

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 4, 2017**

A special meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held at Enfield Town Hall in Council Chambers, located 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, CT on January 4, 2017.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM by Tom Sirard.
2. **FIRE EVACUATION ANNOUNCEMENT:** Tom Sirard announced the fire evacuation announcement.
3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Tom Sirard
4. **ROLL CALL:**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Walter Kruzel, Raymond Peabody, Lori Unghire, Mike Ludwick, Stacy Thurston and Tom Sirard

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tina LeBlanc, Vin Grady and Tim Neville

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Christopher Drezek, Deputy Superintendent

5. **Public Hearing Regarding the Closing of Nathan Hale Elementary School (Based on the receipt of a petition filed with the Enfield Board of Education requesting a public hearing):**

Chairman Sirard stated for the record that Mr. Neville is sick, Mr. Grady is working and Mrs. LeBlanc had a previous commitment. They are unable to attend tonight's meeting but wanted the public to know they wanted to be here.

Chairman Sirard added that we are here to listen to public comments regarding the petition filed with the Board of Education. The administration and Board will not be making any comments or respond to any questions made by the public tonight. Audience members can sign up to speak using the signup sheets. Each speaker will have 5 minutes to address the Board. After everyone wanting to speak for a first time and those that would like to speak a second and final time, may do so. Please refrain from all personalities and use proper, polite decorum while in the Council Chambers.

Linda Leander, Wallop School Road – Mrs. Leander is still looking for a long term educational plan. That is one of our largest concerns. She would like to see the Board attend the Town Council quarterly Q&A meetings with the public. She is still looking for many answers to her questions. She hopes the Board does not ask for a bid waiver for our bus contract. You need to receive multiple bids regarding transportation and do what is financially best for our town. She would like to see a 2 year plan for closing any schools. The Hale decision was rushed. Sister school concept is a good idea in the long term. We still need to wait and give the high school consolidation more time to settle in. Long term goals and plans are needed before we close any other schools.

Judy Kilty, Abbe Road – Mrs. Kilty stated that 5 republicans made a decision that the citizens of Enfield disagreed with. What harm would it take to wait one more year to look into the lunch waves, nursing concerns and bussing costs? Listen to the voter's concerns. The Fermi decision was another rushed decision. She was not pleased with the Town Council meeting held the other day. Our infrastructure needs repairs. She fails to see how you expect the taxpayers to believe in you. Trust and faith needs to be earned. She has no trust in you. You

can still rescind your motion regarding Hale. The students are your number one priority. She urged the Board to do what is right and put politics aside.

Shelly Dakai, Pearl Street – Mrs. Dakai stated the December 13th Board meeting opened up her eyes regarding how people express themselves. Our students speak so eloquently when they address the Board. When the parents address the Board, they are rude and disrespectful. She asked that one of the speakers apologize to a Board member for comments made at the last Board meeting. It would show our students that bullying is not an acceptable behavior.

Point of Order:

Chairman Sirard urged all audience speakers to refrain from using personalities and names when addressing the Board.

Bob Tkacz, Hazard Avenue – Mr. Tkacz stated he attended the Glastonbury Board meeting. They are also closing a school and moving the Board offices. The students speaking at this meeting also spoke beautifully when addressing the Board. The parents were very rude. You serve on the Board or other Town committees and are volunteers. You are not paid to do this. This Board has been extremely thoughtful and you are revamping the education system. The education given in Enfield far exceeds the education delivered in other towns. They have worked together with our teachers, Town's IT department and partnership program with Asnuntuck Community College. This Board is doing a great job and has improved education in Enfield.

Bill Ballard, Abbe Road – Mr. Ballard respects what everyone believes in and what they have been told. The direction is here to make needed decisions. The Board can select what is best for our children. Our state is in grave financial danger. Do not blame the Board for the decisions they need to make. You were a bit late with the petition. He supports the education in Enfield. Look at the changes that were made at the high school. This needed to be done. Next year our budget worries will be worst. He supports the Board and the superintendent's decisions. It will get worse before it gets better.

Peter Jonaitis, Farmstead Circle – Mr. Jonaitis stated respect is something that is earned. The process regarding the decision concerns him. It kept changing. Now it was done for educational value. The Board has bylaws they need to follow and if something is not there, you should follow Robert's Rules of Order. He reviewed debates and vacancies. You all worked to get elected. A lot of people wanted Fermi to be used as our middle school. There was also a petition for this. Now there is the JFK pre-referendum committee. The whole Nathan Hale issue was done incorrectly. The Board asked for the students suggestions about school colors, mascot and graduation but you didn't listen to them either. He would like you to reconsider your vote. Remember November.

Jennifer Ryan, Sheridan Road – Mrs. Ryan stated that she is awestruck by what has occurred over the past few months. You were challenged to find money for reallocation. How can you believe this is physically being responsible! Where is the long term plan? Lowering property values and overcrowding our students into schools is not a plan. Our buildings need repair. This is not being responsible. The playgrounds need repairs. Parents are still struggling with the reorganization from two years ago. She urged Board members to reconsider their vote. We have closed Alcorn, Fermi, Stowe and Hale. You could have tabled the motion made. The decision made was not to save money. Enough is enough. She cannot allow hidden agendas to impair her children's education.

Trish Neild Barry, Buchanan Road – Mrs. Neild Barry thanked the Board members that voted against closing Hale. If you are a Board member and have kids they should go to public schools so your decisions will affect your children also. She is against rushing your decisions.

She is against moving the students to other schools without a plan. She invites all Board members to eat lunch with her son. He will need to be reminded multiple times to sit down, stop talking and to eat. What will happen when all of these kids are all trying to eat lunch? She would like the Board and administration to supervise them during lunch. How can a floating nurse help handle emergencies at multiple schools? We need long term plans. You say you care but we do not believe it. We have been asking for a long term plan for years. The students at JFK are crowded. How will we do this? A long term plan is needed. She also urged people to remember the names in November.

Jeanne Champagne, Manor Court – Mrs. Champagne opposes closing Hale. We moved to this area because our children could walk to school. The gym at Hale is new. What will happen to all of the neighborhood kids that use the playground? This school is used all of the time. We need a school in the Green Manor area. She urged Board members to reconsider their vote.

Marcie Taliceo, Coolidge Street – Ms. Taliceo is concerned citizen. She made a video for all of the children in this town. This video is not political. We need a long term educational plan. You need to include your goals and methods in this plan. We are starting another petition to ask you to take a step back. We are the voters and want our voices to be heard. We do not want a substandard education for our children. We will work with you. Our enrollment is declining. She is sending her child to a private school next year. Nursing concerns continue. She urged voters to make a change during election time. Her video did not play.

Mary Lombardo, Northfield Road – Mrs. Lombardo feels that a board member should have abstained from voting since you are leaving the Board. You can redeem yourself. She believes you were planning to close this school all along. You all have a chance to redeem yourselves. She feels the sister school philosophy is a horrible idea. She does not see any educational value with this. She would rather see K-5 schools. Fermi and Hale are gone. Please reconsider your decision. She has no stomach for Town government. You are here to listen to us. We will continue to play this game of closing schools.

Diane Glettenberg, Ridge Road – Mrs. Glettenberg went through the elementary school reorganization. Then we went through the high school reorganization. She has to say that her son loves the high school. A long term plan is a good idea. The rumor mills are circulating about programs being placed on the chopping block. Other items than sports and music should be looked at. If students need to pay for the AP fees, they will not take the tests. Some parents cannot afford to pay for these. She understands the frustrations that come with closing schools. Please look at more long term plans before any other decisions are made.

Marcie Taliceo, Coolidge Street – Second time speaking - Ms. Taliceo presented a 9 minute video to the Board using up her time.

Jessica Cuscovitch, Hunter Lane – Mrs. Cuscovitch used her first time speaking for the video presentation to be continued.

Tricia Wright, Oakwood Street – Mrs. Wright stated her son was nervous about attending EHS when the high schools consolidated. Her son loves it and is thriving at EHS. There are many benefits to block scheduling and eagle hour. The graduation requirements are increasing. Block scheduling is needed for upcoming students. Colleges look at extra-curricular activities like clubs, band and sports. She knows the elementary parents are not concerned with this know, but your kids will be here before you know it. Colleges look for a well-rounded student. Life skills are needed for all students. She is all for AP classes and our curriculum should allow them to grow with it. She has been to many Board meetings. Please think carefully before making any cuts.

Suzan Thoelen, Edgehill Street – Mrs. Thoelen stated that a long term education plan is

needed. She looked at what other school districts are doing and reviewed that with the Board. The Board should have presented a pro-active long range plan instead of being reactive. Surveying the community and stake holders is helpful when making any plan. She would like to see the Board survey parents that chose to send their children to magnet schools and ask them why they are doing this and what is lacking in our school system. She is concerned with the school capacities and the overcrowding that will be in our schools. We need to adapt to our ever changing world. A long range plan is one way Enfield can be all that it can be.

Elizabeth Davis, North Maple Street – Mrs. Davis stated she always tries to always start with a positive. She does not believe she stated a Board member's name at the last meeting. If she did, she apologizes for that. She spoke her mind at the last Board meeting and at the Town Council meeting. Everyone is saying that I am harsh to the Board. That is not true. She recorded her interview and it was not unethical. A long term education plan is what the petition is about. You need to communicate with the parents and work with us. It would be a win-win if we do this right. Let's work together as a team. She congratulated a Board member on being appointed to the Town Council and wished him luck.

Andrea Howarth, Monroe Road – Mrs. Howarth is also looking for a long term educational plan for the future of her children and other children in Enfield. Many of her friends have moved out of Enfield. Our teachers have done an amazing job with her kids. We have great teachers. This is why she is still here. She is losing her faith in the Board. You are losing the voices of your young families. You are looking at losing your young families in Enfield. You are losing our trust. People are listening to what is going on in Enfield and at Board meetings. A long term plan with short term outcomes is needed. She is looking for a long term plan. She would like you to reconsider your decision. She is willing to stay in Enfield. Her kids are vested in Enfield.

Bill Hosley, Old Abbe Road – Mr. Hosley thanked the Board for volunteering your time and being our Board members. His children have all gone through the Enfield school system. You have a difficult job managing changes in a declining state. The money allocated to Enfield will be worse. You need to match the programs with the resources you have. He watched the consolidation of the high schools and that was done right. It would be nice to keep every school open. There is limited economic growth in the state and in Enfield. The demographics are changing and we need to change with them. Changes are hard.

Theresa Meyer, Thomas Street – Mrs. Meyer went to Enrico Fermi high school and recently moved back to Enfield. She was in the military and we were taught to improvise, adapt and overcome. That is life. Two other schools in Enfield were closed – Kosciuszko and Noah Webster. You are in a hard position. Information has been missed when dealing with the negativity on both sides. She supports the Board's decision and you deserve respect. We need to step back and respect each other. Your job as a Board member is a thankless job. She thanked them for what they are doing and supports them.

Joshua Hamre, New King Street – Mr. Hamre stated remember November is too late. You need to talk to the committee chairpersons now. The town is structured to place members on both the Board and Town Council. Closing a school and reorganizing or restructuring has not been completed and it impacts this community. When we did the K-6 reorganization, we had multiple community conversations. This time the process was rushed to make a budget deadline. It is a disservice to the students in Enfield. Do what is best for the children. He is still optimistic. Our children should not need to adapt and overcome. Adults can do this but his 9 year old son should not have to adapt and overcome another decision made by the Board of Education. The process was rushed this time.

Katelyn Dunn, Kennedy Drive – Mrs. Dunn stated that she has attended the meetings before and chose not to speak until tonight. She feels politics may have trumped education. She

thanked the Board for the Stowe Pre-K program. Her son has made great progress there. He has made huge strides. Her other child has the ability to adapt and adjust. She worries about her son when he will be placed in a larger class. What will happen when he has an asthma attack? She believes the decision was made as a budget measure to fill a gap. She supports the sister school concept. This current proposal did not include a long term education plan. We need a long term plan. We tried to sell our home but couldn't sell it. She is concerned about the larger class sizes and the education she sees for her children in Enfield.

Mary Ann Turner, Meadow Road – Mrs. Turner read a quote about redistricting by Ben Barnes, Budget Chief for the Governor. The speech given by Governor Malloy today was scary. The school saw that we needed to give our kids the best education possible that we could afford. We have STEAM, combined IT and Insurance committees, full day Kindergarten and preschool programs. Our kids are getting what they need in changing times. Our teachers are the best tools we have. We offer our students AP courses. CREC schools are taking money out of our school system. You have a hard job being on a Board, Town Council or Commission in Enfield. Criticism comes with the job. Thank you for your hard work. You made the right decision about Hale.

Chris Rutledge, Victory Street – Mr. Rutledge is an analyst and project manager. He also enjoys student debates and what they teach you. The Board has done everything they could about getting the word out to the public starting on October 25th until today. He commends you for doing this. As a Board, you listened and made a decision and did what is best for education in Enfield. Transparency has been shown by the Board. We are faced with large budgetary issues coming from Hartford. You made a positive decision for the school system and town. He commends your decisions. You did a lot of work before you made your decision. You will not be please everyone. You deserve our respect and thanks. Education costs money and dollars need to be considered. Thanks.

Dan Piper, Whitney Avenue – Mr. Piper stated he is visiting from Hartford and is extremely impressed with the passion in this room. He spoke about defending public Education.

Amanda Briggs, Hazard Avenue – Mrs. Briggs stated she has children in 4 different Enfield schools. It is nice to hear positive things about kids that have gone through the school system. These kids are worried about their friends. They thrive on structure. Where is the structure that is needed? All she has seen is schools closing and restructuring. Teachers are questioning their job security. It takes a village to raise our kids. Hale has been a great school system for her children. How can we add more kids into schools safely with less teachers and less space?

Linda Leander, Wallop School Road – *Second Time Speaking* – Mrs. Leander stated she volunteers in our school and does not agree with you. She is not trying to disrespect anyone. She is looking for a long term plan. She has learned a lot throughout this process. A long term plan is needed so our schools will have a better educational structure. She would like to see how all of the K-2 schools are doing. This would be a plus. She would like to see this information placed on our website. She wants to keep her daughter in our schools. Goals should be the same for all of the K-2 and up. She does not see how you will save money with a floating nurse. She would like to see them at the elementary schools. She would like to see you add a counselor at the K-2 level. She does not agree with all of the political stuff. Everyone should be treated with respect. A long term educational plan is needed.

Peter Jonaitis, Farmstead Circle – *Second Time Speaking* – Mr. Jonaitis stated when the doors to our schools close, magic happens inside of the schools. We have great teachers in Enfield. The Board has talked about closing Alcorn, Hale and Stowe to save money. Hale has been on the chopping block before. We have added a lot of new programs in our schools. Now we need to support these programs. These programs come with a cost. If we had a long term plan, we

wouldn't be going through this now. We needed one year to plan for this. There are still questions that need to be answered. Contingency plans are needed. When we consolidated, we thought we were going to save a lot of money. We can only have a school system that we can afford. The next board will need to make some real hard decisions. The decision to close Hale was made in 49 days. Please reconsider your vote. The armed guard decision was made quickly and was an expensive one. Remember November.

Jessica Cuscovitch, Hunter Lane – *Second Time Speaking* - Mrs. Cuscovitch stated we are here because we are concerned. Nathan Hale is more than a school, it is a family. This is not a feasible decision. The lack of a long term plan scares her. The special education department is already failing her child. Large class sizes will harm some students. Our buses will be overcrowded. Nursing concerns need to be addressed. PTO activities will become too large and will create problems where some children will not be able to participate. Families enjoy being together. What will be done to protect the neighborhood? There are still too many what ifs that still need to be addressed. It takes a village to raise our children, so please do not burn down our village.

Judy Kilty, Abbe Road – *Second Time Speaking* - Mrs. Kilty stated when her kids went to school she worked hand and hand with the Board and the schools. We were successful. This is her town and she does not want to see this happen. She knows the budget process is hard and thankless. Let us work with you and you should be working with us not against us. We want what is best for our kids. Please reconsider this and get a plan. Reconsider your vote and do what is right.

Trish Neild Barry, Buchanan Road – *Second Time Speaking* – Mrs. Neild Barry stated a floating nurse will not do it. Get all the information from the nursing logs to see when the kids are visiting the nurses. Maybe a nurse and a half is needed at the K-2 schools. More things happen from 8-noon in the nurses office than in the afternoon. Do the research and have a plan, use it for September 1st for the safety of our kids. You are making people look at daycare concerns with the redistricting again. Politics should not be in the Board. You should be worried about the welfare of our children. You are worried about the money. We need a plan. You need to follow the sister schools to see which schools are doing better and follow them to JFK and EHS and make adjustments so all of our schools excel.

Bob Tkacz, Hazard Avenue – *Second Time Speaking* – Mr. Tkacz stated the check coming from Hartford will be short. The mayor of Hartford wants regionalism. If this happens, there would be no Board. Parents will be told where their kids will go to school. Our legislators need to fight for us in Hartford. The bottom line is financial. The state is in trouble. The problem comes from Hartford.

Andrea Howarth, Monroe Road – *Second Time Speaking* – Mrs. Howarth is upset to hear that Hale is one of the lowest performing schools. This is a dig at our teachers and students. This is not true. Our teachers are great. Redistricting will affect daycare. Will we be allowed to pick which school our children can attend or will they be assigned to a school in our district?

Bill Ballard, Abbe Road – *Second Time Speaking* – Mr. Ballard stated long term plans and decisions need to be made. Many times decisions are made because you see what is coming down the road. We have a supersonic plane heading towards us. Regionalism is like globalization. The Board did the research about the high schools and closed Fermi. We are faced with huge budget concerns. Changes will happen. Our children are resilient and will adapt. Some parents have a hard time accepting this. He thanked the Board for everything you are doing. He admires everyone that came out tonight to address the Board. The jet plane is on its way and we can't stop it.

Kristina Tetreault, Green Manor Road – Mrs. Tetreault stated a long term plan is needed. She

purchased her home so she could walk her child to school. She is trying to give Enfield a chance. You cannot blame CREC for taking our students. You need to provide a proper education to our students.

Maurice LaRossa, Litchfield Drive – Mr. LaRossa stated you are placing the blame on the wrong place. We could solve everything by raising taxes. The problem has been created in Hartford. We need to change who we are sending to Hartford. We are running a business here in Enfield - education. We put out product and our children are well educated students. The education our children receive in Enfield is good. You are providing the best education that we can afford. Our kids get out of the education what they put into it and what the parents put into it. He did not agree with the armed guards. The state will continue to give you less and less. He commends the Board for what you are doing. You have made a decision. Have they given you any suggestions? You made a decision that will save us money. We have a large senior population in Enfield that cannot afford for our taxes to go up. You need to make the best educational decisions for our students. Keep up the good work.

Chairman Sirard asked everyone to stop interrupting and talking. It is rude.

