

WINCHESTER SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
AUGUST 19, 2021
WINCHESTER SCHOOL LIBRARY

Board Members Present: L. Picard, T. Perkins, L. Hildreth, T. Kilanski, J. Rokes
Administration Present: V. Carey, T. Taylor, M. Hill

The meeting was called to order by Chair, L. Picard at 6:32pm.

L. Picard voiced concerns regarding Board members “trash talking” on Facebook. Explained that if anyone on the Board has a question or concern they should take it to the Chair or Administration before spreading false information. If anyone has a problem with their school e-mail they should contact L. Picard or K. Dassau.

T. Kilanski advised that he was not at the last Board meeting; he had made everyone aware of that beforehand. Explained he didn't know about tonight's meeting until yesterday at 1:00pm; thinks his email didn't work. Feels if the Board is holding a meeting not typically scheduled, they need to be sure everyone has the information. Upon review, it was noted that appropriate notice was provided to all members.

PRINCIPAL's REPORT – V. Carey:

*It is the school's intention to stay in person until they are advised not to. It is not their intention to have a full scale closing.

V. Carey explained there are two parts to the Reopening Plan. She reviewed the plan with the Board including cafeteria staggering lunch times, breakfasts in classrooms, disinfectant and distancing, etc. The Summer numbers were lower; masks were required only if not distancing at least three feet. Have been watching the numbers and guidelines for months.

V. Carey explained Cheshire County is in substantial spread. They have looked at all options for guidance. She feels it is important to follow a health organization policy. The Board received a copy of the NH Public Health rubric. V. Carey reviewed and explained it is less restrictive than those from other health organizations and allows us to change guidelines on a regular basis.

V. Carey feels it would be the most responsible of the district to choose one health organization policy to follow. She is not a medical professional. The Reopening Committee feels they should go with the rubric from the NH Division of Public Health Services. He has reached out to the WTA and two-thirds of respondents were in favor, reluctantly, of universal masking; one-third were not.

T. Kilanski advised that he voted last year on the mask mandate because everyone wanted it. He doesn't agree with it now. He quoted statics advising that over twice as many kids died in car accidents than from COVID last year. He advised his personal belief is it should be up to the parents and adults in the building. He doesn't feel they should mandate kids over two to wear a mask.

V. Carey need to use mitigation strategies

L. Picard MOVED to utilize the NH Department of Public Health Services Indoor Face Mask recommendations as part of the Reopening Plan in order to put in as many mitigating factors as possible to ensure that our students and staff remain safe and able to continue with a full day at school; SECONDED

by: T. Perkins. T. Kilanski asked if parents could speak before the vote on masks, but no action was taken and the Vote was called; VOTED: 3-2, (T. Kilanski – no, J. Rokes – no) MOTION PASSED.

L. Hildreth advised she doesn't like wearing a mask, but her son wore one last year and didn't have a problem with it and he didn't get sick with colds, etc. She feels if health professionals say this will keep kids healthier and safe, she can't go against it because she doesn't want to wear a mask.

T. Perkins thinks they are doing their due diligence by having kids wear masks.

V. Carey advised they are not required to offer remote learning as an option to not coming in the school. We have a staffing issue, so are not able to offer a remote option. They just filled the last teaching position two days ago; that is very tight to the start of school.

V. Carey proposes if it becomes a possibility to offer remote learning because we are in the orange or red, they will. She was hopeful it wouldn't get back to orange and didn't realize there would be a hiring desert nationally. After discussion, V. Carey suggested leaving it if we are in the red, where possible, they would offer remote learning. No one has called asking for the option.

L. Picard thinks they should go ahead and advertise remote teachers in case we have a need.

V. Carey advised they would offer per diem, without a contract.

V. Carey will check with the WTA and our attorneys to see how it should be written.

L. Hildreth MOVED to approve the language in the Return-to-School Plan changing the language to “very possible it would be offered” regarding remote learning; SECONDED by: L. Picard, VOTED: 5-0, MOTION PASSED.

ESSER Funds: – V. Carey reviewed the plan with the Board. Advised it was due August 23rd. The DOE was going to send a template and there was to be training, but along with other factors, the plan wasn't ready for approval at the last meeting and that is why the Board is meeting tonight. She has met with the Return to School Committee and will send the plan to stakeholder groups for feedback. Some students/staff are brand new. Weren't able to have the best discussions with students. V. Carey will post tonight with feedback forms and will make any changes clearly needed. Requesting feedback from the Board, too. She will bring back feedback received to the next meeting.

L. Picard feels there might be an additional committee needed with Board participation.

L. Picard advised the Board to let V. Carey know if they have feedback, questions, etc. This is a moving document. They will continue to look at it and give feedback, make changes, etc.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS:

Daniel Adams distributed a statement to the Board addressing the Reopening Plan and read it to the group.

Jessica Boudreau had issue with the statement made by one of the Board members regarding wearing of masks. She feels it is unacceptable if children are not getting mask breaks. Her daughter came home with headaches.

Amy Hill feels something needs to be done for the janitors and maintenance staff for all their hard work. They are working extra hard to get the building open.

Amanda Nordberg advised she just did two days of Kindergarten Camp. In class children did put up their masks sometimes, but she has seen so many smiles. What she has seen in her classroom is kids really don't mind. There are good experiences happening.

Kelly Kilanski asked L. Picard to return the same consideration regarding professionalism as she has asked for.

Daniel Adams asked if there are Citizens' Comments in the beginning or the end of the meeting.

L. Picard – Not usually in the beginning, but at the end and not during Board discussion.
T. Kilanski – but it has happened.

V. Carey forgot to ask about custodians wearing masks if there are only two in the building.

T. Kilanski MOVED that everyone who comes in the building should be masked; there was NO SECOND.

L Picard MOVED to go into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3,III(c) and (i) at 8:15pm; SECONDED by: L. Hildreth, VOTED: T. Perkins – yes, L. Hildreth – yes, T. Kilanski – yes, J. Rokes – yes, L. Picard – yes, MOTION PASSED.

L. Picard MOVED to leave non-public session at 8:34pm. SECONDED by: L. Hildreth, VOTED: 5-0, MOTION PASSED.

L. Picard MOVED to seal the non-public minutes under RSA91-A:3,III (c) for six months; SECONDED by: L. Hildreth, VOTED: 5-0, MOTION PASSED.

L. Hildreth MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:35pm, SECONDED by: T. Kilanski, VOTED: 5-0, MOTION PASSED.

Respectfully submitted,

Peggy Higgins
School Board Secretary