

GRAND LEDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Board of Education

Committee of the Whole / Work Session – August 9, 2021

MINUTES

President Sara Clark Pierson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. She led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Roll Call by Superintendent Marcus Davenport indicated the presence of ***Board Members***: Sara Clark Pierson, Jarrod Smith, Nicole Shannon, Jon Shiflett, Denise DuFort, Patrick McKennon, Ben Cwayna. ***Central Office Administrators***: Marcus Davenport, Steve Gabriel, Bill Barnes, Nancy Rasinske, Sara Holding and John Ellsworth. ***Others in Attendance*** Melissa Mazzola, Angel Landis, Traci Gentilozzi, Amber Sinke, Paul Putnam, Jamie Putnam, Jeff McNeilly, Valerie Holley, Tara Kopietz, Ashley Oneil, Danielle Nelson, Howard Pizzo, Nell Pizzo, Beth Schuchaskie, Marlene Promer, Lisa Dilber, Aaron Walworth, Lindsey Grostefon, Deborah Diesen, Lena Shaffer, Brian McLaughlin, Sean Reed, Tony Olds, Kyle Dymond, Clifford Hurth, Kim Abed, Carl DenHouten, Ginny Batcheller, Tim Totten, Dawne Velianoff, James Cotter, Elyse Fox, Rachelle Johns and Kim Manning

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. McKennon read the rules for addressing the board.

Amber Redman addressed the board in opposition of a mask mandate, her impression a survey would be conducted and a letter she sent this morning and noting if the board does implement a mask mandate she and many other parents will un-enroll their students from Grand Ledge Public Schools.

Kyle Dymond addressed the board noting he is looking forward to the start of the school year and noting he will support the board in whatever decision they make with regard to a mask mandate.

John Ledesma addressed the board in support of a mask mandate in accordance with the CDC, the health department and all the science. He encouraged the board to continue to listen to the experts.

John Clore addressed the board in opposition of a mask mandate and encouraging parents with withdraw their children from the district.

Valerie Holley addressed the board regarding racism, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and CRT noting parents have the fundamental right to educate their children.

Ashley Oneil addressed the board in opposition of a mask mandate, presented COVID rates for the area, encouraged making masks optional and noting she and other parents have emailed Superintendent Davenport sharing numerous articles on the harm of masking children.

Sky Powell addressed the board in opposition of a mask mandate.

Erin Weller addressed the board in support of a mask mandate for the upcoming school year noting masks are more for the protection of others than for the mask wearer. She encouraged the board to continue to believe in the science.

Jeff McNeilly addressed the board in opposition of a mask mandate noting the virus isn't going away and noting if the board implements a mandate he will withdraw his five children from the district.

Ginny Batcheller addressed the board in opposition of a mask mandate noting a piece of fabric is not going to keep you safe and noting she would pull her student if this is going to continue.

Tim Totten addressed the board in opposition to a mask mandate and noting if vaccines are mandated he will pull his child and possibly if masks are required.

Dawne Velianoff addressed the board noting she is not concerned about a vote for approval of a mask mandate, referencing the Dialogue with the Superintendent she attended and the noting 90% of the conversation that day revolved around special education programs. She noted she is disappointed that this is not a topic of discussion on tonight's agenda.

Jim Cotter addressed the board noting that fewer than 100 people in a community of over 8,000 are here tonight and the majority trust the board to make the right decision. He noted there is a health crisis in this country and in this world that no one can predict and encouraged the board to err on the side of safety.

Michael Perrine addressed the board noting this could all be resolved if a survey was conducted and the majority vote wins. He advised COVID is not going away and stated his kids will not be coming to school masked.

Tony Olds addressed the board noting every decision that is made has implication but he believes the decisions are always made with good intentions. He is hoping the board will see they made the wrong decisions last year. He referenced the break through infection, hospitalizations and death rate stating a person is more likely to die from a lightning strike of the seasonal flu.

Rachel Maybeck addressed the board referencing them to the biggest mean girls club and encouraging parents to pull their kids.

Rachel Johns addressed the board expressing she homeschools her children, noting she believes masks cause more fear in children than being helpful, noting homeschooling is hard work but she is a resource to anyone wanting to look into it and expressing parents are deemed qualified to raise and teach their children.

ACTION ITEMS

A. DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS TO DISTRICT MASK POLICY FOR THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR

Dr. Davenport advised he has been meeting, speaking and emailing with parents over the course of his six-weeks in the district. He has listened to their concerns, experiences, ideas and recommendations. Additionally, he met with the full administrative team to study and really understand the district's processes and protocols for COVID-19. He noted the district's goal is to ensure the return of our students to in-person learning, five days a week. But the

district has the responsibility to ensure a learning environment that is as safe as possible with the least number of disruptions to learning and we must take every action possible to keep our students, families, staff and the community as a whole as safe as possible. He noted he understands masks are not 100% fool proof, nor are vaccines, but they are a means to help slow the spread, help in lessening the effects of the virus. He asked the board to consider his recommendation to implement a mandatory mask mandate for any persons inside district facilities during the instructional day beginning August 16, 2021 to allow our buildings to start the school year in the safest manner possible with the least number of interruptions to student learning.

A detailed discussion among the members covered mandatory reporting to the Barry-Eaton District Health Department, quarantining requirements we must follow if we wear mask vs. not wearing masks, the inability of the district to meet social distancing guidelines within the schools and classrooms due to the size of our buildings and our current enrollment, vaccination availability for students, the vaccination rate, current outbreaks, hospitalizations, the Delta variant, the summer school program and subsequent cases throughout that program, masking for K-6 but making it optional for 7-12 grade, numbers going up in the county, children and family members who are health compromised, finding a compromise by allowing parents and staff to choose if they want to wear a mask, wearing a mask is not fun but we do it to protect those around us and reviewed the information forwarded from Dr. Davenport that shared by community members.

The board asked the plan for quarantined students and he advised the district does not have the staff to run a full in person and full virtual learning platform simultaneously. He noted in March 2021 the buildings were only at 60% capacity and this year, our virtual component will be much smaller with far fewer teachers. He further advised he and the administrative team will meet again later this week to get processes and protocols in place following the board's decision tonight.

The board further discussed, at length, the quarantine requirements if the district implements a mask mandate versus leaving masks optional, keeping the focus on in-person, five day a week learning with the least amount of disruption to learning, most exposures happen out of school and are brought to the school environment, continual monitoring of the cases and adjusting our requirements as things change.

Motion by Ms. Shannon, seconded by Mr. Shiflett for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve a mandatory mask requirement during the instructional day, when inside any Grand Ledge Public Schools facility, for all teachers, staff, students and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, in accordance with the CDC's "Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools" beginning Monday, August 16, 2021.

More discussion among the members reviewed starting the year with masks optional and ramping it up if needed, but waiting to see if there is going to be a problem first, the preference to be proactive versus reactive, it being easier to lessen the requirements than ramp up the requirements, finding a compromise, providing a choice, allowing a choice is the compromise, if choice is a compromise it is a compromise that could have a detrimental impact on public health and the health of many in our district, it is the board's responsibility to make a decision in the best interest of all, if masks are not required parents have the choice of a virtual learning environment, possible K-6 mask mandate and only wearing masks in public areas or during

passing times in the higher grades, even with all the emails received by the board they have not heard from a majority of the parents one way or another, there are districts doing it both ways and there is no right or wrong answer.

Motion by Mr. McKennon, seconded by Mr. Shiflett for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to implement a mandatory mask requirement during the instructional day for Kindergarten – 6th grade students when inside a Grand Ledge Public Schools facility and a mandatory mask requirement for grades 7-12 in common areas and during transition times with a recommendation to wear it whenever inside a district facility, beginning Monday, August 16, 2021.

Dr. Davenport noted wherever the board lands, the administrative team will begin planning for implementation to ensure a smooth start for our students on September 7, but he encouraged them to be in full alignment across all grade levels.

The question was raised on the amended motion regarding staff masking requirements. Discussion revolved around mandating staff is appropriate as they are district employees.

Mr. McKennon agreed to the addition of **Staff and visitors are required to wear a mask inside any district facility.**

Dr. Davenport reiterated it is his recommendation to implement a mask requirement across all grade levels. He noted he understands it is a difficult decision. He again noted that is a K-12 mask requirement is not supported, it would be better to keep masks optional, but either way, the board needs to make the decision to ensure the administrative team has the appropriate time to prepare, to ensure we have the appropriate staff for in-person and virtual learning options and to provide parents with the information to make an informed decision on if they want their children attending in person or virtually. Dr. Davenport did remind everyone that no matter what decision the board made with regard to masking inside a district facility, it is a federal mandate that masks are worn on school busses.

The board began further discussion on testing students quickly, contact tracing and quarantining versus testing.

Dr. Davenport noted testing and vaccination is not his position. He is making his recommendation on what to do inside our district facilities to mitigate the spread while maintaining getting the year started in the safest possible manner.

Ms. Shannon moved to call the question.

President Clark Pierson noted the call of the question and asked for a vote on the amendment to the original motion:

Motion by Mr. McKennon, seconded by Mr. Shiflett for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to implement a mandatory mask requirement during the instructional day for Kindergarten – 6th grade students when inside a Grand Ledge Public Schools facility and a mandatory mask requirement for grades 7-12 in common areas and during transition times

with a recommendation to wear it whenever inside a district facility, beginning Monday, August 16, 2021. Staff and visitors are required to wear a mask inside any district facility during the instructional day.

The amendment failed 3/4.

President Clark Pierson asked for a vote on the original motion:

Motion by Ms. Shannon, seconded by Mr. Shiflett for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve a mandatory mask requirement during the instructional day, when inside any Grand Ledge Public Schools facility, for all teachers, staff, students and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, in accordance with the CDC's "Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools" beginning Monday, August 16, 2021. The motion carried 5/2.

It was noted the district will provide parents with an opt-out option based on medical or religious reasons. The district will begin to pull that information together and get it out to parents as quickly as possible.

B. APPROVAL OF PARTNERSHIP WITH NEOLA

Dr. Davenport provided the board with an overview of the services offered by Neola noting they will work closely with the Governance Committee to enhance the policies of the Board. He advised some of the board's policies have not been updated in many years and a lot has changed. Dr. Davenport feels it is important to have resources that provide the board with up-to-date information that the board can add to or take away from. He noted the cost is just under \$27,000 per year with two different option for payment.

Motion by Mr. Shiflett, seconded by Mrs. DuFort for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve and authorize Marcus Davenport, Superintendent of Schools to move forward with partnering with Neola to enhance the district's Board and Operations Policies. The motion carried unanimously.

C. APPROVAL OF 2021-2022 MHSAA MEMBERSHIP RESOLUTION

Motion by Mr. Shiflett, seconded by Mr. Smith for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the 2021-2022 Michigan High School Athletic Association Membership Resolution, as presented.

Roll Call Vote:

President Clark Pierson	YES	Mr. Shiflett	YES
Mr. Cwayna	YES	Ms. Shannon	YES
Mr. McKennon	YES	Mr. Smith	YES
Mrs. DuFort	YES		

The motion carried unanimously.

D. APPROVAL OF TEACHER LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Motion by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Shannon for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the Teacher Leave of Absence for the 2021-2022 school year for Katie Davis, as requested. The motion carried unanimously.

E. APPROVAL OF TEACHER HIRINGS

Motion by Mr. McKennon, seconded by Mr. Cwayna for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the teacher hiring of Brad Arnett, Teresa Faggion-Reed and Amy Fenton, as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

F. APPROVAL OF APPOINTMENT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (Section 101(10) of the State School Aid Act)

Motion by Ms. Shannon, seconded by Mr. McKennon for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the appointment of a district-wide professional development committee to recommend at least 8-hours of district provided professional development. The committee must be composed of teachers employed by the district that represent a variety of grade level and subject matter specializations, including special education; non-teaching staff; parents; and administrators, with the majority of the committee comprised of teaching staff, in accordance with pupil accounting rules in Section 101(10) of the State School Aid Act.

Assistant Superintendent for Academic Services Dr. Bill Barnes provided the board with background information on the new pupil accounting rules this motion aligns with.

The motion carried unanimously.

G. APPROVAL OF CAPITAL REGIONAL TECHNICAL EARLY COLLEGE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Motion by Mr. Smith, second by Mrs. DuFort for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to agree that classes recommended by the early college may be substituted for Math and English credit for students enrolled in the program. It is also understood that State School Aid Section 6(4)m requires that students must not be otherwise eligible for high school graduation to participate in a fifth year of high school and that Section 2(f) of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act and Section 3(g) of the Career and Technical Preparation Act require that students be enrolled in at least one high school course required for graduation in the fifth year and that class is a dual enrollment math or math related course.

Dr. Barnes again provided the board with the background information for this motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

H. APPROVAL OF JULY 12, 2021 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Motion by Mrs. DuFort, seconded by Mr. Cwayna for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the July 12, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes, as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

I. APPROVAL OF CONSUMERS ENERGY EASEMENT RESOLUTION

Motion by Mrs. DuFort, seconded by Mr. Shiflett for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the Resolution granting an easement to Consumers Energy based on the terms and conditions contained in the Easement Agreement and authorize and direct Marcus Davenport, Superintendent of Schools, or his designee, to execute the Easement Agreement subject to review and approval by the District's Legal Counsel.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Cwayna	<u>YES</u>	Ms. Shannon	<u>YES</u>
Mr. McKennon	<u>YES</u>	Mr. Smith	<u>YES</u>
Mrs. DuFort	<u>YES</u>	President Clark Pierson	<u>YES</u>
Mr. Shiflett	<u>YES</u>		

The motion carried unanimously.

J. APPROVAL OF THE PAYMENT OF SINKING FUND INVOICES

Motion by Ms. Shannon, seconded by Mr. Shiflett for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the payment of sinking fund invoices in the amount of \$293,762.45, as presented. The motion carried unanimously with President Sara Clark Pierson abstaining from the vote in accordance with MCL 380.4203.

K. APPROVAL OF THE PAYMENT OF PROPOSAL 1 BOND INVOICES

Motion by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mrs. DuFort for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the payment of Proposal 1 Bond Invoices in the amount of \$1,956,934.21, as presented. The motion carried unanimously with President Sara Clark Pierson abstaining from the vote in accordance with MCL 380.4203.

L. APPROVAL OF THE PAYMENT OF PROPOSAL 2, SERIES 1 BOND INVOICES

Motion by Mr. Shiflett, seconded by Mr. Cwayna for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the payment of Proposal 2, Series 1 Bond Invoices in the amount of \$740,780.43, as presented. The motion carried unanimously with President Sara Clark Pierson abstaining from the vote in accordance with MCL 380.4203.

M. APPROVAL OF THE PAYMENT OF PROPOSAL 2, SERIES 2 BOND INVOICES

Motion by Ms. Shannon, seconded by Mr. Smith for the Grand Ledge Public Schools Board of Education to approve the payment of Proposal 2, Series 2 Bond Invoices in the amount of \$306,779.87, as presented. The motion carried unanimously with President Sara Clark Pierson abstaining from the vote in accordance with MCL 380.4203.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Traci Gentilozzi asked where parents can find the form to opt their student out of the mask requirement.

Executive Director for Student Services Sara Holding advised the Form will be posted on the website once it is finalized along with all instruction for completing and submitting the form.

Amber Redman addressed the board expressing the board doesn't know how to treat people with respect, calling them tyrants and an embarrassment to the community. She advised the board

should watch for the un-enrolling of students as there are 700 parents who said they will unenroll their students if a mask mandate is put in place.

Jeff McNeilly addressed the board to express his disappointment stating judgments are supposed to be based on fact, not fear, not emotion. He noted he will be disenrolling his kids and 700 other parents will be doing the same. He stated COVID is not deadly. He understands people are getting sick.

Valerie Holly addressed the board again with regard to racism, equity, diversity and inclusion and CRT. She referenced a book that is being used in 25 school district. She requested the board host two hall meetings before any decisions are made on the recommendations of the EDIC.

Tim Totten addressed the board to warn them about the dangers of radical EDI initiatives. He referenced Indiana, Carmel and Dr. Lui.

Ben Kopietz addressed the board expressing his opposition to the mask requirement and stating his belief this will divide the community. He gave Mr. McKennon credit for doing some research, but noted it doesn't matter what other district's do, the board needs to do what is right for this community.

Tiff Vallo addressed the board to express her disappointment in the mask mandate noting this is fear mongering, noting the CDC's recommendations were defuncted and didn't pass peer review. She expressed her belief that COVID is not more dangerous than the flu, no more contagious than any other virus. She noted now she has to pull her students out of the district.

John Clore addressed the board regarding the mask mandate, CRT being taught in the district and EDI sharing he grew up in a black neighborhood where he got picked on and called names. He noted all races have good people, all races have bad people. He encouraged the focus on the human race that focuses on our similarities.

COMMENTS FROM STAFF AND BOARD

Dr. Barnes thanked the board for their support of the Appointment of the PD Committee and the Capital Regional Technical Early College Graduation Requirements.


Mr. McKennon recognized the excellent summer school program and extended his thanks for all the work that went in to ensuring the success of the program and our students.

President Clark Pierson noted she has heard nothing but great things about the summer school program since the first kindergarten lunch line and appreciate all the effort to get that up and running.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



Nicole Shannon, Secretary

Attest:



Sara Clark Pierson, President