Tim Bowers, Pleasant Street – Mr. Powers stated he was home watching this meeting and decided to come here and speak. He would like to see more on-line programs available for our students to save money. You wouldn't need as many teachers if we put all these students in one large room combining classes. Is there a law that you need a five day school week? You might be able to use part time teachers. Do they really need to teach five days a week? He is a parent. Some people rely on the school system to raise their kids. He has done many courses on-line. This would save the town money and space by reducing the number of days. He commends to Board for looking outside of the box. He knows there is money problem here.

Darlene Czekala, Armstrong Road – Mrs. Czekala stated she has attended Board meetings before. She was sorry she did not attend the Fermi meetings. She feels that was a decision that was made in haste like this one. She attended Enfield schools as well as her children and her grandchildren are in all different schools in Enfield. We are closing another school that is wrong. She has not received the answers to any of her questions. She urged the Board to take their time and make a different decision.

Gina Sullivan, Spier Avenue – Mrs. Sullivan is concerned about the students with allergies. The buildings need to be repaired and ready for these kids. She can understand why people are frustrated. The vote for Fermi wasn't that long ago and now you have voted to close another school. The numbers you have given us do not add up. The reimbursement rate for the high school is 70%. We are smart people and know how to research information. Parents are still upset and we want answers. The petition for this meeting was for the Board to produce a long term plan from the Board. She would like to know if we will get one.

Lynn Costa, Teach Street – Mrs. Costa stated cutting teachers and making them full time substitutes is not the answer. They went to school and have a lot of student debt in order to become a teacher. That is wrong. Overcrowding in our classrooms is not fair to our teachers. She feels bad for our special education teachers. We need more paras than we currently have. Our teachers are dealing with so much now. It is not fair to our kids and teachers. Helping these kids takes away from the other students that are trying to learn. She never understood why we had two high schools. We poured a lot of money into Fermi with the field remediation. Our schools need repairs. Fix the schools. She would like to see the students at JFK moved into the Fermi building and use JFK for our elementary students. Do the people need to do your job?

Annmarie Bartlett-Rattell, Kimberly Drive – Mrs. Bartlett-Rattell stated that she attended Enfield schools and received a great education and her daughter is getting one also. Her son

needs one-to-one help. There is one para being split between 3 classrooms. A classroom with 20 students is too large. Her son has seizures. Her son is not learning the things he needs to learn. He does not like going to school anymore. He is not receiving the support he needs so she has applied for him to attend a CREC school for next year. She does not want to see her son fall through the cracks in this school system. Our kids need more support. It is about our town and what are kids need. You are failing our children and her son.

Richard Reynier, Abbe Road – Mr. Reynier thanked the Board for thinking out of the box and saving money. He is a Hale parent, and eventually will be a Whitney, JFK and EHS parent. He is here for the long hall. We have heard some great comments tonight about nursing, counselors and long term plans. The man who spoke tonight about on-line education is not too far off. Programs like this our growing like K-12 programs that are available on-line are based on the students level of learning. They may cost the district money but education today is different and students are learning in many different ways. Kids have more issues today. Changes are needed and we need to look outside of the box and be creative. He is a teacher at Bay Path College. Our town is struggling financially. We need to make education decisions now and decisions for our town as a whole. Fighting against yourselves will get you know where. He commends the man who spoke tonight. He thought enough to leave his home after watching this meeting to come and address the Board and he did this with the snickering of the audience. He applauds him. We need to be creative. We need to find ways to reach all of our students. Thank you.

Chairman Sirard thanked everyone who collected the signatures needed for this public hearing held tonight and for everyone that participated tonight. We know you are very passionate about this topic. The Board voted to consolidate the K-2 schools and that is the course we are following. Board members are passionate with their commitment to provide the best possible education for all of our students in Enfield. This goal will continue to be our focus as we continue to face the challenge we all know are there. Thank you for attending.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Thurston moved, seconded by Mr. Kruzel to adjourn the Special Meeting of January 4, 2017.

All ayes, motion passed unanimously.

Meeting stood adjourned at 9:59 PM.

Tina LeBlanc
Secretary
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary