

**MERIDIAN COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 15
SPECIAL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING**

February 12, 2022

The Meridian Community Unit School District No. 15 Board of Education held a special meeting on Saturday, February 12, 2022, in the Board Room, Macon Campus. President Monte Hogan called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. The following Members were in attendance: Monte Hogan, Adam Herbert, Clint Gorden, Chris Jones, Kara Morey and Matt Roush. Member Kraft was absent. Also in attendance was Andy Pygott, Superintendent.

Communication from the audience:

The following community members spoke in regards to the current mask policy- Derrick Davison, Brandon McVey, Melissa Fitzpatrick, Steven Crutchfield and Wanda Monoro.

President Hogan read the following statement from the Meridian Board:

Effective immediately, the use of masks will temporarily NOT be required in our schools within the Meridian CUSD #15 District until further notice, but the use of masks is still recommended. As always, we expect all students, faculty and staff to be respectful of others' decisions on masking at school.

There have been many tough decisions to make throughout the pandemic. While very many of us within the Meridian District have not agreed with the mandates issued by the State, and the strong-arm tactics that the State and others within our own District have used to try to ensure compliance to these mandates, we have demonstrated and maintained a high standard of civil discourse for our students to see and follow.

At the beginning of the school year, it was agreed the most important issue was getting our children back to school as well as not jeopardizing the long term sustainability of our District to be able to provide an education to the children of our District. It is understood that the vast majority of people within our District are very ready to unmask. We have all likely seen the news clips of other places where there was unrest that did not end peacefully. We have also likely seen where other States, operating similar to Illinois, have recently changed their masking policies.

The path that many school districts throughout Illinois have been traversing has temporarily changed given the ever-changing landscape that continues to evolve daily. Until further future ruling(s) from the Judicial Branch occur, in the interim the Meridian District will deem null and void the terms of the previous executive mandates issued by the Governor of Illinois.

The Temporary Restraining Order issued by a Sangamon County judge last week is a victory for freedom of local control - an opportunity for decisions to be made within our District and not in Springfield or Chicago. There has been confusion and mis-information floating around the

general public about the ruling on [Friday Feb 4](#). Even though Governor Pritzker, on the afternoon of [Wednesday Feb 9](#), issued a statement indicating that he will lift the indoor mask mandate at the end of February, he is still excluding K-12 schools from that action.

It is apparent that the legal proceedings and appeals stemming from the ruling will continue and may take longer than originally thought. The reasoning behind staying status quo locally was to avoid even more confusion being created, as different statewide parties continue to try to make decisions for local school districts, until things come to a natural close in our State's Judicial Branch. This possibility still exists, but it is now believed that a final ruling on the case may take several weeks. Please note that the District's original decision back in August was to have masking recommended but not required – but our local decision was trumped by the statewide mask mandate imposed by Gov Pritzker, and the threats and actions taken by the Governor's bureaucrats for funding being lost for any Districts that did not comply.

We are making this change with the hope that our District can end the divisiveness and come together to support each other regardless of political bias, ideology bias, or whether one chooses to wear a mask or not. While the belief remains that the status quo decision was the right one, we have all seen almost all school districts in the area who made this same decision, reverse course this past week.

In the end, our District simply asks for all to have just a little more patience and understanding as we hopefully near the end of this weary chapter of our existence.

Member Herbert, seconded by Member Jones, motioned to approve the statement. Motion carried on a roll call vote 6-0.

The meeting adjourned at 12:57 p.m. on a motion by Member Herbert, seconded by Member Jones. Motion carried. The next regularly scheduled meeting will be held February 22, 6:30 p.m.

Monte Hogan, Board President

Rebecca Kraft, Board Secretary