

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 26, 2024**

A regular meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held in Council Chambers on March 26, 2024.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chairwoman Riley.
2. **INVOCATION OR MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Charlotte Riley
3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Charlotte Riley
4. **FIRE EVACUATION ANNOUNCEMENT:**
5. **ROLL CALL:**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jean Acree, Dr. Gerald Calnen, Janet Cushman, Peter Jonaitis, Philip Kober, Tina LeBlanc, Amanda Pickett, Scott Ryder and Charlotte Riley

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Christopher J. Drezek, Superintendent; Mr. Andrew B. Longey Assistant Superintendent; Student Representative & Isabella Dinnald

SUSPEND THE RULES AND MOVE AN ITEM UP ON THE AGENDA:

Mrs. LeBlanc moved, seconded by Mr. Ryder that the Enfield Board of Education move Item #7b before Item #6.

A vote by **show-of-hands 9-0-0** passed unanimously.

7b. Thank You.

Mr. Drezek thanked the members of the Board for everything they have done for our students and staff. March is Board appreciation month. We also have some special students from Eli Whitney that would like to personally thank you.

Eli Whitney students Jack, Jacob, Gabriella and Amy thanked the Board for everything you do. They made bottle buddy gifts in their art class for each Board member. They also created portraits of each Board member. You are loved by all students in Enfield, and they hope the Board will enjoy your gifts.

Chairwoman Riley thanked them for the gifts. We should be thanking you, your parents and teachers for making Enfield so great. These gifts mean so much to all of us. Thank you.

Mr. Jonaitis asked the students to introduce themselves. Jack Resnickoff, Jacob Doyle, Gabriella Diaz, and Hailey Anderson.

Mr. Ryder thanked all of his Eli Whitney Wolves friends and all the students across the district. This was such a great presentation. You know why he is up here, it is because of all of you. Thank you.

Mrs. LeBlanc also thanked them for her gifts. It is great to hear how you see us. Hearing kind words is very rewarding. Your heart filled gifts touch her heart deeply.

Mrs. Pickett also thanked the students for their thoughtful gifts. This is her favorite night. Thank you for all the gifts we received tonight.

Mr. Jonaitis hopes to see at least 2 of you up here on the board.

Mrs. Acree thanked them for the artwork. She loves seeing artwork almost as much as she loves hearing students singing and playing instruments. Thank you for all your creativity.

Mr. Kober thanked the students. He is so impressed with these gifts. He echoes everyone's comments made tonight. Thank you.

Mrs. Cushman also thanked the students for making this such a special night for Board members so she can remember why she is doing this. Thank you.

Dr. Calnen thanked the students. These gifts mean a lot to us. He loved hearing the great positive feedback from the students. Thank you, these gifts are greatly appreciated.

Chairwoman Riley added these gifts are truly amazing. She is totally speechless. She also knows why she is here, and it is because of all of you. Thank you.

6. BOARD GUEST(S)

a. Increasing Educator Diversity Presentation

Mr. Drezek welcomed Altressa Cox-Blackwell, members of the Increasing Educator Diversity Team and our current Teacher of the Year – Amber Venoutsos.

Mrs. Cox-Blackwell thanked the Board and wished them a happy Board Appreciation month. Tonight we will show you the work our increasing educator diversity team has done. Members of this committee are Meghann Burr, Bethany Calado, Julie Carroll, Emily Hulevitch, Maureen Jewell, Matt Murray, Kerry Wiley and Altressa Cox-Blackwell.

Mrs. Cox-Blackwell, Mr. Murry, Mrs. Hulevitch, and Mrs. Calado reviewed their plan for increasing educator diversity and implementation, diversifying our certified workforce, vision statement and theory of action plan, P.A. 23-167 Sec. 10 requirements, action plan for recruitment, NextGen Educators, Action Plan & Hiring, Retention, IED Action Plan Summary and CT TRP (Teacher Residency Program).

Mrs. Cox-Blackwell, Mrs. Venoutsos and Paula Castillo each spoke about our TRP and the many benefits that come from this program.

Mrs. Cox-Blackwell added with Board approval of our action plan, we will submit our plan to the Connecticut State Department of Education.

Mr. Ryder asked about the expense of this program? Mrs. Cox-Blackwell stated it would be our financial obligation to pay for the TRP.

Mr. Ryder asked about the price difference between the TRP and NextGen programs? Mrs. Cox-Blackwell stated the cost was \$10,750 plus a \$6K mentor stipend, \$49K for salary/benefits and \$4K summer stipends.

Mr. Ryder asked what the \$10,750 covers? Mrs. Cox-Blackwell added it covers one year. Mr. Ryder asked about the cost for the substitute teacher? Mrs. Cox-Blackwell is not sure what the cost would be.

Mr. Jonaitis asked about the program Paula is in and if it is any different than student

teaching? Mrs. Cox-Blackwell stated it is both student teaching and we are paying her for doing a job here. This program will consume all of her time. She takes courses in the evening and during the summer and teaches during the day.

Mr. Jonaitis asked if she would then need to get her bachelor's degree. Mrs. Cox-Blackwell stated she already has that. Mr. Jonaitis asked about State certification. Mrs. Cox-Blackwell added her coursework will fill in the gaps. Mr. Jonaitis added she does not have a bachelor's degree in education. Mrs. Cox-Blackwell reviewed her coursework. Mr. Jonaitis asked if these are like the courses for method classes? Mrs. Cox-Blackwell believes they are.

Mr. Jonaitis also thanked Mrs. Venoutsos.

Mrs. Pickett thanked them for the hard work they have been doing. She asked about TRP vs. NexGen. She likes the grow your own concept. She asked about staff numbers for certified and uncertified staff of color. Mrs. Cox-Blackwell does not have those numbers. Our BT and Para's are a large percentage and that is why we are only focusing on certified staff. Mrs. Pickett likes the pathways for our staff to become certified educators. It is important to have staff that know our kids and district. CCSU students are not as connected to Enfield. Community connection is extremely important. Paula started at Stowe and that can help with our retention. Our student population is changing and having staff that speak their language helps with their needs. We are paying for her salary plus the \$10K, plus stipends.

Mrs. Cox-Blackwell stated TRP began certifying elementary positions. This year the program expanded to Special Education. They are now looking at secondary math. She had 2 BT's set for this program but informed them that we do not have the funding for this program for next year. They could look at another district if they wanted to continue. They both said no, they only wanted to do this here in Enfield.

Dr. Calnen asked about staff that qualify for TRP and what is the percentage of bachelor's degrees? Mrs. Cox-Blackwell stated you must have your bachelor's degree to be considered for TRP.

Mr. Kober thanked them for their presentation. He is glad to see you have an extension for submitting this to the State. How was your data for staff collected? Mrs. Cox-Blackwell stated staff will self-identify. This information is part of the district report card, and this information can be found on Edsight.

Mr. Kober asked about staff ethnic and racial background information. Mrs. Cox-Blackwell didn't know how that is determined. Mr. Kober asked if we track any other categories through this plan? Mrs. Cox-Blackwell does not believe that is being done.

Mr. Kober stated you are only tracking certified staff, which is approximately 37% of our total staff. Mrs. Cox-Blackwell stated 37% is for our students. Certified staff is 4.8%. Mr. Kober asked how many of our staff are certified. Mr. Drezek stated more than half of our staff are certified.

Mr. Kober added you discussed staff and students. In the plan there are not any benchmarks or quantitative increases. When you submit this to the State, his fear is they will reject it because it will not comply with the mandate if there is nothing quantitative within the plan.

Mr. Drezek stated this was just passed by the legislation in July 2023. This is the first phase – submitting a plan. His assumption is your plan will continue to grow along with the needs of the community and benchmarks will be included.

Mrs. Cox-Blackwell added at the talent office site there are frequently asked questions. One of the questions was about resubmitting a plan each year and the answer is no.

Mrs. LeBlanc thanked them for their presentation. If we had Alliance funding, could that be used for this program? Mr. Drezek stated our commitment to TRP was under the assumption from March of last year that we would receive Alliance funding. A lot of the plan to sustain and grow this plan was connected to Alliance funding that we did not receive. Within the Alliance designation there are grant opportunities. He does not want to commit to anything now. There is a carveout within the Alliance plan to support a program like this.

Mrs. LeBlanc added with the listing of towns only two towns were not Alliance Districts. Mr. Drezek added there are other non-Alliance Districts that participate in TRP. But a lot of Alliance Districts are able to utilize their funding for TRP.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated we do not have a lot of racial ethnic groups that are going into the teaching profession. She has also heard that the curriculum they are teaching in college is not something they can relate to and ultimately do not finish as a teacher. When you spoke about grow your own, she is wondering if we could create a future teacher club at the high school to spark interest with all students. This way students could learn about the teaching profession so they will go into teaching. Mrs. Cox-Blackwell stated there are programs like that. The percentages are even lower when you look at genders that go into the teaching profession.

Mrs. LeBlanc added peer modeling in our schools with high school students working with our younger students would be great. Paula's experience and having students of color and diversity that would be interested in peer modeling to be the voice our students need to see and hear from, and they can relate to. This is something we can do within our district to make connections for our students. She appreciated seeing how diverse our student body is and she appreciates this diversity.

Mrs. LeBlanc is disappointed that we cannot continue with TRP. There was such a benefit for both Paula and Amber and having 2 additional BT's that qualified for the continuation of this program. When they go through the TRP is there a commitment from them to stay within the district for a certain period of time? Mrs. Cox-Blackwell stated they will need to stay with us for 4 years.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked if we receive Alliance funding could we get back into TRP? Mr. Drezek stated that would be something that would qualify us under the plan and is highly encouraged by CSDE. This is a big initiative from the State. We were really excited about this in March. This is something the Board can revisit in the event that we receive any Alliance funding.

Mrs. LeBlanc thanked them again for the presentation and she looks forward to hearing about your progress. She hopes we receive some Alliance funding so we can continue with TRP.

Mr. Jonaitis asked how does it look for us to receive Alliance Funding for next year. Mr. Drezek stated he receives information from the State weekly. He does not feel we will receive any Alliance funding. Funding in general is in jeopardy now with the biannual budget that was discussed at the legislative breakfast that both he and Chairwoman Riley attended. We will keep advocating for this funding, but we cannot commit to this until the funding is in place.

Mrs. Acree congratulated both Paula and Amber for the great job you are doing. Do you have CCSU students for the fall for the NextGen program? Mrs. Cox-Blackwell stated she was contacted by Central about a student. They will need to go through the interview process, but the student has changed their mind.

Mr. Jonaitis asked if we have contacted Westfield State, UConn or any other universities in the area. Mrs. Cox-Blackwell stated the NextGen educator program belongs to Central. She has not reached out to any other colleges to see if they have any similar programs.

Mrs. Pickett added the pipeline for educators of color are not there and many districts are in the same boat as us. That is why growing our own is the best route. KITE recently held a community conversation. That will be part of our next steps and partnering with our local community.

Chairwoman Riley thanked them for the presentation. Hazardville Memorial is a great school, and they consistently knock it out of the park. This is a testament of what you are doing. When you are done with all the requirements for TRP, do you need to take a test to receive your teaching certificate? How does this work? Mrs. Venoutsos stated it is called a resident educator certificate and it will be received for the first year. She will have received all of the coursework requirements.

Chairwoman Riley asked if the time spent in the classroom count towards tenure? Mrs. Cox-Blackwell stated that is correct.

Chairwoman Riley stated our plan will be for the NextGen route and our staff will complete an interview form, you will choose the interviewers that will meet the racial, ethnic and linguistic qualifications. How many staff members are needed for the interviews for NextGen? Mrs. Cox-Blackwell stated we have not started that process yet. We are hoping to gain diversity but any we would interview any student that wants to participate in our program.

Chairwoman Riley asked how many interviewers are needed, is there a State mandate you must abide by? Mrs. Cox-Blackwell stated there is no requirement. She has participated on 1:1 interview teams or teams with as many as 4 or 5.

Chairwoman Riley asked about NextGen stay interviews. Your presentation was very informative. Thank you.

Mr. Drezek asked them to ask the committee members any questions now since they will be leaving, or you can also move this item up on the agenda for Board approval now.

SUSPEND THE RULES AND MOVE AN ITEM UP ON THE AGENDA:

Mr. Ryder moved, seconded by Mrs. LeBlanc that the Enfield Board of Education move Item #11a before Item #6a.

11a DISCUSSION AND ACTION REGARDING THE DISTRICT'S INCREASING EDUCATOR DIVERSITY PLAN

Discussion:

Mrs. Pickett added this work is extremely important. Representation matters. She would like us to invest in growing our own more. She will abstain from tonight's vote due to her professional role. She fully supports this program.

A vote by **show-of-hands 9-0-0** passed unanimously.

Mr. Ryder moved, seconded by Mrs. LeBlanc that the Enfield Board of Education approves the District's Increasing Educator Diversity Action Plan and submission to the State of Connecticut Department of Education.

Discussion:

Mr. Kober previously mentioned he would have liked to see this information sooner. He just looked at this information on the State website. There is a guidebook for hiring and selection. Appendix 8 reviews action planning and smart goals. The State will be looking for quantitative

data. Appendix 9 reviews the monitoring process which is another term for benchmarks. He feels more detail is needed in our plan. For this reason he will not support this.

A vote by **roll-call 6-2-1** passed with Mr. Jonaitis and Mr. Kober in dissent and with Mrs. Pickett abstaining.

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

a. Student Representative Update

EHS Student Representative Izzy Dinnald reported Juniors just finished their SAT's. The Junior Prom will be held on Thursday. There is no school on Friday and grades will close for the marking term on Thursday. Second grade mentoring slips are due on April 1st. The drama production of Mary Poppins will be held on April 26th and 27th. Outdoor Track held a fundraiser event at Red Robbin, and they held their first meet today. They are also holding a can/bottle fundraiser event today. They will also hold a car washing fundraiser. The Girls Lacrosse team will hold their first game on Saturday. Tri-M will perform at the Arts Festival on April 19th and 20th. The French National Honor Society will hold a car wash where all proceeds will go towards French associated charity.

b. Thank You – as presented

c. Good Friday & Spring Vacation Week - NS

d. EPS Update -

Mr. Drezek stated the Board will address the April 9th BOE meeting tonight. Given the level of budget uncertainty at this time, and that this process is done backwards, he will address this topic now. The Board submits a budget, and it is all reliant upon what the State will give to the Town. Every teacher whether they are tenured or not needs to know if their contract will be renewed for the following school year. This process is awful for non-tenured staff. We have a lot of non-tenures staff. Some of our Board members may recall the reading of staff members names that we are legally required to recite. Unfortunately, we do not have a budget in place that will guarantee them positions for next year. We legally need to send them that horrible letter. The April 9th meeting would be the meeting where we would address non-renewals for non-tenured teachers that need to be notified prior to May 1st. This is something the Board will need to address before the end of April. This budget process is different this year with many funding streams that have ended. This is something that will be placed on the April 23rd agenda for Board action and he didn't want to take anyone off guard by not giving them a heads-up about this. This does not mean we will be laying off 120 people. This is the past practice of the Board for sending out non-renewals.

8. AUDIENCES

Chairwoman Riley read a prepared statement regarding audience participation. We will allow 4 minutes for each audience member to speak.

Walter & Debbie Kruzel, Charnley Road – Mr. & Mrs. Kruzel presented Mr. Drezek with a gift of their appreciation. They thanked him for everything he has done over the past few years for the staff, students and families of Enfield. Mr. Kruzel added we should receive 100% of our special education funding. The paint color in here was requested by the former Town Manager. He also added we are guests when were are in Council Chambers.

Monica Ogums, Walnut Street – Ms. Ogums stated she is also a BT and the Track coach at EHS. She is also on EHS equity, inclusion and diversity team, teaches CCD and coaches the girls flag football team. She is an Enfield native, mother and graduated from EPS. This work being done is very important. She is a dual citizen and learned English when she came to school. Student and staff diversity is important. When she attended EHS, she never had a teacher that looked like her or understood what a bad hair day was. She went to a black college, and she can say there is power being the majority. She worked at Stowe and grew up

there. She will miss Mr. Drezek. She is now working at EHS and is needed at EHS. She has a son at JFK. She did not know about the program that Paula is in. She is now studying at Western University for K-12 education. She is making a change that is needed. Thank you for the work you are doing.

9. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Ryder stated the Enfield Townwide Tag Sale will be held on Saturday May 18th rain or shine. You can sign up for this at the Enfield Food Shelf website www.enfieldfoodshelf.org. All proceeds will go directly to the Enfield Food Shelf. We have served over 80K meals with the funds raised for the Enfield community. He encourages everyone to participate.

Mrs. Acree attended the EHS Chorus Concert held on March 16th with students from each of our schools that performed. She congratulated the students that performed and music teachers.

Mrs. Acree also attended the screenagers on March 19th at JFK in the Library. She thanked Mrs. Cushman for introducing her to this series that was put on by the Enfield Together Coalition. Important messages were given about cell phone usage, social media usage, and youth depression. The presentation was extremely informative. This fits in with her concern with Enfield's youth with mental health concerns.

Mrs. Pickett has seen parents posting about kindergarten assessments for children that will not be 5 years of age by September 1st. Do we know how many assessments we are looking at and about the impact this will have at Stowe?

Mrs. Pickett stated the Town Council approved job descriptions for the armed guards recently. She is not aware of the status of the MOU. She is hoping they will receive the appropriate needed training. It is important for taxpayers to understand the cost for this program.

Mr. Kober provided some procedural updates about our agenda setup. School reports will now be given under #13 Liaison Reports.

Mr. Kober stated there are several themes he would like to discuss, and they are Responsiveness, Efficiencies and Transparency. This is needed in all levels of government. He feels taking 120 days to respond to e-mails is not being responsive. Being a public school district and running out of paper is not being efficient. Not having salaries and operating expenses visual for those that will be voting on the budget is not being transparent.

Mr. Kober discussed some of his previous requests that he made to the superintendent. He asked about how many staff and students do we have, and what are staff salaries. He has not received any information regarding these requests.

Mr. Kober stated tonight we discussed improving educator diversity and retention came up. He is also asking about the retention of our staff. Are we retaining staff or are we losing staff?

Mr. Kober asked via the chair to the superintendent about how does Edsight get their information. Mr. Drezek stated they receive their information from us. Mr. Kober asked how is this information transmitted to Edsight. Mr. Drezek stated they receive the information in various forms. Mr. Kober would like for the Board to be copied on the information that is being submitted to the State.

Mr. Kober asked via the chair to the superintendent about our software system that is used to track and manage human capital for tracking payroll and employees. Mr. Drezek stated we use Munis. Mr. Kober asked about the software we use for budgets or is it manually done. Mr. Drezek stated it is done by multiple ways.

Mr. Kober asked via the chair to the superintendent about CT General Statutes CGS 10-20 paragraph C Submitting to the Commissioner of Education Strategic Profile Report for each school. This information is submitted to Edsight. Is this information also given to the Board? Mr. Drezek will get back to you on this.

Mr. Kober asked via the Chair to the Superintendent about CT General Statute 10-21c requires the superintendent within 30 days to provide to the commissioner of Education a report about motor vehicles written complaints for the previous 12 months. This is for motor vehicles safety and bus accidents. This has been discussed during Joint Security meetings. This is supposed to be submitted annually by the Superintendent to the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles. He would like to see the most recent report to be shared with the Board. Mr. Drezek stated we are in compliance with all State laws.

Mr. Kober asked via the Chair to the Superintendent about Connecticut General Statute 10-226 reports that are sent to the Commissioner of Education before October 1st that include the names and addresses of each contracted employees salary for each teacher, principal, superintendent or certified persons employed. This is another statutory requirement that is sent annually before October 1st. He would like a copy of this report sent to the Board.

Mr. Kober added we are implementing policies and approving budgets. It is the purview of the Board when we are making decisions. He has looked at other school budgets and he has sent information to Board leadership that these towns are doing that he likes. He has previously mentioned transparency at the State and Federal levels. Open Connecticut is run by the State of Connecticut Comptroller. At the Federal level, it is called Data Act and a website called [usaspending.gov](https://www.usaspending.gov). The public is able to view information and see financial transparency. He would like to see the Enfield Board of Education work on what he calls the Enfield Transparency Initiative. We should mimic Open Connecticut and what they are doing in Connecticut and share open access to the budget, payroll and what the district is spending money on that the public should be aware of.

Dr. Calnen provided an update about Kite, the week of the young child is April 1-5th, Kite will support Enfield Gets Ready for Kindergarten and this event will be held at JFK on April 16th from 6-7 PM. Kite also wished each Board member a happy Board Appreciation Month.

Chairwoman Riley informed Dr. Calnen this report will now be given under Item #13 Liaison Reports.

Mr. Jonaitis stated regarding the budget, we still need to meet with the Town Council. He would like to see the number of teachers we have in each department and the steps they are on. The number of administrators we have and the positions they hold along with the steps they are on and their job descriptions. The number of coordinators we have and the positions they hold, separated between 10 months and 12 months coordinators. The number of each student in each grade level and school. Identifying the students in each school and the number of special education students in each building. The number of staff members at Central Office, the departments they work in and their job descriptions. The number of special education teachers and the number of students receiving services. The number of certified people that work or have contact with our kids. Copies of the last 4 contracts for each bargaining unit.

Mr. Jonaitis stated a former Board member tried to introduce some kind of budget software program years ago. Do you use something like this? Mr. Drezek stated we use Munis.

Mr. Jonaitis stated these are some of his questions and he believes when we meet with the Town council members, they may have some questions also. He would like to justify our budget request of 8.68% and would like a more in-depth look. He agrees that we need more

transparency when it comes to our budget process.

Mrs. Cushman stated Screenagers Part 3 - Under the Influence will be held on April 2nd from 6-8 PM in the Enfield High Library. She encourages community members to attend the last presentation of this 3-part series.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated she attended the PLA government class with Chairwoman Riley. We were able to meet with engaged community members. A mom shared some of her experience with Special Education students here in Enfield.

Mrs. LeBlanc thanked the schools, PTO's and students for what they did for us and what you do for us every day. Your kindness and hard work does not go un-noticed. During the April vacation week on April 8th, there will be a solar eclipse. She hopes our students are able to view that while wearing specialized glasses.

Mrs. LeBlanc has some questions based on an email she received regarding requested items from Mr. Kober. IRS Tax forms, W-2's, the number of W-2's issued, the number of corrected W-2's issued, the total number of outstanding W-2's that need to be issued, a spreadsheet containing data points exported from W-2's issued with employee names, addresses, wages, tips and other compensations. He will also accept bulk documents of W-2's in pdf form. He is also looking for a 7 year lookback of EPS staff, growth trends and all current employees, number of EPS staff on the first day of school, and on the last day of school. Each list should have the employees first and last name, position held or title, full or part time status, building location, start date and years with the district and unadjusted gross salary.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked Mr. Kober why he is looking for this information. Mr. Kober stated this ties into Open Connecticut. This is the same information the State gives out about employees.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated you want a W-2 for every employee. Mr. Kober stated he is looking for data off of the W-2.

Mrs. LeBlanc would like to know why you are requesting this and for what purpose will you need this information? Mr. Kober stated for transparency and for understanding the budget line item for employee salaries for full time, part time employees, Paras, BT's, FTE's for nurses, secretaries, library aides, tutors, all staff that are employed.

Mrs. LeBlanc added you need this much granular detail. You will study this to have a better understanding of very private information about our staff. Is it legal to ask for W-2's for employees? Mr. Drezek added he included his explanation with the email that was sent to the entire Board.

Mrs. LeBlanc thought Mr. Drezek's best response was for Mr. Kober to go back and look at the Board training we received with different scenarios. Both Mr. Jonaitis and Mr. Kober are asking for information. You both said when you got elected, your first order of business was to get us from being an Alliance District. How will this get us out of being an Alliance District?

Mr. Kober added as Board members, we are responsible for fiscal responsibility. When you talk about being an Alliance District you are talking about funding. If we better utilized our funding it would negate the need for Alliance District funding.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated that is not our decision on what cuts to make. It would never be our decision to cut staff as Board members. Whatever the Town Council allocates to us financially, Mr. Drezek and Mr. Longey will talk with the administrators, and they will look at class sizes and they would be responsible for making any cuts. Is that something you understand? We do not have any say when it comes to staff cuts. They know the actual needs of our students. There are certain areas that we cannot touch like Special Education and certain high school

courses. This is why we do not make these decisions, we do not know what the ramifications would be from cuts.

Mr. Kober stated as a Board, we are responsible for approving a budget and that is the intent of this requested information.

Mrs. LeBlanc added it doesn't serve any purpose. We could be asking the same questions about the fire departments and police departments in Enfield. We could ask for W-2's. My taxes are going towards their salaries. The Town Council could also ask for this. We could ask about attendance and meeting minimum qualifications for the time of their employment.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated that both Dr. Calnen and Mrs. Acree have made a commitment to work on Mental Health and have made active steps to help us understand why we are an Alliance District and what we can do to help. She appreciates your efforts and how hard you are both working. This is what we as Board members should be doing.

Mrs. LeBlanc added all the information you are asking for is already available to the public. You are making the assumption that that things are being mishandled by Central Office. We are audited and you are making accusatory and adversarial deliveries that does not make us a cohesive Board. The only reason she found out about all of your requested items was because the superintendent replied to the entire Board. We should review our roles as Board members and review the information we received from Mr. Mooney's training session.

Mrs. LeBlanc wish everyone a safe and happy spring vacation.

Mr. Jonaitis added receiving more information about the budget is important to the Board. He would like to know why we need 8.68%. He wants to know why we need it and what it will be used for. Is there any place where we can save money? The amount requested needs to be justified. If the request can be justified he can see asking for 8.68%. He wants to see numbers and statistics.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked how is the budget request not justified. We are looking at \$72 million. All of this was included in the budget packet we received and was discussed at the budget presentation. We also met in leadership and discussed this. She does not understand why you are saying it is not justified or supported.

Mr. Jonaitis added he has seen so many different numbers. Not understanding is your problem.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated this is the disrespect that is going on with this Board. I am asking questions because the information is out there. I don't think this is a good use of taxpayer dollars making our administration go on a wild goose chase for information that is readily available and asking for information we have no say about. It is not up to us to tell them they have too much staff. We are not in the schools.

Mr. Jonaitis added he does not believe anyone has said that we have too much staff. He just wants things justified. There are some areas where he believes there are too many people in the administrator category. He is tired of being lectured by Mrs. LeBlanc.

Mrs. LeBlanc thanked Mr. Drezek, Mr. Longey and all our teachers. She thanked everyone that is in our school buildings, including parents. She does not have any kids in our buildings anymore, but she attends many school events. She appreciates you all. Thank goodness we have educational leaders making the decisions about our budget.

Dr. Calnen added due diligence is one thing and micromanaging the superintendent is another thing. What is being expected of our staff and superintendent is unrealistic. It is a waste of

time and money. A line needs to be drawn between due diligence and micromanaging.

Mrs. Pickett stated Edsight has this information and is publicly available. The numbers there come directly from our district. Our budget number request is real. The budget requested was just to maintain what we currently have. We are not adding anything. When you start pulling apart these numbers and looking granularly, you will be ripping apart our budget. This just keeps us at status quo. We actually need more supports, and this budget does not give us that.

Chairwoman Riley added she understands both sides. It is important to have the number of staff and students and the trends for a couple of years and salaries and the steps they are currently on for budgeting purposes moving forward. We do not need to see W-2's. Salary, steps and schools for future planning is okay so we can get a grasp on the magnitude of the budget. We are agents of the State and are responsible for our budget and if it does not balance at the end of the year, they will knock on our doors.

Chairwoman Riley stated we will hold a leadership meeting and we will discuss our next steps, where we will go and how can we satisfy multiple needs without breaking the bank. She is sure the members of the Town Council will want to see numbers about staff and students. The presentation we received earlier was about racial, ethnic and linguistic information which is good for everyone. We want to keep good teachers from any race and ethnicity. We will discuss this further in Board Leadership.

Chairwoman Riley stated Munis was brought up tonight. Is this something all municipalities use? Are we paying for this software system? Mr. Drezek stated that is the Town's financial system that we use.

Chairwoman Riley stated one of her major points when running for the Board of Education was to get us from being an Alliance District. Going through our indicators and seeing the numbers about our students, students with special needs categories, free and reduced lunch numbers, etc., it has become clearly apparent that even if we blow all the indicators out of the water, we will still be an Alliance District. These are things that we have no control over. We are not blaming any specific groups. The reality is we will never get out of being in an Alliance status. We need to shoot for being the best Alliance District that we can be. Maybe the State of Connecticut will figure this out and they will award districts that are striving for excellence.

Chairwoman Riley fully understands our indicators and why our indicator for Art is exceptional. She attended the Enfield Chorus Festival. Our students in the Chamber Choir are phenomenal. She thanked them all for their hard work and dedication. She was truly blown away.

Chairwoman Riley also attended Hazardville Memorial's Pride Assembly and these kids are also great. The students played instruments in front of everyone and did not miss a note. She congratulated the JFK National Junior Honor Society 29 students that were recently inducted. She is so impressed by all our students and what they are doing and for their academic excellence. Our kids are amazing and impress her so much. She also congratulated the 160 First Readers that were recently celebrated. Thank you all.

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

11. NEW BUSINESS:

b. DISCUSSION AND ACTION REGARDING THE APRIL 9, 2024 REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Dr. Calnen moved, seconded by Mrs. Cushman that the Enfield Board of Education cancels the

April 9, 2024 Board of Education meeting and notifies the Town Clerk with the change to the regular meeting schedule.

A vote by **roll-call – 7-2-0** passed with Mr. Jonaitis and Mr. Kober in dissent.

c. POLICY REVISION – FIRST READING

Mrs. Cushman moved, seconded by Mr. Ryder that the Enfield Board of Education approves the first reading of Policy #6111 School Calendar(s) as presented.

Discussion

Mr. Kober stated this policy needs to be updated and we have recently waived this policy in order to approve our school calendar. He is okay with the proposed changes on #2 but is against making any changes on #3. He would support sending this policy back to the committee for further review.

A vote by **roll-call – 7-2-0** passed with Mr. Jonaitis and Mr. Kober in dissent.

12. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Curriculum Committee: Mrs. Acree reported the Curriculum Committee will meet on March 21st and we heard a presentation regarding the new reading program. The next Curriculum meeting will be held on April 18th.

Mrs. Pickett stated the new reading curriculum complies with legislation. There will also be required professional learning for staff and curriculum re-alignment work and assessments will need to be done. She is very proud of the work our staff has done.

Finance Committee: Mr. Kober reported the Finance Committee will meet on April 1st. We will discuss adjusting bonds at this meeting.

Chairwoman Riley asked if Board members are okay with moving bonds from short term to intermediate investments.

Dr. Calnen reviewed the recommendation from Wolf Financial Investors. Board members were all in agreement with this decision.

Policy Committee: Mrs. Cushman reported the Policy Committee will meet on April 17th.

Leadership – Chairwoman Riley reported Board Leadership will meet on April 3rd.

13. LIAISON REPORTS

Joint Facility – Chairwoman Riley reported the Joint Facilities Committee did not meet on March 14th due to a lack of a quorum, but we did discuss roofs. The State of Connecticut DPW now has a project tracker for all town projects where you can see the status of any projects. Thursday's meeting has been cancelled. She is not sure when the next Joint Facilities meeting will be held but it could be on April 11th or April 18th.

JFK Building Committee – Mr. Ryder reported Randy Daigle would like to present a report to the Board as the project manager at a date to be determined.

Joint Security Committee – Chairwoman Riley reported the Joint Security Committee will meet on April 5th.

Enfield Mental Health Committee – Mrs. Acree reported they will meet with Mr. White and Mrs. Carroll in April to implement a plan that will address districtwide approach for handling mental health crisis in our schools.

Enfield Cultural Arts Commission – Mrs. LeBlanc reported ECAC committee will meet on April 2nd.

School Reports/Updates:

Mrs. Acree provided an update about happenings/events at Prudence Crandall, she discussed Dessert for Dinner Event, Pride Assembly, Teacher Experience Raffle winners, the Crandall Nurses need clothing, and Maddie Tomalonis fundraised to purchase gifts for cancer patients. This was part of her Kid Governor platform to bring smiles to the faces of cancer patients. We are all very proud of Maddie.

Mr. Ryder provided an update about happenings/events at Eli Whitney, Red Robin fundraiser event on April 3rd, One Book 3 Schools kickoff is being held at the Middle Road Library on April 17th, Bingo night on April 18th, and the PLA Tag Sale event, flyers for these events will be coming home with students.

Mrs. Pickett provided an update about happenings/events at Enfield Street, they held a student assembly, they have a gift card calendar fundraiser event, look at your newsletter for additional upcoming PTO events. Parkman will hold their spring picture day and they also have lots of fundraiser events coming up. Please look at your newsletters.

Mr. Kober provided an update about happenings/events at Henry Barnard, grade 1 math and literacy night is being held tomorrow night and the grade 2 night will take place on Thursday, they will hold a spirit week next week, kindergarten family nights with the CT Science Center will be held on April 18th, April 25th and May 13th, spring picture day will be held on April 19th, trimester 3 report cards will be sent home on April 30th, the Family Resource Center will sponsor visits to the Riverside Reptiles on May 6th, a family music night will be held on May 21st with Ms. Renee, please look at the Big Cat newsletter for other updates and events.

Chairwoman Riley reported that CREC Council approved their diversity proposal, and they are asking for support to keep magnet and CREC funding as it is and to not reduce it. They are asking schools district to support HB-5003 regarding education funding. She supports this initiative.

Chairwoman Riley reported Buzz Robotics placed 8th at the University of Rhode Island competition and took home the Professionalism Award. They are currently ranked 9th in New England and will compete in the District Championship competition that will be held at the Big E on April 4-6th.

Chairwoman Riley reported that Enfield High held a stock market challenge that was hosted by Junior Achievement, and EHS came in first place. Congratulations!

Chairwoman Riley reported Hazardville Memorial will hold a fundraiser event at Red Robin on April 3rd, and they will have a Superhero Day on April 4th and all donation proceeds will go to CCMC.

Mrs. LeBlanc requested an update from Dr. Calnen about Rosie Read and Rocking Chair Readers. She attended the EHS staff vs. students basketball game. Her daughter played and it was a lot of fun watching everyone.

14. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Ryder moved, seconded by Mrs. Cushman that the Regular Meeting Minutes of March 12, 2024, be approved. A vote by **show-of-hands 9-0-0** passed unanimously.

15. APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS AND PAYROLL - None

16. CORRESPONDENCE & COMMUNICATION

Mr. Ryder reported that Board members will receive in their Friday Update Packets an invitation to attend the 58th Annual Arts Festival that will be held at EHS on April 19 & 20th.

17. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mrs. LeBlanc moved, seconded by Mrs. Pickett that the Enfield Board of Education enter into Executive Session for Matter(s) Related to Personnel.

A vote by **roll-call – 8-1-0** passed with Mr. Kober in dissent.

Mr. Drezek and Mr. Longey joined the Board in Executive Session at 9:10 PM.

No Board action occurred while in Executive Session.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION:

The Board returned to open session at 10:21 PM.

18. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kober moved, seconded by Mrs. LeBlanc to adjourn the Regular Meeting of March 26, 2024.

All ayes, motion passed unanimously. Meeting stood adjourned at 10:22 PM.

Scott Ryder
Secretary
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary