

RSU # 12
BOARD OF DIRECTORS (REGULAR) MEETING
Wednesday, November 10, 2021 @ 6:30 PM
Chelsea Elementary School

*The meeting will be recorded and made available on our website at
<https://www.svrsu.org/page/video-recorded-school-board-meetings>.*

Draft Minutes

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, and Flag Salute

Meeting called to order at 6:36 pm

Rick Cote led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance

Attendance: Mary Coventry, Ryan Carver, Richard DeVries, Doug Morier, Will Sugg, Rick Cote, Deborah Myers, Rick Danforth, Kristina Verney, Deborah Talacko, Kimberly Hutchinson, Russell Gates, Dustin Mellor, Sandra Devaney

Zoom: Suzanne Balbo

Administrators in Attendance: Deb Taylor, Michele Grant, Delia Dearnley, Pat Block, Larry Dancer, Mike Flynn, Mark Deblois, Heather Wilson, Stephanie Oliphant, Allison Myers

Absent: James Wiligar (E), Lynette Conroy (E)

2. Approval of the Agenda (5 min)

Motion to approve the Agenda

Russell Gates - 1st

Richard DeVries - 2nd

Motion passes 15-0-0

3. Focus on Learning: Windsor Elementary School

April Spencer, a third grade teacher from Windsor thanked the board, Mr. Tuttle and the administration for all of their support during the shut down last year and the opportunity to learn new programs to help with teaching. She presented Seesaw, an Interactive Digital Learning Program to the group and how useful it was during pandemic remote teaching. She discussed how it allowed teachers and students to learn in new ways. Students love that it is engaging, intuitive and loaded with options, parents love that it gives details to daily instruction, notifications and accountability. She highlighted one of Windsor's students, Sebastian and his mother Robin.

Rick Cote commented that he has been using the program with his grandchildren and it is a great program.

4. Public Comment: (10 min): *Public Comment at School Board meetings is to be restricted to items on the agenda. Comments regarding individuals or personnel matters are not appropriate for the public session.*

Kenneth Dostie, a Windsor resident, speaking on Item 7 on the agenda.

He asked for a 120 time limit for speaking. It was explained that there is no set limit, but that there were other members of the public there to speak so about 10 minutes per speaker seemed appropriate, unless a person needed more time. Addressing item C, pool testing: He asked if the pool testing was optional. Mr. Tuttle clarified that public comment is not a question and answer, but he would be happy to answer questions via phone or email. (He did clarify and say that the pool testing is optional and has already begun.)

Addressing item D: He questioned the “pending” status of the Covid vaccine clinics by the FDA and CDC, and why we would have them if they were not approved. He was told they were approved by the FDA. It was explained again that this was public comment, not question and answer and that he could call the superintendent or the principal to discuss questions. He asked how we could prove the side effects are higher from the risk of not taking the vaccine as opposed to taking the vaccine as was written in something he received in the mail. Mr. Tuttle believed it was a pamphlet from Lincoln Health but did not know exactly what he was looking at, but reminded him that it was not a time for questions and answers. Mr. Dostie was warned about using profanity while speaking. Sandra Devaney explained to him again that this was public comment and Mr. Dostie could call the school or the superintendent’s office with any questions he may have. Mr. Dostie does not approve of the vaccine clinics in the schools and asked the board what their opinion was on the clinics.

Rick Danforth made a point of order with the Chair that public comment was a time to make comments only and not engage with the speakers. He pointed out that the superintendent should not have answered any questions, nor should the board. Comments and questions would be noted and then discussed later in the meeting when it was the board’s time to talk about an agenda item, in which time clarification can be requested.

Mr. Dostie continued by asking for clarification of his opinions and why he would need to call the superintendent’s office. It was explained again that it was public comment only.

Jeff Sullivan, speaking on item D, E and F. He is not in favor of vaccination clinics in schools and wants clarification that if he sends his child to school that it won’t be considered Implied Consent as it is allegedly being done in California. If his child is to receive the vaccine, it will happen in the doctor’s office. He feels that basketball season needs to allow students to play and parents to attend. He feels we are raising children to be scared even though the recovery rate for

children with Covid is high and the mortality rate is low. He feels we need to move on from Covid and get back to some normalcy since we have vaccines and medicines to keep people safe.

Angie Sullivan, speaking on item C, pool testing. She feels it is a waste of taxpayer money, whether local or state funds, and does not feel that we should be doing it in schools. She feels we are chasing Covid cases by testing people that do not have symptoms. and discriminating against students that do not participate.

Item D, she does not feel that the schools should be having clinics because it is taking up school time, taking up resources and it is a distraction. She said that they should be done at the dr office as they take up too much class time. She discussed a reward system last year for students who received their flu vaccine and felt it was inappropriate and discriminatory.

Item E, she said the MPA has not made up their minds about masks and it could potentially be left up to the schools to decide. She does not feel that students should have to wear masks to play basketball. There are extracurricular activities outside of school that do not require masks and there have not been any outbreaks. It should be the parents choice if their students wear a mask. She also feels that parents should be allowed to go into practices. She does not feel comfortable dropping her six year old child off to school for basketball practice and being told she is not allowed to enter the building.

Gretchen Morrow, a parent from Whitefield, addressing item D, thanked the board for keeping the children safe with all of the protocols as there have been no quarantines and her children have been in school. She said her three children have been signed up for the Covid vaccine clinic next week which is helpful to her as the children will not miss school, she will not miss work and it is more convenient for them. She stated that the clinic is optional and that Lincoln Health provided great information about the vaccine. She has no reservations about her children receiving their vaccine at school.

5. Consent Agenda (20 min)

Note: Items may be removed from the Consent Agenda on the request of any one member; items not removed may be adopted by general consent without debate. Removed items may be scheduled for consideration immediately after the Consent agenda or placed on the agenda at the discretion of the board.

[Action]

Consent Agenda items:

- a. Approve the Minutes of the previous meeting as distributed
- b. Superintendent's Report - removed

- c. Approve the Committee Minutes as distributed
- d. Accept the Personnel Report
- e. Accept the Policies as distributed:
 - i. ACAA-R - First Reading

Motion to accept the Consent Agenda with the exception of item B

Russel Gates - 1st

Richard DeVries - 2nd

Motion passes 14-0-0 (Will Sugg was out of the room during the vote)

Superintendent's Report - Mr. Tuttle said that staffing is starting to be an issue, particularly with bus drivers in the district. We have had to consolidate bus runs and make arrangements to provide transportation. We are also short on subs for staff members and have days when we do not have enough people to cover out buildings. We are always hiring substitutes for our district.

Mr. Tuttle acknowledged the passing of Kim Tinkham-Lavallee, a student support specialist at Chelsea School who will be greatly missed by the staff and students. Our thoughts go out to her family.

Congratulations to Windsor Middle School, which was recognized as one of the top 20 middle schools in the state.

6. Old Business:

- a. RSU 12 Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services School Year 2021-2022 [Informational]

Mr. Tuttle discussed how the board approved this plan in August and the number one objective was to keep students in school, which we have been successful in doing. The plan continues to work, despite the rising number of cases of Covid. RSU 12 has to follow the rules given to us by the state, the CDC and the DOE, including wearing masks which helps keep us from having to quarantine entire classrooms and in some instances entire schools. As a reminder, the pool testing was approved by the board in August and just began on Monday.

Ryan Carver asked if we should consider going back to a half day on Wednesday to give teachers extra prep time, allow for extra cleaning in the schools and if it would help with staffing shortages. He discussed his own experience this morning with a late bus. Mr. Tuttle clarified that it is not a simple yes or no answer as the board would have to form a task force to look into this and bring the recommendation to the board. Mr.

Tuttle said that students are required to have five hours a day of instruction, which was waived last year.

Rick Danforth asked about the exception for municipal events and which rules needed to be followed regarding mask wearing. Municipal events need to follow the municipal rules, any visitors must wear masks. The board is an exception as they are not considered visitors. Mr. Tuttle clarified the earlier comment regarding dropping a young child off at basketball practice that the RSU does not set the rules for community recreational sports programs to follow, those are set by the rec programs. He referred the parents to Ryan Carver with any questions. The RSU only sets the rules for our own middle school program.

Angie Sullivan asked Ryan Carver who is actually in charge of the program. He directed her to the Whitefield school's representative.

7. New Business: (90min)

- a. Substitute Rates [Action] - Some districts have raised their rates considerably for substitutes, while RSU 12 has not. Mr. Tuttle explained this to the board.

Richard DeVries recommended a motion that a proposal be brought to the board at the next meeting unless it becomes critical that something needs to be done before then. (Motion was withdrawn in favor of Ryan Carver's motion.)

Ryan Carver made a motion to allow the Superintendent to adjust the substitute rates to match the other districts around us.

Richard DeVries - 2nd

Deborah Myers asked if it was grant funded, if it would be a temporary increase or if it would affect future budgets. Mr. Tuttle explained that it would depend on the grant, which is a two year grant that we are trying to get approved and see if we can use for these funds, and what the impact would be on the future budget.

Doug Morier proposed an amendment to the motion that the superintendent will provide an analysis of the surrounding districts and that an analysis be presented to the board at the December meeting and that the superintendent would have the authority to make any rate adjustments before then if needed.

Rick Cote - 2nd, but wants to allow the superintendent to make any increase necessary. He said the information would be brought to the Finance Committee at the next meeting.

Motion to approve the amendment passes 15-0-0.

Motion to approve the motion as amended

Motion passes 15-0-0

b. Budget Development Timeline [Action]

There is a budget timeline in the packet as recommended by the Finance Committee for the 2022-2023 School year. The Budget Validation meeting is scheduled for May 25th and will hopefully be an in person meeting. Mr. Tuttle encouraged the board members to get involved with the budget process.

Rick Cote commented that any board members interested in the Finance Committee meetings are welcome and can Zoom into the meeting if they cannot make it to Somerville.

Motion to approve the Budget Timeline

Richard DeVries - 1st

Rick Cote - 2nd

Motion passes 15-0-0

c. Pooled testing [Informational]

Mr. Tuttle explained that the pool testing started on Monday and has been done in every building. There are approximately 41 students in Whitefield, 30+ in Windsor, 25-30 in Chelsea, and 15 in Palermo. It is an optional layer of protection to keep kids in school.

Rick Cote commented that he is mostly against pool testing, but realizes that the numbers of students that would be sent home would be much higher.

Rick Danforth said that pool testing is a valuable tool to see where we are within the immediate community as far as knowing how many covid cases are out there.

Richard DeVries asked if we have had any transmission of Covid in our schools. Mr. Tuttle said we had one case last year. The filters and ionization system that we have put in place are doing a great job to help keep kids in school.

d. Vaccination Clinics [Possible Action]

Mr. Tuttle explained that the RSU has done vaccination clinics for the last 10 years, such as the flu and H1N1 for students and the community.

Lincoln County Health contacted Mr. Tuttle and offered to help the schools do vaccination clinics (we recently had a flu clinic at Whitefield).

Parents received forms to sign up and if there is not enough interest, the clinics will be given to another district. This is a community clinic. This partnership is helpful to parents to access the vaccine if they want it. We do not have a large number of sign ups for the clinic at this point, but will be letting parents and community members know. We do not give vaccines to any students without written parental consent. He addressed the comment about implied consent and said that we do not do that here.

Deborah Myers asked if students are going down individually to maintain confidentiality. Mr. Tuttle said that as with anything medical, we do our very best to keep confidentiality. Parents are also allowed to come in while their child is being vaccinated.

Ryan Carver made a motion to cancel the vaccine clinics in the schools. He does not feel the school is the appropriate place to do this. Parents can take their children to CVS, Walgreens, Hannaford, Walmart or their own doctor's offices.

Kimberly Hutchinson - 2nd

Rick Danforth said it is his understanding that we are just providing a service for the community and since it is a choice, he would prefer to make it easier for our families and community members to obtain the vaccination. This is an ongoing service that schools have done to build community.

Russell Gates feels that the motion is centered around Covid and asked if the motion is being brought up just because of that or if the intent is to cancel all vaccine clinics.

Ryan Carver said it is only the Covid clinic that he wants to be cancelled.

Kim Hutchinson asked if the school is prepared if a student should have any adverse reactions. She believes that all medical procedures should be done at the doctor's office.

Richard DeVries asked if this was only the Covid vaccine and would we still provide other vaccine clinics to the school and the community. Mr. Tuttle explained that the clinics have never been brought to the board before for approval. We provide lots of medical services in our schools and it would not be feasible to say everything should be done at the doctor's office. He said he could start bringing flu vaccination clinics to the board for approval in the future, though it has never been done before.

Rick Danforth stated that offering a vaccine clinic is only providing a service to those who want to have their children vaccinated and making it

easier for the parents. We have a history of offering medical services to the community and does not understand why a stand is being made against this just because it is Covid.

Ryan Carver said diabetes has been around for a long time and Covid has not and is approved under emergency situations. He said we did not provide anything to the community last year when we did not allow public groups to use the buildings (Boy Scouts, youth basketball programs, etc).

Doug Morier stated that the school board and the school has a responsibility to the community to provide services that might not be able to be acquired elsewhere and it is something that has always been done and helpful to parents and the community. This is something that we have always done. It is proven to be effective and safe by the CDC.

Ryan Carver talked about how the board made students go elsewhere to play sports, etc and therefore students should go somewhere else for the vaccine. He stated that the Covid shot is not approved and we should not take the risk of someone having a reaction in one of our buildings.

Rick Danforth said it is not mandatory, but it is up to the parents to decide if they want to allow their children to be vaccinated and up to us to simply provide the service. We should not pick and choose which ones are more important as that is beyond the scope of the board.

Rick Cote stated that the clinic is optional, parents have to sign off on it, if they do not want their children to have their children receive the shot, they do not have to. He is against vaccinations, but since it is optional he does support the clinic.

Ryan Carver asked what the liability was for the RSU if something should happen. Mr. Tuttle said the district has no liability. Lincoln Health is the provider doing the clinic in our space. This has been verified with Drummond Woodsum.

Motion fails 3-12-0 (3 yes, 12 no)

e. Safety Protocols for Basketball [Possible Action]

Mr. Tuttle said the plan approved by the board in August said we would follow the MPA guidelines, which have not come out yet. The leagues want to have one rule for all to do the same thing. The general consensus as of yesterday is that students will wear masks while playing. The league is considering allowing only home spectators allowed at the games, and the games will be streamed. Mr. Tuttle asked the board if they were comfortable doing whatever the league decides this season.

Ryan Carver said that the community leagues do not require students to wear masks on the floor, but they do have to wear them on the bench and coaches have to wear them at all times.

Mr. Tuttle requested a recess until an audience member left due to constantly disrupting the meeting at 8:30 pm.

The meeting resumed at 8:41 pm

Doug Morier made a motion to maintain the current school year policy until next month when we have more information.

Rick Cote - 2nd

Mr. Tuttle said there is not a current policy. The policy is to do what the MPA says and they are not saying anything yet.

Doug Morier asked if last year's policy had expired. Mr. Tuttle said last year's policy required masks and no spectators and the dilemma is if some districts have mask policies and some don't, whether they would be allowed to play. Mr. Tuttle said he would like to see students not wear masks while playing, masks on the sidelines and all spectators would be allowed and have to wear masks, but there would need to be some rules per site as some schools are restricted for space. However, if the league decides something different, he would like to see us go with their decisions so schools could play other districts.

Ryan Carver commented the masks might hinder refs from coming to RSU 12.

Rick Danforth asked if we know when they are going to make a decision. Mr. Tuttle said they are still discussing it.

Dustin Mellor said that summer leagues had students not wearing masks to play, but masks at all other times but said that there were space issues in places. He asked if there was limited capacity in the gyms. Larry Dancer said there were limits. He commended the RSU for streaming the games.

Ryan Carver made an amendment to the motion that spectators will be allowed into the buildings, that players do not have to wear a mask while playing but will have to wear masks at other times, spectators will have to wear masks, coaches will be required to wear masks at all times except when addressing the teams, spectators will be allowed on a rotating basis for crowd control and would be expected to leave after their game, and if the MPA passes guidelines we will follow those guidelines.

Kim Hutchinson - 2nd

Motion approve the amendment passes 11-3-1 (Deborah Myers abstained)

Motion passes 14-1-0

f. Safety protocols for visitors and building use [Possible Action]

The town of Chelsea has a new committee and wants to utilize the building for community activities and would like us to waive our mask rules for their events. It is in our plan for all visitors to the buildings to wear masks.

Deborah Myers asked for clarification regarding a community event versus a municipal event as far as mask rules. Mr. Tuttle said that municipal events are exempt (i.e. voting).

Dustin Mellor discussed the youth program rules for masks and feels we should be clear to the public. Mr. Tuttle clarified that for basketball that only the players will be allowed to not wear a mask while they are playing, so therefore they would still be following the rules.

Rick Danforth said he believes the community in Chelsea felt that the building would be used for community events and is in favor of an optional mask policy for those events.

Ryan Carver felt we should be following the mask policy for all visitors.

Rick Danforth made a motion that community events have an exemption and masks would be optional.

Deborah Myers - 2nd

Mr Tuttle is concerned that it might lead down a rabbit hole where every event would need a decision to be considered exempt.

Kimbery Hutchinson said the children and adults are optional everywhere and masks should only be required during school hours, optional for after hours events. Rick Danforth agreed.

Dustin Mellor asked if we could hear from the principals from the schools about this.

Allison Myers said there is a concern about a blanket exception if students are around after hours for something and there is a positive test, contact tracing would be difficult. Mr. Tuttle said it is an issue if something happens in our buildings because we are required to contact tracing. When students go to other activities after school, those organizations are responsible for contact tracing.

Will Sugg said our goal is to keep kids in school and we have done well, and while he understands the commitment to allow the community to use the buildings he feels this could disrupt that.

Richard DeVries feels we are opening a “barn door” if we step away from our protocols and would be detrimental to our students.

Ryan Carver asked about the afterschool program. Mr. Tuttle said it is an RSU program not a community event.

Kim Hutchinson said we have no say what happens once the students leave the building and feels there is no difference between the school cafeteria and Walmart.

Ryan Carver made a motion to cease discussion.

Richard DeVries - 2nd

Motion to cease discussion passes 14-1-0

Motion to make masks optional fails 9-5-0

g. Capital Area Technical Center draft agreement [Informational]

Mr. Tuttle said it is informational and that the Finance Committee would be looking into it. He wanted to make the board aware of the draft agreement and gave the board an overview of the history as well as what is to come. There is draft information in the packet for board members to review.

Kim Hutchinson asked where the funding for the technical center came from. Mr. Tuttle said the state pays the money directly to the centers.

8. Adjourn at 9:18pm