

REGIONAL SCHOOL UNIT #38 BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Special Meeting
Maranacook Community Middle School
August 24, 2021, 6:30 p.m.
Minutes of Meeting

Members Present: Chair Cathy Jacobs, Keltie Beaudoin, Kim Bowie, Tyler Dunn, Patty Gordon, David Guillemette, Rebecca Lambert, Betty Morrell, Shawn Roderick, Dennis Ruffing, Melissa Tobin, David Twitchell, Dane Wing

Administrators: Superintendent Jay Charette, Principals Dwayne Conway, Janet Delmar, Abbie Hartford, Kristen Levesque, Assistant Superintendent Tina Brackley, Special Education Director Ryan Meserve, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Karen Smith, Finance Manager Brigette Williams

Call to Order: Chair Jacobs called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Superintendent Charette reported the purpose of this special meeting is to consider the safety protocols he is recommended for the start of the school year. The document was compiled with input from the health center director, school nurses and administrative staff, taking into consideration the recommendations of the CDC and the Maine Department of Education.

Chair Jacobs announced that the Board wants to be sure everyone has an opportunity to be heard, and requested those present to sign in if they want to speak, and to please keep comments to 5 minutes. Any decisions made will be revisited each time the Board meets. Superintendent Charette will review the health and safety protocols; then citizens' comments, board discussions and then board decisions.

Question was asked about how the recommendations were created. Chair Jacobs responded that the Superintendent worked with the nurses to develop the protocols for Board consideration.

Superintendent Charette reviewed the draft health and safety protocols, outlining the priorities: 1) keep all students and staff safe; 2) keep students in school; 3) minimize impact to families; and 4) provide a transparent source of information regarding the protocols and procedures for RSU 38.

Chair Jacobs asked for citizens' comments, noting that the Board also received several written comments regarding this topic.

Several community members spoke regarding the proposed plan for the start of school. Four spoke in favor of the Superintendent's proposal, which included a letter from physicians from the Kennebec Pediatrics signed by ___ physicians and supported by the school district nursing staff. Seven community members requested the Board consider allowing parents to make the decision on whether or not to have their children wear masks in school.

Board Discussion/Votes

Question was asked about busing and whether there was a 6 foot rule. Superintendent Charette responded there is no minimum rule at this time. The direction from both the DOE and CDC is that if there is something prohibitive to getting students to school, to do the best you can.

Regarding eating at tables, we are looking at assigned seating in the cafeteria so if there is a case, kids can be identified.

Approved 09/01/21

Question was asked about pool testing. At this time the decision was made, along with the district's nursing staff not to do pool testing. They felt what was done last year worked. More staff would be needed if pool testing is conducted. The decision to conduct pool testing can be made at any time.

Tyler Dunn requested striking the section on page 3, under "Lunch/eating" asking students age 12 and older to consider their vaccine status when selecting where to eat. Consensus from the Board was to strike this statement.

Dennis Ruffing requested a motion to have further discussion on scientific data, and to build a policy rather than accept one. No motion was made.

It was noted that this is not a final decision; it is for opening school.

MOTION by D.Twitchell to accept the RSU 38 Student and Family 2021-2022 School Year Health and Safety Protocols as presented, with the exception of removing the section on "Lunch/eating" on page 3 as agreed to above. The motion was seconded by B.Morrell.

Discussion ensued.

Motion Failed: 6 in favor, 7 opposed (Beaudoin, Dunn, Jacobs, Lambert, Roderick, Ruffing, Wing)

Discussion continued about compelling data on both sides of the masking issue.

Chair Jacobs commented that this is a caring school community, and the Board needs to care about what parents are saying.

Superintendent Charette provided some historical information on this topic. Last school year, he met every Friday with the nursing staff to get the Covid student counts as well as staff Covid counts, including the number of students in quarantine. From December 4, 2020 – June 4, 2021, there were 86 students and 5 staff members who had Covid. Some of those students were hit multiple times, which means they missed multiple days of school. There is value in keeping kids in school and we know what disruption that was to families and student learning.

MOTION by D.Wing to recommend that masks be worn if you are not vaccinated, however, ultimately mask wearing is a personal family decision, and to use pool testing. Motion was seconded by T.Dunn.

Discussion ensued. Question was asked whether an additional nurse would be needed for the pool testing. Superintendent Charette responded that if the district takes part in pool testing he would request an additional nurse as part of the ESSER III Funds grant, which will be on the agenda for next week's Board meeting.

Motion Passed: 9 in favor, 3 opposed (Bowie, Gordon, Morrell), 1 abstained (Twitchell)

Respectfully submitted,
James Charette, Superintendent/Secretary
D. Foster, Recorder