

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 12, 2013**

A special meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held at Town Hall in Council Chambers, located at 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, CT on March 12, 2013.

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Peter Jonaitis, Tina LeBlanc, Vin Grady, Donna Szewczak, Tom Sirard, Joyce Hall, Jen Rancourt (arrived at 7:14 PM) and Timothy Neville

MEMBERS ABSENT: Kevin Fealy

ALSO PRESENT: Dr. Jeffrey Schumann, Superintendent

5. **SPECIAL PRESENTTION FROM THE BOARD'S MEMBERS ON THE JOINT TC/BOE SECURITY COMMITTEE:**

Chairman Neville stated tonight's meeting will address the recommendations from the Joint Security Committee on ways to enhance the safety and security of Enfield's Schools. The committee is comprised of three Town Council Members – Carol Hall, Cindy Mangini and Greg Strokes; three Board of Education Members – Kevin Fealy, Donna Szewczak (alternate), Vin Grady and Tim Neville; Town Manager – Matt Coppler; Superintendent – Jeffrey Schumann; Deputy Superintendent – Chris Drezek; Director of Public Safety – Chris Bromson; Chief of Police – Carl Sferrazza; Police Captain – Fred Hall and Fire Chief – Ed Richards.

Chairman Neville reviewed the time line and the committee's focus concentrating on the regular school day. The committee's focus is to buy time by giving the police sufficient time to arrive on the scene. He reviewed the recommended strategies to delay, educate, train and deescalate.

Chairman Neville stated the committee has been meeting over the past 10 weeks. They attended a state-wide security symposium on January 7, 2013 and were introduced to BEST practices and a systems approach. He reviewed the four key areas: Prevention and Mitigation; Preparedness; Response and Recovery.

Mrs. Rancourt arrived at 7:14 PM.

Chairman Neville reviewed progress to date and the recommendations made to both the Board and Town Council to strategically enhance; Building Security/Communication; Safety Protocols/Emergency Procedures and Armed Security Personnel.

Chairman Neville reviewed Building Security Plans to enhance building entry protocols; hardening the perimeter and increasing communication in emergency situations.

Chairman Neville reviewed Safety Protocols & Emergency Procedures to review and revise as necessary all daily safety and security operating procedures; revise Board policies as needed to

reflect these new protocols and procedures; train all district personnel and practice these protocols and procedures.

Chairman Neville reviewed Armed Security Personnel by delaying someone getting access to the schools includes the addition of armed security guards. He reviewed the rationale used to make this recommendation. We currently have SRO's (School Resource Officers) at the secondary schools and they support the other 8 elementary schools including Head Start. He reviewed the strategies considered by the committee.

Chairman Neville stated the armed uniformed security officers will be under the jurisdiction of the police department and will be trained by them. They will recruit from retired police officers. They will act in the role of greeters in each building and will be in direct contact with the police but do not have any powers to arrest. If the armed security officers are approved, the plan will be re-evaluated in 2 years to see if it is working. They will be part time employees and will begin in September 2013.

Chairman Neville reviewed the next steps being considered by the legislation for school security initiatives in Hartford and Washington. The committee will look into after school hours, non-public schools and monitoring all initiatives. The Board and Town council will continue to harden the perimeter in all schools and will finalize the MOU.

Chairman Neville stated the Town Council and Board of Education will each hold a special meeting to review the MOU and take any necessary action. They will hold a community conversation on school security on March 27, 2013.

Chairman Neville stated the Joint Security Committee members have made recommendations to enhance the physical security of the buildings; provide revised security protocols for controlling building access; provide revised emergency procedures and protocols for handling emergencies; provide strategies and personnel to delay access to buildings giving the EPS time to arrive at the buildings; provide opportunities for continuing public discussion and budgetary consideration for the 2013-14 budget process that will ultimately enhance safety and security in all Enfield schools.

Ms. Hall asked if the School Security Conversation date has been changed from March 27th to March 25th.

Chairman Neville stated the Board will present our budget to the Town Council on March 25th. The Community Conversation on School Security will be held on March 27th. Chairman Neville would like Dr. Schumann to send something out regarding the upcoming meeting dates to Board members.

Mr. Jonaitis would like a copy of the presentation. Dr. Schumann stated he will provide all Board members with copies of the presentation.

Chairman Neville stated the Joint Security Committee thought due to the importance of this topic we would devote the entire meeting to discuss school security. People have a lot of questions regarding this. This is an emotional topic. We have presented our best recommendation to you. At this time, we will answer any questions audience members may have to the best of our ability. We will not be able to address any direct school related security procedural questions. We do not want to share any school security information with the public.

6. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:

Pat Droney, Bobolink Drive – Mr. Droney commended the Board and Town Council for being

proactive with school security. So many young lives have been lost and it has affected us deeply. He is a retired police officer from Enfield after 30 years. He was a campus safety director at a private school and is currently working for a small police department in Massachusetts. He is concerned with the ability of retired police officers as security guards. He knows his own physical limitations. As we get older, we do not move as quickly or respond as quickly as we used to. Many school shooters are very young. Our reflexes are a lot slower than that of someone younger. He would like us to use the best conditioned and the best possible option available to protect our students. He likes having SRO's in the buildings or using police officers on a rotation basis. Our schools have been made fire proofed. Building codes need to be revamped to protect against active shooters. He thanked the Board for a job well done.

Chairman Neville thanked Mr. Droney. We are putting forth our best recommendations. We will continue to harden the perimeter of the buildings to cause a delay. Armed security guards are the last piece of defense to keep them out of the building. It is our intent to cause a delay until the PD can arrive.

Mr. Droney stated active shooters are looking for an easy target. This will be all over the news that Enfield is going to do something. Hopefully they will go somewhere else and they will be as prepared as Enfield is.

Ms. Hall read a statement from Judy Apruzzese-Desroches. Ms. Apruzzese-Desroches does not support having armed security guards in our elementary schools. She does not care if it is a member of the Enfield Police Department or a member from the State Police. Having guns in our schools will not prevent someone determined to do something horrific. If her children were still in school and armed security guards were in place, she would put her children in private school or home school them. She would also move away from Enfield. Guns have no place in education.

Chairman Neville reminded audience members that there are upcoming meetings. The School Community Conversation will be held on March 27th. The location and time for the conversation will be announced at a later time.

Chairman Neville stated we are interested in hearing from the public. We have all looked at this and want to protect our students. He will express how he feels when we get to Board member comments. This has been a personal challenge and he believes all the Board members have the same view. These are our kids and we need to protect them. He would love to not discuss this topic. He would rather discuss improving reading and math scores. That would be a joy to discuss instead of an active shooter. We are trying to make the best decision we can in the best interest of our kids.

7. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Jonaitis would like to receive hard copies of any presentation given. This presentation was different from the last presentation and was difficult to follow. He would prefer if the Chairman would refrain from making your own personal comments to the Board until the Board Member Comments portion on the agenda.

Mr. Jonaitis agrees with Ms. Hall and Mrs. Apruzzese-Desroches. He would like us to operate the way we have been from the past 300 years without armed security. As far as he can see, we have three choices available. We can remain the way we have been in the past without any guns in the buildings. The proposed plan with retired police officers as pointed out by Mr. Droney, physical conditions may prohibit them. Having a regular trained officer present in the building would be more efficient. They can move and react faster. Having SRO's would be good. Having an officer and a cruiser at a building will make someone think twice.

Mr. Jonaitis would like the Joint Security Committee members to discuss this with the Police Chief and come up with a hybrid plan – part retiree and part police officer. He thinks there is a lot more that can be done. He is concerned with the safety not the familiarity with using random officers. He just wants them to protect the kids.

Mr. Jonaitis would also like them to look into the end of the school day and look at the kids getting on and off of the buses. He believes the costs to protect the kids will increase. Strategies to buy time and having a trained officer would cause the least amount of damage until police backup arrived. He would like to see a hybrid plan.

Mr. Jonaitis would prefer to continue as is. He is not in favor of only using retired police officers. He would like to see us use regular police officers on a rotation basis and retired police officers.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated December 14th changed the way we look at things. Both she and Mrs. Rancourt have struggled over this topic. We have young children in our schools. We would like to continue with the status quo. It is not the same anymore. She has concerns that were mentioned by Mr. Droney. There is a cost with doing something. The cost of doing nothing is a child. You cannot put a price tag on our children. This is a struggle for all of us. Hearing input from audience members is helpful. We want to make the correct decision for everyone.

Mr. Grady wished the Enfield High Boys Basketball Team good luck in the State Game tonight against Weston.

Mr. Grady thanked Mr. Droney for his comments that put things into perspective. We are not living in the times when we went to school. Times have changed and not for the better. We are not as safe as we used to be. The Joint Security Committee was formed and we also struggled with our decisions and recommendations. We need to do what we can to protect our kids and do whatever we can. We need to worry about the costs but cannot put a price tag on our kids. He would rather them be safe and go overboard. We have a great police department in Enfield and they are well trained. He hopes we never need to use their training. We struggled with the recommendations. He is confident with our police chief's recommendation and he supports him. We are taking every precaution we can by hardening our buildings.

Chairman Neville would also like to continue as we have in the past like Mr. Jonaitis stated but since December 14th times have changed. He has also struggled with this. He does not want to take a chance and gamble with somebody's children. He would rather use police in our buildings but there are not enough officers available. As of now, this is the best recommendation and he is willing to support it. This is a plan that will make a difference with our kids and he supports it.

Mrs. Szewczak stated it takes a lot of time to absorb, address and understand who we have become over these past few months. No one wants this to happen or truly understands why it happened. We have people in our community that deal with these things on a daily basis and we need to listen to them, understand and respond to their recommendation. Attending the active shooter training rang true to her about what it really takes to keep a school safe. When you are waiting 3 minutes can be a long time for help to arrive. She is supporting the Chief of Police plan.

Mr. Sirard agrees that times are different. The world is not the same anymore. He agrees with the Board members when it comes to the safety of our kids. When he was in the military he was trained in physical security. The Chief of Police has been ahead of the bell curve with the active shooters training for several years. When the chief recommends something, he takes it very seriously.

Mr. Sirard does not agree with using a “Wal-Mart” security guard in our buildings. He would prefer to use our top cop’s judgment when hiring security guards. He agrees that this is a top notch security plan. This is a good plan that addresses multiple layers to make our buildings safer. We would not be placing a “rent a cop” in our schools. This is a mischaracter of judgment. Consider the security guard as Mr. Rogers that is packing. He supports this plan. Our Chief of Police and Public Security Director believes this is a good plan. He also says this is a good idea.

Ms. Hall stated that she watches CNN and listens to the experts. They are all saying do not rush. If you are putting an armed person in the school, they should be fully trained to handle the education process as a greeter.

Ms. Hall believes that introducing someone with a gun will instill the concept of fear in our elementary schools. She is concerned about this. She has spoken to parents at a recent PTO Meeting and they feel safe in our schools as well as their children. They all feel safer with the hardening of the perimeters of the schools. She does not want us to introduce the anxiety of needing to worry. We can tell the students you don’t need to worry because he is here to protect you. She does not believe that will be the end result. We will be introducing fear in her opinion.

Ms. Hall added spending more time on mental health problems across the community and in our schools is being discussed on the Children’s Health Committee in the legislature. We have many groups looking at ways to address school safety. She does not feel that we should be first out of the gate. We should reviewing other options and not be rushed.

Mrs. Rancourt stated that she has also had a hard time with this just like Mrs. LeBlanc. This is not what she anticipated. She has had a hard time digesting this. Since she has become a Board member, she has learned that you need to take the recommendations from the professionals because they know best. The Chief of Police and the Public Safety Director are recommending this plan. They know what is going on in our town. This is why she is supporting the plan that has been presented. As a mother, she wishes she didn’t have to support it.

Chairman Neville reminded the public that the Board will present their budget to the Town Council on March 25th and the Security Community Conversation will be held on March 27th.

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

9. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Grady moved, seconded by Mrs. Szewczak to adjourn the Special Meeting of March 12, 2013.

All ayes, motion passed unanimously.

Meeting stood adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Donna Szewczak
Secretary
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary