

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 11, 2020**

A special meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was virtually on August 11, 2020.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM by Walter Kruzel.
2. **INVOCATION OR MOMENT OF SILENCE:** Walter Kruzel
3. **ROLL CALL:**

MEMBERS PRESENT REMOTELY: Jonathan LeBlanc, Bill Salazar, Chris Rutledge, Wendy Costa, Tina LeBlanc, Joyce Hall, Stacy Thurston, Scott Ryder, and Walter Kruzel

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Christopher Drezek, Superintendent of Schools and Mr. Andrew B. Longey, Assistant Superintendent

4. **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**
 - a. **Update on School Reopening**

Mr. Drezek presented his school reopening plan for Board consideration. He reviewed the following topics for a Hybrid Plan: EPS Reopening Parent Survey Results; What Options Do We Have; Hartford Area; Alphabetical Split; K-12 Fall Reopening Hybrid Model; Fall Reopening Hybrid Model; Special Needs Students; Temporarily Choosing Not to Participate; What This Will Look Like K-5; What This Will Look Like JFK; What This Will Look Like EHS; What This Will Look Like at SLC (Pre-K); Social Distancing; Transportation; Reporting Illnesses and Addressing Vulnerable Populations; Use of Face Coverings, Masks, and Face Shields; *This Can All Change; Survey; and Local Control. This presentation can be found on our website at www.enfieldschools.org.

Mr. Drezek stated the plan will remain draft until we are back in school. He added there are no great options. The Hybrid Plan is being presented in the best interest of our kids and for Enfield.

5. **ACTION IF ANY, REGARDING SCHOOL REOPENING PLAN**

Mr. Ryder moved, seconded by Mrs. Thurston that the Enfield Board of Education adopts the Superintendent's recommended Hybrid Phasing Plan through mid-October.

Discussion:

Mrs. Thurston asked if they would conduct a deep cleaning after the students leave on Friday and over the weekend? Mr. Drezek stated yes and over the weekend. One of the recommended State guidelines is for deep cleaning of the buildings on Sunday. Our B&G employees do not work on Sunday. We are working with B&G and the buildings will be cleaned after students leave on Friday.

Mrs. Thurston asked about the placement of the tents at JFK. Mr. Drezek stated Mark Gahr has the JFK site plans and he will work with the building inspector and Fire Marshall.

Mrs. Hall asked if dividing the students alphabetically will include equivalent grade divisions. Mr. Drezek stated yes. We looked at dividing the students last names starting with L & K and

wanted to balance the students out. We determined just switching students by one letter would affect the student numbers districtwide. There will be some areas that are not balanced. We looked at the numbers and tried to balance the numbers as best as we could.

Mrs. Hall asked about the breakfast ERfC provides students and will this continue this year. Mr. Drezek stated we are working with our nutrition services department and ERfC to make sure the students that qualify for free and/or reduced lunch will continue to receive breakfast also. ERfC is our only afterschool program that we are working with.

Mrs. Hall stated students will be eating in their classrooms. Mr. Drezek stated students will eat in their classrooms.

Mrs. Hall stated she read something that was in the New York Times about talking to students about going back to school with social distancing in place. One parent commented that her child was excited to go to Kindergarten because they have more toys that she could play with. She added that with social distancing and rigid classroom rules, this child will be very disappointed. This is going to be a problem in every classroom. Classrooms will not have that friendly atmosphere they used to have. She added this could be a problem for some children. Mr. Drezek agreed that classrooms will not look the same. The experience will be different. The classes will be half full and the students will be spread-out. It is going to be very different and we will make it the best we can.

Mrs. Hall asked about sharing library books. Books do not clean up. Mr. Drezek stated classrooms will have libraries and the books will need to be isolated for a period. Our curriculum and reading departments are working together. Students will not be able to go to the library. A lot is going to change. It will be strange for students and staff. We will not know how this experience will affect the students. What we are experiencing now, we will be dealing with for a long time. This is a traumatic event for our students. We have an obligation to help them all.

Mr. Salazar asked about the Pre-K students and not deciding about them returning to school yet. He would like to know when a decision will be made regarding the Pre-K students. Mr. Drezek stated it is his hopes that by next week we will know what Stowe will look like so parents and staff will know. There are many variables we need to address about the population that go to the Stowe building. He does not want to comment to a specific date yet. The Stowe building is shared with ECDC. We need to work together. What we do will impact the students at ECDC.

Mr. Salazar added you will announce this next week. Mr. Drezek added hopefully sooner.

Mr. Salazar would like to propose a change to your plan. Chairman Kruzel asked if he would like to make an amendment.

Mr. Salazar stated the plan that was presented, we will wait until October 16th to decide. He would like to give parents time to prepare and plan to go back in person on October 19th. He would like us to proceed with the Hybrid Plan and recommends that we decide now that students will go back in person on October 19th. He does not want us to decide on October 2nd. He wants us to make that commitment now. That is the change he is recommending.

Chairman Kruzel stated Mr. Salazar is making an amendment that we go back fulltime in person on October 19th. Mrs. Costa seconded the amendment.

Point of Order:

Mr. Rutledge asked if Mr. Ryder considers this a friendly amendment? Mr. Ryder stated that he does not consider this as a friendly amendment. There are too many unknowns. He liked

the superintendent's suggestion for the Hybrid Plan. We will give the parents a two-week notice from October 2nd until October 16th to decide what we will do on Monday, October 19th.

Mr. Rutledge stated based on this information we must know discuss and vote on the amendment before we can proceed with the original motion.

Discussion:

Mrs. Hall does not believe this amendment makes sense. We will be looking at conditions on October 2nd. We cannot say at any point that we are fully going back. We cannot guarantee anything in her opinion. Saying we will go back by October 19th is impossible and inappropriate.

Mr. LeBlanc stated if we went with Mr. Salazar's proposal, students could go back to school 5 days a week on October 19th. We could on October 2nd if circumstances changed, vote on what to do.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated the superintendent laid his Hybrid Plan out perfectly. We will look at the data on October 2nd. The fall has been the biggest discussion about what the 2nd waiver will look like. She supports the superintendent's plan. If a change needs to be made, we can make it on October 2nd. He has provided us with benchmarks on October 2nd, October 16th and 19th. She will not support this amendment.

Mr. Salazar stated on October 2nd we will revisit and decide for October 19th. That is Mr. Drezek's plan. By saying now, we will be going back full time in person, this will give parents time to plan. If we find out on October 2nd things might be different, we can make a change. He just wanted to add this for clarification

Mr. Rutledge stated Mr. Salazar's amendment is just to give certainty that we will go back fulltime and in person on October 19th. If circumstances dictate on October 2nd differently, the amendment is just semantics. If he is interpreting Mr. Drezek's plan correctly, that that is exactly what we are going to do. For that reason, he does not support this amendment either.

Mr. Salazar stated based on Mr. Rutledge's comments, maybe he did not understand Mr. Drezek's plan. He thought we would be choosing a plan on October 2nd.

Mr. Drezek stated we need to give guidelines on how this will work. October 2nd allows us to see how we are doing and how we are doing with our Hybrid Plan. We want to get the kids back full time. This will give us time to gather information. October 2nd is a date to reassess the data. At that point, will we either continue with the Hybrid Plan, bring students back full time, or go with a complete distance learning plan. Everyone agrees that our ultimate end goal is to get the students back in school safely. October 2nd gives us time to gather information and report it back to the Board. We be able to present real data and facts. He wanted to put an end date because this is not indefinite. We needed some benchmarks to use along the way.

Mr. Ryder stated the biggest problem when we went out in March was, we were looking at two weeks and then another two weeks and so on. He does not want to say we are back on a specific date and does not want families to think it will be over. He would like to reassess this on October 2nd and parents will know what we are going to do on October 19th. He does not want us to make a commitment now without knowing all the information.

Mrs. Costa stated our ultimate goal is to get the kids back to school fulltime. We will all have different opinions. Parents have the right to know. This is a way for us to say our intent is we will go back on October 19th fulltime. October 19th aligns with the State's reopening plan with phases. We will look at the data on October 2nd. We need think of the mental health of the students. The longer they are out of school will hurt them. Students will be more inclined to

follow the rules with an end in sight. Getting to the next point depends on everyone following the guidelines for social distancing and wearing masks. She supports the amendment.

Mrs. LeBlanc added everything the superintendent said, you are saying differently. We will reevaluate on October 2nd. Mr. Drezek will be reevaluating daily and will reiterate this information to us. She does not know if you would like the wording changed, specifics or if it is just semantics. What you are saying is how she understood his presentation.

Mr. Rutledge called for the question.

Chairman Kruzel stated the amendment is to add October 19th as the date students return to full time five days a week with the reassessment.

A vote by **roll call 4-5-0** failed with Mr. Rutledge, Mrs. LeBlanc, Mrs. Hall, Mrs. Thurston, and Mr. Ryder in dissent.

Chairman Kruzel suggested to move October 2nd to September 29th so it aligns with our Board meeting date? Mr. Drezek stated information is being received daily. He put that date on the plan so the community would know there are deadlines. We can not do this any later than October 2nd. He does not have a problem with changing the date. He just wanted to use a Friday date. Sometimes, you will receive information at the end of the month. We could hold a special meeting to discuss this. He understands everyone's points. He would love to say we will be back on October 19th fully. We need to see how the hybrid plan is working and social distancing is working with the students. We cannot say that because none of us know what the future will bring us. He will share the data with the Board as soon as he gets it. It is hard to predict.

Chairman Kruzel asked for Board member questions on the original motion.

Mrs. LeBlanc thanked Mr. Drezek for his presentation. She asked if PE classes will be held outdoors or in the classrooms. Mr. Drezek stated they will be held both in the classes and outdoor weather permitting.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked about Freshman orientation, Gr. 3, Gr. 6, and Kindergarten orientation. She is sure we will receive information from the principals about this. Mr. Drezek stated we have been discussing holding some of these kinds of events the week the teachers are back. Our principals are trying to be creative and developing the most welcome back for our kids. There are a lot of events that normally take place in the school during the first month. We will not be able to hold open house events, socials, or these kinds of events. One of the best parts of being a superintendent is when we can walk around the schools and pop into classrooms or reading to the students. We will be postponing these kinds of events.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked about families that receive free/reduced lunches that opt out of the Hybrid Plan and are Distancing Learning, will they have the option to receive lunch and breakfast? Mr. Drezek stated that is correct. They might need to register to receive meals like we did in the spring providing you qualify for free and/or reduced. We will have a place where the parents can pick up meals. It might be different than what was done in the spring. Mrs. Edwards need to keep track of the meals being distributed.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked about the distribution of the iPads. Mr. Drezek stated the principals will be distributing these to the parents. The principals know the families and the students. This will also give students a chance to come to the schools and see the principals.

Mrs. LeBlanc asked if parents that opt out for Distance Learning, will the students still be able to participate in fall sports? Mr. Drezek stated we are waiting for further guidance on this. It was suggested in one of the updates that students that opt out will not be allowed to

participate in sports. There will be a universal rule that will be followed. As soon as we receive clarification on this, we will let everyone know.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated parents would like to see the cleaning and ventilation plans for the buildings. Mr. Drezek stated Building and Grounds will be handling building cleanings.

Mrs. LeBlanc extended her condolences to the Behling family. They are a wonderful family.

Mr. LeBlanc stated if schools are being politicalized as a State, town, and country, we are going to fail. We need to get our kids back to school 5 days a week. We all want the students back in school. Problems will continue to exit down the road. The perfect solution does not exist. We need to get together as a Board and stop politicizing. We need to get the kids back in school. He likes the Hybrid Plan and supports it. The approach is smart and takes into account safety precautions and gives us guidance and what we need to do to get to a 5-day a week program.

Mr. LeBlanc thanked Mr. Drezek for his presentation. He asked what are other districts doing with dates? Are they coming with the same approach as we are? Mr. Drezek stated some districts are just looking at the month of September. Some are going longer through Thanksgiving. It varies from community to community. During the spring, they were telling us information in two-week increments. This plan gives us enough time to gather data and make plans. Surrounding towns are looking at a month increment. Some have made adjustments due to the change for the start of school. Columbus Day gives us an extra day.

Mrs. Costa stated it was reported in the JI that Suffield is doing a Hybrid Plan for three-weeks and will then go full time. She supports the Hybrid Plan and going back on October 19th. Without a decision or needed criteria about what we will need to do for going full time, she is struggling with us deciding on October 2nd.

Mr. Drezek stated we need criteria for closing schools. We have not received criteria for what we should do if there is a confirmed case. We need guidelines from the State. This information could help Board members and parents make decisions.

Mr. Rutledge would like to call the question.

Chairman Kruzal stated he would like to say something, and Mr. Ryder would also like to.

Mr. Rutledge withdrew calling for the question.

Mr. Ryder asked if any building has more than 55 % or 45% in any direction with the breakdown by alphabet. Mr. Drezek does not believe it is more than that. Class lists are being compiled now. Mr. Ryder appreciates that information. He just wants parents to know it will be as close to a 50/50 split as can be done.

Mr. Ryder stated JFK and EHS students will eat their lunches in classrooms during the lunch wave times. Mr. Drezek stated lunch time will be incorporated into the period that are in.

Mr. Ryder stated that any e-mails Board members have received regarding plans have been forwarded to the superintendent and assistant superintendent. He thanked them both for reading them.

Mr. Ryder asked when classroom assignments will be coming out. Mr. Drezek stated they are working on them now and they will all be sent out at the same time.

Mr. Ryder asked about the orientations for Kindergarten, Gr. 3, Gr. 6, and Gr. 9. We will wait to hear from the principals about this.

Mr. Ryder met with Eli Whitney principal about the PTO. He asked if the teachers could send out pictures of the classroom with the 9 desks in each room so the kids will know what they look like. Mr. Drezek stated he does not believe the classrooms will be setup in time. B&G is working on moving the desks around. The classrooms will have 18 desks in them not 9. Students will be assigned to a specific desk. Mr. Ryder appreciated the clarification.

Mr. Ryder thanked Mr. Drezek for explaining about our special needs students and how they will have the opportunity to attend 4 days a week if they so choose.

Mr. Ryder will meet with the PTO presidents and volunteers about not being in the buildings during phase I of our Hybrid Plan.

Mr. Ryder stated we received 3K responses for the first survey. He is hoping all parents will complete the next survey. We are looking for 100% participation. He will ask everyone to spread the word.

Mr. Ryder wished Hazardville Memorial teacher Mrs. Foy-Dupuis a speedy recovery.

Mr. Drezek stated the next communication we need to send out is a welcome letter to our new kindergarten families.

Mr. Drezek stated we will also send out another survey for parents to complete for each of their children about attending school with our Hybrid Plan or opting out for Distance Learning. Students participating with the Hybrid Plan and Distance Learning will receive iPads. He stressed that if you plan to homeschool your child, you will not receive an iPad. You will be solely responsible for educating your children.

Chairman Kruzel stated that 540 people are watching us. He would like you all to call 860-566-4840. This is the number to the Governor's office. This is the plan we are going to use. We need him to give us the plan we need from his office about closing school. Thank you.

Chairman Kruzel asked for a roll call vote.

A vote by **roll call 8-1-0** passed with Mrs. Costa in dissent.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Salazar moved, seconded by Mrs. Thurston to adjourn the Special Virtual Meeting of August 11, 2020.

Mr. Rutledge added we are all happy to get back to normal. This may be our new normal for the time being. This has been difficult for everyone. We have worked together and have accomplished a lot as a Board. We are working on a lot of different things trying to make our school system better. At some point, all journeys must end. He has thought about this a lot over the past several months, and announced effectively today, August 11th, he is resigning from the Board of Education. He thanked his fellow Board members for the spirited debates we have had and for your time and efforts. He wished them all the best.

Chairman Kruzel thanked Mr. Rutledge for his service.

All ayes, motion passed unanimously. Meeting stood adjourned at 7:30 PM.

Tina LeBlanc
Secretary
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary