

**Watertown Board of Education
Special Board of Education Meeting**

Meeting Date: September 8, 2020
Meeting Time: 6:30 p.m.
Meeting Place: REMOTE MEETING

Members Present: Ms. Leslie Crotty, Chairman
Mr. Tom Lambert, Vice Chairman
Ms. Janelle Wilk, Secretary
Mr. Robert Makowski
Ms. Cathie Rinaldi
Ms. Diane Bristol
Ms. Cindy Eastman
Mr. Jason Malagutti
Ms. Josephine Cavallo-Rosa

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Dr. John Ramos – Interim Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Tom DiStasio – Business Manager

- A. Convene Regular Meeting – 6:30 p.m.
- B. Salute to the Flag
- C. Roll Call – Ms. Davidson
- D. Based on the new School Mask Guidance issued by the state, the Board will review and discuss the following the following policy drafts:

Use of Face Covering – New

Dr. Ramos - Thank you for being with us tonight. The first policy is in regards to masks as explained. On Friday, we received this information from the state department and we are hopeful to move forward with it this evening so we are aligned with what the state is asking for. Specifically, this policy speaks to the fact that the masks that should be worn are cloth style masks or the disposable procedure style masks. the guidance from the state department

addressed other kinds of masks and either said no to them or indicated a question mark about them which left it far too ambivalent for us to be able to say okay yes, let's do that. The only masks that we can be sure of based on this guidance are the masks that I just talked about. The cloth mask must have two layers at least, covering the nose and mouth, and looping over the ears. There is further information in the policy that speaks to when an exception can be made; they are very rare and are mostly medical in nature. They're not for the typical asthma or that kind of thing, they are for more severe things, which are all outlined in the policy. This should bring us up to speed in terms of what we need and put in place regarding masks in addition to our covid-19 related policies.

Ms. Crotty - Board members receive the policy in our packets and it is also available through the link in the agenda online. The policy goes through different types of compliance and talks about compliance with having to wear masks on the buses, wearing masks on all of the school facilities and grounds, it talks about wearing masks that loop around the ears and cover the nose and mouth, they are made of cotton or paper, and in addition to that, it refers to things that are not allowed and I do want to draw our attention to one particular area where it talks about gators and bandanas. I believe there is some level of comfort that the general public where they can feel the difference between wearing a gator or a bandana and a mask that loops around the ears but what we are being told by the experts is that unless the gator, is at minimum, doubled in the fabric it is not as effective and can actually break up the particles and cause the molecules to be further multiplied and have a greater risk of spreading covid. I don't think it is in our best interest at this time to have teachers to have to worry about whether or not the gator has been folded over multiple times and in addition to that gators that are made out of stretch fabric opens up the weave as it stretches over the face so that the particles have increased access to getting into the mouth and areas of the face then they would without it. In addition to that, they talk about the same concerns were some of the types of bandanas and a thin fabric that they are made with and the amount of layers of that fabric it would take to be as effective as the kind that we are talking about; the cotton ones that are at least in double fabric and go over the nose and mouth and loop over the ears.

Mr. Makowski - I agree with the policy, we need to have standardization, however I do think that the state's policy in itself doesn't go far enough to be descriptive. You were clear in your description that it should be form-fitting around the mouth. I think the state missed a big opportunity to provide that clarity and that expectation. I just want to use this opportunity to encourage our parents and caregivers to be mindful of that before they send their children out the door in the morning. I regularly see individuals out in public with masks that are bulging around the mouth, open at the top; and that does allow for the particles to escape. I just wanted to use this opportunity to again encourage our parents, be engaged, make sure that you have the masks that you are sending your kids to school with to be properly fitted so that our teachers can focus on education and not mask management.

Ms. Crotty - I did just want to mention further that within the addendum 11 it is available online to members of the public that was released by the state, they go into, in detail the different masks, the N95, the ones that have valves on them...in addition to the gators and bandanas. They talk about the N95 respirators on the masks and go quite clearly through each one of those and I would suggest that parents and community members who have concerns or questions

refer to that seven-page document and scroll down if they have questions about it. We will also post it on our website as well so that people have an understanding of where this policy is coming from.

Dr. Ramos, should the board approve this policy tonight, how will we communicate the policy to the public and beyond the meeting tonight?

Dr. Ramos - We will post it on our website, I will include it in an email blast and I will reference it in that blast that will go out tomorrow.

Ms. Crotty - Ok, great. I believe there is a second policy as recommended by our fire marshal, Mrs. Calabrese, for the use of school door chocks to hold classroom doors.

Use of School Door Chocks to hold Classroom Doors - New

Dr. Ramos - This may seem like a surprise because we have done so much work over the years with security, but what this is about is ventilating for the classrooms. We need to keep the air flow going. It is also about making the classroom as touchless as possible. We will not have to keep touching the door back and forth. The fire marshal is allowing us to make an exception for as long as covid-19 and use the door chocks to keep the door open. She mentioned that this was okay provided that when there are fire drills or when the classrooms are empty that the door be closed and the chock be removed. If the board passes the policy to that effect oh, she would be happy to allow them.

Ms. Crotty - Ok, so if a teacher wanted to keep their classroom door open while the students are inside for air flow, they are able to do so which is a temporary policy that in effect, goes against our security policies that we have in terms of the doors being closed while children are in there.

Dr. Ramos - Yes, this isn't our first point of irony in regards to covid. It is necessary and I do think that the teachers appreciate that there will be some flow of air and people have expressed that concern to me several times.

Ms. Crotty - Yes, and I appreciate Fire Marshal Calabrese working with us on this and I know that she has been diligently checking all of the schools for us before we open and helping us in that process for safety and I just wanted to put that out there and thank her for that. Are there any questions in regards to this policy for board members?

Mr. Makowski - Was the Watertown Police Department consulted on this in conjunction with the fire department?

Dr. Ramos - I can't speak to where the fire marshal spoke with the police department. I know I didn't. I can certainly inform the chief tomorrow.

Mr. Makowski - I would ask that you do. Certainly, school security.... threats come in very different forms so we want to be mindful of all of those different opportunities and want to make sure that if we need to update any procedures in response to, God forbid there was some

kind of event, that we had those in place seeing that we are undoing a security item, I want to make sure that would capture that accordingly.

Ms. Crotty - Thank you very much for the work that you put behind the scenes on getting these policies together in time for tonight, Dr. Ramos, I really appreciate it and to the fire marshal for her assistance with doing what we need to do to keep the kids covid safe during this time.

E. Public Participation (Please state name, address and topic of discussion)

Mike Russo - 28 Orlando St., Oak - Gave the Board feedback on remote learning and the guidance that has been given out so far. To hear his entire question/feedback, please go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRID4xCHaQs>

F. Action Items – Adoption of Items to be Approved by Consent

Agenda Item:	F.1
Subject:	To approve the temporary covid-19 new policy on the use of face coverings in school, as presented

Motion Presented By:	Ms. Wilk
Motion Seconded By:	Mr. Makowski

Text of the Motion:	So moved
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Discussion:	None
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Opposed:	None
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Abstained:	None
Vote:	Motion Passes

Agenda Item:	F.2
Subject:	To approve the temporary covid-19 new policy on the use of door chocks to hold classroom doors open, as presented

Motion Presented By:	Ms. Wilk
Motion Seconded By:	Mr. Makowski

Text of the Motion:	So moved
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Discussion:	None
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Opposed:	None
Abstained:	None
Vote:	Motion Passes

G. Board Members Comments

None

H. Adjournment

Agenda Item:	H.1
Subject:	To adjourn the meeting

Motion Presented By:	Ms. Bristol
Motion Seconded By:	Ms. Eastman

Text of the Motion:	Madame Chair, I move that we adjourn.
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Discussion:	None
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Opposed:	None
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Abstained:	None
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Vote:	Motion Passes
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The meeting adjourned at 6:51 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mindi Davidson
Recording Secretary

Janelle Wilk
Secretary of the Board