

**BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
MARCH 2, 2016**

A special meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held at Town Hall in Council Chambers, located at 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, CT on March 2, 2016.

1. **CALL TO ORDER** : The meeting was called to order at 8:00 PM by Tom Sirard.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** : Tom Sirard
3. **FIRE EVACUATION ANNOUNCEMENT** : Tom Sirard announced the fire evacuation announcement.
4. **ROLL CALL** :

**MEMBERS PRESENT :** Walter Kruzel, Raymond Peabody, Mike Ludwick, Tina LeBlanc (arrived at 8:05 PM), Tim Neville and Tom Sirard

**MEMBERS ABSENT :** Lori Unghire, Vin Grady & Stacy Thurston

**ALSO PRESENT :** Dr. Jeffrey Schumann, Superintendent

5. **LEADERSHIP PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ON FERMI USE DATA** :

Mrs. LeBlanc arrived at 8:05 PM.

Mr. Neville and Mr. Peabody presented to the entire Board a report regarding the Fermi Reuse. They reviewed the Board's charge; reviewed like-to-like comparisons; enrollment numbers; FAQ's; option cost comparisons, summary conclusion and recommendations based on the information that has been collected about reusing Fermi for educational purposes.

Chairman Sirard thanked Mr. Neville and Mr. Peabody for the presentation.

Mr. Neville distributed copies of the report to Board members and audience members

Mr. Ludwick stated for clarity, the priority 1 option would bring Enrico Fermi up to code for all ADA compliance issues. Mr. Neville added this would also bring the building up to code as a high school only.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated based on the recommendation to release Fermi back to the town, some of the comments she has heard or seen on social media is for a movement to have the referendum fail. If the referendum fails, any plans for JFK will not be viable. Neither of the schools would be repaired.

Mr. Neville stated the problem is that we have a ton of repairs that are needed at all of our buildings. Most of the elementary school roofs leak when it rains. Dr. Schumann stated the roofs are being patched as needed.

Mr. Neville added that we have gone past the life on these roofs. We used to put money into a CIP account and made building repairs on a schedule. We need to do this again. Preferred maintenance should have been done on all our buildings. A plan is needed to make these necessary repairs. It is a shame that the referendum to repair the buildings failed. The Town did a good job getting the information out. All of these buildings are assets to the Town and we need to deal with this.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated that we will need a referendum whether Fermi is used for a community center or a middle school. She does not want to see a referendum fail to make the necessary building repairs. The referendum to fail would be to turn Fermi into a community center. The kids are being caught in the middle of this political battle. She is vested in the Board, the Superintendent's vision and this community.

We need to do what is best for our kids. This is her personal feeling. The Board will vote on this next week. This will not be an easy decision for any of us.

Mr. Kruzel stated it was a shame that the 2 Town referendums failed (school repairs and electricity). Now we will try to do this again and may not receive the same incentives that the State was offering before. The referendums should have been explained more clearly.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated she is very impressed with the new Board members. We try to work together as a team. As a Board, we hit the ground running. The Board hears what you are saying. We do not hold the purse strings. The one referendum to fail is the one to make Fermi into a community center. She does not want to see Fermi used as a community center.

Mr. Peabody would like Fermi to have educational use allowed in the building if we turn Fermi back to the town. We can't afford to not make repairs to our schools. Our elementary buildings need repairs.

Mr. Ludwick thanked Mr. Neville and Mr. Peabody for their work on the presentation. Cost is very important. We are losing many big companies in Enfield. The State is broke and is going through major changes. He looks at both schools and does not think there would be any educational benefits to move the middle school to Enrico Fermi. This building is overwhelming for 9<sup>th</sup> graders. I can't image it for middle school students. JFK is a great middle school. It is setup for middle school children. Fermi was a great high school. People are not staying in Connecticut. Our enrollment numbers are decreasing. Our sports teams reflect this.

Mr. Ludwick added that he feels the debate the Board has had has been very healthy. We need to do what is best for our kids. Putting middle school students at Fermi will not work no matter how much money we spend.

Mr. Neville stated he just wanted to present the facts. His kids went to Fermi and he taught at Fermi. We have listened to the comments. The numbers are astronomical. Asbestos work has been done at JFK. We haven't done this at the high schools. He does not like closing schools. Looking at the costs is important. Deferred maintenance was not done with our buildings. The boilers are old that are in our schools. We have other major needs in our district. We need a long range plan. He is extremely proud of the new high school.

Mr. Neville stated our new high school will be great. Can we afford to take on another project? Can we afford this as a district? Money will be the deciding factor. We need to do what is best for our town. There will be no easy decisions made.

Mr. Peabody stated we combed through the data. A lot of things stuck out when we looked at the data. We need to fix our base. Our kids deserve to learn in rock solid buildings. We are fighting for our school system. We are thinking of all of the kids needs. We are rebuilding our schools. Our curriculum is huge and is moving us forward. Cost is very important to the tax payers. Will we gain any educational benefits by doing this? What is the value added?

Mr. Peabody thanked audience members for coming and for sending us your e-mails. He can send out this report electronically. Please give him your e-mail addresses if you would like to receive this report. Thank you for your patience.

Mr. Neville added that you can e-mail or call us and we will send out the report. We tried to make the report as accurate as we could.

Mr. Kruzel thanked the Board Leadership for this report. It is very well written and it is good report. We want the best bang for our bucks.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated that she has had deep conversations about this. The budget process comes with constraints. We seem to be anti education and pro everything else. She is saying that if a referendum fails, Fermi will be turned into a community center. She will probably be hung out to dry because of her

comments and the Board will be blamed. We will receive a budget from the Town Council and if we do not receive our request, she will blame herself for making negative comments. She would like education to be fully funded by the Town. We have 2 former Board members sitting on the Town Council. All Board members are losing sleep over the budget. We have lost many Town employees. Now we need to make a decision about Fermi and we will be blamed. She does not want to see money go into a community center and not into our education system. We cannot continue to use our kids in this struggle.

Mr. Peabody agrees with Mrs. LeBlanc. We have consolidated our schools and made many cuts to education over the past couple of years. He sees public safety as a number one concern of the Town, education is second and everything else comes third. We have been hit hard from CREC tuition costs, special education costs and have not replaced any teachers since 2008. The budget will be hard again this year. People will disagree with us. He knows where we will need to go to make cuts.

Mr. Ludwick commends the Board Leadership for this report. We have been honest and have spoken our minds. The intent is here. He thanked Mr. Neville and Mr. Peabody for your hard work with this report. People may disagree with us. We are here for the right reasons.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated that the Board has looked at this as a group. She appreciates everyone's hard work.

Mr. Neville stated this is an emotional issue. We have all agonized over this. We need a long term plan that will help us out. We are here to work with the public. We don't want to see our buildings deteriorate anymore. We need to do the work on our buildings over time. We need to finance this the right way. He understands this will be expensive. We need to do this with the Town so all of these things will get done. We need to work together.

Mr. Neville added the JFK fields need to be fixed. The portables will also need to be dealt with. Our kids deserve a world class middle school to go with the world class high school. We need to work together to come up with viable solutions. We need to work with the Town Council.

Mr. Kruzel stated the town can conduct independent studies. Our staff can do this and is equipped to do this.

Chairman Sirard thanked Mr. Neville and Mr. Peabody for the presentation and for identifying the items in this report. There are many issues that are inter-related. This is a good report.

Chairman Sirard stated the Board came up with a plan in 2008. We are now going to merge our high school. We have done many great things for our school system. We are now addressing the next phase. He has discussed this with the mayor and we will come up with a joint committee to address these items. We need to fix what is broken.

Chairman Sirard thanked everyone for coming to the Board meeting.

## **6. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Kruzel moved, seconded by Mr. Ludwick to adjourn the Special Meeting of March 2, 2016.

All ayes, motion passed unanimously.

Meeting stood adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Tina LeBlanc  
Secretary  
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary