in the buildings at the same time as the students are there. Would there be additional police or safety personnel presence?

Mr. Fiore stated there would not be any additional safety personnel. This would be something they would address with Mr. Crabtree for additional internal supports at polling sites. If school is not closed, we would discuss this with Chief Fox for additional police support at Henry Barnard to address the traffic situation on Shaker Road.

Mr. Kienzler added that would help with the traffic flow on Shaker Road only. It would not address the backup within 75 ft. of the building where the voters will be entering. Mr. Fiore added no vehicles will be permitted in this area at Henry Barnard.

Mr. Ryder added even though you are not concerned with the traffic flow at JFK, we would have a concern with additional people in the building along with the students. Mr. Kienzler stated in the past, we have closed off sections in the buildings to keep students from the public for security reasons. Mr. Fiore added we have dealt with this in the past and were able to keep the public away from the students.

Mr. Ryder stated the schools full program of daily schedules would be impacted by this. ERfC's afterschool programs would also be impacted.

Mr. Kober agreed it would make sense for the Board to take action to close school on April 2nd.

Mr. Longey added our students go to school for 181 days. They only need to attend school by State law for 180 days. If the Board waives a day, it will not impact the last day of school. April 2nd would still be a workday for our staff. Only the students would not attend school on that day.

Chairwoman Riley asked for additional signage to be placed at Henry Barnard about voter parking on the right side. Most people are parking in front of the school and walk the distance to the voting entrance on the side of the school.

Both Mr. Kienzler and Mr. Fiore thanked the staff and principals for their help on voting days having them park away from the voting side of the buildings. Mr. Kienzler spoke about early voting that will take place on March 26, 27, 28 and 30 from 10 AM – 6 PM only at Enfield Town Hall in the Enfield Room only.

Chairwoman Riley thanked them for coming.

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

a. Student Representative Update

EHS Student Representative Kayla Surprenant reported EHS senior Keonta Crawford is State Champion for Wrestling in his weight class. He will compete this weekend in Rhode Island for the New England Championship. Spring sports will begin on March 16th. The EHS track team is holding a fundraiser event for tuxedo rentals. Buzz Robotics will compete on March 2nd and 3rd at Hartford Public High School. The Rhode Island competition will be held on March 15th & 16th. They will also hold a pasta supper on March 21st. March is Music in our Schools month. The Enfield Chorus Festival will be held on March 16th and the Enfield String Music Festival on March 22nd. Both events will be held at EHS in the Auditorium.

EHS Student Representative Izzy Dinnald reported Junior SAT day will be held on March 22nd. There will be a talent show on March 15th. Junior Prom tickets are on sale, and it will be held on March 28th at the Log Cabin. Grades close for progress reports tomorrow. We held the Blues and Beyond Symposium on March 15th. Mr. Allegro is hosting Black History month during Eagle Block. The EHS Band and Orchestra played at the Springfield Thunderbirds Hockey game. We just added composting bins to our recycling efforts at EHS.

b. Read Across America Day – as presented

c. EPS Update - None

8. AUDIENCES

Chairwoman Riley read a prepared statement regarding audience participation. We will allow 4 minutes for each audience member to speak.

Rob Anderson, Bass Drive – Mr. Anderson feels the Board should conduct a search to replace Mr. Drezek who is resigning. If Mr. Longey is the best candidate after the search that would be that. Audience members are supposed to refrain from personalities and Board members should do the same. He was offended by comments that were made by a Board member at the last meeting about obsessed people, transgender, PJ day and videos.

John Power, Laurie Drive – Mr. Power congratulated Mr. Drezek on his new position. He has been a great administrator and has worked right along with our principals and staff. Mr. Drezek and Mr. Longey have hired some of the best teachers. The Board has been presented with a reasonable budget. Our kids need support. We are still working to get them on the right path. He knows this is a tough budget year. Mr. Drezek has always put our kids first.

Angella Foss, Crescent Beach Drive – Mrs. Foss distributed a document to the Board about past budget allocations. She congratulated Mr. Drezek for his new position. He has been an amazing Superintendent. She has spoken previously about tax increases received along with the Town and school budgets and allocations. She has been purchasing paper for her students. Our ELL students that do not understand English are expected to take SBAC testing and perform proficiently. We really need a much larger increase for our budget. Tell the Town Council to fully support our budget request of 16%.

Kelsey McGuire-Bruce, Neelans Road - Mrs. McGuire-Bruce stated education has not changed for the good. Our kids are what keep teachers going and we hold onto the good moments to keep us here. Burnout is real. Our budget last year just maintained our needs. We are not adding anything new. We currently have a frozen budget and teachers are paying for a lot out of our own pockets. Our SPED teachers are serving twice as many students. We are losing our para's, tutors and teachers to other districts that are paying more. How much longer can this continue for just maintaining. We need basic supports. We will be looking at cuts next. Education needs to be funded appropriately.

Nathan VanMeter, Pease Street – Mr. VanMeter thanked Mr. Drezek for what you have done for our administrators and teachers. He teaches science at JFK. As part of the ecology unit, the students have learned about plant growth, planted seeds, watched them grow and recorded the data. We have done this for the past two years and the students level of growth has amazed him. From this study, some students wants to grow their own gardens and care for their own plants. The more seeds educators can plant, the more our students will find passions that with help them to grow. We need financial backing from the district that supports formative educational experiences. How you vote will answer that question.

Justin Rodzen, Kalish Avenue – Mr. Rodzen is a teacher at JFK, a parent and taxpayer in Enfield. He is proud of Enfield and understands balancing the budget. Cutting our budget will have negative impacts. He came here from teaching in Springfield. Giving pink slips for non-tenured teachers is high stakes gamble. You will lose quality teachers that will go to other districts that are paying higher salaries. This is concerning because our students will still be here. Will we have quality teachers here next year? Pink slips will drive away talented teachers. We need the best teachers to teach our children. Budget cuts should not affect the classrooms. He congratulated Mr. Drezek and urged the Board to fully support the budget.

Leah Munson, Jessie Lane, Broad Brook – Ms. Munson is a teacher at JFK. She also left another district to come teach in Enfield. Pink slips will make us look elsewhere. She wants to teach in Enfield but if we are not wanted we will leave. She urged Board members to remember your mission statement. We need resources. Teachers are dealing with a paper shortage. We are sharing documents. Class sizes will increase with budget cuts and experience will be lost.

Kate Fawthrop, Michael Lane, Suffield – Mrs. Fawthrop is a teacher at JFK. She grew up in Enfield, attended school here and graduated from Enrico Fermi. She returned back to Enfield to teach and taught on a cart. One of our former teachers said to her remember why you do

this. It is because we love to teach. Remember why you are here as Board members. She also spoke about the mission statement and urged Board members to remember it. Thank you for your support.

Emily Hulevitch, Cutter Lane – Ms. Hulevitch is here about the Armed Security Guards. Her concern is the Town Council can put money for guards and not for our budget. Having armed guards may cause fear. Use the money to enhance our services for a safe environment including training sessions and anti-bullying programs so we can be prepared. The safety of our schools is important but using this money differently would enhance student learning and safety. Thank you.

Bill Delaney, South Windsor. Mr. Delaney is a JFK teacher and the ETA Vice President. He thanked Mr. Drezek for his leadership. He appreciates everything you have done for our students and staff. You are deeply respected, and he wished him luck. He thanked the chair for your leadership and allowing non-resident employees to speak. The budget presented is not extravagant. If you care about our community, please support the budget fully. Our teachers are leaving to go to higher paying districts. We are trying to give our students the best education we can. Funding matters. He urged them to listen to what the teachers are saying. We are here every day. Any cuts made will be devastating to this community. Please do not defund education in Enfield.

Daniel Girard, Edgewood Drive – Mrs. Girard is a parent and friend of many teachers in Enfield. She thanked Board for what you do every day making our schools better. She urged the Board to make a decision with both sides in mind. You have hard decisions to make. Are armed guards the way we need to go? We trust you will make the right decision. We were only given 24-hour notice about this item. We had armed guards in 2011 for 2 years. Our children have many high needs. Her child has an IEP. We need more paras, counselors and staff. The needs of our schools should come first before guards. Focus on education. When you campaigned for the Board you all supported our schools, please remember this.

Amy Guzzie, Suffield - Parkman Teacher – Ms. Guzzie also attended Enfield schools and graduated from Enrico Fermi. She knows Enfield and our potential. She thanked Mr. Drezek for his service here. She has worked with several of our Superintendent's. He was very approachable and has done what has been best for our kids. He will be missed. She also urged Board members to remember why are you doing this and support the budget for our kids and staff. Please make a positive difference that will not negatively affect our kids. We have 4 police officers and SRO's in our schools now. They are here daily interacting with our students and families. Armed guards cannot deal with our children or family members that are in crises. An armed guard will call for a police officer to assist. Thank you.

Mr. Hamre, New King Street – Mr. Hamre stated Mr. Drezek has been an exceptional superintendent. He was clear with everyone about the impacts of Covid with our students learning. Our numbers prove this. Transgender policies have been discussed previously. He spoke about a nonbinary student that is no longer alive. Cutting resources, support and staff should not be made. He hopes the Board will maintain the budget requested without making any cuts. Asking for an increase would not hurt. Having armed guards for safety is a concern that has been rushed once again. Our teachers are here begging for their jobs. He wished more parents were here tonight. What you do as a Board will affect generations to come.

Jonathan Grande, Spruceland Road – Mr. Grande thanked Board members for everything they do on both sides of the aisle. He agrees the budget is important to parents and they should be here to talk about it. He urged Board members to present thick budget books with detail like we used to get with each line item. This is the largest budget for the Town. Statistics are online. He did not see where it was posted online. He spoke about budget increases over the past 10 years. The Town has invested in our schools. He thanked our teachers for everything

they are doing. You have a bargaining unit that can fight for you. The residents of Enfield do not have a union to represent them. Thank you.

Amanda Marquez, Hoover Lane – Mrs. Marquez stated we have been given an opportunity to select a new superintendent. You need to identify the criteria you are looking for. Certain requirements are needed to be a superintendent. We did not conduct a search in 2017. She urged the Board to not make the same mistake now. Be open and transparent when hiring our next superintendent. Changing policies takes several meetings. The superintendent decision should not be made quickly. Old Saybrook had 32 candidates apply for the superintendent position and choose from. Our district deserves the best candidate. She urged the Board to conduct a national search. Our district deserves this.

Sheila Munro, Stacy Lane – Mrs. Munro stated our teachers are all about our students and we all care about them too. The decision for the next superintendent will affect our students. We need a problem solver, and we need to get out of being an Alliance District. Our attendance has dropped. She thanked the Town Council for making our schools safer for our students and staff. Sandy Hook families would have loved more security. We need to fully vet applicants for the superintendent position, so we get the best of the best. Ridiculing posts on Facebook should not be made, focus on your job here. You and I both know someone that would be upset with those comments. Is there a dress code for students and how is it implemented? A police officer with a cruiser with blinking lights should be placed at the top of the entrance to Enfield High on Enfield street before and after school. What has this Board accomplished?

Maureen Griffin, Abbe Road – Mrs. Griffin urged Board members to not change the amount of time for people to speak. Tonight is an exception. The Town Council should not tell the Board how to spend the money or micromanage them. Having armed guards in our schools will not limit violence. We need more secure schools, not more guns. This will waste funds. Talking about Sandy Hook families is disrespectful. The money should be used to support mental health. Our teachers are telling us why they are leaving. Teachers came to us because we value them. They also need to be paid better. Who will mentor our new staff? Please vote to fund education. The taxpayers have a vote. Let's keep administration that values our teachers and students and provide the support they need.

Lewis Martin, Jackson Road – Mr. Martin is a teacher at JFK. He stated what teachers do is important. We are involved with emotional learning throughout a student's education. We guide them with social interactions. He recently helped a band student with his tie because he did not know how to do it. These are just a few of the little things we do. If class sizes grow because the budget gets cut, it will be harder for teachers to connect with the students. We all want the best education for our students. It will impact their emotional and educational growth. It is his responsibility to provide our kids with better than the bare minimum. Please consider fully supporting the budget.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE RULES AND MOVE AN ITEM ON THE AGENDA:

Mr. Kober moved, seconded by Mr. Jonaitis to move Item #11a Action if any, Waiving the 181st School Day for EPS Students up on the agenda.

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

ITEM #11a. ACTION IF ANY, WAIVING THE 181ST SCHOOL DAY FOR EPS STUDENTS

Mr. Kober moved, seconded by Mrs. LeBlanc that the Enfield Board of Education Waives the 181st School Day for EPS Students for the current academic calendar canceling student attendance for April 2, 2024.

Discussion:

Mr. Ryder stated this change will not affect the last day of school, which is Wednesday, June 12th. That is our scheduled 181st day of school.

Mrs. Pickett asked if our calendar will be updated online.

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

9. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mrs. LeBlanc thanked the teachers that spoke tonight about your feelings. She also thanked Mr. Girard for speaking tonight. She would love to talk with Mrs. Foss about your handout and the \$1.4 million you spoke about. Mrs. LeBlanc also shared information about budget increases from 2011-12 and up. This information can be found on the town website.

Mrs. LeBlanc shared about her mother's cancer diagnosis and how she was pregnant when she died. Her daughter was named after her mother. Her mom was the one that held their family together. The day her mom died is the day she first heard her baby's heartbeat. Cancer affects many people and families. Please do not tell me that my family would be ashamed of me. She had her mother for 24 years. Some children have their mother for less time. She would love to share with you what her siblings have said to her about your comments.

Mrs. LeBlanc thanked Mrs. Cushman for the kind words and notes she gave her about my mother. Your notes mean the world to me. Thank you.

Mrs. Pickett thanked staff members for speaking and everyone else that spoke. She also advocates for our teachers and students. She is hopeful for Enfield. She agrees that Mr. Drezek will be missed. It is a loss, but she is hopeful that our next superintendent truly understands our needs.

Mrs. Pickett added the ETA has a fundraiser event that will go towards a scholarship for our students. Report cards will be coming out soon. She provided an update about Enfield Street picture day, special someone dance and upcoming Invention Convention. She thanked the staff involved in all of these wonderful events. She also thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting.

Mr. Kober stated as a Board it is our duty for our efficiencies, responsiveness, transparency and fiduciary responsibility. We all agree that any budget cuts should not affect the classrooms. We need to look at administration and operation costs. Several teachers spoke about their love for teaching and are here for selfless service. We are looking at making difficult decisions and some of them are quick to jump ship.

Mr. Kober asked via the Chair to the Superintendent to find out about the paper shortage and where the disconnect is coming from.

Mr. Kober stated the Enfield Public Schools approved budget for \$95K included grants per the State.

Mrs. Acree stated Prudence Crandall will also celebrate Read Across America next week. She provided an update about Crandall and Barnard's spirit week, teacher raffle, and book fair. She urged students to dress to impress for spring pictures on Monday March 4th.

Mrs. Acree also congratulated Mr. Drezek on his new post. She thanked Mrs. Hulevitch for her comments about mental health and its causes.

Mr. Ryder provided an update about Eli Whitney and their picture day, Leap Day assembly, Math Iditarod challenge, Read Across America, family engagement week that was rescheduled and will now be held on Tuesday, March 5th. The Whitney PTO meeting will be held on March 6th.

Mr. Ryder added that Principal Flanagan has brought free programs to Eli Whitney. This week grade 5 students participated in the Space Program that was provided by the Pettit Foundation. They will also partner with the Buddy Bisson program again and grade 3 students will go to Dinosaur State Park. Another partnership provided students with 400 Magic Tree House books.

Mr. Ryder wished all our students good luck in the Invention Convention being held this weekend.

Mr. Jonaitis stated he was not at the last Board meeting. He was appalled by what a Board member said. We ask audience members to refrain from personal attacks. This was completely out of line. You do not need to have children in our schools to be concerned about our school system. Saying someone is obsessed is wrong. We are all concerned about our kids. He is not in favor of pajama day either. He would rather they wore sports attire. He supports the reason behind this, and it is commendable. They are not attacking our schools. They are attacking some of our policies and the things being done in our schools. He feels we should refrain from attacking our citizens.

Mr. Jonaitis does not believe we are taking anything away from our kids. Teachers want to be valued and needed. He values our teachers, he taught for 38 years. He loved teaching and value our teachers. No one on this Board is devaluing the need for teachers.

Mr. Jonaitis added the budget process is amazing. We need to do certain things and the State is forcing us to do it. We have a huge Special education population. We have around 1,500 students that have IEP's and 504's. That is larger than Enfield High School population. We have insurance costs that are out of control. We can only control things that the State is not telling us we must do. We need to do as much as we can for our kids with what money we have. Look at the demographics in this town. We have a growing number of students receiving free and reduced lunches, aging population, a large elderly population and we have a poverty problem. People in this town need help. We have a hard time paying for our teachers and we will lose quality teachers. He remembers receiving pink slips as a teacher. It is not easy being a young teacher.

Mr. Jonaitis addressed the comment about defunding the budget. No one is defunding the budget. Your budget is set year to year, and you can't spend less. He is not sure if everyone is in favor of an 8.68% budget increase and does not feel our town can afford it. Enrollment has decreased, but we still have the same number of teachers. Education has changed drastically. We will support our kids as much as we can afford to support them.

Mr. Jonaitis stated Mr. Drezek has been superintendent for 7 years. He would also like to get the thick older version budget books. We need to know where the money is going. Then you make cuts accordingly. You can't touch special education. When he was a teacher, we needed to sign-out for the paper we used.

Mr. Jonaitis feels if you are a resident of Enfield you should be able to speak at meetings and if your not, you do not have the right to speak.

Mr. Jonaitis added the average salary is \$40-\$45K in this town. We are not a rich town. The budget keeps increasing. The town maintains our buildings. Our roofs are leaking. The process to get them repaired is long.

Chairwoman Riley addressed some of the audience comments and stated the 2024-25 Budget has been posted on-line and it lists each department. It was posted the day after it was presented. Our teachers came tonight, and parents didn't. She thanked our teachers for coming. She also asked why is there a paper shortage. We were told there isn't a shortage you just need to order it. There is some miscommunication.

Chairwoman Riley thanked Mount Carmel for hosting Trivia Night for the use of their hall. She thanked the donors. She thanked those that attended. It was a well-attended event.

Chairwoman Riley stated the Invention Convention is being held at JFK on Saturday. Buzz Robotics also has an event being held this weekend at Hartford Public High School. She will forward some videos to the Board they sent her.

Chairwoman Riley attended the Legislative Breakfast and spoke at the Capital along with Mr. Drezek. It was interesting to network. We swung for the fences. We had some really good conversations. She hopes they listen to what was being said about ECS Funding. I guess we will hope for the best and expect the worst.

Chairwoman Riley stated at the last Town Council meeting they passed the solar flashing lights for a sign to be placed on Enfield street but now it is up to the DOT.

Mr. Jonaitis asked why the lights are on at JFK at night?

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

a. Policy Revisions – Second Readings

Policy #9120 Officers of the Board of Education

Mrs. Cushman moved, seconded by Mrs. Pickett that the Enfield Board of Education approves the second reading of Policy #9120 Officers of the Board of Education as presented.

Discussion:

Mr. Jonaitis asked about the changes. Mr. Ryder and Chairwoman Riley stated this is the second reading of this policy and the changes can be found in your packet.

A vote by **roll-call – 8-0-0** motion passed unanimously. Mrs. LeBlanc was missing during the vote.

Policy #9132 Standing Committees

Mrs. Cushman moved, seconded by Mrs. Pickett that the Enfield Board of Education approves the second reading of Policy #9132 Standing Committees as presented.

A vote by **roll-call – 8-0-0** motion passed unanimously. Mrs. LeBlanc was missing during the vote.

Policy #9323 Construction of the Agenda

Mrs. Cushman moved, seconded by Mrs. Pickett that the Enfield Board of Education approves the second reading of Policy #9323 Construction of the Agenda as presented.

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

Policy #9325.43 Participation at Board Meeting by Remote Methods

Mrs. Cushman moved, seconded by Mrs. Pickett that the Enfield Board of Education approves the second reading of Policy #9325.43 Participation at Board Meeting by Remote Methods as presented.

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

11. NEW BUSINESS:

a. Action if any, Waiving the 181st School Day for EPS Students:

This was addressed previously.

b. Policy Revisions – First Readings:

Policy #5111 Kindergarten

Mrs. Cushman moved, seconded by Mr. Kober that the Enfield Board of Education approves the first reading of Policy #5111 Kindergarten as presented.

Discussion:

Mr. Kober stated these changes came from the State regarding the cutoff date for Kindergarten students. This policy is being revised to comply with State Statute. We also added a line about ages of attendance and dropouts.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated we used CABA's policy since the State had not come up with any formal decision.

Mrs. Cushman added that is why we made a reference in the policy. We have maintained the current language from our existing policy. The CABA policy had some redundancy within their policy. We just made a few adjustments to our current policy.

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

Policy #5112 Ages of Attendance/Dropouts

Mrs. Cushman moved, seconded by Mr. Kober that the Enfield Board of Education approves the first reading of Policy #5112 Ages of Attendance/Dropouts with the recommended changes.

Discussion:

Mrs. Pickett asked for clarification. Mr. Kober stated it is the paragraph that starts with "A child who has attained the age of seventeen (17) who has voluntarily terminated enrollment..."

Mrs. Cushman stated this paragraph will be moved down under Dropouts and will be the last paragraph in this section.

Mrs. Pickett stated she is struggling with the dropout language in this policy but supports the policy.

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

Policy #9325.2 Order of Business and Meeting Conduct

Mrs. Cushman moved, seconded by Mr. Kober that the Enfield Board of Education approves the first reading of Policy #9325.2 Order of Business and Meeting Conduct as presented.

Discussion:

Mr. Ryder is okay with the way the policy is written. He questions limiting public audience to 60 minutes in Section 8e and adjourning the meeting in Section 18 from 11 PM to 10 PM. He

raised these concerns at the Policy Meeting. We normally do not have many audience speakers and we rarely have gone past 10:30 PM with past meetings.

Mr. Kober agrees this was discussed and audience participation can be expanded by a majority vote. The goal is to increase efficiency at our meetings.

Mrs. Pickett does not want to limit audience comments. Tonight is a perfect example. Tonight's agenda has many important topics. She understands we can extend the time if needed. She also does not want to limit anyone. She also would like to keep the adjournment time at 10:30 PM. Under #9 to streamline Board member comments, a lot has been added in sections a-f. She feels this is a way to control what we say and infringing on her first amendment rights. She is not okay with how this is written.

Mr. Jonaitis commented on audience participation and anyone that works for the town has union representation. The NEA, CEA, ETA, etc. are supposed to speak for you and will represent you. If you are a teacher and live in Enfield, you are welcome to speak. If you are a teacher and do not live in this town, you should go to your association, and they can speak for you. That is how he feels.

Chairwoman Riley asked from audience members to refrain from making comments.

Mr. Jonaitis added you want to live in a place that is the best for your family. If you teach in this town, but live in another town, you can speak at your own town meetings.

Chairwoman Riley asked the audience members to respect Board members time to speak and to be respectful or we can ask you to leave.

Mr. Jonaitis added this is only his point of view. He is probably the only one on the Board that thinks this way.

Dr. Calnen stated the number of teachers here tonight speaks volumes. It is one thing to have union representation speak but our teachers are working in our schools for the benefit of our students and should be able to speak regarding the budget. They may not live in Enfield, but they will be profoundly affected by it. They have a right to speak.

Mrs. Pickett added the proposal for this policy does not limit audience participation or non-resident staff from speaking.

Mrs. LeBlanc would rather hear from a teacher who works with our kids than someone that doesn't have kids. Our teachers understand what is happening every day. She understands why people have left our town. People are leaving because of the underfunding and taxes are too high. We can't pick and choose.

Mr. Jonaitis agrees that teachers know best about our kids. They work with our kids daily and are getting paid to do a job. He has compassion for our teachers. He feels you need to live in our town in order to speak at our meetings. If you don't live in our town, you should go to the association and express your concerns to them.

Chairwoman Riley welcomes comments. We would have extended audience participation tonight so everyone would have a chance to speak. We are just trying to streamline the meetings.

Mr. Ryder asked for clarifications about extending the meetings. Who can ask for the meeting to be extended? Chairwoman Riley stated any Board member can ask for extensions.

Mr. Ryder added it would be seconded and approved by a majority. Chairwoman Riley added it

can be approved by a simple majority.

Mrs. LeBlanc thanked Mrs. Cushman for her proposal and revisions for these policies and thoughtful conversations about these policies.

A vote by **roll-call – 8-1-0** passed with Mr. Jonaitis in dissent.

Policy #9321 Time, Place and Notification of Meetings

Mrs. Cushman moved, seconded by Mrs. Pickett that the Enfield Board of Education approves the first reading of Policy #9321 Time, Place and Notification of Meetings as presented.

Discussion:

Mr. Kober proposed another amendment to this policy under Adjournment of Meetings to simple majority vote instead of two-thirds vote.

Chairwoman Riley asked for a roll-call vote for Policy #9321 Time, Place and Notification of Meetings as amended.

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

Policy #9325.3 Meeting/Parliamentary Procedures

Mrs. Cushman moved, seconded by Mrs. LeBlanc that the Enfield Board of Education approves the first reading of Policy #9325.3 Meeting/Parliamentary Procedures.

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

c. Discussion and Action if any Regarding the FY2024-25 Budget

Mr. Ryder moved, seconded by Mrs. LeBlanc that the Enfield Board of Education approves the FY2024-25 Budget as presented on February 27th per the Town Charter requirements even though this is still a fluid document with outstanding unknowns from the State.

Discussion:

Mr. Kober stated he is still waiting to receive information from the Superintendent's office pertaining to salaries and the number of employees that he requested back in November. We received the budget 13 days ago and it just lists departments with dollar amounts. It is a thicker booklet than what was given in previous years. The budget we received suppresses line item detail. He will not approve this budget based on the way it was presented. He needs to know where each dollar is going.

Mr. Kober added Board members are fiscally responsible for approving this budget. Central Office has 4 administrator positions, and they make over \$150K each. He would like to review line items further. According to the organizational chart for the district, these 4 individuals do not have any subordinate staff and they do not instruct students. This is an example of something he would like to further review prior to approving the budget. We need to look at each department and line items in order to make reasonable reductions to expenditures we cannot afford. The current proposed budget is 8.68% increase. Looking at 10 year lookbacks, each year the budget has increased. The Federal interest rate is now around 5.3%.

Mr. Kober understands the budget is fluid and there are unknowns. He feels we need to be more stringent with the budget. We campaigned on fiscal responsibility. None of us want our taxes to go up. He will vote against this.

Mrs. Pickett supports the needs based budget. She would like to ask for more. We all have

concerns about our students academic needs and being an Alliance District. Our staff also need support like professional learning, and coaching support. Our kids have many needs that need to be addressed. We have never really truly funded what we actually need. She thanked audience speaker Mrs. McGuire-Bruce for mentioning that we need more than to just maintain. She has asked for a greedy budget. This budget does not bolster support for our students and teachers. Our kids and teachers are begging for help. The public needs to understand this budget is just one piece. The Town Council will make the ultimate decisions that will affect us. The Town Council is willing to make an investment in our security needs without any promise they will fully support our educational needs. We need to address the educational needs of our students first. She will vote yes and hopes to receive more.

Dr. Calnen stated he will also vote for this budget. He worries about 25% of our students have Special Education needs. We can never cut supports to these students even if we wanted to. We are legally obligated to meet their educational needs. We are asking for a bare bones budget increase that must be passed.

Mr. Ryder supports this budget. We no longer have any Covid monies to use and were able to spread those monies as far as we could. That is the reason for the increase. We made this money last as long as we could. He also wishes our budget request were more. We are just maintain our current programs without adding anything. He knows this 8.68% percentage will decrease.

Mr. Jonaitis added we do not print money. He agrees with our teachers, and we all have wants and wishes. The budget is fluid. You need to keep track of how the money is being spent and being used. We need a detailed budget book, and we need to start this process sooner in January. We cannot cut mandated programs. Class sizes is an area we can look at and he does not want to cut any teachers. This is not a desirable option. He does not believe our 8.68% budget increase will pass with the Town Council. We do not have any Federal money left. We did not support Race to the Top when that was proposed. We knew what would happen after the money was gone.

Mrs. LeBlanc wanted to make sure Mr. Jonaitis received a budget book. Mr. Jonaitis said he has it now.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated when she spoke about numbers, that was after the town took over building and grounds. When you look at class sizes, 1 out of every 4 students is a special education student and that impacts class sizes. Our ELL students are expected to test like our students that have spoken English their entire lives and be proficient. Our teachers are under pressure for these students to perform. These families are also struggling and do not speak our language. We need support in our district. We established the Eagle Academy to keep our kids here in Enfield. We are always trying to survive and maintain. We spent our Covid money to support our students by hiring social workers. This money is needed to be spent in a certain way. We also supported some town projects with our funds. She will support this budget and will always support our teachers.

Mrs. Cushman also recognizes the financial needs of our district and the needs of our students including special education students. There has also been a reduction with grants we receive along with the impacts of unfunded mandates. The budget presented by the superintendent outlines our district needs and that it is a fluid document, and this number may be reduced based on our actual insurance needs and when the State budget is passed. There are a lot of unknowns at this time. She knows that our Town leaders are meeting and making every effort to work collaboratively and to do what our town can afford and what is in the best interest of our students. She will support this budget based on this.

Mr. Jonaitis added if you want more money in our budget, he would love to see all the Alliance Schools go to the Statehouse and protest. They need to give us some of the money we need to

run our schools efficiently. It is the State that is doing the damage to us.

Mrs. Acree stated she is also a retired teacher, and she knows what our students need. She will support this budget. The students needs should come first. She understands what our teacher are saying and the stress they are under.

Mrs. Pickett added our administration has always made the budget work with not enough resources. She thanks them for everything they are doing with grants that were written and received. It would be nice to see your work for this. We knew the Federal funding would end and spent the money purchasing iPads, etc. to keep our students learning. We added additional supports for our student needs. We used funding for security and doubled our security budget during Covid for additional security that was needed at JFK when the renovations were being done. It is important to understand grant funding that comes and goes and what we need to do to get the resources needed in our schools.

Mr. Kober stated he mentioned transparency. You can go to State site openconnecticut.gov and see what any state employee makes, what each department spends, invoices, etc. Our budget books included an aggregate total. Can anyone tell me what the Superintendent's salary will be for next year? Please share that information with him.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated if the budget passes tonight and Town Council does not pass it, we will not make cuts. Mr. Drezek and Mr. Longey will make the cuts. Board members do not get into the granular numbers. They will listen to the building principals and administrative staff at Central Office. We make a decision on a percentage and number. We do not make final decisions on line items.

Chairwoman Riley stated we have done our due diligence and have put the appropriate supports in place for our students. We were denied by the State when we asked for more. The State has slighted us. The budget process is backwards, and we do not have an option. She will continue to work with the Town Council and Leadership when we get the answers to all of our unknowns. It is important to work together, and we need to make it clear about our needs. We will also discuss the needs of our community. We have a high poverty level in this town. We have many homeless people in Enfield. She will vote for the budget, and she will fight for us. The town needs to understand that the Board of Education has taken many zeros. Maybe some of the town needs need to take some zeros to even things out.

Mr. Jonaitis stated the Board starts the budget process with a number. It would be nice to have a good percentage. We need to vote on this tonight. We will then give it to the Town Council. The Town Council will come up with something and then the budget will go to the State and that is when the process will start over again. It is upside-down and backwards.

Chairwoman Riley proposes we should think outside of the box. We should hold quarterly finance meetings so we can better understand where we are for the next year.

Mrs. LeBlanc appreciated Chairwoman Riley going to the State Capital and speaking. We were flat funded last year. Everything that the State does has a formula so we already know we will be flat funded for our ECS funding. The big questions are the Alliance funding, excess cost grant and the cap on magnet tuitions. Chairwoman Riley is doing a great job checking on all these moving parts. The State does not make it easy for us. We already know what our ECS Cost Sharing amount will be and that goes to the Town.

Mrs. Pickett agrees that quarterly meetings are a good idea. The process is challenging. It is important to hold joint meetings. She would like Town Council members to watch our meetings and to have joint meetings with them.

A vote by **roll-call – 7-2-0** passed with Mr. Jonaitis and Mr. Kober in dissent.

d. Discussion and Action if any Regarding the 2024-25 School Calendar

Mr. Kober moved, seconded by Mr. Jonaitis that the Enfield Board of Education table Item # 11d Discussion and Action if any Regarding the 2024-25 School Calendar since we have already waived Policy #6111 School Calendar(s) and are not under any deadlines at this time.

Discussion:

Mrs. LeBlanc added we have received many inquiries about when the school calendar will be approved especially for the Christmas break and April vacation. She would prefer to approve this tonight.

Chairwoman Riley added our caucus has some questions about half day PD's. It might take some time to address those questions tonight. She would propose moving this item to the next meeting agenda.

Mr. Kober agrees with Chairwoman Riley about addressing this at our next meeting.

A vote by **show of hands – 5-4-0** passed with Mr. Ryder, Mrs. LeBlanc, Mrs. Pickett and Dr. Calnen in dissent.

e. Action if any, Regarding Enhanced Safety & Security Measures

Mr. Kober moved, seconded by Mrs. Cushman that the Enfield Board of Education approves Memorandum of Understanding with the Town of Enfield regarding Armed School Safety Officers to be provided by and at the expense of the Town of Enfield.

Discussion:

Dr. Calnen stated having armed policy in our schools will allow for a timely response from the Enfield Police department if there is an active shooter in our schools and may serve as a deterrent, but we really do not know if that is true. He read an article from JAMA about this that and it suggests the opposite. We really can't be sure that this will be beneficial and might be counterproductive. He is concerned with what our kids will think every day with armed police in our schools and will be reminded every day that schools are not safe. This will not be an environment that will be conducive to learning. Police are not trained to deal with students with social and emotional challenges or to de-escalate a child or dysregulated adolescent. The Town Council will pay \$1 million for police presence. He feels the money would be better spent on a few more social workers and behavior technicians.

Dr. Calnen moved, seconded by Mrs. Acree that the Enfield Board of Education postpone this vote until after the citizens of Enfield have had a chance to discuss this matter at a time and place to be determined by Board Leadership.

Discussion:

Mr. Jonaitis stated people have made a decision about what they want. If a meeting is held, there will be people that support it and those that don't.

Mrs. LeBlanc added there is a push for transparency. She believes people have not had a process for transparency.

Mrs. Pickett is not sure who the Town Council consulted regarding this. The Board did not know about this until January 23rd. Whatever is done should be done publicly and should include parents, students and staff. The last time we did this, we held community

conversations about it. After our last budget conversation, they are ready to put armed guards in our schools. Our public deserves to be part of this conversation.

Mr. Jonaitis stated we have had armed guards and they have been removed. We will not make everyone happy with our decision. Some audience members spoke about this tonight.

Mrs. Pickett stated she posted something about this. People did not know this was happening. The resolution was not even included in Town Council members packets, and they did not know this was happening. This was placed on our agenda 24 hours before tonight's meeting. She knows this was not done intentionally.

Chairwoman Riley apologized for that revision to the agenda.

Mr. Kober also believes in transparency like other Board members. Safety and security is one of FOIA exemptions. It was discussed at the Joint Security Committee. There is a delicate balance between public input and public discourse. Due to the nature of this it cannot be discussed in a public setting. School safety is a priority. He appreciates people talking about this. We are responsible for protecting our students. We did discuss funding for the security guards. This line item will be moved out of the schools budget and into the Town Council's budget. We need to take this because we can't afford it otherwise without making cuts to other departments. He will support this proposal.

Chairwoman Riley informed Mr. Kober there is another motion on the floor to table this item until leadership comes up with a date for a public meeting.

Mr. Kober stated he will support the main motion. He is also open to tabling this item.

Mrs. Pickett addressed Mr. Kober about how he will not support our budget, but you will support this. This was discussed during our executive session with Chief Fox, but we still do not know about the details. So how can you vote on this? She needs more information about this. Our guards are part of the schools. Our schools need to be hardened. One of our audience members spoke about alternatives for armed guards. The armed guards will be employees of the EPD not EPS. We need a fully supported budget that ensures continued support for our staff and students. The armed guards will make \$30 per hour. Our para's only make \$15 per hour.

Point of Order:

Mr. Jonaitis called for a point of order. Mrs. Pickett stated she is trying to get her point across. This is my time to talk and how she will vote on this item.

Mr. Jonaitis stated you are not commenting on the motion made by Dr. Calnen for public input.

Mrs. Pickett stated the public needs to be part of this discussion. This decision will affect people and their jobs. Our current SRO's will lose their jobs. They are valued members of our school communities. They are doing things that are not in their job descriptions. Our SRO's know our students and help when our kids are in a crises. This is a huge ticket item for the town's budget and there has been no public input about this. The town has never fully funded education. We need to make sure our money goes to our kids and not to the police. What is being done here does not provide transparency. Armed guards will not get us off of being an Alliance District. We need academic, behavioral and intervention staff, better pay for our staff, and training. The Town Council truly needs to support us and families.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated she voted against armed guards twice. The votes were very bipartisan both times. Her issues mirror Mrs. Pickett's concerns for the guards. We need more support

in our schools. Our special education numbers have increased. We need to make a decision on what the Town Council wants to give us, or do we keep what we have, and we will be looking at staff. She just wished this money could be used along with our current SRO's and increase enhancements. If this doesn't pass, the narrative will be that we do not care about our kids' safety which is false. She has spoken with Town Council Leadership about this. She does not believe this decision was well thought out.

Chairwoman Riley stated whether we table this item, student and staff safety is number one. She has heard opposing viewpoints. School repairs and hardening of our schools is needed. This is something that will take time. There has been a shift with mental health and these concerns will not go away. This is something we can provide in the meantime. It is a short term fix. We live in an upside down world. This affects everyone. Kids need to go to school. Parents and staff should not have to worry about their safety. She thought there would be a public hearing after our last meeting. The Town Council voted on this, and it is in our lap now. They will need to hire staff to fill these positions. A lot of our current guards will have the experience needed. A lot needs to be done. We need to address this tonight.

Mr. Ryder does not agree with Mr. Jonaitis and Mr. Kober. He is a member of the Joint Security Committee. There are things we need to discuss in executive session that we cannot discuss here. We spoke about our budget and our current line item for SRO's in the budget ends on June 30, 2024. He is not pro-guns. He does not want to serve staff with any pink slips so we can fund security. The Town Council has provided an option for security just like they took over the responsibility for our schools. Everyone knows that I care about our kids. The Town Council made a promise for security in our schools, and it is the towns responsibility. He would rather the Town Council pay for security in our schools than us handing out pink slips.

Mrs. Pickett added there is no money coming back to us. We will pay for security under these conditions. She spoke at the Town Council meeting about this. There are more cost effective ways to done for supporting our kids. We are ready to make a decision tonight without all the answers. We are forgetting our mission to educate our students.

Mr. Ryder added the armed guards will be supervised by the EPS and they will not be arresting students.

Mrs. LeBlanc added that she fears the ramifications if we do not support this tonight when it comes time to support our budget. They mayor has made comments that he has the votes to do certain things. She thought we would work together. Other departments have been asked to make cuts in their budgets, and now there is this money to support armed guards. She would rather this money be used for other things to support the education budget to helps us get out of being an Alliance District. She does not want to lay off teachers.

Mrs. Pickett added cutting our budget will drastically impact what we currently have. We need a better understanding of what we are doing. We need a long term plan. She agrees with Chairwoman Riley and if this is a short term fix, she would like to have that conversation.

Chairwoman Riley asked for a vote on this item.

Mrs. LeBlanc is in favor of tabling this item but would like to have a conversation with the Town Council about this.

Dr. Calnen would like to keep the motion simple. The bottom line is we are losing sight of what the people want. Regardless of what the Town Council or we think, the people of Enfield need to provide input on this topic.

A vote by **show of hands 4-4-1** motion to table failed with Dr. Calnen, Mrs. Picket, Mrs.

LeBlanc and Mrs. Acree in favor and Mr. Kober, Mrs. Cushman, Mr. Jonaitis and Chairwoman Riley voted against the motion with Mr. Ryder abstaining.

Mr. Kober added there is a timeline. This is tethered to the budget, and they would need to hire staff to get the ball rolling.

Mrs. Pickett added we need staff at our schools to teach our students. Our budget needs to be fully funded. We are making decisions about one piece without all the information.

Chairwoman Riley asked for a roll call vote on the main motion.

A vote by **roll call 5-3-1** passed with Mr. Pickett, Dr. Calnen and Mr. Jonaitis in dissent with Mrs. Acree abstaining.

f. Action if any, Related to Personnel

This item will be addressed after Item #16 – Matter(s) Related to Personnel.

12. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Curriculum Committee: Mrs. Acree reported the Curriculum Committee met on February 15th. We reviewed high school English course changes and unified Integrated STEAM course at JFK. Our next meeting will be held on March 21st.

Finance Committee: Mr. Kober reported the Finance Committee will meet on March 4th.

Policy Committee: Mrs. Cushman reported the Policy Committee will meet on March 19th.

Leadership – Chairwoman Riley reported Board Leadership will schedule a meeting for next week.

Joint Facility – Chairwoman Riley reported the Joint Facilities Committee will meet on March 14th.

JFK Building Committee – Mr. Ryder does not have a date for the next JFK Building Committee meeting.

Joint Security Committee – Chairwoman Riley reported the Joint Security Committee will meet on March 8th.

Enfield Mental Health Committee – Mrs. Acree reported that surveys were collected from JFK, Enfield High and from Mr. White. We are reviewing the data and will meet again with Mr. Longey in March.

Enfield Cultural Arts Commission – Mrs. LeBlanc reported the next ECAC meeting will be held on March 5th.

13. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Ryder moved, seconded by Mr. Kober that the Special Meeting Minutes of February 14, 2024, be approved. A vote by **show-of-hands 9-0-0** passed unanimously.

Mr. Ryder moved, seconded by Mr. Kober that the Special Meeting Minutes of February 22, 2024, be approved. A vote by **show-of-hands 8-0-1** passed with Mr. Jonaitis abstaining.

14. APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS AND PAYROLL - None

15. CORRESPONDENCE & COMMUNICATION

Chairwoman Riley stated we received Mr. Drezek's letter of resignation with the effective date of May 20, 2024. He enjoyed serving the Enfield Public School district and will miss everyone.

EXTEND MEETING PAST 11:00 PM

Chairwoman Riley moved, seconded by Mrs. LeBlanc that the Enfield Board of Education extends the meeting past 11:00 PM.

A vote by **show-of-hands 8-0-1** passed with Mr. Jonaitis abstaining.

16. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Kober moved, seconded by Mrs. LeBlanc that the Enfield Board of Education enter into Executive Session for Matter(s) Related to Personnel with the appropriate personnel.

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

Mr. Longey and Ms. Middleton joined the Board in Executive Session at 10:45 PM.

No Board action occurred while in Executive Session.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION:

The Board returned to open session at 11:07 PM.

11f. Action if any, Related to Personnel

Mr. Kober moved, seconded by Mr. Jonaitis that the Enfield Board of Education appoints Andrew B. Longey as the incoming Superintendent upon Mr. Drezek's resignation on May 21, 2024.

Discussion:

Mr. Kober stated bringing this item up for a vote is very efficient and will streamline the transition of administration. His only concern is the rapidness and the inability to share with the public the process that got us to this point and increased transparency. For this reason, he was in favor of hiring an acting superintendent and conduct a search for a superintendent. For that reason he will vote no.

Chairwoman Riley knows that people want a process of reviewing, interviewing candidates and hiring. At first she also thought that way, but she took a step back and reassessed the realities of the situation. This was not an overnight thought. She has been aware of the possibility a couple of months ago. We are an Alliance District with a large population of special needs students, free/reduced lunch students, ELL students with a very engaged community. We live in Connecticut which has its own set of State mandates and policies that are obtrusive at best for our schools.

Chairwoman Riley added Mr. Longey has been here for 20 years in various administrative positions. He knows about student discipline, scheduling, report cards, teacher evaluations and has also been a History Teacher. He has been in just about every situation in our district. He is a strong advocate for curriculum and academic excellence. He wants our students to be prepared for life after school and to be successful and productive members of society. She has worked directly with him. His list of accomplishments is long and to take a gamble on the

unknown versus the actions we have witnessed by him. He has a known track record of leading when put in a position to do so. He presented us with a solid plan to reinvigorate and set our students up for continued success. It makes sense to do this than to waist money we do not have for a search when we already have the answer here.

Mr. Jonaitis concurs with everything Chairwoman Riley has said. He has worked with Mr. Longey at JFK. He has a great background, and he is well respected by the teachers. He knows education. He has been at multiple levels serving in multiple positions. He is the right man for this job. He will be very happy to vote for him.

A vote by **roll-call – 8-1-0** passed with Mr. Kober in dissent.

Dr. Calnen moved, seconded by Mrs. Acree that the Enfield Board of Education appoints Michelle Middleton as the incoming Assistant Superintendent to replace Andrew Longey effective May 21, 2024.

Discussion:

Mr. Kober believes that Michelle Middleton is an excellent candidate as the Assistant Superintendent and will be a good fit for the job.

Chairwoman Riley added if we want to focus on curriculum and student supports, she is the person for this job.

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

17. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kober moved, seconded by Mrs. LeBlanc to adjourn the Regular Meeting of February 27, 2024.

All ayes, motion passed unanimously. Meeting stood adjourned at 11:13 PM.

Scott Ryder
Secretary
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary