

**MEETING MINUTES of the
NASHOBA REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMITTEE**

MEETING DATE and TIME

August 17, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Meeting held remotely via the Zoom video-conferencing platform in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021 (enacted June 21, 2021) extending certain COVID-19 measures adopted during the State of Emergency including the remote meeting provision of Executive Order of March 12, 2020 suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law (Gen. Laws c.30A, sections 18-25).

MEMBER ATTENDANCE:

PRESENT: Leah Vivirito, Karen Devine, Sharon Poch, Brett Collins, Rich Eckel, Stephen Rubinstein, Dr. Mary McCarthy Amy Cohen, Shawn Winsor, and Joseph Gleason

ABSENT: Michal Horesh

NON-MEMBER ATTENDANCE:

Superintendent Kirk Downing, Pupil Personnel Serviced Coordinator Joan DeAnglis, Nurse Coordinator Lesa Breault-Gulbicki

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

At 6:01 p.m. Chairperson Vivirito called the meeting to order and led the District Committee and those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

CITIZENS' COMMENT(S)/PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

6:02 p.m. Chairperson Vivirito opened the floor to citizens' comment(s)/public participation. The following individuals participated:

Jeremy Crossland (Lancaster), Keely Nowakowski (Stow), Gregory Mylott (Lancaster), Michael King (Lancaster), and Ryan Hill (Stow).

NEW BUSINESS – MASKING GUIDELINES PRESENTATION:

6:22 p.m. Chairperson Vivirito recognized Superintendent Kirk Downing to provide a presentation to the District Committee on a proposed masking policy for the opening of the 2021-2022 school year.

Superintendent Downing recognized Nurse Leader Lesa Breault-Gulbicki who co-presented on this masking policy.

Superintendent Downing advised the District Committee that the proposed policy being presented is intended to provide a “pathway” for the types of environments that all would like for the children of the District.

It was related that the metrics and guidance used in establishing this proposed policy are as follows: (i.) infection rates, (ii.) vaccination rates, (iii.) ability to obtain vaccinations, and summer travel.

Further recommendations from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health were also considered. Consultation was also initiated with the Nashoba associated Boards of Health for their input and endorsement as well.

Data on case rates for District member communities as well as vaccination rates for the students of the District was presented. Superintendent Downing also reviewed all of the mitigation measures that have been initiated by the District and practiced by the staff and students.

Superintendent Downing's recommendation for consideration the District Committee is as follow:

- (a.) To commence the school year with all indoor environments (with limited exceptions) requiring masks; and
- (b.) In regards to Nashoba Regional High School consideration will be given to an adjustment of the mandatory masking policy three (3) weeks after Labor Day with the intent of moving to an optional policy depending on the metrics relative to COVID-19 incidences being available.

6:33 p.m. Superintendent Downing presents Nurse Coordinator Lesa Breault-Gulbicki to present an overview of pool testing and antigen testing.

Superintendent Downing spoke to the manner in which the District will attempt to move to optional masking at the other schools in the District and that the criteria for this decision will be based on low case rates, high participation in pool testing, and vaccine availability. It was further recommended to the District Committee that decisions to move to optional masking should be initiated on a school-by-school basis.

6:47 p.m. Amy Cohen inquired about whether the Superintendent had an opportunity to consider feedback from the community relative to the proposed policy. Superintendent Downing advised that he did not posit any feedback requests in form of a vote or ballot while consideration was still being given to the proposed policy. Further inquiry was made by Ms. Cohen relative to the acquisition of vaccination rates. Lesa Breault-Gulbicki advised that the information secured was through M.I.I.S and S.N.A.P. which are confidential interfacing health information databases. Ms. Cohen further inquired as to how the mechanics of the policy would be implemented in the future. It was presented that votes of the District Committee would be necessary to move to optional masking and/or to make any changes or alterations.

6:54 p.m. District Committee member Shawn Winsor arrived for the meeting.

6:55 p.m. Sharon Poch requested a further explanation as to how there would be any modifications and/or alterations to to the recommended policy.

6:57 p.m. Stephen Rubinstein stated his objections to the District Committee being involved in school-by-school decisions on masking and that the implementation and modifications to this policy should be assigned to the administration.

7:06 p.m. District Committee member Dr. Mary McCarthy left the meeting.

Discussion ensued among the District Committee members relative to whether there is authority to assign implementation as well as modification responsibilities to the administration so as to avoid the necessity of additional meetings of the District Committee to secure authority to implement modifications of the proposed policy.

Karen Devine inquired as to whether there is a plan on how the data is to be analyzed in regards to the implementation of the policy. Superintendent Downing indicated that it would be his inclination to rely upon the local boards of health in regards to any analysis of the data and implementation of the proposed policy.

Rich Eckel encouraged all members to rely on the medical experts and their assessments in regards to this policy.

Amy Cohen inquired if there was a way to frame the policy so as to allow the administration more autonomy in regards to its implementation and modification.

Superintendent Downing advised that he will secure guidance in regards to Ms. Cohen's inquiry.

Chairperson Vivirito expressed that while masking is not ideal to the learning process masks do allow for an ability for all children to attend in person learning. Notwithstanding the foregoing Chairperson Vivirito inquired of administration if there was any information and/or data that masking negatively impacted social-emotional learning. Lesa Breault-Gulbicki advised that masks that are clean and properly utilized are best form of mitigation that the policy as presented is the best approach to the pandemic.

Joan DeAngelis expressed that the safety of the children is paramount and that while there may be some impact to the emotional health of some children the health and safety of all children was and is of singular importance to the District. Superintendent Downing added that the proposed policy does allow for some accommodations for those children who for medical or other reasons cannot comply (in whole or in part) with the policy.

ADJOURNMENT:

At 7:24 p.m. there being no further business before the District Committee Chairperson Vivirito requested a motion for adjournment.

MOTION: Motion to adjourn made by Joseph Gleason (Seconded by Stephen Rubinstein)

In favor: Leah Vivirito, Amy Cohen, Karen Devine, Stephen Rubinstein,

Brett Collins, Rick Eckel, Sharon Poch, Shawn Winsor, Joseph Gleason
Opposed: None.
MOTION PASSES 9-0

Respectfully submitted this 3rd day of September, 2021.

Joseph M. Gleason

Joseph M. Gleason (Lancaster)
Recording Secretary