

MINUTES OF THE HYBRID SPECIAL WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Wednesday, May 11, 2022

Via WebEx <https://woodbridgeps.webex.com/woodbridgeps/j.php?MTID=m4db6a35d9d1d6e8b3b5d5104b27736e3>

Meeting Number: 2491 804 5050

Meeting Password: r2wXgr433qF

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Piascyk, Chair called the meeting to order (7:02 AM).

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Chair (In-person); Dr. Jay Dahya (Remote); Ms. Sarah Del Prete, Secretary (Remote); Ms. Brooke Hopkins (Remote); Mr. Jeff Hughes (In-person); Dr. Maria Madonick, Vice Chair (Remote); and Ms. Erin Williamson (In-person).

STAFF: Dr. Jonathan Budd, Superintendent; and Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board.

Chair Piascyk acknowledged receipt of correspondence which was available for public viewing in Board Book.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jackie Capiello hoped that the BRS would remain “mask choice.” Elementary age children are the least vulnerable population. There has been no significant in-school transmission change and critical education time would be lost if we were to implement changes at this stage of the school year.

Kristen Turkosz advocated for masking decisions to be left to parents. There are different reasons for the increased positivity rates than there were previously. Children are achieving greater academic success without masks. The Board was urged to maintain mask choice.

Grant McInnes opposed the reintroduction of masks at BRS. Schools are not hospitals and there are only two reasons to consider masking children – to protect children themselves and to break the chain of transmission that could bring Covid home to vulnerable family members. The infection risk to children is minimal. These same children are playing sports, having playdates, and socializing at other events outside of school without masks being worn.

Josh Gelder felt that BRS was in a really good place with mask choice. Parents should be the one deciding what is best for their children. Many of the methods used during the pandemic are not as effective as originally thought. Decisions should be made based on proven data. Numerous requests have been made for the Board to provide data for mask effectiveness. Before we reinstate masks, we need the data behind it. We are all in a good path with mask choice, let’s keep it there.

Jeffrey Luck noted that parents have not received any of the studies requested. It is imperative that children remain in school. The positivity rate is not the same as it was two years ago. Mask choice should be a parent decision and BRS needs to stay that way. Covid is a virus and it will continue to be around similar to that of the flu. He noted that BRS students were told they would be suspended if they walked out in protest of masking. BRS students should have the same right as students at Amity. BRS students are playing sports and are together in and out of school without masks. The Board was urged to maintain mask choice.

James Turkosz noted his disappointment that the Board is back discussing this topic again. Mask choice needs to remain as it is. Everything is fine, people are making their own choices, and there is no need to mess anything up.

Matthew Browning recounted that there is no significant school-based transmission. Masking should not be forced upon children and N95 are the only effective masks. While there may be a high positivity rate at the moment, 90% of people symptomatic are negative. Masks are a medical choice and individuals should have control over their medical decisions. More importantly, parents should have control of medical decisions that affect their children.

Whitney Randall supports mask mandates especially if COVID-19 reaches a level that puts children at risk. While voices for pro-choice are very loud, if the virus were to be more deadly at some point, it is hoped the Board would reimplement the mask mandate. There is a point where public safety overrides personal choice.

It was noted that the primary reason for convening this meeting was to allow the Board to discuss the recent community change of Covid cases to “high” level in New Haven County and its relevance to BRS. While there is no evidence of

significant in-school transmission as defined by QVHD, cases have risen from an average of 0.8 / day in March to 4.5 / day in May. Continuation and/or changes to current mitigation strategies would include:

- Pausing expansion of Cafeteria usage
- A return to spacing of desks to 3 feet apart - rows instead of clusters
- Use of desk shields in classrooms & Cafeteria for snack and lunch
- Cohorting at dismissal

It was not necessary for the Board to take any action at this meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to receive an update on local metrics and mitigation strategies in accordance with their motion made at the February 23, 2022 Special Meeting. While community input is important, the Board is responsible to ensure the safety and welfare of all BRS students. Questions were raised regarding transportation and cohorting as student groupings are different on buses and in classrooms and what message is being delivered to children regarding the 3 feet social distancing.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: (7:58 AM)

Dr. Dayha
Second by Dr. Madonick
UNANIMOUS

Recorded by Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board