

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JULY 8, 2014**

A regular meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held at Town Hall in Council Chambers, located at 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, CT on July 8, 2014.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chairman Sirard.
2. **INVOCATION OR MOMENT OF SILENCE:** David Wawer
3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** David Wawer
4. **FIRE EVACUATION ANNOUNCEMENT:** Chairman Sirard announced the fire evacuation announcement.
5. **ROLL CALL:**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Peter Jonaitis, Raymond Peabody, Lori Unghire, David Wawer, Vin Grady, Timothy Neville, Stacy Thurston and Tom Sirard

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tina LeBlanc

ALSO PRESENT: Chris Drezek, Deputy Superintendent

6. **BOARD GUEST(S)** - None
7. **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT** - None
8. **AUDIENCES**

Bob Tkacz, Enfield Terrace – Mr. Tkacz shared his thoughts about a video on education with Board members. ECS funding has increased every year. The last 5 years the funding has been flat. The State is broke and does not have any money coming. The funding is based on need and the number of students in the school system. The number of births has decreased considerably. Parochial schools take around 15% of the incoming students and students are going to magnet schools. We are not operating our schools at capacity. These numbers come directly from the budget. He reviewed high school scores compared to other schools. This Board is not improving education and it needs to be resolved. False accusations have been made about the Town Council. The Board has a poor attitude. He would like the Board to look at the Fire Department's budget. It is the best budget he has seen and the Board could learn a lot by looking at it. Thank you.

9. **BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Mr. Wawer thanked the families, students and parents that got involved in the budget process. The budget is now finalized. He encouraged everyone to get involved in the beginning of the budget process. We started in February with budget workshops that were open to the public to attend. He presented a list of items to look at and one of the items was Suffield Vo-Ag. He asked why we were spending \$360K per year to send students there. He learned that a mandate exists and we must send students to this program. We need to look at maintaining the programs that exist in the Town of Enfield. We also spend between \$4K and \$5K per student to send them to CREC magnet schools. This is also another State mandate that we must adhere to that cost us \$1.3 million dollars each year. This is truly unfair to the students and families in the Enfield school system. Both of these items require a remedy from the State

of Connecticut. When you vote in November, ask your State Legislatures if they are there to help us with the \$1.3 million dollar mandate and the \$360K dollar mandate that have been imposed on us. We don't pay to send students to Cheney Technical School and we should not have to pay for these other school systems either.

Mr. Wawer urges parents and students to get involved early and when we have the formal budget sessions come and voice your opinions. We do this in an open and collaborative manner and look at all kinds of ideas. We appreciate your input.

Mr. Neville echoes Mr. Wawer's comments regarding budget meetings. This is the communities budget. We need your input. We want you to call us, e-mail us and attend the meetings. Let us know what you are thinking.

Mr. Neville stated Suffield Vo-Ag and CREC Magnet schools are all additional opportunities for our students. He would like the Legislation to look at other means for funding these opportunities. The decision we made previously regarding Suffield Vo-Ag was a reluctant decision due to not enough funds in our budget. We will discuss a solution later on the agenda for these seats. He would like us to move forward. The budget time is not the best time for Board members. He complements the Board for working together during this past budget season. We have prepared a reasonable transparent budget. We will work with the community on ways to improve the budget process.

Mr. Neville wished everyone a happy relaxing summer. We will continue to work together to improve the education for the students in Enfield. We have made some significant improvements over the past year. Thank you.

Mr. Jonaitis addressed the class size capacities mentioned by an audience member and asked what the class size capacities were before the elementary school consolidation occurred.

Chairman Sirard reminded audience and Board members that we must refrain from personalities and cannot talk back and forth during Board Member Comments. We are violating our own policy by continuing in this manner. This is how we conduct our meetings.

Mr. Jonaitis stated that the elementary reorganization did a lot to bring the schools up to full capacity. JFK is currently at full capacity. With the consolidation of the two high schools you will see one high school at full capacity. We should not be compared to another school system from another State. It is not a fair comparison. We should be compared to other school systems in our DRG.

Mr. Jonaitis wished the German soccer team good luck with their match on Sunday.

Mr. Jonaitis asked about phone calls being made to poll Board members about Suffield Vo-Ag. He never received a call about this.

Mr. Jonaitis stated that he has also been looking for information from the Superintendent about what the STEAM and Humanities Coordinators have accomplished during their first year with us and what the Chief Technology Officer has accomplished over the past two years. He has also sent e-mails to both the superintendent and Chairman Sirard about this request and has heard back nothing.

Mr. Jonaitis does not like the fact that if a Board member requested something and that it is not being done. He was told that a detailed report would come out in August. He is just looking for a summary, nothing detailed. He does not believe the Superintendent would be happy requesting information 3 or more times before he gets it. He would like the Chairman of the Board to make sure this information is available. He is looking for a brief summary. This

is no different than an observation for a teacher.

Mr. Jonaitis added that he has a new neighbor that works in Westover and chose Enfield because our school system is in the middle and he did not want his children to go to school in Chicopee, MA. This made him feel good that we are doing something correctly some of the times.

Mr. Peabody would like to see the Board improve our fiscal house. We need to expand our line items to some more detail. He would like to see a normal breakdown of line items similar to the business world. This would provide easier traceability when it comes time for the next budget cycle. We are very close to doing our budget this way and we did a pretty good job with this budget to a digestible format.

Mr. Peabody does not like what happened in East Windsor with the budget. He would like to receive monthly true-up reports about our budget. We can then report back to the Board and the public regarding our finances. He believes we can modify the reports in Munis to make us a bit more efficient. We are spending funds accordingly and are not hiding any money. Our budget was reduced by \$1.6 million dollars. We did not layoff any staff due to attrition.

Mr. Peabody added as mentioned by Chairman Sirard, look out for next year. We have needs and will need to be prepared for this. He appreciates the communication we received and feels Chairman Sirard did a good job keeping us informed and on the same page without any arguments.

Mr. Peabody stated the Board needs to improve their communications with the public. We need to prioritize our programs so the public is informed. He would like us to revamp a citizen's audit committee and work on our communications.

Mr. Peabody also attended a Fermi summer soccer game.

Mrs. Unghire thanked Board members for all of their hard work during the budget process. She has learned a lot this year. She wished everyone an enjoyable and safe summer.

Chairman Sirard wished America a happy birthday. He is a veteran and this time of year means a lot to him. We are all working towards the same goal and are on the same team.

Chairman Sirard stated we will always be improving. We have made significant improvements. We have opened up the lines of communications with the public and have consistently tried to notify people about what is going on. We cannot knock on people's doors to make them understand. We use our student messenger system, E-TV, our website, Facebook, Twitter and publicize our meetings. The only other thing left to do is knock on doors. We can open up the door but can't make people walk through it.

Chairman Sirard stated the last time we had a Citizen's Audit Committee it was successful and there were many similar accusations about money being hidden. It was proven that no money was being hidden. The committee did find areas for efficiencies where we consolidated the elementary schools. He has no problem with citizen's looking at our books. Our accounting practices are in accordance with all State laws.

Chairman Sirard stated at a previous meeting he mentioned the State has an obligation for 60% of our budget. The State relies too heavily on property taxes to fund education. This is why we have CREC and ECS funding. They are also the ones that can change the rules. SPED costs are one of the biggest factors with our budget. They are not reimbursing us for the Excess Costs for SPED costs. There is a lot more going on with the funding equations than we see. If we see a bump with Excess Costs there will be a decrease in another area which

basically is flat funding us and the Town. This year we received an increase of \$70 million but also received a cut in our Excess Cost Grants. This is been the same story for the past 12 years. The State may be broke but so is the Town.

Chairman Sirard stated that we fought hard to reduce class sizes in certain developmental stages. Our buildings may have been built to hold larger numbers but the State has also stipulated the number of students allowed in certain classrooms. The building capacity may be one number and the classroom sizes may be another especially in the lower grades. By consolidating elementary schools, we now have controlled enrollments across the district.

Chairman Sirard wished everyone a happy Fourth of July and hopes to see everyone on the Town Green for the Town-wide Celebration.

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

11. NEW BUSINESS

a. Authorization of FY2014-15 Suffield Vo-Ag Seats

Chairman Sirard stated during the budget process tough cuts were made. A budget is a guesstimate of the future needs of the district. We know what we will pay our teachers and administrators. We don't know what our unemployment costs or health insurance costs will be. We are not allowed to have excess money or have a savings account. We are held to a higher standard than most businesses are. We have not changed any of our line items and can now send all 10 students to Suffield Vo-Ag next year. We have crossed all of our "T's" and dotted all of our "I's". He would like the Board to vote on reinstating the 3 seats for this year. This does not mean that we will not be looking at this again for next year.

Mr. Neville moved, seconded by Mr. Peabody that the Enfield Board of Education reinstates the (3) three seats that were previously cut at Suffield Vo-Ag for FY2014-15.

Discussion:

Mr. Jonaitis would like to know where this money came from. Where did we over budget? He is going to vote in favor of this but would like to know how the money came about for funding the 3 additional seats.

Chairman Sirard asked the exact question and from our projected health insurance costs and CREC tuitions began to solidify to where we are at now. We had projected invoices and now we are receiving actual invoices. This equates to .0004% of the budget or around \$26K.

Mr. Neville added this has been going on since we were both teaching. We don't know how many substitutes are needed until the last day of school. The bills start coming in and there are also end of the year expenses. His understanding from the Town Council is that if there is any end of the year funds, we can use that towards any educational needs. Mrs. West is keeping an eye on this daily. This is something that Mr. Drezek used to do when he was the business manager.

Mr. Jonaitis asked how much money did we actually find? Chairman Sirard stated it was \$25K and some change. It was close to \$26K.

Mr. Drezek agreed with Mr. Neville's comments. When it comes to the magnet school tuitions, we will not receive the invoices until the end of the month. When we started the Superintendent's budget process, we estimated the amounts. Once we reconciled the invoices that were originally estimates, we had a better understanding of our budget for the fiscal year

and will make adjustments accordingly for the next fiscal year. This is how we were able to come up with the additional funding for the remaining Suffield Vo-Ag seats.

Mr. Neville stated we are looking at a \$62 million dollar budget and have reconciled it pretty close. It could have gone in the other direction.

Chairman Sirard agreed that as long as we are not in any negative areas at the end of the year, he is pleased.

A vote by **roll-call 8-0-0** passed unanimously.

12. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Curriculum Committee

Mr. Neville stated the Curriculum Committee met on June 18th. He sent out an addendum to the minutes that included information regarding a grant progress report for the year. Ms. McKernan gave a description of what the grants were used so it will help people to understand them.

Mr. Neville stated that committee members reviewed a proposed policy change for policy #5123 Promotion/Retention and will be readdressed by the policy committee at a later date. This does not need to be done until November for retention purposes.

Mr. Neville added that the committee discussed adding a course to AP computer science that will emphasis coding for the 2015-16 school year. Ms. McKernan will bring an update regarding this to the Board and what she envisions for computer science development.

Mr. Jonaitis asked if this was for advance placement courses. Mr. Neville stated it is to start off with advance placement courses and add additional courses as we progress. Mr. Jonaitis asked if you have discussed this program with using Asnuntuck. Mr. Neville stated that would be part of the process and is linked to one of the grants they acquired.

Mr. Neville stated the committee also discussed IEP Plus and the options to look at all kinds of data. This will allow us to plan better for student achievement. We were quite impressed by this information we received. We have also asked Ms. McKernan to present this information to the Board. It is important for the Board to see where our money is going. The more data we collect it will become even more useful for us to use as a planning tool to improve student learning.

Mr. Peabody added that one of the demonstrations showed graphic representation of the student's performance. Trend analysis can be performed on each student to see where support is needed. This can be a time saver for principals and teachers. You can be proactively informed about student's performances. The performance plus system is a wise investment that has been made.

Mr. Neville added that the cost has not been that much. It is important for the public to see where our money is being spent. This is a powerful tool that can help students learn. Both he and Ray are very enthusiastic about this.

Mr. Neville stated they have been going out and applying for and receiving grants.

Mr. Peabody reported that a grant from the State of Connecticut for technology was received in the first quarter for \$105K. A \$20K grant from 3M for a new STEAM course in the consolidated high school. We have a pending State of Connecticut Choice Capital Grant for \$68,5K. All

indications are showing that we will receive this grant. This will create a state of the art media center at JFK. This will help our students in a multimedia fashion.

Mr. Peabody added when he started on the Board one of his goals was to see that grants would pay for the curriculum coordinators salaries. If this last grant comes through, this will bring them up to \$233K of generated revenue to the school system. The grants they are applying for are for total cost of ownership moving forward. The curriculum team is very budget consciences and they are going for grants that will provide value to the school system and the students and will assist our teachers with the delivery of education.

Mr. Peabody stated coding is computer programming. We are also looking for logic classes to go along with coding. He uses Microsoft Visio everyday to process modeling and flows. Coding should start at the elementary level. Ms. McKernan is reaching out to her people about this. We are looking to start our kids off in the early grades creating websites. Our students will be able to work anywhere using HTML. This is a good approach that is fiscally solid and will prepare our kids for the future. We are very excited about this committee.

Mr. Neville added that coding is another way of thinking. It is a logical way of thinking and starting with our kids at an early age is a way to do this.

Mr. Neville stated the folks from Asnuntuck will work with the students at JFK as mentors as part of the grant.

Mr. Peabody added that Ms. McKernan was very pleased with the student writings for the Calkins program at the elementary level. This will help our students to achieve with State testing. We discussed AP honor classes, Suffield Vo-Ag, and the ETV program partnership.

Mr. Neville stated that we asked Ms. McKernan to put together a list of our accomplishments. We don't tell people enough about what we are doing. Curriculum is our number one area and we need to let everyone know what we have accomplished and what we are doing. We have asked her to address the Board once a month with a particular topic to educate the Board and the community.

b. Policy Committee

Mr. Wawer reported that the Policy Committee met on July 7th and no recommendations will be brought forward tonight. We will review the information from the Curriculum Committee at a later date.

Chairman Sirard stated in the future to avoid any confusion, please forward any policy recommendations to Mr. Wawer and himself for the Policy Committee to review.

c. Future Use of Fermi

Chairman Sirard stated the Future Use of Fermi Committee will meet on Tuesday, July 15th to review costs for JFK and other related items. Some of the committee members will be away on vacation and any information discussed will be shared with all committee members. The meeting is open to the public.

13. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Grady moved, seconded by Mrs. Thurston that Special Meeting minutes of June 17, 2014 be approved. A vote by **show-of-hands 8-0-0** passed unanimously.

Mr. Grady moved, seconded by Mrs. Thurston that the Regular Meeting Minutes of June 24,

2014 be approved. A vote by **show-of-hands 8-0-0** passed unanimously.

14. APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS PAYROLL - None

15. CORRESPONDENCE AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Peabody stated that Board members received an e-mail late tonight from Alison Castoldi regarding Suffield Vo-Ag seats. She and her daughter cannot attend the meeting tonight. Mr. Peabody read the e-mail thanking the Board for filling the 3 additional seats at Suffield Vo-Ag.

16. AUDIENCES

Garrett Maxwell, Wilson Court – Mr. Maxwell thanked the Board and Dr. Schumann for reinstating the 3 seats to Suffield Vo-Ag. It has been the hopes and dreams for all 10 students to attend Suffield Vo-Ag and it is best for their educational needs and for their futures.

Eileen Maxwell, Wilson Court – Mrs. Maxwell also thanks the Board for allowing all of the students to attend Suffield Vo-Ag. She knows the budget process is not easy. The State sets the pricing for the Vocational Education schools in Connecticut. The tuition for 2014-15 will decrease to \$6,823 per student or \$211,513 for 31 students. With the savings you will receive, please use the money to reinstate a full time teacher. Dr. Schumann explained to me that Suffield Vo-Ag is included in a \$1.3 million dollar line item that includes all magnet school tuitions. Suffield Vo-Ag is the only magnet school that lets you know how many students will be attending for the next year which makes it very difficult to budget. You have mentioned that cuts may be needed for next year. Please notify us prior to the students receiving their acceptance letters. She will help them to come up with an agreement and will work with Suffield Vo-Ag. Please do not put the kids through what they went through this year again. The minimum number for incoming grade students for 2015-16 will be 9 students. Please work with Suffield to maintain incoming students to the Suffield Vo-Ag program. It would be nice if you would continue with the gentleman's agreement and continue sending 10 students each year. She has been an involved parent and will continue to be. The last Board meeting received 539 views on line. People are watching you. Thank you.

Elizabeth Davis, North Maple Street – Ms. Davis also wished happy birthday to America. She thanked each Board member for what you do. You work very hard and put in a lot of hours for our kids. We do not always see eye-to-eye and disagree-to-agree and stay civil to each other in the end. She seems to always be out of town during the public hearings. She thanked Mr. Peabody for meeting with parents at our convenience. Please continue to do this. The word is getting out and parents appreciate this. She is concerned with the process that occurred for the Suffield Vo-Ag seats. The students go through a vigorous grueling process and were accepted to attend. Once the process has started, it is wrong to cut some of the seats. If we cannot provide our students with the education that they need, we should as a community outpace them to give them what they need to learn and succeed. It is also our job to outpace special education students. We know that we can pass the buck back and forth and say the State isn't giving us what we need and the Town is giving us only this amount. We need to take ownership if we are mandated and need to make it work. We need to be thankful for everything we get. Thank you for what you do. You are doing a tremendous job and have come together. We elected you to represent us and keep up the good work.

Bob Tkacz, Enfield Terrace – Mr. Tkacz referred to the movie he previously discussed. It is available at the public library. East Longmeadow turned a failure into a good student in Enfield. Some people took this in a negative way. This is the same way you do the budget process – backwards. This needs to be done differently in the future. The roads 2015 project will add to our taxes, the sewer plan and facilities studies will require referendums. School systems are getting smaller and the birth rates are dropping. Unless we have an in surge of

students moving to our town, our enrollment numbers will decrease. He would like to know what the State Statute is regarding funding. He was a member of the Audit Committee and there was money that was hidden. Money was being used for other items than they were intended for. We found a lot of discrepancies. He has spoken to several superintendents and their budget process is done differently than how Enfield does it. The school budget is between 7-14% too high. You need to get your act together and have transparency so the Town Council can understand it. You need to list an expense column like the fire department does. You should know what the tuition costs are before we send any students there. You seem to estimate your numbers on the higher side. Businesses get the actual costs and do not estimate. Thank you.

17. EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

18. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Grady moved, seconded by Mrs. Thurston to adjourn the Regular Meeting of July 8, 2014.

All ayes, motion passed unanimously.

Meeting stood adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Vincent M. Grady
Secretary
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary