

ELLSWORTH SCHOOL DEPARTMENT
ELLSWORTH SCHOOL BOARD SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES

Tuesday, August 26, 2021 – 6:00 PM
Ellsworth Elementary Middle School

Members Present: Kelly McKenney, Chair, Paul Markosian, Elizabeth Alteri, Muneer Hasham
Members Excused: Abigail Miller, Vice Chair
Members Absent:
Staff Present: Daniel A. Higgins, Superintendent of Schools
Dan Clifford, Ellsworth High School Principal
April Clifford, Ellsworth Elementary Principal
Amy Boles, Hancock County Technical Center Director
Carol Ann McEachern-Murphy, Special Education Director
Matthew Wibberly, Special Education Assistant Director

Guests Present:

A. The meeting was called to order by Board Chair, Kelly McKenney, at 6:01 PM

B. Pledge of Allegiance

C. Communications / Correspondence

Superintendent Higgins received 30 written communications. 26 were in favor of universal masking in schools and 4 in favor of optional masking in schools.

D. Public Participation

See attached List

E. New Business

1. Discussion of Mask Policy for Start of School

A Motion was made by Muneer Hasham, seconded by Elizabeth Alteri that All ESD Schools and affiliate institutions have universal masking if the United States Centers for Disease Control Community Transmission level is substantial or high in Penobscot or Hancock Counties.

A Motion was made by Elizabeth Alteri, second by Muneer Hasham, to amend the motion by requiring universal masking for all students under age 12 in the ESD regardless of the United States Centers for Disease Control Community Transmission level

The second and motion was withdrawn.

Vote on the original motion:

Vote: 4 Yes 0 No

2. Discussion of Standing Committee Schedules

A Motion was made by Kelly McKenney, seconded by Elizabeth Alteri, to table this item until the next regular Board Meeting.

Vote: 4 Yes 0 No

3. Discussion and Consideration of Middle School Social Studies Resources

A Motion was made by Elizabeth Alteri, seconded by Kelly McKenney, to table this item until the next regular Board Meeting.

Vote: 4 Yes 0 No

4. Discussion and Consideration of Disposition of Additional State Subsidy for Education

A Motion was made by Elizabeth Alteri, seconded by Kelly McKenney, to approve the disposition of additional State Subsidy for Education as presented and recommended by the Finance Committee.

Vote: 4 Yes 0 No

5. Discussion and Consideration of Facility and Transportation Committee Recommendation

A Motion was made by Paul Markosian, seconded by Muneer Hasham, to accept the Proposal for a Sensory Path at EEMS as presented and recommended by the Facilities and Transportation Committee.

Vote: 4 Yes 0 No

F. Calendar/Announcements

School Board Meeting, Tuesday, September 14, 2021, 6:00 PM

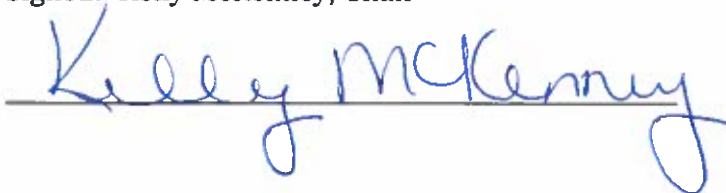
L. Adjournment

A Motion was made by Paul Markosian, seconded by Muneer Hasham, having no further business, to adjourn the Board meeting.

Vote: 4 Yes 0 No

Time: 8:42 PM

Signed: Kelly McKenney, Chair



Date: 9-14-21

Public Comment – August 26, 2021

Billy Bob Faulkingham – State Rep – advocating for Board to maintain current optional mask policy.

Pilar Burmeister – Parent and nurse. Advocated for keeping kids in school and not repeating last years' experience. Noted other schools where optional masking is in place are now remote.

Mike Perlman - Advocated for a mask mandate and for a focus on safety and experts to make decision.

Anna Pazerackas – Parent. Advocated for Board to reconsider optional masking decision. Noted that other schools already having cases and quarantines.

Nate Hanson – Parent – Advocated for universal masking. Stated it is important for kids to be in school five days per week and that the pandemic is stronger than last year.

Marleina Ford – Parent and spouse of staff member. Advocated for universal masking policy to keep kids in school five days per week.

Casey Hardwick – Urge Board to review pooled testing protocols. Stated concerns with masks that were handed out without a warning label at EHS last year and they replaced. Masks are not important enough to our kids and are anti-social.

David Webb – Appreciate everybody's scientific data and expressed concerns that masks cannot keep the virus out of school and the impact of masks on children. Stated that suicide rates are up not from COVID, but from fear.

Anne Dudeck – parent. Advocated for universal masking policy and that the decision should be based on medical facts only. Concerns about lunch – too close together. Breeding ground for Delta to move through EEMS..

Rylynn Clark - incoming Freshman at EHS. Expressed concerns about the mental health factor of masks and discussed the suicide of her friend.

Joshua Dudeck – Parent. Advocating for masking and social distancing as mitigating factors against COVID. Urged board to be proactive rather than responsive.

Sara Flewelling – Parent. Opposed to universal masking. Stated importance for kids and teachers to see each other. Began to make inappropriate comments about and to specific Board members and was asked to leave.

Michelle Kaplan – City Councilor, Health care provider, Parent. Urged use of data and studies that are

peer reviewed and not funded by special interests. Surgical masks provided for children are not effective for children. Shared statistics re masks. N95 or cloth masks with N95 filter.

Santana - Expressed that masks spread disease and that kids need bacteria to help them develop immune systems. Stated that masks are a feel good option.

Bob Terwilliger - Opposed masking mandates and compared mask mandates to education experts Common Core, NCLB. Decision to masking should be left up to parents.

Casey Hanson - Parent and Family Doctor. Acknowledged the emotions in the room and expressed the issue is about more than masks. Advocated use of all mitigation strategies to keep kids safe.

Tia Sprague – Opposed mask mandate and stated Board members should vote based on the results of the preference survey. Decisions should be family based. Virus is not going anywhere. Scientists all over the world are being censored. Stop living in fear and take care of their children.

Lucille Poulin – Doctor. Acknowledged the varied opinions in the room and that statistics and presentations will not change anybody's mind. Advocated starting the school year with masks and give it 2-3 months.

Heidi Omlor - Teacher. Spoke about the word Nazi and how it is currently being used locally. Encouraged the Ellsworth community to think about how respond to difficult times such as this as kids watching and adults are setting an example.

Julia Sheehan – Advocated for optional masking policy based on personal choice. Media overstating Delta variant and kids were without masks all summer.

Todd Little-Siebold - Parent. Spoke to those ineligible to be vaccinated and teachers for keepignh school safe and running last year. Masks worked In 20-21. Goal is to keep kids in school five days per week and not return to the isolation of students last year while on zoom screens.

Will Fernald – Parent. Told story about growing up, having chickens, eating 3-4 eggs, cholesterol. Tested at 14 – low cholesterol led to poor diets – diabetes. Delta variant is contagious – not sure masks will help.

Landen Sprague – Parent. Advocated for family choice and that his child's business is his. Shared history of diseases and concerns about regulations.

Kelli Casey - Parent Maine CDC has reported that the ESD has achieved 95%+ vaccination rate.

Advocated for not having one universal vaccination policy.

Katie Cough – Parent of special needs children. Expressed issues with children and why they cannot wear a mask. When child started in school as K – masked last year. Dreads coming to school.

Diagnosed with anxiety. Standing up for children as nobody else will.

Fred Beyer – Grandchildren in school and daughter who is an educator. Goal is to keep kids safe. Goal of all parents to have kids in school. What is the best way to keep children and staff safe? Relatively low infection rates in Maine. Should be concerned about increased transmission. Have every right to tell child to wear mask or not wear a mask. Board has every right to make policy to keep all safe.

Amanda McLaughlin – Parent. Kids are the teachers' and school's business and it is their responsibility to keep kids safe. Kids struggled due to being out of school last year and not due to masks.

Kristen Schlaefter – Parent. Stated she has chosen to home school due to the optional mask policy. Also expressed concerns about the preference survey and invalid results.

Joel Horne – Advocated for parent/family choice regarding masks. Shared personal employment experiences and stated that many activities more dangerous than COVID.

Kelly McKenney

