



Wakefield School Board Minutes

January 4, 2022

Held in the Paul School Library

Approved

BOARD MEMBERS		ADMINISTRATORS	
Bob Ouellette, Chair	✓	Pam Stiles, Superintendent	✓
Relf Fogg, Vice Chair	✓	Michael O'Neill, Financial Manager	
Mary Collins	✓	Anne Kebler, Special Ed/Coordinator	✓
Sheena Robbins	✓	Kristen White, Principal	✓
Caitlin Gelinas	✓	Tracy Bemis, Assistant Principal	

Audience: Sandra Taliaferro, Faith Merrill and Mary Soares with Clearview TV.

Chairman Ouellette called the meeting to order at 6:35. Those present joined in the flag salute.

Public Comment

None

Consent Agenda

Mrs. Gelinas made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Collins, to approve the consent Agenda. (Vote 4-1)

Meeting Minutes

Mr. Collins made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Gelinas, to approve the public minutes of 12-21-21 with any amendments offered. (Vote 5-0)

Mr. Collins made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Gelinas, to approve the non public minutes of 12-21-21 with any amendments offered. (Vote 5-0)

Old Business

Budget Committee Update

Article 9: Changed the words Multi-Purpose Room to Gym Floor.

Article 13: Inserted a number 2 after the heading for this fund to raise and appropriate as opposed to the one for donations.

Article 15: Changed to Raise and Appropriate instead of the money coming from end of the year savings. The Budget Committee said they are willing to reconsider the vote at the January 11th meeting if there is a change in language.

Mr. Fogg made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Collins to approve the changes in the articles 9, 13 and 15 and bring them forward to the Budget Committee. (Vote 5-0)

Mr. Fogg made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ouellette, to change the wording to ‘does not recommend’ reflecting the Budget Committee’s vote. (Vote 5-0)

Deliberative Session

February 5th immediately following the Town (9:00 am)

Covid Update-Volunteers, Quarantine length

Mrs. Stiles gave the Board the results of the survey asking teachers about volunteers in the school. She received 45 responses. 66.7% did not want to see volunteers in the classroom at this time. 40% said yes with masks mandated and 20% said yes with masks optional and 40% said no to volunteers in the non-contact areas. 60% of the staff would like volunteers in non-contact areas with masks mandates. Mrs. Robbins asked Mrs. White if this would be a difficult feat. She wondered if doing this and creating more work for her and others would defeat the purpose.

Mrs. Robbins made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Gelinas, to have the Administration explore the feasibility of having visitors come into the school and work in non-contact areas with masks on. (5-0)

Mr. Fogg would like to see this embraced by a stronger majority. Mrs. Robbins felt that was part of the exploration. Mrs. Collins asked if she could contact a previous Volunteer Coordinator and bring that information forward to take that much off Mrs. Whites plate. Mr. Ouellette questioned the timing. He feels that Mrs. White should be the person looking into this. Mrs. Collins explained that she would be gathering information on how the program was run. Mr. Ouellette felt that was fine. Mrs. Gelinas felt that the concerns are those she mentioned at the last meeting. Would this be adding too much now? Mrs. Collins said she was looking for ways to support the staff. Mrs. Stiles recommended that she and Mrs. White work on looking for one person to come in at this time. The Board was in agreement that Mrs. Collins gather information.

Mrs. Stiles presented a mask exemption form for the Board to consider. This would be a formalized document to keep on file. This form will be available on the website.

Mr. Fogg mad a motion, seconded by Mrs. Collins to adopt the Covid Exemption form. (Vote 4-1)

Mrs. White lets the teacher and anyone who works with the child that he/she has a mask exemption.

Mr. Fogg asked Mrs. Stiles to let Board members know if the deadline for adding items to the agenda changes from Thursday at noon. Mrs. Collins asked if items could be added to the agenda at a meeting per a Board vote and Mr. Ouellette replied they could be added then. Mrs. Stiles explained that this was an unusual circumstance. It was the holidays and she came on Wednesday and she was all alone and she came in so the Board could get their packets and they were sent out early.

There are twelve positive cases of Covid in the school. Mrs. Stiles said the superintendents had a meeting with the Commissioner on Monday and the guidance from the Commissioner and Governor is that the State of New Hampshire is governed by DHHS and they have not had the time to look at the new information from the CDC. We are being told that we will follow the protocol that’s in place. That information was relayed to staff. Mrs. Robbins said that kids could be out of school as much as forty days. She said per policies there are students that are not

allowed to attend school. She has read extensively, information garnered over the past two years and the new tools that have become available. And she also acknowledges the impact to children and families. People are questioning whether they should even take a test as that could mean twenty days of work and school could be missed. She feels it's time to start transitioning. She works in the mental health field and the second cause for death in 10-34 year old's is suicide. She said incidents for school aged children have increased since Covid. She read the CDC recommendations and the options.

1. If a student tests positive the family has an option to keep them home for ten days or keep them home for five and come back to school and wear a mask for five days. If a family has an mask exemption the child stays home for ten days
2. If you're exposed in your household, no quarantine but ten days hard mask rules. After ten days you take a test and if it's negative you can remove the mask.
3. If you're exposed outside of your home strongly recommend mask wearing.
4. If someone has symptoms keep them home for five and come back to school and wear a mask for five days or take a test.

Mrs. Gelinas said we can't even get kids to wear masks without sickness and we're now inviting them to come back to school on the most contagious days. She feels we should stick with the current plan. She said she understands wanting to get kids back in school but it's just adding another layer of stress making these rash decisions. Mrs. Collins said she read a lot and the information is out there. She said kids are out for so long because of the ten day quarantine rules. Mrs. Robbins said that she believes what was done in the beginning of Covid was understandable because we did not know. Now that time has passed we have more data we don't need to be as extreme.

Mrs. Gelinas feels this is not good for our community that the people who are the loudest and our own personal desires are being put before the good of the students and staff. Mrs. Collins does not feel that this is personal but what is best for the student in the safest way.

Mrs. Robbins made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Collins, to move toward aligning with the CDC's recommendations

- 1. If a student tests positive the family has an option to keep them home for ten days or keep them home for five and come back to school and wear a mask for five days. If a family has a mask exception the child stays home for ten days**
- 2. If you're exposed in your household, no quarantine but ten days hard mask rules. After ten days you take a test and if it's negative you can remove the mask.**
- 3. If you're exposed outside of your home strongly recommend mask wearing.**
- 4. If someone has symptoms keep them home for five and come back to school and wear a mask for five days or take a test. (Vote 3-2)**

Mrs. Stiles said this would be devastating to staff. We will be tremendously short staffed. A huge number of staff are so fearful, they don't feel safe. They are fearful for their health and that of their families. She said this will have a huge impact on the staff who will feel that the only thing between them and an ill child will be a mask. They are on edge about their own health and three feet distancing or less and no opportunity to go outside because of the cold. Mr. Ouellette said he felt they would think we're not supporting them. Mrs. Collins said we do offer the better fitting N95 masks. Mrs. Gelinas feels there will be more resignations. Mrs. Collins asked if this became official on Friday would the staff feel different? Mrs. Stiles said the CDC is already

talking about rescinding this. DHHS has not had time to look at the science behind it. They were told by the Governor and Commissioner that we are sticking with what we have now until it's determined that this is the right step to take. Mrs. Kebler said when there is more than one option it becomes confusing. Mrs. Robbins said she is now feeling that she needs to change her mind or everyone will be upset. Mrs. Stiles said we don't have a right answer. She said there are unintended consequences to whatever decisions are made.

Mrs. Robbins said we have the CDC making these recommendations. She said we have been living this for two years and there has been an impact. Her intention was to try to slowly pull ourselves out of all this but she doesn't want to have people scared for their own safety. Mrs. Gelinas said the fear trickles down to the children and she doesn't want the school to be the guinea pig. Mrs. Robbins rescinded her motion even though she believes with the science out there that this is the best step and where we're heading and we have to consider this at some point. After some discussion:

Mrs. Robbins made a motion to reconsider the previous motion, seconded by Mrs. Collins. (No vote taken)

New Business

High School Lottery

The Board drew the number for the Kingswood High School lottery. There are seven spots and eighteen applications. Parents will be informed.

Policies

JICC Student Conduct on the Bus (Second Reading)

Mrs. Collins said they added the parental responsibility when a child loses bus privileges.

Mrs. Collins made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Robbins, to approve Policy JICC. (Vote 5-0)

Other Business

Mrs. Collins made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ouellette, to accept the MOU as written. (Vote 0-5)

Nurse

Mrs. Robbins would like to thank the school nurse. She has gone above and beyond during this covid crisis.

Public Comment

Faith Merrill said the Board needs to decide what the teachers want. She is worried and concerned if they don't the teachers won't want to stay. Substitutes will not help the students in the long run in high school. Mrs. Taliaferro said that she appreciated Mrs. Robbins motion as she and her son just got over Covid. He was fine within the five days and it would have been nice to send him to school with a mask. She said kids are definitely more resilient than adults. She asked what the plan would be for a superintendent. Mr. Ouellette said we have options, some of which will be discussed in non public tonight. Mrs. Soares thanked Mrs. Stiles for all she had done for the school. She said all her students who have had Covid have reached out to her and asked what they could do at home.

Nominations /Hires/Resignations

Mr. Fogg made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Gelinas, to accept the resignation of Melanie Buell on January 4th (Vote 5-0)

Mrs. Gelinas made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Collins, to accept the resignation of Liz Hadzima with regret on June 30th. (Vote 3-2)

Mrs. Gelinas made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Robbins to accept the resignation of Pam Stiles with deep regret and devastation on January 15th . (Vote 2-3)

Correspondence

None

Mr. Ouellette said that this is Mrs. Stiles last meeting and he would like to thank her from the bottom of their hearts.

Non Public Session

Mr. Ouellette made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Gelinas, to enter nonpublic under 91-A 3:11(a) and (c) at 8:00. Roll call Gelinas aye, Fogg aye, Collins aye, Ouellette aye (Vote 5-0)

The Board reentered public session at 10:20.

Adjournment

Mr. Ouellette made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Gelinas, to adjourn the meeting at 10:25. (Vote 5-0)

Respectfully submitted for approval at the next School Board meeting,

Priscilla Colbath
School Board Secretary