BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 11, 2025

A regular meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held in Council Chambers on February 11, 2025.

1. CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chairwoman Riley.

2. INVOCATION OR MOMENT OF SILENCE: Janet Cushman

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Janet Cushman

4. FIRE EVACUATION ANNOUNCEMENT:

5. ROLL CALL:

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jean Acree, Dr. Gerald Calnen, Janet Cushman, Deane Gousse, Philip Kober, Tina LeBlanc, Scott Ryder and Charlotte Riley

MEMBERS ABSENT: Amanda Pickett

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Steven A. Moccio, Superintendent; Mr. Andrew B. Longey, Deputy Superintendent; Student Representatives Izzy Dinnald and Olivia Nuccio

6. BOARD GUEST(S)

a. Next Generation Accountability Presentation:

The Next Generation Accountability Presentation will be given at the April 8th Board meeting.

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

a. **Student Representative Update –** as presented
b. **Early Release Day/President's Day/Staff PD** – as presented
c. **EPS Update** –

Mr. Moccio reported the Vision of a Graduate work is continuing. We will share our next steps with staff and will also be looking for community input. We will present this to the Board in the Spring. All EPS staff have received information about the Connecticut State paid sick leave law. We have received a lot of questions from staff about this new law.

8. AUDIENCES

Chairwoman Riley read a prepared statement for Audience member participation, and you will be allowed 4 minutes to address the Board.

John Santanella, Enfield Street – Representative Santanella urged the Board to set priorities with the budget. Things in our schools are not okay. Having 29 students in a classroom is not okay. Education is a priority. The budget should reflect our needs and not what you think will pass. Our job is to prepare our kids for the future. Our kids deserve it. He urged Board members to do your job. Parents need to fight for their kids.

Virginia Prentiss, Post Office Road – Ms. Prentiss is a teacher at Stowe. She previously received a pink slip and was then rehired. Our building is very small and needs repairs. We have asked for an additional teacher, but we need more teachers in the budget to support our students increasing needs. Head Start does a lot for our families. She urged Board members to keep fighting for us and protect the needs of our students.

Pam Townsend, Kimberly Drive – Ms. Townsend was here to discuss a ceremony that will be held to recognize World War II Veterans on May 19th at the State Armory in Hartford. We need to get the word out about this. Transportation will be provided for the Veteran and one guest. If you have questions, contact Town Clerk Shiela Bailey. It is important to recognize these Veteran's.

Lucien LeFevre, Kimberly Drive – Mr. LeFevre is here on behalf of the Veteran's Council and would like to invite schools and groups to participate in this year's Memorial Day Parade. They encourage each school with teams to march in the parade or ride on floats with school banners. The Enfield High School marching band will march and play as well as the EHS Honors Choir. We are looking for more town involvement.

Sheree Winans, Enfield Street – Ms. Winans thanked Mr. Moccio for the additional teaching assistants. She is hoping that the budget will support our kid's needs. She remembered when guidance counselors were going to be cut from the budget. She presented a scenario to the Board about how overwhelmed teachers are feeling with large class sizes. This has been the hardest year teaching for her. She is managing instead of teaching.

Maureen Griffin, Abbe Road – Mrs. Griffin knew the budget would not bring back all the teachers that were cut. Our kids are suffering and need to feel valued and seen. We are failing our kids. We lost the Career Center at the high school. Our guidance counselors are trying their best to pick up the slack and help our kids. She urged Board members to make our budget reflect our real needs.

9. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Dr. Calnen spoke about Governor Lamont's two-year budget proposal that includes having universal pre-K. He also spoke about the excess cost grant and the 119 commission. Stowe needs more space for our students. We are responsible for our special needs students and our student needs are increasing. We need our legislators to fight for Enfield in order for our children to receive a decent education. We need them to do their jobs.

Chairwoman Riley attended the Legislative Breakfast with Mr. Kober and Mrs. Cushman. They discussed the Governor's proposed budget. She swung for the fences and expressed Enfield's needs. She spoke about our per pupil cost and excess cost sharing. She asked the Education Committee to make the Alliance Grant funding fair and equal by giving us a 10-year look back instead of a 1-year look back. She spoke about our Eagle Academy program successes. She asked them to look at exit criteria and once a district meets that criteria, to hold the district harmless for losing funding in order to keep that level of performance standards. We need all our legislators fighting for us. She will continue to fight for Enfield.

Mrs. LeBlanc read a statement from Mrs. Pickett about budget needs since she could not be here tonight.

Mrs. LeBlanc spoke about several influential black women in our history. February is Black History month. She spoke about some misinformation. She spoke about how our budget does not address the needs of our students. She understands our parent's concerns about the budget not meeting the student's needs. We will discuss our budget tonight. She has spoken to Representative Santanella about our needs, and he is reaching out at the State level. This budget is not enough.

Mr. Kober congratulated EHS Wrestlers – Ethan & Jacob for their outstanding athletic accomplishments. He spoke about Board members duty and maintaining good public education for our students by preparing them to become responsible citizens. He feels progress is being made with his transparency initiative with our policies, budget, superintendent updates and reports online. We are moving in the right direction.

Mr. Kober added that budget and special education costs were discussed at the Legislative Breakfast. Our staff have received guidelines and recommendation regarding ICE and the superintendent has sent out communications to the community about this. Per BOE Policy 5112, we are only required to verify residency and will not produce any records we do not have. ICE will not disrupt our schools.

Mr. Kober thanked Mrs. LeBlanc for the Novak report from 2018. He found this report very interesting.

Mr. Kober asked via the Joint Facilities Committee about any update or feedback on the work order system. Is this new system up and running?

Mr. Kober asked via the Chair to the Leadership Committee about Policy #9132 and #9140 regarding the superintendent performance and evaluation. We also need to conduct final evaluations for both Mr. Drezek and Mr. Longey.

Mr. Kober spoke about the PowerSchool data breach and reassured the community that we are closely monitoring this. The superintendent sent out communication about this breach in January to the community. Please share any additional information about this to community members.

Mr. Kober stated Enfield Public Schools is hiring Behavior Techs, Para's and Building Substitutes. Scholarships are also available for our graduating high school students. Please check with the guidance office for scholarship opportunities.

Chairwoman Riley asked Mr. Kober to send him his questions for the Joint Facilities Committee.

Mr. Moccio will provide the Board with an update about the B&G ticketing system in your Friday update from him.

10. <u>UNFINISHED BUSINESS</u>:

a. <u>Discussion & Action Regarding the 2025-26 School Calendar</u> *(This item was tabled on 01-28-25)*

Mr. Moccio reviewed the calendars (Daft #1 and Draft #2 and updated school hours with the Board. He presented these items with ADCO and unions.

Board members further discussed the 2025-26 draft calendars.

Mrs. Cushman moved, seconded by Mrs. LeBlanc that the Enfield Board of Education approves Calendar – Draft #2.

A vote by **<u>roll-call 7-0-1</u>** passed with Mr. Kober abstaining.

11. <u>NEW BUSINESS</u>

a. <u>Discussion & Action Regarding the FY2025-26 Budget</u>

Mr. Moccio presented an update to his Superintendent's Proposed FY2025-26 Budget that included a link for budget history. He reviewed line items where adjustments were made. He thanked staff members for their work on this budget. He included a link on the Key Takeaway slide. He has reduced the budget from 5.86% to 5.24%. This document is a fluid document, and additional adjustments will be made as he receives information.

Mrs. LeBlanc has concerns with the reductions. We are losing jobs. We still need funding just to maintain what we currently have. She would like us to stay at 5.86% and if we find any reductions, we should use that money to add staff. Class sizes are large. We cannot pretend that everything is okay. Keep the budget at 5.86%.

Mrs. Cushman asked about the anticipated class sizes with the additional staff for next year.

Mr. Moccio stated we looked at the grade levels with 29-30 students in classrooms. We would level the class sizes to 24 students per class. This is a fluid process. He will present the Board with whatever percentage you would like to see. He can prioritize a list of added items to be included in the budget.

Mrs. Cushman asked about the reading program and paying it off in three years. She also asked if there are parts of the program that are consumable. Mr. Moccio stated we are paying for the software. The consumables would come from supply items. We break up technology by what can be used multi year versus consumables. He reviewed consumables by account numbers.

Mrs. LeBlanc added the Board is in a difficult position. We have a new superintendent, and the budget is part of his job. He has gone through the budget with a fine tooth comb. This is the best she has ever seen. He knows the budget and has trained his staff as well. She understands why the budget was created this way. Class sizes and staffing are very important items.

Dr. Calnen has listened to our teachers concerns and in the spirit of acquiescence and fundamental injustice, we share in the injustice. The Town Council will do what it wants. We need to present what we need and not what the Town Council wants.

Mrs. Cushman stated instead of reducing the budget by $479K could we increase this with 4 or 5 additional positions? This is based on our discussion from the Leadership Committee meeting.

Mr. Moccio stated that depending on the position, the step hired and benefits, the salaries will vary. We are still looking to hire a school psychologist.

Mrs. Cushman asked about his list for additional positions if there was an additional $500K to use in the budget.

Mr. Moccio stated there have been many different conversations about specific programs. This is something he would discuss with his cabinet to look at the varied needs. Class sizes are our number one priority. He had the opportunity to add an additional class at Crandall, but it was decided to keep the current class sizes and add teaching assistants. This is something we discussed with Ms. Winans. The teachers did not want to break any current classes. That is why we provided them with additional support in their classrooms. Class sizes will not be an issue next year. We have shifted some classes at the high school, and we need an additional math teacher at the high school. He is trying to spread the wealth across the district. We lost the Career Center and the Asnuntuck programs. We also need a math intervention specialist at the middle school. We really need one per grade level.

Mr. Moccio appreciates your comments. He knows the budget inside and out. He will present a budget that the Board wants. He can come back as many times as the Board would like. He presented options to be considered.

Mr. Kober added Mr. Moccio is looking at the budget with new eyes. Having these discussions is extremely important. He has found efficiencies and reduced some of the line items. Mr.

Moccio presented us with his original budget presentation 2 weeks ago and adjustments were made to the percentage the next day. The 5.24% is not a huge jump. Our goal is not to repeat what occurred last year. We are realistically budgeting. We need to focus on our needs. The Board will be making adjustments over the next two weeks to the budget that we will ultimately present to the Town Council. Now is the time to fine tune the budget. We need to look at a reasonable budget. We are not cutting and are adding some items to the budget. We are looking at efficiencies and prepaying for items. We are at a good spot. He is glad we are discussing this and having a healthy conversation about the budget.

Chairwoman Riley stated she has also received e-mails and letters from teachers and parents. We are not where we want to be. We know we cannot add 81 staff members back into the budget. Adding a couple of additional staff with the $479K reduction savings is an idea. By doing this and keeping our contingency funding at 2% that will give us some wiggle room for emergencies. By using a step up progression, we can get to the sweet spot. We are in a hard spot. We know what our needs are, but we also need to be realistic. Funding can be changed instantly. She does not want to set us up for failure and then need to make additional cuts to the budget.

Mr. Gousse stated the superintendent is budgeting with a plan in mind. He has mentioned preparing for down the road. He understands this will not be ideal, but we need to work with what we can afford. The superintendent is new to Enfield and has been working on the budget with a plan. Staffing numbers can gradually be increased. Being totally transparent to the Town Council makes it easier to ask for more. Nothing is hidden.

Chairwoman Riley stated the empty positions aren't being hidden and have been included within the budget. You can see what positions were eliminated.

Mr. Gousse added with large class sizes of 30, and adding more staff to bring those class sizes down makes sense. But what will be the tipping points with class sizes will help us with planning.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated we discussed what number will work. We know we can't bring back 90 staff members. We need to look at class sizes and supports that are needed. The regular taxpayer does not fully understand the needs of our students. These interventions saves the district money. She also appreciates this discussion. When we decide on a number, we will need to explain why including a long term plan. We need to provide an analogy like what Ms. Winans did so people can understand our budget request.

Mr. Moccio would appreciate a percentage to work with. This is a fluid process. Once the transportation contract is finalized, he might have additional savings in this line item. The same thing with our insurance line item. He will come back to the Board with updates, and he will continue to find savings within the budget that could equate to additional staff members or reductions if needed. Let me know what the target percentage the Board is comfortable with. If it is 5.86% where we were before, just let him know so he can prepare. The Board will need to approve the budget at the next regular meeting. He will continue to find more savings. He treats the Board of Education money like it is his own. He wants to maximize everything we can without spending frivolously. A ballpark percentage would be helpful.

Mr. Ryder stated this is a game we play each year. We are educating 5,000 students that eventually will be sitting in our seats. We need a budget that meets our needs. These are our children, teachers and staff. Everyone's wants are different. He also knows hiring 91 staff is not feasible. Representative Santanella stated we are budgeting what we think the Town Council wants. We are not budgeting for all our needs. He knows we cannot present a 12% budget. We are adding 11.9 bodies which is not enough. We need more staff. What is the next tier of needs, and we need to justify it by showing the schools they will be placed at. There are other metrics we can look at. We need to invest in our children by budgeting for our needs. If more savings are found, what staffing can be brought back?

Mrs. Acree thanked Mr. Moccio for your efforts with the budget and thinking about our children first. She agrees with Mr. Ryder regarding the percentages. Mrs. LeBlanc does not want to see us make any further percentage cuts from 5.33 to 5.24. Should asked if the Board should discuss an agreeable percentage? What would the budget look like with a 6% increase and how many teachers could that add? We were at 5.86% originally. How many teachers or resources would that bring back to the district? Like Mr. Ryder stated going step by step.

Dr. Calnen stated our consensus is let's look at our needs first and then figure out what the percentage should be. If the Town Council doesn't like it, they will cut our percentage.

Chairwoman Riley asked if Mr. Moccio has a tiered list.

Mr. Moccio stated he will put a list together with .5% increments. The Board can decide on what they are comfortable with. He will prioritize the list. He will get an updated analysis for enrollment by grade levels. Class sizes will be adjusted, and teachers can be moved to other grade levels according to the class sizes. He will provide this information to the Board before our February 25th BOE meeting. You might want to add an additional evening to discuss this prior to that meeting.

Chairwoman Riley agrees that would be a good idea to meet prior to the February 25th meeting. Mr. Moccio added you can hold a special meeting – budget workshop with just one item on the agenda.

Mr. Kober added we need to find a balance for our needs while harmoniously blending the resources we have. He spoke about some historical past budgets. We need to consider from past learned lessons. We need to proceed with caution. We need to look at our needs and resources over the next two weeks.

Chairwoman Riley would like to see a schedule with .5% increases. This will be helpful for continuing our budget discussions.

Board members agreed to hold a Special Budget Workshop on Wednesday, February 19th at 6:00 PM at Alcorn in Mr. Longey's office or in the large Social Services conference room. Mr. Moccio will also invite cabinet members to attend.

12. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Curriculum Committee – Mrs. Acree reported the Curriculum Committee will meet next on February 20th.

Finance Committee – Mr. Kober reported the Finance Committee met on February 3rd. He provided a brief overview from that meeting. We will approve financial reports later tonight. Our next meeting will be held on March 4th.

Policy Committee - Mrs. Cushman reported the Policy Committee will meet on February 18th.

Leadership Committee – Chairwoman Riley reported the Leadership Committee met on February 5th. She provided a brief overview from that meeting. Our next meeting will be held on March 5th.

13. LIAISON REPORTS

Head Start - Dr. Calnen reported that the Head Start Grant application has been accepted. Head Start is currently accepting applications for the 2025-26 school year.

Henry Barnard - Mr. Kober gave a shout out to Henry Barnard staff and families. They held a kindergarten science night today that was a huge success. They will hold future science nights with the CT Science Center for grade 1 and 2 students and families. They will also hold upcoming math and literacy nights. Please refer to the Big Cat newsletter for additional school events.

Prudence Crandall - Mrs. Acree reported that Prudence Crandall will hold a read-a-thon on March 13th. Students will come home with pledge forms for this event. The girls on the run program will start up again. Information about this was sent out on ParentSquare. She thanked the volunteers that are spearheading this program. She congratulate CAS winners Ceili Handly and Cora Pare.

Enfield High School - Mr. Ryder reported the EHS Program of Studies night was a huge success. He thanked Principal Clark and staff for this event.

John F. Kennedy - Mr. Gousse reported that John F. Kennedy is holding their Random Acts of Kindness week. Best Buddies is now selling swag online or in the school store at JFK until February 21st.

Joint Facility – Mr. Ryder reported the Joint Facilities Committee will meet on February 13th.

Joint Insurance Committee – Chairwoman Riley reported the Joint Insurance Committee needs to set their next date to meet.

Joint Security Committee – Mr. Ryder reported the Joint Security Committee will meet on February 14th.

Enfield Mental Health Committee – Mrs. Acree reported the Enfield Mental Health Committee will meet on March 12th.

14. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Kober moved, seconded by Dr. Calnen that the Regular Meeting Minutes of January 28, 2024, be approved. A vote by **show-of-hands 7-0-1** passed with Mrs. Acree abstaining.

15. APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS AND PAYROLL

Month of January FY2025

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

- The month of January 2025 total expenditures amount to $8,839,520.76 broken down between payroll totaling $6,470,431.97 and other accounts totaling $2,369,088.79 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 documented.

A vote by **show-of-hands 8-0-0** passed unanimously.

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

- The month of January 2025 the total Grant and Head Start expenditures amount to $700,584.78, broken down between payroll totaling $631,570.48 and other accounts totaling $69,014.30 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 documented.

A vote by **show-of-hands 8-0-0** passed unanimously.

Line Item Transfers: None

16. CORRESPONDENCE & COMMUNICATION - None

17. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Ryder moved, seconded by Dr. Calnen that the Enfield Board of Education enters into Executive Session for Matter(s) Related to Prospective Supply contract – Transportation Contract.

A vote by **show-of-hands 8-0-0** passed unanimously.

Both Mr. Moccio and Mr. Longey joined the Board in Executive Session at 9:25 PM. No Board Action occurred while in Executive Session.

Return to Open Session:

The Board returned to Open Session at 9:40 PM.

18. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kober moved, seconded by Mrs. Acree to adjourn the Regular Meeting of February 11, 2025. Motion passed unanimously by a **show-of-hands 8-0-0**. Meeting stood adjourned at 9:41 PM.

Scott Ryder
Secretary
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary