

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 18, 2014**

A special meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held at Henry Barnard Elementary School in the Board Conference Room, located at 27 Shaker Road, Enfield, CT on February 18, 2014.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM by Chairman Sirard.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Chairman Sirard
3. **FIRE EVACUATION ANNOUNCEMENT:** Chairman Sirard announced the fire evacuation announcement.
4. **ROLL CALL:**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Peter Jonaitis, Lori Unghire, Ray Peabody, David Wawer, Vin Grady, Tina LeBlanc (participated remotely), Timothy Neville, Stacy Thurston and Tom Sirard

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Dr. Jeffrey Schumann, Superintendent and Mr. Christopher Drezek, Deputy Superintendent

5. **Continue the 2014-15 Budget Discussion**

Chairman Sirard stated that Mrs. LeBlanc will participate remotely.

Dr. Schumann showed Board members a short video of the students working on the Buzz Robotics robot. They are preparing for the upcoming competition.

Dr. Schumann reviewed the history regarding IT costs with Board members. Board members had a healthy discussion regarding our IT program including increasing costs, services and what is expected. Board members agreed that more information is needed and that we are not happy. Board members agreed to park this discussion for another time.

Mr. Drezek reviewed the projected numbers for 2014-15. We will gain or lose around 20 students. We do not have the kindergarten numbers yet. We have 370 in kindergarten and 365 students in grade 12.

Mr. Neville would like to see the matrices for class sizes now.

Chairman Sirard stated projected enrollment will remain flat.

Dr. Schumann reviewed magnet school costs that range from \$3,600 - \$7,200 per student. We have around 450 students attending magnet schools. Around 12 students have returned back to us from the magnet schools and 7 students have returned from the technical schools.

Dr. Schumann plans to write a letter to the families of students attending a magnet school that is being moved from Bloomfield to New Britain trying to entice them to look at our schools again. He will also write letters to other magnet school families as well.

Chairman Sirard asked if these students opt to move with the program are we responsible for their transportation? Mrs. Zalucki stated CREC transportation would be responsible for

transporting them, not us.

Mr. Grady asked if the 17 students that came back to us is before October 1st. Mrs. Zalucki stated that is a continuous number. We know that 3 more magnet students will be coming back within the next week or two because they contacted us about this.

Mr. Wawer thanked Dr. Schumann for providing us with current legislation. He would like us to contact our Legislators regarding magnet schools and funding. This is a budget issue. We should not have to pay for the tuition for these magnet schools just like we don't pay for students attending private schools or State technical schools. He would like Dr. Schumann to continue to discuss this with our legislators.

Mr. Peabody stated we should send a letter from the Board regarding this to our legislators. They are representing our community.

Mrs. Leblanc stated we met with the legislators last year in March or April and expressed our concerns about magnet costs. We can invite them to an upcoming Board meeting again to see if they have any additional information.

Dr. Schumann will invite them to attend an upcoming meeting tomorrow.

Mr. Neville stated Dr. Schumann has been meeting with them. It was brought to his attention that the transportation costs associated with this could be a wash if we are required to transport them instead of paying for the tuition costs.

Mr. Wawer likes Mrs. LeBlanc's suggestion to invite them to attend a meeting. He asked Board members to look at what Dr. Schumann has provided them. The legislation will not know what bills will be passed by the time our budget is set.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated when she attended the CAFE training for new Board members, many towns were represented and they were all concerned with magnets and costs. If we do not pay our bill, they will take the funding from our excess cost funds.

Mr. Wawer stated these magnet schools are from the Sheff settlement. Chairman Sirard stated that is correct and there have been a long list of law suits that have stemmed from this.

Mrs. LeBlanc added the problem will still be the same with any new magnet schools that pop up. Some magnet schools like MLC have been very successful. Parents are finding some of the schools still have the same kind of problems they were trying to avoid.

Mr. Wawer asked what we will get back from magnet schools. There is no level of accountability for the money we are paying. For an example, they are advertising. What is the budget for this?

Mrs. LeBlanc added that JFK has a bad reputation. Her daughter attended there and did not have any difficulties. There is a lot of misinformation out there about our schools. Some of the magnet schools are grades 6-12 and the kids all ride the same bus.

Chairman Sirard stated the biggest difference between magnet schools and public school is parental perception. The second difference is that CREC is fully funded and public education is not. Some of the money that is needed for local education is being funded toward the magnet schools.

Mr. Peabody stated that is the message we need to share with parents. Through a public relations process, we need to let everyone know what we are doing. Being transparent is a way. He had the same perceptions about JFK. He got involved and his kids had a good time while

they were at JFK.

Mr. Wawer asked about the ECS per pupil formula. We are supposed to get a certain percent. Dr. Schumann added there are discrepancies with the ECS costs.

Mr. Wawer asked about the State formula. Dr. Schumann state the ECS cost sharing is a grant. The excess cost formula has been decreasing. There is talk about increasing both of these items with surplus money that may or may not exist.

Mr. Wawer stated we are not getting what we should be receiving for local education.

Chairman Sirard stated there is a formula and funding level is different for every town. Enfield was underfunded in 2010 \$18 million dollars. The trend using the formula is between \$16 and \$14 million dollars each year.

Dr. Schumann reviewed the 2013-14 and 2014-15 budget development chronology for the Board.

2013-14 Budget Development Chronology

\$63,141,355 - FY2012-13 Budget

\$71,920,166 - Districtwide Needs Based Budget	13.90%
-\$ 5,002,027 - Superintendent Adjustments	
\$66,918,094 - Superintendent Budget Request	5.98%
-\$ 1,263,714 - Board Adjustments	
\$65,653,380 - Board's Proposed Budget	3.98%
-\$ 1,392,223 - Town Manager's Adjustments	
\$64,262,157 - Town Manager's Proposed Budget	1.78%
\$64,262,157 - Town Council Appropriation	1.78%
\$ 718,154 - Town Council Adjustment	1.14%
\$64,980,311 - Town Council Appropriation	2.91%
-\$ 674,069 - BOE Adjustment Required	
-\$ 117,786 - Pension Adjustments not in Proposed Budget	
-\$ 791,855 - BOE Final Adjustments	1.78%

2014-15 Budget Development Chronology

\$ 64,262,157 - 2013-14 Budget

\$ 73,028,876 - FY2014-15 Districtwide Needs Based Budget	13.64%
-\$ 5,565,680 - Superintendent Adjustments	3.12%
\$ 67,463,196 - Superintendent's Proposed Budget	4.98%

Dr. Schumann added that we do not know what our numbers for magnet schools, kindergarten students, pensions, evaluations, excess cost, education cost and retirements. This year we will plan for more in our retirement accounts to avoid a shortage. These numbers are soft and will be adjusted once we know more.

Mr. Neville stated the budget you presented reflects our needs. He asked Dr. Schumann to review the needs for the 7 elementary assistant principals. Dr. Schumann stated the need for the 7 elementary assistant principals will assist with the evaluations. We will need to come up with a Cadillac solution to handle the evaluations and to assist with student needs. Adding the additional help for 3 support counselors would help greatly. STEAM has added more to our budget including hiring Dr. Faulkner to get our kids ready for high school. If we take this out of the budget we will need to be creative.

Mr. Peabody asked if we can outsource for the complementary evaluators. Dr. Schumann

stated we have an agreement with the ETA and we would be in violation of that agreement.

Mr. Neville added that principals are dealing with student and parent issues. These are items that cannot be put off. Add in the evaluations during the day and this becomes a real problem for our principals.

Dr. Schumann stated we may need to redefine the head teacher's role with the ETA and the ESAA and use some complementary evaluators.

Mr. Neville likes the idea of using complementary evaluators and using head teachers if that can be negotiated.

Mr. Jonaitis has a problem with the ideology. You can't keep giving the teachers more and more workshops and programs. They are stealing from science and history to accomplish this. We need to take something out before we add more in. This takes from classroom time and teaching. They are teaching to the test. He wouldn't support this even though it is a nice thing.

Mr. Wawer stated he looked at some trends from 2013. He compared the cost for staff at ESS as well as Memorial and this has increased. Mr. Drezek stated the Title I schools changed. Title I staff is paid out of the grants.

Mr. Wawer looked at the SPED cost increases and salary increase. Did we increase certified SPED staff numbers. Mr. Drezek stated this could be due to contractual needs for 70 employees.

Mr. Wawer would like to know why our SPED numbers are more than Newtown.

Mr. Neville stated you need to go by the IEP and look at the number of SPED students and the number of staff needed.

Dr. Schumann stated you need to look closely at the numbers. In Newington, we had 4 directors in special education. We have 2 directors in Enfield. You need to adequately service the needs of the special education students. If you don't watch this, the costs to outpace them will cost you more money in the long run. This number could change by being pennywise and pound foolish.

Mr. Grady stated a lot of the parents are now coming with lawyers and advocates to the PPT's.

Mr. Wawer added we need to come up with a process to get control of our costs. He asked about occupational therapy costs. Dr. Schumann stated that is an increase for contracted services.

Mr. Wawer stated these costs are part of our budget. We need to look at this closely to get things under control.

Mr. Neville stated the budget for SPED costs is different from town-to-town. Everyone calls these positions something differently. You need to look at the needs of the district and the number of FTE's. We need to ask these questions and there is no simple solution.

Chairman Sirard stated we have mentioned conducting a SPED audit previously. A lot of our costs are determined at the IEP process. We need to see how other towns are doing this. We need to benchmark to other communities and look at their IEP's to see what they are doing compared to us.

Mr. Jonaitis asked how many Enfield students are receiving some kind of special education

service. Dr. Schumann stated around 13%. Mr. Neville added the average is around 11%.

Mr. Wawer asked about curriculum development increasing costs. Mr. Drezek stated we consolidated accounts last year. There were more accounts and we tried to restructure by putting some money in each of these accounts. We are in the process of identifying the accounts and where the money used to be.

Mr. Wawer asked what we will get for \$1 million dollars. Mr. Drezek stated today for example, we held a professional learning day for all staff. It looks like a drastic increase but it is more because of the way it was done last year. We are still working on this.

Chairman Sirard stated the consolidation of accounts done last year for professional learning left us with \$800K last year. Now we are looking at an increase of \$200K for professional learning this year. Where is the justification for the \$200K increase. This is what Mr. Wawer is looking at compared from last year from professional learning.

Dr. Schumann stated part of that budget is for STEAM. This is also for curriculum materials not staffing. Dr. Schumann can look into this and break this down for you.

Mr. Neville appreciates you clarifying this. He would also like to see what the increase is for the materials.

Mr. Wawer asked what the priority is going forward. Chairman Sirard stated from being on the Finance Committee, the prior Business manager only had input on one budget. All of the consolidations were all grouped into one account. Now they are being spread between accounts and we are looking for the breakdown of the \$200K.

Mr. Wawer asked about the Elementary Academic Support. Mr. Drezek stated this is for Title I services.

Mr. Wawer asked about Elementary Nursing salaries. Mr. Drezek stated this was contractual.

Mr. Wawer asked if we increased the number of nurses. Mrs. LeBlanc believes there was something with professional development and their benefits. This was something the State was mandating.

Mr. Neville remembers something like this also for the nurses. Dr. Schumann stated we can go back and research this or look at this year's budget.

Mr. Wawer asked about School-to-Career Salaries. Mr. Drezek stated we lost some of our grants that supplemented this program. Dr. Schumann stated we lost our ARRA funds.

Mr. Neville stated we also needed to deal with staffing costs when the ARRA funding ran out.

Mr. Wawer asked about the General Ed Equipment line item. Mr. Drezek stated this was due to line item consolidations. Dr. Schumann would need to go back to look at this.

Mr. Wawer asked if this was a one-time item. Chairman Sirard would also like to know. Mr. Drezek is not sure what the former business manager did with the line items. When we reconciled accounts we might have taken funds out this account in order to pay for IT costs.

Mr. Wawer asked about furniture and fixture costs. Those are the years when we had money left over and we moved it to the next year. Mr. Wawer stated if we had actuals for the current year the amounts might be different. This might allow us to do something good on the other end. Mr. Drezek stated if we held off on purchasing equipment that particular year, it was for us to carry over funding to the next year.

Dr. Schumann stated we receive a request every year for more chairs. We wait until the end of the year to make sure the money is actually there or did we use for the rollover or IT costs. We budget the funds but will most likely move it to another account.

Mr. Neville does not believe we need to get involved at this level. We ask Dr. Schumann and Mr. Drezek to come up with funds when they are needed for these kinds of expenses. They will tell us what accounts they are taking the funds from by using line item transfers.

Mr. Wawer asked about the ESL Tutor salaries. Mr. Drezek stated they are hourly and are non-benefit employees.

Mr. Wawer asked about Elementary Computer teachers. Dr. Schumann stated these are classroom teachers.

Mr. Peabody stated there are computer teachers at the elementary level. Dr. Schumann stated students will go to the computer class for lessons. This is considered as one of their specials.

Mr. Jonaitis added that all teachers have a certain amount of prep periods. Students will go to the special classes like art, music, PE and computer class so the classroom teachers will have a prep period.

Mr. Wawer asked about what they are being taught. Mr. Neville stated they are taught a number of different types of programs. Some are related to math and literacy. They are all related to the curriculum.

Dr. Schumann added they will learn how to keyboard and use the technology being provided.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated the two teachers will service the 7 elementary schools.

Mr. Wawer asked about revenue and SPED costs. We receive a rebate each year from the Federal Government. Will this be the same again this year?

Dr. Schumann stated that depends on what the legislature wants to give us. Last year it was 70%. We have heard that number might drop to 68%. We also heard there is a \$500 million dollar surplus and it might go up to 72%. We are not really sure what we will get.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated our former Business Manager Chris Chemerka used to stay with the 68% amount for budgeting purposes.

Mr. Wawer would like us to address the Federal mandates for SPED costs if possible. Dr. Schumann added that every school district in the State is asking the same kind of questions.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated the money we do receive is only a fraction of what we should be getting.

Mr. Wawer believes this problem can be solved.

Mr. Peabody asked about the 3 curriculum administrators. Dr. Schumann stated Ms. McKernan is our Chief Academic Officer and is responsible for curriculum for students in grades K-12. Ms. Middleton is our Humanities Coordinator and Dr. Faulkner is our STEAM Coordinator. They were both brought in to help with building our new high school and to coordinate the curriculum as we move forward. The law is Common Core and we must adhere to what is required. For a district our size, having 3 people in this department is relatively small.

Mr. Peabody asked why we have a specific Humanities Coordinator. Dr. Schumann stated we

are blending the curriculum from the STEAM side to the Humanities side. We are trying to give a voice to both sides. We are looking for ways to integrate all sides of the curriculum. He envisions eliminating department chairs. We are trying to blend instruction together for the time the students are in school.

Mrs. LeBlanc added that they are also helping with the teacher evaluations. Dr. Schumann added they are evaluating 52 staff members between the two of them.

Mr. Jonaitis stated we are losing local control. We are being told by the State that we need to do certain things and must pay for it. We are making a choice to blend Humanities and Steam together. These kids are not going right out to the business world. Some of them will go onto trade school or post secondary education. We are doing too much for them. We need to give the students a basic education. He does not like the direction we are going in.

Mr. Peabody stated that he understands both Mr. Jonaitis and Dr. Schumann regarding this. In the technology field they are welcoming STEAM and Humanities. Blending needs to occur. He knows firsthand that we are not providing our students with the basic needs for writing, reading and comprehension.

Mr. Peabody would like to know if we have any alternatives to doing this. Dr. Schumann stated we eliminated some of the Department Chairs. If we eliminate Humanities or STEAM we would need Department Chairs to take us in this direction. The Board made this decision last year to consolidate. We need to make sure the curriculum is being followed.

Mr. Jonaitis added like bringing back Department heads. Dr. Schumann stated that is correct.

Mr. Peabody stated he is experiencing the same kind of problems at his work now, trying to break down the silos and consolidate.

Mr. Neville stated we are creating one culture and are trying to speak with one voice. We had multiple cultures before.

Chairman Sirard asked what would be a comfortable budget to present to the Town Council. What is a fair number for a percentage increase the Board would like to present. We are attacking line numbers.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked what the percentage increase would be if we mirrored our budget last year meeting our contractual obligations. Dr. Schumann stated the number Mr. Drezek worked up was 4.55%. We have started to take things from the budget. We have removed the new initiatives for the assistant principals and counselors along with other reductions that we are comfortable with. We are looking at 3.55% or 3.5%.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated to maintain our current budget, we would need to have at least 3.5%. Dr. Schumann stated we could probably go to 3.49%. Any additional cuts will take from what we currently have.

Mr. Neville asked about the complementary evaluators? He is leery about taking this out of the budget and then we will need to come up with something we can't afford. Dr. Schumann believes he will still be able to do this. We have taken money out of salaries from the retirements. If we take another \$100K we would be at \$300K. He believes we will have a few more retirements that will occur.

Mr. Neville added you will still need to pay for the pensions and will need the real numbers for the insurance. Dr. Schumann added we need a lot of real numbers.

Mr. Neville is comfortable with 3.5%. It is easier to cut than add back in. Dr. Schumann

agreed with Mr. Neville. He would be more comfortable with 3.7% but 3.5% will work.

Mr. Peabody asked if we have defensible evidence to back this percentage up. We cannot defend this if we do not know what it is. He would like to know what the numbers are or let the public and Town Council know that this is a work in progress. What will Saturday's meeting accomplish? Will this be a joint session with the Town Council?

Chairman Sirard stated this is a backward way of doing a budget that we have inherited. One of the consequences is the unfunded mandates. He is looking at cutting the 7 assistant principals and 3 counselors. We have a \$161K increase in the equipment allowance. We cannot buy new desks or equipment. We cannot afford the IT budget. We need to look at the Special Education budget and ask if we can do any better. These are all driving forces to the budget. We need to see if we can do this better. Half of our staff are at top salaries.

Mr. Peabody stated we are in agreement. We need to add caveats and defend it, so people will not think the school Board is going crazy. His suggestion for Saturday is to look at the line items and justify them. He asked do we have a contingency fund.

Chairman Sirard stated we do not have a slush fund on the Board of Education. We try to get our line items as close as we can to what has been budgeted. We can use line item transfers as necessary.

Dr. Schumann stated he has done budgets before where each principal has sat with him and presented their budget needs. He has met with the principals and has cut their budgets by \$5.5 million.

Mr. Peabody stated we need to defend the budget we present.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated that is why she wanted to know what a level budget would look like. If we do anything else, cuts will need to be made. She feels we have opened up the bridge of communication with the Town Council. She would like us to present a 3.5% budget to maintain what we currently have. Anything other reductions will mean cuts. She feels this would be good starting point.

Mr. Neville stated we are obligated to present the needs of the district. The budget process will not stop here. We can work with 3.5% and continue to look for efficiencies once we know what our numbers are. The Superintendent has said he can work with this. He will not second guess him. We will continue to fine tune our budget with the Superintendent. He is comfortable with 3.5%.

Mrs. LeBlanc added that she would like the Town Council to know where we are coming from. This way they have a starting point of our budget and we are trying to move forward with the process.

Mr. Wawer stated we are not looking at actual dollars. Dr. Schumann stated the Finance Committee are looking at these numbers each month.

Mr. Wawer added that we have fiscal challenges. We need to balance our educational needs and keep in mind what the taxpayers are looking for. Our existing educational cost sharing is not where it should be. Magnet schools are costing us. The Town Council increased our taxes last year. We have a lot of home foreclosures in Enfield. He does not believe we can realistically go past a 1% tax increase. We need to continue to look for economies of scale and efficiencies.

Mr. Jonaitis stated you can scrutinize all you want. There are needs and wants and we have contractual obligations. We are at a point in our education in order to save programs we will

need to increase class sizes or make cuts. This is something we fought hard to get them where they are at now. You can go thru all the programs and go line by line you might find some money here or there. Line item transfers are used from one year to the next year. We are looking at 3.5% of a \$64 million dollar budget, you will still be looking at salaries and benefits. We are stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Mr. Wawer asked what our contractual obligations are for salaries next year. Mr. Drezek stated for salaries it is \$947K.

Mr. Wawer stated we cannot keep going back to the well. Our tax base in Enfield is not growing to support increases.

Mr. Neville agreed that money plays a significant role in Connecticut. We are trying to balance our needs and work with the Town Council. We do not set the tax rates. The Superintendent believes he can do this with a 3.5% or 3.55% budget as a starting point. We will have long discussion with the Town Council regarding our needs. The Town Council will look at the needs for the town. We are not looking at the town's side of the budget. He knows there will be some cuts but we need to meet our educational needs. We have all day Kindergarten in our budget. He believes we are presenting a reasonable budget.

Mr. Wawer reviewed some of the other districts budget percentage requests and some of them are presenting 0% budgets.

Chairman Sirard stated these towns are doing what we have already done. We have made cuts and have consolidated programs. We said four years ago that these towns will be in the same boat that we are in and will need to make changes like we did. Full day Kindergarten is staying in the budget.

Mr. Wawer asked if full day Kindergarten is State law.

Chairman Sirard stated not yet. It could be yet another mandate down the road. We have some concerns about spending funds appropriately in the IT department. He is hearing a 1% budget and a 3.5% budget. We need to give the Superintendent some direction. If the Board is in agreement, he would like the Superintendent to show us what a 3% budget would look like.

Dr. Schumann stated that Mr. Drezek just ran the numbers from 3.55% to 3% and made some additional adjustments.

Chairman Sirard asked the Board if they are comfortable with 3%. We will be very lucky to see 3% budget from the Town Council.

Dr. Schumann stated we will most likely need to take some items from the budget that we are currently enjoying.

Chairman Sirard added that we either make the cuts now or make them later. Dr. Schumann stated we may receive an IT adjustment like we have in the past. We will also receive firm numbers as we move forward with the budget process. We do not want to alarm people by taking items away that will hurt.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated she tends to be fiscally conservative and believes we are being conservative with this budget. We are not asking for a lot with our budget request. She would prefer to ask the Town Council for 3.5%. We are rolling our budget forward and this is what we need. Any cuts that will be made will be deep.

Mr. Peabody asked how we can conduct the evaluations without the elementary assistant principals. We will need to propose something different like a budget range. We need to list

what the percentage will be if we cut out certain items from the budget. We need to show a range that we are working to be fiscally responsible.

Mr. Jonaitis stated we are being presented with choices. We established the Humanities position last year. Is this person more important than hiring retired principals to conduct evaluations to alleviate the pressure the elementary principals will be dealing with? These are the kinds of choices we will be looking at. How much will be spending on new technology vs. the evaluation process.

Chairman Sirard stated we do not need to figure out a number tonight. We will meet again on Saturday. We know that with a 3.5% budget, our budget will remain flat. We need to put a face with the cuts. We need to know what the cuts will be.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated she is always comparing the prior year to the current year to the future year. The 3.5% is a good starting point. This will cover our contractual obligations. We know additional cuts will be needed. By listing the cuts, you will be able to view the cause and effect. We will need to know how deep our cuts will go.

Mr. Jonaitis added that is how he felt four years ago. We had nowhere to go. One of the cuts was the JFK sports.

Chairman Sirard stated we know what a flat budget will look like. In order to move the process along, he would like the Superintendent to show us what a 3% to a 2% budget would look like. We are not voting on a budget tonight. These are the sacrifices we will need to make with each percentage cut from the budget. This way on Saturday, we will know what the budget would look like

Mr. Wawer stated when faced with fiscal challenges, we need to look at doing things differently. Hire outside consultants and retired principals. We need to think out of the box.

Mr. Grady stated we are asking the Superintendent to do a lot for Saturday's meeting. If we cancelled Saturday's meeting would that give you enough time to prepare this information.

Mr. Neville would prefer to hold a Saturday meeting.

Board members agreed for the Superintendent to present a 3% and 2% budget on Saturday.

6. Adjournment

Mr. Wawer moved, seconded by Mr. Grady to adjourn the Special Meeting of February 18, 2014.

All ayes, motion passed unanimously.

Meeting stood adjourned at 9:33 PM.

Vincent M. Grady
Secretary
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary