

MENDON-UPTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Special School Committee Meeting

Virtual

Tuesday, March 15, 2022

Committee Present:

Sean Nicholson, Phil DeZutter, Kerry Laurence, Vikki Ludwigson

Administration Present:

Maureen Cohen, Superintendent of Schools

I. CALL TO ORDER

Kerry Laurence stated the following: consistent with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law MGL Ch. 30A, S. 20 and Regulation 940 CMR 29.10, which allows for remote participation in certain circumstances under the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law Regulations, the Mendon-Upton Regional School Committee will be conducting this meeting with remote participation. Any and all votes will be conducted by roll-call votes. Per usual, this meeting will also be livestreamed.

The meeting was called to order at 8:02 p.m. by Kerry Laurence.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Approval of the Agenda

MOTION: On a motion of Vikki Ludwigson, seconded by Phil DeZutter, to approve the agenda.

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes
Vikki Ludwigson, yes
Kerry Laurence, yes
Phil DeZutter, yes

II. REVIEW OF FACE COVER POLICY

Chairperson Kerry Laurence stated how this policy relates to the Pre-K. Kerry Laurence asked for Committee discussion on their opinions on the face coverings and then there will be public discussion.

Dr. Cohen shared updated information with the School Committee including a survey with Pre-K parents. The district has been tracking weekly data and this past week there was only 1 case. Dr. Cohen noted when this policy was discussed in the past, there was a concern about a spike after February vacation. This spike never materialized and the cases continued to go down.

Dr. Cohen noted the mask optional environment is going well. Students are comfortable whether they have decided to wear a mask or not. Dr. Cohen noted she had shared CDC info and local data with School Committee and cases in Upton are still low. Also, the Department of Early Education shared higher risk should continue to wear masks and be supported.

Dr. Cohen stated Pre-K parent survey information showed 18% were not comfortable. A new survey was done since the original survey was buildings and this survey was grade level. Dr. Cohen also spoke with the teachers and they were comfortable with what the School Committee decided. School nurse was consulted and only a few would be turning 5 and eligible for vaccinations.

Kerry Laurence asked how many parents responded to the Pre-K survey? Dr. Cohen stated there were 52 responses which is a large amount.

Vikki Ludwigson stated with the additional information and the decline in cases it makes sense to amend the policy and remove the line regarding Pre-K. She is concerned about what will generate a return to mask policy and that it is important to keep in mind there may be a return to masking.

Kerry Laurence stated recent studies show secondary transmission is low. Students are happy to see everyone faces and it makes sense to amend the policy.

Sean Nicholson has followed what the American Academy of Pediatrics is recommending and they have stated to relax mandates and he believes it is a good decision to amend policy.

Phil DeZutter what would the metrics would to return to mask policy at different building level. Dr. Cohen stated CDC gives guidance based on community's risk. District will continue to track weekly and if cases increase on local level, DESE will be consulted.

Dr. Cohen stated Pre-K eat their snacks while being distanced and follow protocols. She noted same protocols are still in place for lunch time at the elementary schools.

Sean Nicholson stated the cases per building during the Omicron after the December breaks were high. He stated if this occurs again, the School Committee would need consider a mask policy.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Kerry Laurence reminded everyone of the policy and allowing 15 minutes for comments.

James Forkey asked if there was a motion and it was stated it would occur after the public. He commented he did not see with APP had recommended relaxing masks. James stated the numbers are low and agrees with removing the mandate but there should be a policy on when masks will be re-instituted based on number of cases.

Christine commented COVID is never going away and it would not be good to keep going back and forth with the masking policy.

Bridget commented she agrees with Christine comments and stated masking should be a parent's decision.

Kerry Laurence asked if there was a motion after discussion and public comments

APPROVAL OF AMENDING POLICY EBCFA – MASK POLICY

Approval of the Amending Policy EBCFA – Mask Policy

MOTION: On a motion of Vikki Ludwigson, seconded by Sean Nicholson to remove the second bullet: *“A face covering that covers the nose and mouth is **required** to be worn by students in Pre-K in school buildings, even when social distancing is observed, other than when eating or drinking. Masks are not required when outside.”* from Policy EBCFA – Mask Policy.

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes
Vikki Ludwigson, yes
Kerry Laurence, yes
Phil DeZutter, yes

IV. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: On motion of Phil DeZutter, seconded by Sean Nicholson to adjourn.

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes
Vikki Ludwigson, yes
Kerry Laurence, yes
Phil DeZutter, yes

Meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m.
Minutes by Kelly McElreath