

BETHANY BOARD OF EDUCATION
Special Meeting Minutes
Via Zoom Webinar
February 23, 2022

Present

Angelo Amato
John Paul Garcia
Angel Irigoyen
Amy Lestinsky, Vice Chair
EJ Maher
Christopher Pittenger, Chair
Shawn Uscilla arrived at 6:40 pm
Lynette White, Secretary
Namita Wijesekera

Administration

Colleen Murray
Kai Byrd
Tom Reed-Swale

Absent

None

Call to Order

Dr. Pittenger called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Public Comment

Nicole Wetmore, 48 Woods Road. Spoke in favor of unmasking BCS students.

Jennifer Searles, 134 North Humiston Drive. Spoke in favor of keeping masks for BCS students.

Rick Altice, 286 Bear Hill Road. Spoke in favor of keeping masks for BCS students.

Stefanie Wells, 54 Rainbow Road. Spoke in favor of unmasking BCS students.

Melissa Zaldo, 191 Beacon Road. Spoke in favor of unmasking BCS students.

Shannon Gluse, 337 Wooding Hill Road. Spoke in favor of unmasking BCS students.

Andre Puleo, 36 Knollwood Road. Spoke in favor of unmasking BCS students.

Adam Carbone, 233 Amity Road. Spoke in favor of unmasking BCS students.

David Grimes, 22 Woods Road. Spoke in favor of unmasking BCS students.

Steve Wampler, 54 Rainbow Road. Spoke in favor of unmasking BCS students.

BOE Secretary, Lynette White read Public Comments submitted by:

- Matthew Carlson, 12 Earley Court. Spoke about the masking preferences of the BCS teachers.
- Brian Fournier, 21 Rainbow Road. Spoke about mask requirements for unvaccinated students and no masking for vaccinated students.
- Shannon Lane, 168 Miller Road. Spoke about staff feeling safe coming to work and consideration for immunocompromised PreK students.
- Russell Stutsky, 45 Cedar Road. Spoke in favor of unmasking BCS students.

New Business

Mrs. Murray reviewed data that was provided to the Board prior to the meeting upon their request.

The Board held a robust discussion on COVID-related school policies. Each BOE member shared their views and opinions on student masking.

Motion by Garcia, seconded by White that masks become optional in the Bethany Public School District, insofar as is permitted by state and federal law, effective February 28, 2022.

Motion Amendment by Pittenger, seconded by none, to amend the motion that masks become optional in the Bethany Public School District, insofar as is permitted by state and federal law, effective March 14, 2022. *The amended motion was not seconded and failed.*

Motion Amendment by Wijesekera, seconded by Pittenger, to amend the motion that masks become optional in the Bethany Public School District, insofar as is permitted by state and federal law, effective April 22, 2022 and to instruct the Superintendent to develop a metric-driven system to guide the use of masks in response to changing public data from that point forward. *The amended motion failed 1 yes (Wijesekera), 7 no (Amato, Garcia, Irigoyen, Lestinsky, Maher, Uscilla, White).*

Original Motion by Garcia, seconded by White that masks become optional in the Bethany Public School District, insofar as is permitted by state and federal law, effective February 28, 2022. *The motion carries 7 yes (Amato, Garcia, Irigoyen, Lestinsky, Maher, Uscilla, White), 1 no (Wijesekera).*

Motion by Garcia, seconded by Maher to instruct the Superintendent to develop a system of metrics based on publicly available health data to guide future decisions about mask usage in the Bethany Public School District in the event of future worsening of the COVID pandemic. *The motion carries 6 yes (Amato, Garcia, Irigoyen, Lestinsky, Maher, White), 2 no (Uscilla, Wijesekera).*

Motion by Lestinsky, seconded by Garcia that the Board of Education suspend Policy 4118.237/4218.237 effective February 28, 2022, due to changes in the state mandate, until such time the Policy Committee makes further recommendations on such policy to the Committee of the Whole. *The motion carries 7 yes (Amato, Garcia, Irigoyen, Lestinsky, Maher, Uscilla, White), 1 no (Wijesekera).*

Motion by Maher, seconded by Garcia that the Board of Education suspend Policy 5132.1 effective February 28, 2022, due to changes in the state mandate, until such time the Policy Committee makes further recommendations on such policy to the Committee of the Whole. *The motion carries 7 yes (Amato, Garcia, Irigoyen, Lestinsky, Maher, Uscilla, White), 1 no (Wijesekera).*

Motion by Amato, seconded by Irigoyen that the Board of Education suspend Policy 6172.61 effective February 28, 2022, until such time the Policy Committee makes further recommendations on such policy to the Committee of the Whole. *The motion carries 8 yes (Amato, Garcia, Irigoyen, Lestinsky, Maher, Uscilla, White, Wijesekera).*

Public Comment

Amber Durkin, 58 Perkins Road. Thankful for the hard work of the Board of Education and Superintendent.

David Grimes, 22 Woods Road. Thanked the Board for a job well done.

Melissa Zaldo, 191 Beacon Road. Thanked the Board for making the difficult decisions and for keeping the meeting civil.

Naomi Rosenstein, 30 North Humiston Drive. Asked the Board what the protocol will be for bullying those that wear masks.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:54 pm.


Susan L. Carpenter
Recording Secretary

Approved March 9, 2022