



Board of Education Meeting Minutes

[Tuesday, December 7, 2021 5:00p.m.]

In Attendance: Tina Ward, Lindsey Gustafson, Shelby Thomas, Stephen Delaney, Heather Smith, Dr. Laurel Tait

Absent: Eli Keller

Call to Order

Shelby Thomas

Mr. Thomas called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and stated the purpose of the special meeting and explained the process/procedures.

Roll Call

Stephen Delaney

Pledge of Allegiance

Public Comments

This special Board meeting was called by a group of parents, in accordance with Arkansas Code § 6-13-619 and § 7-9-109, requesting to revisit the recent repeal of the mask mandate by the vote of the PCSSD School Board on November 9, 2021. Anne McPherson, introduced herself and thanked the Board for their time and willingness to listen. She reiterated the purpose of her petition and her concerns with the Board not honoring their word to revisit the mask mandate at the regular board meeting on December 7, 2021. Ms. McPherson then yielded the floor to the other speakers.

Dr. Jessica Snowden, Board Certified Pediatric Infectious Disease physician, greeted the Board and explained how the Delta variant of COVID-19 was now impacting children. She went on to state that there were 1500 children in Arkansas hospitals fighting COVID-19, not all kids are recovering and over 30% have long-term symptoms. Dr. Snowden reiterated that we as parents and professionals cannot underestimate the impact and effects of COVID-19 and that only 11% of children are currently vaccinated that are eligible for the vaccine. She then requested that the Board consider a motion to reinstate the mask mandate until all eligible children have the opportunity to get fully vaccinated.

Dr. Rebecca Cantu, Board Certified Pediatrician, greeted the Board and asked that they consider reinstating the mask mandate until all eligible children have had the opportunity to get fully vaccinated. She stated that she has witnessed the devastation COVID-19 has had on families; kids have been orphaned by parent hospitalizations and/or even death. Dr. Cantu shared that reinstating masks will see a decrease in absences and explained that there is no significant



impairment with facial expressions because studies have shown that humans use their eyes to communicate as well. She then requested the Board consider a motion to reinstate the mask mandate until all eligible children have the opportunity to get fully vaccinated.

Dr. Ashley Antepolo, Pediatrician, greeted the Board and reiterated that they do what is best for the students at the elementary schools and reconsider reinstating the mask mandate until all students have the opportunity to get fully vaccinated. She stated some of the effects of being quarantined and away from school due to COVID-19 include mental health crises with anxiety and depression, lack of access to education and parents losing jobs. Dr. Antepolo expressed that masks do not cause depression and anxiety, it is a simple and safe way to protect those ourselves and those around us. She closed by asking the Board to consider a motion to reinstate the mask mandate until all eligible children have the opportunity to get fully vaccinated.

Jessica Boswell, Pediatric Healthcare Administrator and parent, greeted the Board and asked the Board to reconsider a motion to reinstate the mask mandate until all eligible children have the opportunity to get fully vaccinated. She stated that appointments for children to get vaccinated are going into January 2022 because they are not readily available at all locations. Ms. Boswell reiterated that children are not fully vaccinated until receiving the 2nd dose, 4 weeks after the initial dose, which would not be until February 2022. She stated that there is a current shortage of healthcare workers and ER's are full of pediatric patients. Ms. Boswell pleaded with the Board to make a sound decision.

Sharon Hamilton, a parent of students in the District, greeted the Board and commended them on their efforts for the safety of students. Ms. Hamilton spoke from the perspective of viruses, stating that her father had Polio and suffered from post-polio symptoms because there was not a vaccine available at the time. She stated that she is a first generation for vaccines. Ms. Hamilton asked the Board to reinstate the mask mandate for another layer of protection for students as she wants her kids and all kids to be safe.

Daniel McPherson, parent of students in the District and car seat professional, greeted the Board and explained the implementation of the car seat law of 1978. He went on to explain that Tennessee was the first state to make car seats mandatory in 1981 and eventually all the other 49 states passed the law as well. Mr. Pherson expressed that parents want choices but must be humble enough to look at the science and data for themselves and the safety of others. He stated that this meeting was not about masks but about trust and timing and that the Board could earn their trust back by adhering to the recommendations of professionals and give every student the opportunity to get fully vaccinated.

Ms. McPherson thanked each speaker and the audience for being civil. She thanked the Board for the opportunity and asked for consideration of a motion to reinstate the mask mandate for elementary age children to have the opportunity to be fully vaccinated.



Mr. Thomas thanked the speakers and the audience.

Vote to reinstate the District mask mandate for elementary age students until all have the opportunity to get fully vaccinated.

- Motion by Tina Ward

- Seconded by Lindsey Gustafson

Roll Call for taken

In Favor

Tina Ward, Lindsey Gustafson

Opposed

Stephen Delaney, Shelby Thomas, Heather Smith, Dr. Laurel Tait

Motion denied

Adjournment

Vote to adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:49 p.m.

-Motion by Stephen Delaney

-Seconded by Heather Smith

In Favor

Tina Ward, Stephen Delaney, Shelby Thomas, Lindsey Gustafson, Heather Smith, Dr. Laurel Tait

Opposed

(None)

Motion Passed