



**BOARD OF EDUCATION
SHEBOYGAN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Sheboygan, Wisconsin
SPECIAL SESSION MINUTES
Monday, May 17, 2021**

A Special Session of the Board of Education was held on Monday, May 17, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. at South High School (Commons), 1240 Washington Avenue, Sheboygan, WI 53081.

Please note that due to the precautions recommended during the current COVID-19 health emergency, some Board members may be participating in this Board meeting via teleconference or other remote access technology. Members of the public who attend the meeting will be able to hear any open session dialogue between such members and the Board members present in the South High School Commons. In addition, in the interest of social distancing recommended by health officials as well as the governmental limits on the size of gatherings, the District is offering audio access to the meeting via phone connection by calling 1-401-753-9475 with access code 421 409 436# or meet.google.com/gcs-nptf-rxj at the scheduled meeting time. (Please be aware that a Google account is needed in order to access the meeting from this link.)

- I. President Gallianetti called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.
- II. Board Members Present: Mr. David Gallianetti, Dr. Susan Hein (joined at 7:57 p.m.), Mr. Ryan Burg, Ms. Marcia Reinthaler, Mr. Santino Laster, Ms. Kay Robbins, Ms. Rebecca Versey, Mr. Kyle Whelton, Mr. Mark Mancl
- III. Moved by Ms. Reinthaler, seconded by Mr. Whelton to approve the agenda. All ayes. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Gallianetti stated that as a result of the guidance by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Thursday and then Saturday, as well as a communication that was sent to students and staff, community members started reaching out to school board members to share their thoughts/concerns. It was determined there was a need to meet sooner than the May 25 Regular Board of Education meeting.

Mr. Gallianetti provided a review of how the agenda would be followed for this evening and noted that school board discussion would occur after receiving community input. He reiterated that the discussion is strictly on masks and asked community members who want to provide input to not stray off topic.

IV. Review of District Mask Requirements

Mr. Harvatine talked about the notice the District received on Thursday that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) changed their guidance regarding masking. The pandemic team met and discussed how the new recommendations may alter the District's current masking policy that was in effect. After much discussion, and the fact that there are staff and students who have been vaccinated, the pandemic team developed revised guidelines which centered on the notion that if a person is fully vaccinated that would align with the CDC recommendation, and therefore, would not be required to wear a mask. As a public school entity, and based on our consultation with our legal counsel, we have the ability to ask for verification of vaccination if the need arose. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) does not apply and is not in violation. Mr. Harvatine reported that on Saturday, the CDC released updated guidance on fully vaccinated individuals to which they then said schools should be following the existing guidance for masking. The CDC cited two different criteria for their change: 1) students will not be fully vaccinated by the 2021 school year and, 2) schools may need additional time to make policy and recommendation to their COVID response guidance. He added that the District will receive information to update our 2021-2022 guidance from the CDC. He further noted that there was a very positive response at the high schools and across the District for adults, and that one cannot assume those who are masked are not vaccinated.

V. Community Input

Ms. Lorraine Greene, 2308 N. 35th St., Sheboygan, WI – She talked about the District mission statement and the positive learning environment. How can a positive learning environment exist when the District is purposely trying to divide groups of people from mask vs. non-mask and vaccinated vs. non-vaccinated. There already exists a divide in this country and now we are endorsing this type of thinking in the school setting. She asked if it promotes a positive learning environment to divide students. She was also disappointed with the students who were being negative to her group while they were standing outside the vaccination clinic at North High School.

Mr. Russ Otten, 2522 S. 7th St., Sheboygan, WI – He knows the Board does not have an easy job but does wonder who they are trusting. Everyone says follow the science. Science has shown many things in terms of masks. Sheboyganites control what happens here. There is no governor mandate so let's just use our minds/common sense. To say now we are going to continue this nonsense is ridiculous. Do we really want to create a divide? If people want to wear a mask, then wear them. Consider all who voted to put the Board members in office.

Ms. Judi Pool, 18 Ashwood Dr., Sheboygan, WI – She talked about an experiment of dividing students who had blue and brown eyes. Consequences of superiority soon developed and the blue eyed children became more aggressive and started harassing the brown eyed or inferior group. Administration is trying to pit children and staff against one another – no masks. Children have been used as a political football for long enough.

Mr. James Gilliam, 2520 S. 17th St., Sheboygan, WI – How do you not consider the discrimination or segregation dividing the kids when most who are wearing the masks are not vaccinated. We are going to cause bullying to increase over something silly as a piece of cloth over your face. The kids are the ones that are being the pawns and will be affected down the road. If administration is saying they have to wear masks, it will never go away. Look at it from what we are doing to our kids.

Ms. Ruth Villareal, 1406 Pennsylvania Ave., Sheboygan, WI – She talked about herd immunity and asked if the District has been testing the students to know if they had the virus and deserve to go to school and not be reprimanded. Children are helping us to receive herd immunity but do not reprimand children any more. They have been given natural immunity.

Ms. Suzanne Speltz, 3917 Mendocino Ln., Sheboygan, WI – This is a very divisive rule to get people to get the vaccination. Puts undue stress on staff and gives a special privilege to those who are vaccinated. Kids have enough pressures and do not need this added to it.

Mr. Blake Bennett, 1205 Mead Ave., Sheboygan, WI – He is one of the parents of a bullied kid over masking. Everyone can see what is going on. School is a place to learn and not start separating people.

Mr. Walter Grawer, 3416 N. 7th St., Sheboygan, WI – He talked about how unhealthy mask wearing is. Hard pressed to find firm numbers on the benefits of masking. If we use some critical thought and look at the impact on children and/or teachers passing it on to one another. Fear is a much worse virus and teaching our children to be fearful of each other is wrong. We should not have to interfere with our body's natural immune system. It is wrong to require someone to show papers on an experimental vaccine.

Ms. Tracy Allee, 4627 W. Reineking Dr., Sheboygan, WI – Talked about the struggles she has had with her children learning. Being in school having to wear a mask so you cannot see others expressions is difficult for children. They are in masks six hours a day and then are on the playground outside with a mask on – it is not healthy. She would like to see everyone work together as a team and should make masks optional. We have learned from history and do not want it to repeat itself. Feels it is a divisive path we are on.

Ms. Lynn Gleu, 417 Birchwood St., Belgium, WI – As the President of the Sheboygan Education Association (SEA) she indicated their goal is to provide the safest working environment in the community and she added that each change has brought challenges. It is challenging to work with students with masks and challenging to work through a computer screen. Regardless of the outcome this evening, teachers' will work for the success of each and every child. This is not a political position or personal belief. The SEA will support the Board's decision.

Ms. Shelly (unknown last name/address) – Removed her son out of school this fall as a result of having to wear a mask. She is a registered nurse and never wore a mask as a result of a virus. She was exposed to pathogens because that is how you build herd immunity. Masks do not protect from a virus and she also said you should never mask a healthy person. There is no such thing as an asymptomatic spread. Certain masks have to be properly fitted in order

to be effective. The integrity of the masks is constantly compromised. If you are wearing the same mask for more than one hour you are creating all sorts of other pathogens and wearing a cesspool of pathogens. The data suggests that both medical and non-medical masks are ineffective. The psychological effect it is having in creating depression and suicide is at an all-time high.

Mr. Darrick Rupp, 217 Superior Ave., Sheboygan, WI – We are being told to give up our liberty and freedoms over something that is 99% survivable and wear a mask when there is zero science to show it is effective. It is ridiculous we are making our kids wear masks that have so much bacteria and are creating diseases while protecting over something that is not deadly. Children have a small chance of getting COVID-19 so why are we continuing this ridiculousness. If you want to wear a mask wear it, if you do not then don't.

Mr. Jack (unknown last name/address) – We are Americans and have free choice. Think about those kids who have gone through hell for the past year and now you are going to segregate kids in a free country. Parents are to make decisions for their kids and we do not have the option because the school is choosing to do it without our consent. There is a lot of bantering going on in the schools and have they explored and understand what this change will do. He does not want to see the District hurt by a decision to segregate our kids.

Ms. Jill Krause, 1410 N. 12th St., Sheboygan, WI – Thanked the Board for following the CDC guidelines. The CDC is recommending masks for the remainder of the school year which is 11 days. She would like to see everyone masked which evens out the playing field. Not asking for student proof of vaccination. May is a big month for substitute teachers as well so there may be some concern with them wanting to work.

Ms. Holly Raleigh, 2642 White Fox Dr., Sheboygan, WI – At what point do we take what the country's numbers are and take that into consideration.

Ms. Nicole Graf, 3207 S. 17th St., Sheboygan, WI – Talked about the double standard with the mask. How can we let people enter without a mask but tell students they have to wear a mask. More people die from the flu than the COVID-19. There is no mask mandate in the State. The school district needs to take care of the health and safety of her kids and if they continue masking she will remove her kids from school.

Ms. Rebecca Letter, 1213 North Ave., Sheboygan, WI – Students are already acclimated to wearing masks and the focus should be on plans for next year. Saddened that parents are focusing on their own children rather than all children. She is ashamed with administrators and the school board who should have the interests of all students. The decision tonight will impact many people. We have been following the CDC guidelines all year, so why change them now.

Ms. Katie Checolinski, 3217 W. Apache Rd., Sheboygan, WI – Thanked the Board for calling a Special Session meeting. The focus should be the child and parents' decision as it always has been. Encouraged the Board to make no changes as we finish out the year.

Ms. Lillith Brooks, 1248 Los Angeles Ave., Sheboygan, WI – She has a son who is special needs and noted that the staff are amazing but this past year has been difficult for him. He has lost so much learning due to virtual, and has difficulty with a mask. They have received the vaccinations because she was concerned this was the way it was going to go and added that the mask will not protect you from COVID-19 so why are we wearing them.

TM Garcia, 603 Petra Lane, Sheboygan, WI – She is the mother of a special needs child and this has been extremely difficult. She would like the school board to consider options to stay hybrid and/or virtual – especially for special needs children.

Ms. Jennifer Smith, 1859 Revere Ct., Sheboygan, WI – She is a teacher and said kids are too young to make medical decisions. She is disappointed to see that we are not setting an example for these children. Teachers who are fully vaccinated are walking around without masks and that is not setting a good example for the students. Students are not being looked at as number one and we are dropping the ball. To segregate our staff or students is not fair.

Ms. Jody Jelinacek (unknown address) – Freedom of choice is a personal choice. She works in health care and chooses not to have the vaccination. We cannot punish kids or staff for not wanting the vaccine. Students feel they would be coerced to get the vaccination.

Ms. Cindy Weir (unknown address) – We are the only district of choice so what makes us think a vaccine will affect every person the same way. She feels the District is pushing people to get vaccinated. People should have a choice to take the vaccine or not.

Ms. Agnes Jackson, 3416 S. 10th St., Sheboygan, WI – The CDC gives out recommendations/guidelines and we do not have to follow them. Many districts are no longer going to follow them. She would like the District to discontinue following their guidance as well.

Ms. Debbie Brown, 2429 S. 16th St., Sheboygan, WI – She sees kids every day that are walking outside with masks on. She has grandkids who either do not want to attend school to not wear the mask or other ones who are in the masks constantly. Let people's immune systems take care of the virus.

Ms. Arlis Feidt, 230 Meadowbrook Dr., Sheboygan, WI – Her daughter is home-schooled due to bullying as a result of the mask policy. The last days of school are going to be warm. Let the kids see each other's faces the last few days of school.

Ms. Jane Weidner, 2345 Sunflower Ave., Sheboygan, WI – There are students and staff who are immuno-compromised and we need to continue to keep schools the safest as possible. She would recommend keeping masks for everyone for the remainder of the year. She has already seen the negative consequences of some wearing and not wearing masks.

VI. **Board Discussion on District Mask Requirements**

Moved by Mr. Mancl, seconded by Ms. Versey to have masks optional at all levels for staff and students.

Mr. Mancl stated that there are no federal, state, or local mandates in place and it is time to restore individual rights and freedoms. He asked what are the pros and cons to keeping the mask and noted that eleven days left of school is not a good enough reason. Parents can make their own decisions on how compromised their children are and perhaps accommodations can be made. Mask wearing to flatten the curve and our numbers locally are low. He read through the statistics and asked who we are really helping but wonders who we are protecting. Staff have the option whether they want to vaccinate or not and this should be an individual decision. He added that the masking option would remain in place until something significantly would require a change. Ms. Versey stated that everyone has a right to choose whether they want the vaccine or not.

Ms. Reinthaler noted that administration has been doing the best zig zagging through this mess. She added that the CDC is just guidelines and she is equally as frustrated. She acknowledges that it is their job to provide a safe environment and she wants our kids in schools. She is not sure whether masks are good or not and then she started thinking about kids who have to wear masks. The answer is easy – have everyone wear masks for the remainder of the year. She believes parents have a choice but did note we do have classrooms that we have had to transition as a result of a positive COVID-19 case. She believes if we go optional that is the best outcome.

Mr. Burg stated that this is not a rally and talked about his election with some difficult candidates. He has changed his stance after reading the science. Numbers of active cases have gone down considerably. He believes much of it has to do with mask wearing which caused the outbreak to go down in a relatively short amount of time. He was concerned about the connotation to the masks and that there is no person on the Board that believes we are deliberately segregating people. This is not any easy decision but he supports having masks be optional.

Ms. Robbins asked if the motion Mr. Mancl made would be effective now to the end of the school year. She commented that if the CDC had not messed up the last guidelines, the Board would not be having this meeting. Eleven days plus the entire summer would allow for a lot more time for people to be immunized thus more herd immunity. We have had no community input until the CDC put this out. She does not understand why we are doing this especially if the CDC would have been clear on their guidelines and not change course a few days later. She recommends sticking with what the CDC said and keep masks mandatory for the remainder of the school year. The last two weeks of a students' school year is critical and this does not need to distract from that and is not helpful.

Mr. Gallianetti is not in support of the motion. He has heard consistently from employees and parents that have said stay the course and finish the year with the masks. To implement this immediately is incredibly problematic. He has talked to other districts who went optional and they are saying that they are also having problems. Making it

optional is going to create bigger problems. If we would do optional he would like a few days to work into it so that teachers can sell it to the kids so they understand empathy, etc. He does have an issue with our current policy and to no offense of the administration.

Mr. Whelton wonders what burden we are placing on this decision. The decision is purely symbolic and he felt we spent a lot of time on this issue. He does not believe the motion supports the science. His concern is we are making a decision and placing the pressure on our staff. This is not just about one individual person's decision which is why we have taken the precautions. We are only eleven days away from school being finished so leave the policy as it is as he will not support the motion.

Ms. Versey commented that information could be sent to staff, students and parents tonight, allow everyone to talk about it on Tuesday and start it effective Wednesday. There will also be immune-compromised students. Eleven days of non-masking would be a present.

Mr. Gallianetti noted that if this is approved and students do not like it, they still have the option to go virtual.

Moved by Mr. Burg to make a friendly amendment to the (presented main) motion to strike the current policy and effective May 18, 2021 all students and staff will be required to wear a mask through the end of the school year (June 8, 2021) with masks optional for summer school (June 17, 2021) if amended, seconded by Mr. Mancl. A roll call vote was taken and carried 8-1 (Robbins, Laster, Burg, Reinthaler, Whelton, Gallianetti, Mancl, Versey) Hein – no

Mr. Mancl has concerns because of staff that have reached out to him regarding bullying they are receiving in the workplace which is why he wanted it effective immediately. Ms. Reinthaler could support the amendment but wants masks optional as soon as possible. Ms. Versey commented that we are changing something and parents will make the best decision they can for their children and right now someone else is making those decisions and it needs to end. Mr. Laster wonders why we are making a decision now with eleven days left. We have been taking the advice of the CDC the entire time and should get through the eleven days so we do not have to continue this discussion. Mr. Mancl is trying to figure out which group is okay to bully and he cannot wrap his head around how that is driving the decision.

Mr. Gallianetti asked for a vote on the amended motion. A roll call vote was taken and carried 7-2 (Robbins, Laster, Burg, Reinthaler, Gallianetti, Mancl, Versey) Hein and Whelton - no

VII. Moved by Mr. Burg, seconded by Ms. Versey to adjourn at 8:25 p.m. All ayes. Motion carried unanimously.



Seth A. Harvatine
Superintendent & Secretary of the Board

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