

Pre-K Through 5 And Eagle Academy School Pre-Referendum Building Committee
Meeting Minutes
August 13, 2025

The Pre-K Through 5 and Eagle Academy School Pre-Referendum Building Committee held a meeting on August 13, 2025 at Enfield Town Hall, 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, CT.

1. CALL TO ORDER The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Randy Daigle

2. ROLL CALL
MEMBERS PRESENT

Randy Daigle, Tina LeBlanc, Christine DeBonee, Gina Cekala, Bob Cressotti, John Dague, Jim Nasuta, Amanda Pickett, Scott Ryder, Jaclyn Valley, Andy Longey, Jeff Wyszynski, Antonia Ciaverella, Chris Cykley

MEMBERS ABSENT

Lauren Andrews, Janet Cushman, Kate Flanagan, Steven Moccio, Charlotte Riley, Jeff Rousseau, Justin Hopkins

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion made by Tina LeBlanc to Approve Meeting Minutes of July 2, 2025

Seconded by Amanda Pickett

Motion passes by a show of hands

Abstained by Bob Cressotti, Jim Nasuta, Scott Ryder

Motion made by Amanda Pickett to Approve Meeting Minutes of July 30, 2025

Seconded by Tina LeBlanc

Motion passes by a show of hands

Abstained by Gina Cekala, Bob Cressotti, Jim Nasuta

4. ARCHITECTS PRESENTATION

Jeff distributes handouts including slide deck for reference. Also includes draft flyers, boards and marketing for community conversations. Jeff gives update of last meeting for members who were absent. We had a communications meeting between our last meeting here. We've selected some dates for community conversations. Jeff reviews the schedule, our next meeting is August 27th, then we will go every 3rd week. We are solidifying some of the dates. We've held a communications plan review meeting where we selected dates, we talked about engagement with faculty and students. We set time and location for community conversations. We also held a working meeting relative to demographic and enrollment projections. They will update the numbers based on the October 1st enrollment survey. There are two demographers working, one for the school district and one for our team. Once we get those numbers we will share with you. We are still working on updating existing use plans. Our next step is to further develop the options. Randy had sent 5 sites of possible sites for consideration. We are looking for 10-15 acres of useable land. The first is South Road, adjacent to housing authority. Good site, overall. Challenges are some areas indicated as all wet soils, this is a conversation we need to have with P&Z. It is adjacent to residential and housing authority. The next slide is on 145 Freshwater Blvd. There is access from South Road and Hazard Avenue.

Randy states I have been working with the Town. I have looked at every property the town owns. These are the 5 that we narrowed down that have the best potential.

Jeff states 145 Freshwater Boulevard is 99 acres, zoned industrial park, it could be combined with adjacent property. The 3rd property we looked at is across from Barnard school, Shaker Road. Flat property, adjacent to farms/fields, 10.62 acres. The next property we looked at is 100 Freshwater Boulevard, 58.82 acres, multiple access points, relatively flat. There is a water way through there now. There may be a few more challenges.

Jeff states land acquisition is reimbursable and should be done as part of the grant application.

Randy states I don't think anyone realizes what we have for land.

Jeff states the last one is 25 Weymouth Road, 8.58 acres, adjacent parcel allows for phased implementation. Access to additional street.

Randy states we could add on the back of the building or add a new building.

Jeff states the next step is to show you what an add/renovation looks like, then compare the two.

Jeff states for those that missed the last meeting, the next couple of slides are what we presented at the last meeting to start the conversation of what could be (enrollment). He reviews slides with committee who missed the last meeting. We take your enrollment, we will arbitrarily increase it by 5% and 10%, once we get more data we will plug it in. Option A is what you have, Option B1 is 3 buildings of prek-5, population is 785-825. B2 is 3 K-5 buildings with one PreK building, population is 675-700, with PreK sized at 325-350.

Randy states don't think of the occupancy with the schools we have. This is not what it is going to look like.

Scott states I think full day preschools is going to be coming. We should be referring it to universal Pre-K.

Jeff states I'm not sure how long that 15% reimbursement is going to last.

Jeff states C1 is the four school model. There are 4 PreK-5 buildings with enrollment 590-620. C2 option is 4 Pre-K-5 buildings and 1 Pre-K building, with enrollment at 500-525 in the K-5 schools and 325-350 in the Pre-K building.

Amanda states is ECDC in our enrollment.

Andy states no.

Tina states I like seeing that balanced numbers in the buildings.

Randy states there might be minor redistricting.

Jeff states you have to keep in the mind, this isn't going to happen tomorrow, it will be a series of years, so we would be phasing it in.

Amanda states we don't have any school in the Thompsonville area. If we combine Enfield Street and EA, and we're building a new spot for Eagle Academy, how much acreage does that give us?

John states 14.1 minus the EMS.

Jeff states the next series of slides is putting thing in perspective, these are 4-5 year projects. The State is going to want us to escalate to the mid-point of construction and that will fall somewhere between 2028-2029. We are talking about 3 or 4 years of escalation. We have a pretty good historical data base and we will show you examples as we move along. We are not going at the extreme high end of the cost or low end, we are right in the median. Escalation surged 18-20% and it came down. With different estimators we are currently using between 4-4.5%. We have some decent numbers from recent bids. We will have to make adjustments to the sites and what is chosen, either demolition, remediation or how do we what to leave sites if we're not using them. People get concerned if a building is left as is. One of the recommendations is to fold that into the project so you get reimbursed to take it down, it could be field or community use. It is a footnote on the project.

Amanda states we have a lot of empty buildings.

Jeff states at some point we will have to have a conversation about operational costs. There should be operational cost savings. The other piece to talk about but not tonight is sustainability, to get into net neutral energy uses. It's reimbursable. You have to meet the high performance building standards.

Randy states there are dollar amounts associated with it.

Jeff states I mentioned your reimbursement is 68% (renovate as new) and 58% (new construction). With any potential consolidation project we have to prove if you renovate what you have, which is 6 buildings and you go to 4 or 5, is it as cost efficient, you get the higher rate. I think with options B and C we can sell that story to the State. Once you get to the level of looking at the square footage of a building, sometimes because of these specialized programs you need more space, that's why many go after special legislation, space area waivers. They don't usually give them anymore. Keep your representatives that are at the State informed. When we talk about total project costs, there are two main buckets, construction costs (80%) and soft costs (20%). Soft costs are chairs tables, furniture, technology, equipment. Contingency and escalation are worked into your total project costs. Our goal in this planning process is to make sure you have a responsible budget number for each of the projects. It doesn't mean you have to spend it. The State wants you to now carry 10% owner contingency. Typically on new buildings you're only spending 1-2%, renovations you should only be spending 3-4%.

Tina states at our elementary schools, there isn't anything extra such as pools.

Jeff states the variables on construction costs, and the environmental challenges on both building and site, the regulations are difficult but once you identify something those costs can escalate.

Tina states it's the unknowns you have to deal with.

Amanda asks where do playgrounds come in?

Jeff states playgrounds are in construction costs or soft costs, it can be either or, but they're in there. All FF&E (furniture, fixture and equipment) is in your soft cost.

Scott states for future drawings and renderings, throw in a playscape.

Jeff states the next slide shows project costs with real data. New constructions for elementary schools between \$800 and \$900 per square foot. Renovations between \$750 and \$850. When you escalate it up to FY2028 you're looking at new construction \$920-\$1035 and renovations at \$865-\$980. Jeff shows 7 projects with type of project, and their projected costs and enrollment. If we go back to the slide with the three vs. the four school scenarios, I want to walk you through the costs. There is a lot of data on the slide. If you were to look at a building with 785-825 students in 110,000 square feet, there is site development, cost of the building, the sustainability enhancements, soft costs, escalation. A building of that size to be built 4 years from now is going to cost you about \$118 million dollars, total project cost. When you take your base reimbursement and add the 15% you get about 83% reimbursement for your community. There's a thing called ineligibles for the State. Say if you had to add a traffic light, the State is not going to pay for that. Ineligibles, in our experience range about 2.5%. On a \$118 million dollar building times 3 is about \$350 million dollars. Norwich is in the process of doing. There referendum was \$385 million. When you do the math the projected cost to Enfield is about \$22.3 million per building, so it's \$67 million total. This is a responsible approach to planning a preschool program. Your referendum will have to have the \$350 million number if you were to go all at once, but with an explanation of the grant reimbursement getting you at 67 million.

Amanda states that's helpful to know. It needs to be explained what we're responsible for.

Randy states we have to educate them.

Jeff states if you were to do a 3 school K-5 plus a pre-K, each of the buildings will cost about \$102 million, times 3, plus the pre-K building would cost about \$50 million. Then if you do the reimbursable amount from the State, you're at about \$113 million. The reason for the delta is the recent legislation with the 15% increase. If you put pre-K in your elementary schools, you're getting 15% more on the left side.

Amanda asks is that B-5 in the slide, birth to five years old?

Jeff states there is an expanded paragraph that you can look at, it has to have some programs related to that level.

Amanda states that's my wonder about ECDC, I was thinking about the reimbursement and the space.

Jeff states our approach was to include those students in the cost in those programs, that's why the number is around 325 at the pre-K.

Jaclyn states it's attractive to look at the 67 vs. 113. Pre-K is it's own animal with regulations and we have a really great program in this town. If we did just a pre-K building, they would get the 15%, the others wouldn't. If I asked our State Rep for special legislation. Families like a pre-K site.

Jeff states anything is possible. On a pre-K as a stand alone, we have seen both.

Andy states if there were to be universal pre-K and we went with 3 schools with pre-K, we are locked in for space.

Jeff states options B and C include the increase.

Jeff states the 4 school model the reimbursement application is the same, 69.2%. The pre-K is the only one that has the 15%, your base reimbursement for the rest is about 66%. This starts to get the ball rolling. We have to talk about how to implement this across the district and what the timing will be.

Scott reads previous referendums for reference. It will tell you what the actual cost to the town is.

Jeff states many that are experienced with education know that conventional learning has shifted from what you see today to small learning communities. It is an interesting way to break down the scale of buildings so students will live in 'neighborhoods', where specialized education, support spaces, toilet facilities are within the neighborhood itself. There is care and thoughtfulness to where art, music, PE are. There is sensitivity to the scale of buildings. Slides are shown. We take care in regards to faculty spaces. Slide of case studies shown/other schools, Brookfield, Norwalk, Madison, Cheshire. We try to develop the building so it's used during the day for education and nighttime it can be used for community use. If you build new on the same property, it can be done safely.

Antonia states drafted for you is updated community events flyer. This one would ideally be posted on the website. We could start circulating it at Open Houses, put in various spots within your community. It could be posted on town websites, as well. Also, thinking ahead to Open Houses we developed an activity book. We brought one that was made for your community and we'd love your feedback. We brought one from another community that is a dual language book. Another draft we brought was a 24X36" board. The vision is to print one of these for every school in the district and a few extra for around town. It will have dates for upcoming meetings and existing conditions. We're looking to develop a small postcard, this could be a great tool for if you're going to a little league game. It's a quick way to get people to look at the website. Those are the materials we are currently developing.

Amanda states it looks like you were pretty conservative with the pictures of the conditions of the schools.

Scott states he wonders why we have pictures of the worst conditions, people may say why would I give you my tax dollars when you can't keep the current buildings up to date. It's a fine line. Also, the QR code on the postcard will have to go on everything, maybe have a smaller QR code for the Zoom meeting.

Randy states what we are trying to say is this is what we could be doing. This is a draft of what they will be doing to put information out there.

Tina asks Andy the only Wednesday I am thinking about is October 22nd, that is when the Youth Vote would do their Meet the Candidates night. Is it possible to say they couldn't have it that night or how do we work around that? Do we want to keep October 22nd open until we hear back.

Andy states I think that date is locked in, it's already on the calendar.

Antonia states they are tracking the Open House dates so we will have the materials finalized and distributed.

Tina states there is also a Jack-O-Lantern festival that is all families of kids. It's a town event usually on a Saturday night on the Town Green.

Amanda states also there is Youth Services who recently did a Lego Challenge. Getting our Youth Services on board and getting them booklets, also ERfC and ECDC be included.

Randy states now that we have some ballpark numbers there is going to have to be some more discussion about programs, that will sway a little of your square foot usage per building. Now that we have an idea of what is possible, either the 3 or 4, we need to start weighing in what 3 or 4 we want to do. The data that they provided us got us to this point and you can only go so far with design. Now we have to get into the hard decisions. Then we need to have the discussions about which schools get what programs. That effects the footprint 100%.

Tina states you will want the special education people coming.

Jeff states we haven't had our follow up meetings yet, but getting our arms around specialized education, transportation, food service, I.T., and the therapeutic program still obviously needs to be addressed. I know it was a lot of information tonight but I wanted to get the case studies in there so when you're reviewing, you can flip back and forth. We'd love to hear thoughts and comments so we can start honing in.

Randy states if you have any questions, send them to me, cc Ellen and I will forward them to Tecton and it will be answered to everyone.

Jeff asked was there anything we missed that you would like to see at the next meeting?

Tina states this is very thorough.

Jeff states our next meeting is August 27th. Our goal would be to have a final draft of everything we need for Open House. We will take all the comments, take another swing at it and bring it back.

Gina states if Pre-K is to have one building, they should be involved.

Randy agrees.

Amanda states is there any information about how the experience was from the teachers that were displaced to Enfield Street School? Should we survey the Pre-K families that were displaced to Enfield Street School.

Randy asks John if he can reach out to them.

Amanda asks what about the ECDC teachers that are part of the town?

Andy states they were at the listen and learn sessions, they were there.

Jaclyn states I have a question regarding HeadStart funding, it's federal. It doesn't mean you can't have multi sites. I'm curious to look at trend data to see which neighborhoods the kids come from because I don't think you can predict where your HeadStart enrollment will come from, therefore you can't predict you will have 90 in one building or 30-30-30. You can't predict for your integrated Preschool, you can't predict their home schools, they enroll through Birth to 3. You can't predict the Pre-K neighborhood. There is new funding called Early Start which is putting multiple funding sources together. There is Smart Start funding, which is tricky, HeadStart funding, then we have federal reviews and accredited through National Association for Young Children. Meal funding is done through a different grant. There is a lot to consider.

Amanda state we have created a really good HeadStart program in one building that creates an equal school experience.

Jaclyn states then you're transitioning the children when the go to kindergarten. I am on board for whatever is going to be great for the big picture. Currently, the preschool classrooms are part day but conversations I have had with the Commissioner the vision is to see how to make that full day/full year care. If you look at my school, that would be 9 classrooms. It impacts the number of spaces you would need.

Tina states we do want to cut down on transitions, but I saw in some of the case studies unique ways they integrated different things, one property housing the Pre-K program. The integrated preschool and HeadStart gives it an additional facet to consider.

Randy states that's why we need to get a better grasp on programs.

Chris asks what the first step and everything has to trail behind?

Jaclyn states who is the most stringent?

Chris states what is the most stringent piece of it? Is it not being able to move 2 kids because you're capped at 17, you can't move two kids?

Jaclyn states how do you predict where the enrollment is coming from?

Chris states we kind of have that identified because once they hit kindergarten they become part of that school.

Jaclyn states my next question is if you have those extra 2 kids and your classroom is supposed to be at 17, can you flexibly, within the federal government and maintaining ratios with staff and all the things that go with accreditation, can you just say Amanda you're going to have 19 kids, John you're going to have 17. Then the teacher across the way has 15, you still have to be within your 102 kids. Can't exceed 102. I am a huge fan to a sole location for many reasons.

Chris states that may be the driver to keeping at a separate sole location. That's a perspective you need to take a look at. There's a lot of different pieces to that. That is the conversation that drives where this goes, programmatically in this plan.

Randy states we see the need to dial it down to the end users. The next step is we really need to talk to them.

Amanda states we are an Alliance district.

Jeff states we heard that at the last meeting and I haven't seen anything regarding that in regards to funding.

Randy states we need to think about what the options are, come up with questions and send them to me. The next meeting will be decision making time to keep the ball rolling. I commend Tecton for their work and time. What I send to the committee members is not for the public yet. Do you think there is enough town own property?

Jeff states the net step for us to do some basic test fits. It will be telling. Most of the buildings we're looking at are 2 stories.

Randy states next meeting is August 27th. Keep the October 22nd date in mind, we need to work together.

5. COMMENTS

- a. Committee Member Comments**
- b. Liaison Member Comments**
- c. Good to the Order**

6. Motion to Adjourn

Motion made by Amanda Pickett
Seconded by Jim Nasuta
Motion passes by a show of hands

Adjourned at 8:05 PM

Submitted by Ellen Smith