

The Newburg United School Board met in special session February 3, 2021. President Scott Hunsakor called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm. Present: Karlene Wyman, Nathan Boll, Sommer Zimmer, Jason Blada, TJ Streich and Lloyd Sund (via phone conference). Absent: none. Also present: Superintendent Jason Kersten, Elementary/High School Principal Bob Beaudrie, Business Manager Darcy Lamoureux, Jen Tonneson, Janice Nelson, Hadlee Brandt and Beth Hall.

Reentry Plan – Hunsakor read opening remarks to board members and patrons. Hunsakor invited patrons to address the board if they would like regarding a mask mandate. Janice Nelson addressed board and said she does not like wearing masks but will wear them if it keeps our kids in school as we do not have a choice if we want to abide by the close contact guidelines. She is in favor of continuing to require masks so we can continue to have face to face instruction. Hadlee Brandt addressed board and said as a classroom teacher she does not feel the teachers can abide by all the restrictions 100% of the time so she questions how much good they are doing. She feels the kids are wearing masks to many hours of the day and it is hard on them.

Hunsakor asked the board members for their opinions. Boll said he does not know what is right or wrong but feels we have built a dam that has holes in it. He said masks are a distraction because we do not require them in the classroom but then require them in the hallways. Streich said the kids do not want to be wearing masks. Zimmer said the Governor has given local school boards control on mask mandates and she wants to give the kids some normalcy for awhile and not require them to wear masks. Boll asked what the close contact guidelines are and Mr. Beaudrie advised that both parties must be wearing a mask to avoid the quarantine requirements. Mr. Beaudrie said we have had 30 kids required to quarantine and 23 of these occurred before the mask mandate was enacted. We have been able to keep kids in school, and not have to quarantine, because we have been wearing masks. He said that although our staff is doing a great job, it is very hard trying to get kids caught up with their work. He understands that kids do not want to wear masks and he doesn't disagree with any of the points made so far tonight.

Beth Hall asked how the school is handling the green risk level we are in now compared to the green risk level from this fall. Is the school safer with the plexiglass dividers, protocols implement, hand washing stations, etc. and can kids stay apart for 15-minute contact? Supt. Kersten said the teachers broke down approximate times the kids are wearing masks. He does not feel we could do anything different to keep the students apart for 15 minutes. Students have set seating charts so if someone were to get COVID-19, only a few would be considered a close contact and must quarantine. Supt. Kersten said the green risk level now compared to this past fall is different because if both parties wear a mask now, you are not required to quarantine whereas this past fall that did not matter. He said whatever the board decides we will do our best to make it work. Supt. Kersten said he did not receive direct notification from the state of Governor Burgum's decision to lift the mask mandate and did not have very much time to meet with his reentry committee and make a decision before the mask mandate was lifted.

Beth Hall said she has called DPI asking about Community Mitigation. She said masking may be required for seasonal influenza and is wondering if it is temporary or where is the line drawn. She said our kids could be wearing masks a ways down the road. Sund said this is not black and white and that he tries to stand up for what he believes in and tries to do what is right for the kids. He said there is so much contradicting info out there. He would like to see the mask mandate removed as the Governor does not mandate it. Boll asked if we expect any changes to contact tracing to be coming and Supt. Kersten said no.

Hunsakor said we are trying to do our best. He said he had COVID-19 and his boys were so upset they had to quarantine at home and miss school because they never became sick. He said our school board hired our Administrators and he will defer to their recommendations on requiring masks. He will not make his choice on his personal beliefs because he goes both ways with requiring a mask. He said he knows Supt. Kersten agonizes over his decisions and is truly trying to do what is best for our students and school.

Jen Tonneson said that 5–10 years from now, we do not know what mask wearing is doing to our kids. It could affect their brain, heart, etc. She said she feels this is a bigger issue than students missing a game or having to conduct contact tracing. Hunsakor said the long-term effects of having COVID-19 are also very serious as he still

struggles with side effects from having it. Zimmer said we would be naive to not think that more than one student has had COVID-19 and as others probably only displayed mild cold symptoms. She is proud of the Administration and staff for the job they have done but the teachers are now complaining to the board about the mask mandate.

Boll asked what Westhope or other area schools were doing. Supt. Kersten said that every school could handle it differently and we just need to go with what the board decides. Supt. Kersten said he still recommends wearing masks when social distancing can not be maintained.

Zimmer moved to approve changes to the activity guidelines and to increase to 75% capacity and mask wearing is recommended, seconded by Streich.

Roll Call Vote: Wyman-yes, Boll-yes, Zimmer-yes, Blada-yes, Streich-yes, Sund-yes, Hunskor-yes. MCU

Supt. Kersten thanked everyone for attending tonight and for their comments.

Sund moved to not require masks to be worn and to remove the mask mandate, seconded by Streich.

Roll Call Vote: Boll-yes, Zimmer-yes, Blada-yes, Streich-yes, Sund-yes, Wyman-no, Hunskor-no. MC.

Meeting adjourned 7:01 pm.



Darcy Lamoureux, Business Manager



Scott Hunskor, Board President