Bourne Public Schools

BOURNE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting Minutes

DATE: Wednesday, February 16, 2022
TIME: 7:00 PM
PLACE: ZOOM

ATTENDANCE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Emily Berry; Ryan Bagdonas; Maureen Fuller; Kari MacRae, Paul McMaster; Erin Perry; Student Representative Viveca Stucke

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHER ATTENDEES PRESENT: Dr. Kerri Anne Quinlan-Zhou, Superintendent; Dr. Barbara Starkie, Assistant Superintendent of Learning and Teaching; Dr. Ryan Place, Director of Special Education and Student Services

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Emily Berry calls the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and reminds participants that they must list their full names on their zoom link. She thanks the school community for their perseverance over the last 2 years wearing masks. She says that masking was never a school committee choice but a policy was put in place to enforce the state mask mandate put forth by the Commissioner of Education for the state of Massachusetts last summer. Chair Berry says we are at the point where the mandate has been lifted and we are able to make the choice that is best for our district. She says they felt it was important to give all staff members and caregivers a chance to voice their opinion through a survey which received over 1300 submissions.

2. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

a. SCHOOL COMMITTEE SUB COMMITTEE & DISTRICT COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Policy Sub Committee

- Chair Berry reports that after looking at the data and discussing the guidance the Policy sub committee is recommending that masking be optional for staff and students.
- Dr. Zhou shares a presentation with some of the major documents from the past as well as survey data that was recently collected. She notes that 1302 survey responses were received with 78.4% coming from parents and caregivers and 21.8% coming from BPS staff and that 79.6% of responses believe the masking policy should change to mask optional and 20.4% believe it should remain the same.
- Dr. Place takes over and presents data showing the downward trend of Covid cases. He thanks the staff for all their hard work especially during the January spike in cases and reads a statement from District Physician, Dr. Hooshmand, in support of eliminating the mask mandate in schools. He then reads a statement from Terri Guarino of the Town of Bourne Board of Health, also supporting the school district being mask optional after the state mask mandate is lifted on February 28th.
- Dr. Zhou adds that families can still opt in to the At-Home testing program at any time and there will still be symptomatic testing at the school. She thanks the school committee for pushing up this meeting so we can have a decision in place and avoid any confusion coming out of the break when everyone comes back to school on the 28th. She expresses that she is fully confident that if we move forward as mask optional that our students will be respectful of each other, they will continue to be responsible with themselves and will continue to be safe.

3. PUBLIC INPUT

- Micheal Rogers thanks the committee for the great presentation and recommendation and for doing their due diligence.
- A question comes from the public asking if masks are voted optional what happens to other Covid protocols in the schools such as lunchtime spacing and recess protocols. Chair Berry notes that building-based protocols are up to the building administration and are not school committee decisions. Dr. Zhou adds that as of now all of those protocols will be left in place. She says that she's been in and out of the schools and other than the masks on faces teachers are doing an incredible job of keeping the school day as normal as possible. She addresses any staff that may have concerns about the mask optional policy and says the district will work with them to make sure they are as comfortable as possible in their environment and do all that they can do to keep them in our classrooms.
- The next question asks about masking in sports. Dr. Zhou answers that they are still waiting on guidance from MIAA and whatever is within our jurisdiction to allow will be allowed.
- A question is asked about whether the masking policy will be the same at Bournedale even though the vaccination rate is lower and Chair Berry answers that it will be the same policy and parents can decide if they want their children to be masked or not. She says survey results show a strong majority wanting masks to be optional across all schools.
- A question is asked about how many Bournedale students are participating in the testing program and Dr. Palace answers that it's about 25%.
- A question is asked about whether consideration was given to waiting for two weeks after vacation to change the mask policy. Chair Berry answers that in collaboration with union leadership it was decided that it was best for staff and students to change the policy effective 2/28.

- Chair Berry invites the public to email the school committee with any questions that may not have been answered.

4. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Discussion about current policy EBCFA on Face Coverings

- Chair Berry explains that since there is a policy in place stating that masks are mandated by the state and that policy is enforced, the committee needs to decide whether to change or rescind the policy. She says that after discussing the issue she feels that rescinding the policy and having no policy in place is the easiest way to maintain open communication and the easiest way for staff and caregivers to understand it. She notes that they had a policy in place only because it was mandated and as it is no longer mandated she does not see the need for the policy. Maureen Fuller says that she is on the other side of the fence in wanting to amend the policy to include the wording of making mask wearing optional. She says if it is rescinded and things change they would have to start from scratch and she favors amending the policy at least through the end of the school year to see how things go as we progress through the seasons not wearing masks. Ryan Bgdonas says she is in favor of rescinding the policy. Paul McMaster says he agrees and feels that if something happens the committee can react quickly so a clear rescind is the best way to go. Kari MacRae agrees to rescind the policy.

Ryan Bagdonas motions to rescind the current policy EBCFA on face coverings; Seconded by Paul McMaster; Roll call vote passes 5-1-0, with Maureen Fuller opposing and Erin Perry not present to vote

- Chair Berry reminds the public that masks must still be worn on buses and that is a federal policy, not a school committee decision. She says masks will also still be mandatory in nurse's offices.
- Paul McMaster thanks all the parents and staff for coming together on such a polarizing issue. He also thanks Dr. Zhou and Emily Berry, who started as Superintendent and School Committee Chair respectively right as the pandemic started, for their leadership and helping everyone come together on this.

5. ACTION ITEMS

a. None; vote took place during Discussion

6. ADJOURN-*PAUL McMASTER MOTIONS TO ADJOURN; MAUREEN FULLER SECONDS; ROLL CALL VOTE APPROVED 7-0-0*

Meeting ended at 7:35 PM

List of documents and exhibits used (GL c.30A, sect 22(a))

Agenda Item	Document

Bourne Public Schools

0	School Committee Agenda
3a.	Policy Sub Committee Presentation
5a.	EBCFA on Face Coverings

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Jessica Moerman
Recording Secretary