

Coventry Board of Education
Coventry, Connecticut

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Approved Minutes of Thursday, February 24, 2022
Administration Building Conference Room

Board Members Present:

Jennifer Beausoleil, Chairperson
Eugene Marchand, Vice Chairperson
Mary Kortmann, Secretary
Peter DePaola
Emma Eaton
Courtney Rossignol
Christina Williams (left the meeting at 8:56 p.m.)

Also Present:

Celia Delvecchio, Board of Education Student Representative

Administrators Present:

Dr. David J. Petrone, Superintendent of Schools
Robert Carroll, Director of Finance and Operations

Audience Members Present: Several citizens were present.

I. Call to Order

J. Beausoleil called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. Salute to the Flag

J. Beausoleil led the salute to the flag.

III. Audience of Citizens

Coventry student Emma Garlock, 834 Wrights Mill Road, was present to share her wishes of not having to wear a mask any more. (The statement she submitted is attached to these minutes.)

Jennifer Galock, 834 Wrights Mill Road, was present to speak in favor of lifting the mask mandate in school. (The statement she submitted is attached to these minutes.)

William Hall, 1022 Grant Hill Road, was present to speak in favor of lifting the mask mandate in school.

Stephanie Symkowicz, 70 Beebe Farms Road, was present to speak in favor of mask choice.

Megan Philips, 57 Hendee Road, was present to speak in favor of lifting the mask mandate in school.

Coventry student Parker Rejman, 122 Judd Road, was present and spoke twice in favor of making masks optional. (The statement he submitted is attached to these minutes.)

Ralph Rejman, 122 Judd Road, was present to speak in favor of lifting the mask mandate in school. (The statement he submitted is attached to these minutes.)

Karl Koenig, 92 Appian Way, thanked the Board for their service. He was present to speak in favor of lifting the mask mandate in school.

Beau Demko, 188 Eastview Drive, was present to speak in favor of lifting the mask mandate in school.

Greg Kiss, 1370 North River Road, was present to speak in favor of lifting the mask mandate in school.

Matt Kyer, 4 Wall Street, was present to thank the members of the Board and Dr. Petrone for their thoughtful consideration of the situation. (The statement he submitted is attached to these minutes.)

Dawn Vieira, 337 Swamp Road, was present to speak in favor of lifting the mask mandate in school. (The statement she submitted is attached to these minutes.)

Caroline Davis, 302 Pine Lake Drive, was present to speak in favor of keeping masks in place while science dictates it is necessary.

Rachel Padula, 815 Wrights Mill Road, was present to speak in favor of unmasking students.

Rebecca St Germain, 28 Brenda Lane, was present to speak in favor of lifting the mask mandate in school.

Sarah Cook, 253 Stonehouse Road, was present to speak in favor of lifting the mask mandate in school.

Jackie Marion, 61 Laurel Drive, was present to speak with her son, Bishop. Bishop spoke in favor of lifting the mask mandate in school, (The statement he submitted is attached to these minutes.)

Stacey, 48 Springdale Avenue, was present to speak in favor of lifting the mask mandate in the schools.

MOTION: To move Old Business up before the Superintendent's Report.

By: C. Williams

Seconded: P. DePaola

Results: Motion fails 3-4 (J. Beausoleil, E. Marchand, M. Kortmann, E. Eaton against)

IV. Report of the Superintendent

Dr. Petrone reviewed events taking place locally, regionally, and statewide.

IV.A. Information: Board of Education Student Representative Report

Miss Delvecchio reported that winter sports are wrapping up and portfolios are being worked on.

V. VOTE: Approve Consent Agenda

V.A. Accept Retirement of Mary Arnini, GHR Para-Educator

E. Eaton requested that Ms. Arnini's retirement be removed from the Consent Agenda.

MOTION: To accept the retirement of Mary Arnini

By: E. Eaton

Seconded: E. Marchand

Discussion: E. Eaton thanked Ms. Arnini for all of her work and wished her the best in her retirement.

Result: Motion passes unanimously

VI. Report of the Chairman

J. Beausoleil thanked the administration for the tour of Coventry Grammar School. She noted that the Town Council has approved the request for the non-reoccurring fund to go to a 2% cap from 1%.

VIII. VOTE: Approval of Minutes

VIII.A. Approve Minutes of February 10, 2022

MOTION: To approve the minutes of February 10, 2022

By: E. Marchand

Seconded: C. Williams

Result: Motion passes unanimously

IX. Old Business

IX.A. Information and Possible VOTE: Review of Executive Orders and New Requirements Related to COVID-19

MOTION: Effective February 28, 2022, masks are required in the Coventry Public Schools whenever the average COVID-19 case per 100,000 (also known as the 2 week rolling average) is in the Red category as reported by the State Department of Public Health.

By: E. Marchand

Seconded: M. Kortmann

Discussion:

MOTION to AMEND: The Coventry Pubilc Schools eleimiate the mask mandate as of February 28, 2022

By: P. DePaola

Seconded: C. Williams

E. Marchand did not accept the amendment.

C. Williams requested a friendly amendment to the proposal on the table that Coventry schools will eliminate the mask mandate February 28, 2022 and we will reconvene if COVID case numbers warrant. E. Marchand did not accept the amendment.

E. Marchand said it is an effective motion; it takes into consideration if there is a spike in infections.

P. DePaola said this makes no sense - we cannot change on a dime and expect everyone to have to adjust. C. Williams said this will create chaos.

E. Eaton said it provides the same amount of warning as if there is a snow day. She said the numbers have been in steady decline. She said if the number reaches red, it means there is a significant community spread.

M. Kortmann noted that the Federal mandate is in place for buses, so students would have masks ready regardless.

C. Williams said her children would not be riding the bus, because of the mask mandate and they would not have masks available.

J. Beasuoleil asked for a friendly amendment that the Red Alert be specific to the Town of Coventry. E. Marchand accepted the amendment.

C. Rossignol said this will cause chaos and added that there is no end date. She asked for specific language to be added in the motion, as to when it would end.

C. Rossignol asked for an amendment that when the status is not Red, masks are optional again. E. Marchand accepted the amendment.

P. DePaola said it is time to end the nonsense; we need an end date to this nonsense. He added that the science is clear that the students are at the least amount of risk.

C. Williams stated the proposal of waiting until we are in the Red does not make sense, it will be too late; the virus will have already spread.

C. Williams asked for an amendment to just take the masks off February 28 and if situations change we will reconvene or the Governor will be come a king again and mandate masks, but this does not work. E. Marchand did not accept the friendly amendment.

The Board discussed masks and if they inhibit students' speech and language; details on the staff survey; the fact that the survey was not anonymous for staff; and that all staff are vaccinated.

P. DePaola said the motion on the floor is ridiculous. He said the number of school boards going mask optional is significant and now Coventry will be at the tail end instead of the front.

C. Williams asked for one more friendly amendment to just make masks optional February 28 and if things get bad again, we visit it because we are a responsible Board of Education. E. Marchand did not accept the friendly amendment.

The Board discussed health department data; the governor's emergency rights; community spread; and if there were those within the school system not being represented.

C. Rossignol asked for an amendment to focus on the schools rate, by the numbers Dr. Petrone is sending out weekly, not the town's rate. E. Marchand did not accept the amendment.

E. Eaton said the numbers reported by the district are not as accurate as the ones reported by the State, because families do not have to report positive cases to the schools.

C. Williams asked for a friendly amendment to be mask free or have masks optional from February 28 through June 30, 2022. E. Marchand denied the amendment.

There was a brief recess at 8:45 p.m. The Board reconvened at 8:47 p.m. and the Vote was called.

Result: With the two amendments, the motion in full “Effective February 28, 2022, masks are required in the Coventry Public Schools whenever the average COVID-19 case per 100,000 (also known as the 2 week rolling average) is in the Red category as reported by the State Department of Public Health - the Red category is specific to the Town of Coventry and when the status is not Red, masks are optional again.” passes 4-3 (P. DePaola, C. Rossignol, and C. Williams against)

X. New Business

X.A. Information and Possible VOTE: Approve the 2022-2023 School Calendar

J. Beausoleil asked for questions on the school calendar.

C. Williams left the meeting at 8:49 p.m.

M. Kortmann asked about days in June.

Noise from the community members outside could be heard during the meeting.

C. Williams returned at 8:51 p.m.

Dr. Petrone noted that the calendar draft was vetted through the staff and parent groups.

Dr. Petrone explained that the graduation date does not need to be moved once it is set.

C. Williams left the meeting at 8:56 p.m.

MOTION: To approve the calendar as presented.

By: E. Eaton

Seconded: M. Kortmann

Result: Motion passes unanimously

X.B. Discussion: Review of Policies

X.B.1. Discussion: Review of NEW Policy 3542.4 Food Service Charging Policy (To be warned for a VOTE at a future Board meeting.)

E. Eaton reviewed the new policy for Food Service Charging Policy. M. Kortmann asked about the language on how to manage the gift funds. Dr. Petrone said that may be better handled in an administrative regulation.

There was commotion heard outside of the building and community members banged on the window while yelling at the Board.

P. DePaola said he found the policy very confusing. The Board addressed items such as student accounts that are overdue and the current law. Dr. Petrone said there is a process in place to remind parents of past due amounts.

There was consensus to move it forward for a vote.

X.B.2. Discussion: Review of Policies - REVISIONS (To be warned for a VOTE at a future Board meeting.)

a. 1251 Prohibition Against Smoking

E. Eaton reviewed the changes to the policy. C. Rossignol said these new guidelines can place a burden on our staff if they have to determine what type of high a student may be under. Dr. Petrone said staff do not determine what type of high the student is under - the first priority is student safety. He reviewed school procedures during this type of situation.

P. DePaola noted confusion about the area considered school property.

The Board decided to send the policy back to the Committee for legal clarification on school building/property.

b. 3300-3323 Purchasing

M. Kortmann asked about the change regarding not having to print in the request to bid in the newspaper. Dr. Petrone said it is not legally necessary and the wording can stay as "may."

P. DePaola asked what is defined as "personal property." M. Kortmann said it is incidental items such as desks, or items that can be used. P. DePaola asked that the language be clarified in the policy.

The Board discussed the bidding process and timeline.

The Board decided to send the policy back to the Policy Committee to keep the the option to advertise in the newspaper as "may"; clarify "personal property"; and response to bidding timeline.

c. 4118.5 Employee Use of the Districts Computer Systems

E. Eaton reviewed the changes to the policy.

P. DePaola wondered if language should be added that there would be consequences for illegal use of district computer systems. Dr. Petrone talked about personnel procedures and legal requirements.

There was consensus to move the policy forward as is to a future meeting for a vote.

d. 4216.2 Alcohol Tobacco and Drug-free Workplace

Based on the conversation regarding 1251, the Board decided to send the policy back to the Committee for legal clarification of school policy.

e. 5125 Confidentiality and Access to Education Records (FERPA)

P. DePaola noted the wait time for records could be up to 45 days. Dr. Petrone said it would not usually take that amount of time, but this allows for if staff are on vacation, for instance.

There was consensus to move policy forward for a vote.

f. 5131.2 Student Use of the District's Computer Systems and Internet Safety

E. Eaton reviewed the adjustments to the policy.

There was consensus to move the policy forward for a vote.

g. 5131.4 Use of Private Technological Devices by Students

The Board discussed the changes made to this policy.

There was consensus to move the policy forward for a vote.

h. 5131.6 Drug and Alcohol Use by Students

E. Eaton talked about the changes to the policy.

There was consensus to move the policy forward for a vote.

i. 5144 Student Discipline

E. Eaton reviewed the statute updates made to this policy. The Board discussed conduct off of school grounds and bullying definitions.

There was consensus to move the policy forward for a vote.

j. 9270 Role of Board and Members

E. Eaton reviewed the policy revisions.

There was consensus to move the policy forward for a vote.

k. 9362 Time, Place, and Notice of Meetings

E. Eaton reviewed the changes made to this policy.

There was consensus to move the policy forward for a vote.

XI. Possible VOTE: Executive Session [Superintendent's Evaluation]

MOTION: Pursuant to CGS-1-200(c)(6)(A), the Board of Education will go into Executive Session for discussions related to the Superintendent's Evaluation at 10:02 p.m.

By: M. Kortmann

Seconded: E. Marchand

Result: Motion passes unanimously

XII. Open Session

The Board left Executive Session and returned to Open Session at 10:13 p.m.

XIII. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 10:13 p.m.

By: E. Eaton

Seconded: C. Rossignol

Result: Motion passes unanimously

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberlee Arey Delorme
Board Clerk

Approved: March 31, 2022

Hello. I'm Emma.

I want to choose to
not wear masks. because

I love being free from masks.
They make my face hot so
much. I want to see my friends
smile. without masks. please let

us ~~do not make masks~~
not wear masks to school.

Statement

Jennifer Garlock
834 Wrights Mill Rd

Members of the Coventry BOE

I'm not going to stand up here and repeat what I said last meeting. We all know that I'm deeply concerned for the social and emotional well-being of our youngest children, as well as the overall development of my own children.

I would, however, like to touch on the social stigma of choosing whether or not to wear a mask in the high school. The teenage years are tough. Frankly, I don't know many adults that would like to relive them, especially now with the added pressures associated with social media. These kids are judged for everything; the clothes they wear, their hair, their choice of music, even who their parents voted for. I feel for each of them, but the fear of being judged for continuing or discontinuing wearing a mask is not my toddler's cross to bear. We wouldn't make any other decisions about our grammar or preschools based on the feelings of some high school students, and this shouldn't be any different.

Since I know how much the board values anecdotal accounts I'd like to shed a little light on the Covid-19 reporting situation in our state. I have worked through much of the pandemic in a local urgent care. DPH asks that only positive, particularly positive vaccine breakthrough cases be reported on their portal. In most cases negative results are not being reported at all. I've included a print out of the top of the form showing the instructions. I would also like to address the concern that there are so many Covid-19 positive patients not reported due to home testing. I can tell you that most people don't believe those home test results whether they be positive or negative, and come in to urgent cares and testing centers "just to be sure".

I'd also like to touch again on the types of PPE available to the public to use if they choose. For those that aren't familiar, PPE is personal protective equipment. Cloth and paper face coverings are not classified as PPE. A level 3 surgical mask such as those worn in dental offices, an N95 or a KN95 are considered PPE as they provide adequate protection to the person wearing them from respiratory viruses which have particles too small to be stopped by the Mickey Mouse face masks our children and most staff are wearing. Face shields, eye goggles, and side shields that snap onto the sides of glasses are also an excellent choice for personal protection for those who feel more comfortable with another barrier. With several affordable options for PPE available in both adult and pediatric sizes I see no reason that those who wish to take additional steps to protect themselves can't while we allow all families as well as staff to have a choice to mask or not.

In closing, I'd like to ask you to leave your political bias at the door this evening. This is your opportunity to give some power back to the parents and the staff. After all we are talking about the ability for people to make a choice for themselves or their children. This is an excellent opportunity to teach the kids that their voices and their opinions matter, and that standing up for themselves can make a difference. Thank you for your time.

Connecticut Department of Public Health

2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Online Case Report Form

Guidelines

This online submission portal is designed so that providers can: (1) report cases of newly diagnosed COVID-19 based on positive RNA or antigen test for SARS-CoV-2; (2) cases of COVID-19 vaccine breakthrough, i.e., persons with a positive RNA or antigen test in a specimen collected ≥ 14 days after completing the primary series (final dose) of an FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccine; and, (3) results of onsite SARS-CoV-2 testing for provider locations performing very low numbers of tests. Providers are referred to the Updated Guidance letter of April 29, 2021.

Other notes:

- Use of this form meets Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) provider reporting requirements for COVID-19 cases.
- Please do not fax a copy of this form to DPH if you enter it via the portal.
- You do not need to report cases to local health departments as this information will be made available via the web-based Connecticut Electronic Disease Surveillance System.

The updated portal has been divided into sections for ease of use. Guidelines for using the portal are as follows.

- Information on only one patient at a time can be entered.
- Only information on Connecticut residents needs to be entered. This includes students who are resident at a school or college or who are inpatients.
- Data fields marked with a red asterisk * **are** required, and must be filled out.
- Spelling and proper case are important for the collection of data. We ask you do not write in all caps or in all small letters. Please use initial capitals.
- Please use the drop downs when available.
- Phone numbers should include area code.
- Many questions open up additional questions if answer "Yes".
- Other information can be typed into the Additional Comments box at the end of the form.

Patient Information

- Complete all patient information.
- Please use a Connecticut address for the person. If they are a student,

use the school or dorm address.

- Use official town name not a borough (example: Borough of Riverside, official city is Greenwich). There is a button that can be used to select the town. This button will also fill in the county if used.
- Use the 2 letter abbreviation for State (CT, MA, NY).

Housing and Occupation

- Complete this section based on the residence and occupation at the time of the positive test.
- If the person works at more than one location, please list the location where they spend the most time.

Pre-Existing Medical Conditions

- List all pre-existing conditions known at the time of the positive test.

Hospitalization and Outcome

- Complete as much as possible.

Symptom and Outpatient Care

- If the patient presents with symptoms, please include the Date of Onset of illness or first symptoms.

Vaccine Breakthrough

- Please complete if the patient is a possible vaccine breakthrough case.
- Additional information on the test result is collected in the SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) Testing section (see below).

SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) Testing

- Please complete this section if a SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) test was performed or ordered.
- Please refer to the provider letter about having residual specimens from the positive test sent to the DPH State Public Health Laboratory, if applicable.

Additional Testing Details

- Please complete this section to provide additional information on test results.
- If you are using the portal to report an onsite test result, this section must be filled out.
- If you are reporting only a negative test result for a test performed at your

office the vaccine breakthrough questions do not have to be completed. Those are only for patients with a positive RNA or antigen Covid-19 test result.

Provider/Reporter & Facility Information

- Please complete all information.

We greatly appreciate you using this online portal submission process and helping to keep Connecticut healthy. Thank you.

If you have questions about how to complete this form please email dph.eeip@ct.gov

If you have questions about submission of Covid-19 test results please email DPH.InformaticsLab@ct.gov



CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

DPH Submissions System

Connecticut Department of Public Health COVID-19 Healthcare Provider Report Portal

Notice: This report form is to be used to report: (1) a newly diagnosed case of Covid-19 and (2) a possible Covid-19 vaccination breakthrough event. Report can also collect information on persons tested onsite at your facility or office using a rapid test.

Provider Letter **Form** Instructions

Patient Information– please fill in all information

Patient's Last Name

*

Patient's First Name

*

Patient's Middle Name

Street Address of Patient

Apt, Bldg

**Patient's Resident
City/Town**

*

Cities
in CT

Patient's County

Patient's Resident State

Patient's Zip code

Hi my name is Parker Rejman and I am here today because I feel it is important to share my thoughts about the mask mandates and how I see it affecting others around me.

I hope that the Board of Ed votes to make masks optional because I, like many other students, have always followed the rules and wore our masks. However, we are very uncomfortable in them. They hurt my ears and many times I cannot breathe well. I have trouble hearing my teachers and the masks make it so hard to focus because of how uncomfortable they are.

There are a lot of students constantly reminded to pull up their masks, even students who have always tried to follow the rules. I know many of my friends who never get in trouble, are even getting in trouble for their masks falling down but we can't help it, we can't take them any more! It has been almost 2 years that we have been wearing them. Please make them optional, so we can focus in our classes and we can have a better rest of our year in school.

Ralph Rejman
122 Judd Rd

Thank you for letting me speak and provide my thoughts on our current mask situation for our children.

During the last meeting Board member Jen stated ^{open quote} "I would rather follow DPH guidance, Science based guidance and ~~antidotal~~ anecdotal numbers about those things than a parent that cant keep a mask on their child's face. Thats my opinion, thats whats going to drive my decision not a survey I took in October"

I believe Jen's statement is not only distant and extremely disconnected from what modern parenting entails from day to day. It is grossly insulting to watch her claim we as parents aren't doing the best we can in raising our own children. I do not believe a sitting member of the Coventry Board of Ed should be making statements to that magnitude. I understand that the subject of Covid and masks can be touchy and that some people have personal stories related to the pandemic but personal feelings should not be brought to the table. I believe we as citizens, parents and voters of this town are owed an apology.

If we are to follow the science and the numbers the survey results show 63% of families in the district voted for the freedom to choose masks or not. 41% of staff members have voted to have the freedom to choose masks or not. Even 90% of the Admin building employees voted to have a free choice on masks.

As for the staff side of the survey I was informed that employees had to provide their names prior to submitting their answers. Asking a staff member to sign off their name on their survey answer could have deterred them actually submitting it. I think it would be productive to show how many polled vs the 250

responses so we know how many may have felt afraid to submit a response.

There are numerous towns and cities in the state of Connecticut lifting their masks mandates. One for example is Manchester public schools which has an average of 13,000 students. Their masks policy is now optional as 2/23

The science, the numbers and the support is all there. I urge the Coventry Board of Education to listen to what we the people want. Our children are the next generation to lead this country. We are holding back their development with these useless mandates. Let them see their teachers smile at them. Let them giggle and laugh with their friends. Let our kids be just what they are a kid.

Keep politics out of how our children are being treated in school.

The time is long over due. Lets unmask our children and let them grow and develop the way they're meant to be.

Matthew Kyer
4 Wall Street

As most of you know, I teach at Coventry Grammar School and serve on the Town Council, but I am here tonight in neither capacity. Nor am I here to share my opinion regarding the wearing of masks in our schools.

Instead, I am here to thank the members of the Board and Dr. Petrone for your thoughtful consideration and careful deliberation regarding this matter. You have sought input from parents and teachers alike, and you have listened to a variety of opinions and opposing views with respect and understanding. Your efforts throughout this pandemic have kept the students and staff in our schools safe, and I trust that the decision you make regarding the wearing of masks will again be in the best interest of those you serve.

I urge my fellow residents to join me in recognizing the difficult task you have been presented with and your judicious approach to this matter.

Again, thank you.

Dawn Vieira

You, the board responsible for this decision tonight, are here to represent the children + parents of this school district - NOT the teachers, teachers unions or political affiliations. This is about defending + protecting our childrens' basic human rights, body autonomy, + civil liberties. It has been over 2 years, we are no longer in a state of public health emergency under which the EVA mask mandate was issued. ^{I have asked + will continue to ask} Where is the informed consent? There is no justification for the masking of our children to continue. This is the time to consider, support, and respect individual choice.

Just as some parents feel strongly
their child wear a mask for protection,
I feel just as strongly my child should^{not}
~~does not need one for protection.~~

Just as other parents have the right
to assess the risk for their own children,
I equally have the right to assess
the risk for mine. We all need to
mutually respect those inherent
rights to individually make these
choices and decisions as we see fit
for our own children. While wearing
a mask for some may represent safety
and security, for others it represents
disease, control, + fear. The demoralization
+ dehumanization of our youth who

are at virtually no risk for severe disease ~~but at every risk for~~ ~~psychological, social + emotional~~ and are suffering ~~psychologically, socially~~ as a result. I would never ask your child to unmask for mine nor should my child be asked or required to mask for yours.

Cloth and surgical masks DO NOT prevent viral ~~transmission~~. They do nothing more than harbor germ + bacterial growth. With everyone now having access to preventative measures, why would we continue to impede our children's well being, education, social + emotional growth

In continuing this nonsense?

Enough is enough - our children
deserve to return to an educational
environment that not only supports
their growth but rights and freedoms.

~~They~~

Hi my name is bishop marion and i live at 61 lr dv. As you all know the year is 2022 2 years ago covid hit the us Everyone had to wear masks including us the kids. today only schools have to wear masks, this should be over by now. a lot of towns are getting rid of the Mask mandates and a lot of states are getting rid of them too. I have ADHD and anxiety, school work stresses me out not just that but the mask is stressing me out, it bothers me, and distracts me but it's not just with me it's also with other kids some other kids have different needs some can't wear masks some bothers them so much to the point to where they just can't deal with it anymore some kids have to read lips but they can't do that because everyone around them are wearing masks. It's time to make masks an option. It should be our choice and our parents choice to choose if they want us to wear masks or not. it shouldn't be anyone else's choice for us. some parents feel safe with their children wearing masks and that is fine they can wear mask if they want to but not all parents want to have their children be forced to wear masks. Thank you for your time I hope you make masks optional starting February 28th.

I am at an age where I need to see peoples faces to truly understand what is being said to me and how it is being said. I need to better learn social skills from my friends and teachers.