Coventry Board of Education

Coventry, Connecticut

Regular Board of Education Meeting

Approved Minutes of Thursday, August 26, 2021 Administration Building Conference Room

Board Members Present:

Jennifer Beausoleil, Chairperson Eugene Marchand, Secretary Mary Kortmann Michael Sobol Christina Williams

Board Members Absent:

William Oros, Vice-Chairperson Robert Williams

Administrators Present:

Dr. David J. Petrone, Superintendent of Schools Robert Carroll, Director of Finance and Operations William Trudelle, Director of Physical Plant and Facilities

Audience Members Present: Several citizens were present.

I. Call to Order

- J. Beausoleil called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
- J. Beausoleil set the ground rules for the meeting: masks are required, Audience of Citizens addresses are limited to 5 minutes and the Chair has the right to limit further.

II. Salute to the Flag

J. Beausoleil led the salute to the flag.

III. Audience of Citizens

J. Beausoleil read the one email sent in for Audience of Citizens, from Caroline Davis, which is attached to these minutes.

Jacquline Marion of 61 Laurel Drive was present with her children, Bishop and Kortman. They spoke against wearing masks in school. The statements are attached to these minutes.

Dawn Vieira of 337 Swamp Road was present to speak against wearing masks in school, the statement is attached to these minutes.

William Hall of 1022 Grant Hill Road was present to speak against wearing masks in school. He thanked the Board for having in-person learning in 2020-21.

Caroline Davis of 302 Pine Lake Drive, whose letter is attached, was also present to talk about being in favor of masks in school.

Elizabeth Bauch of 110 Seagraves Road was present to announce, as of September 1, Coventry Bridges, the special education parent group she created, will no longer exist. Her comments are attached to these minutes.

Sarah Cook of 253 Stonehouse Road was present to speak against wearing masks in school.

Andrew Menard of 441 Merrow Road was present to speak against wearing masks in school. His comments are attached to these minutes.

IV. Report of Superintendent

Dr. Petrone shared information on various topics in the district, including the recent tropical storm, work over the summer, and professional development activities that take place in August.

A. Information: Opening the 2021-2022 School Year - Update

Dr. Petrone reviewed the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan 2021-22 and shared a related presentation, both of which are available on the district's website.

There was discussion about various topics, including the following:

- Pick up and drop off will look the same at CGS
- Parent/teacher conference will be virtual
- Open Houses will be virtual
- Physical Education will be outside when permitable
- Quarantining less time needed
- Vaccinations required for staff
- Cleaning UV lights will continue
- Lunches will look the same
- Room parents will happen, with vaccination
- Masks required
- Snacks allowed
- Birthday non food treats allowed
- Substitues one designated person for each site

M. Kortmann noted that enrollment looks good. Dr. Petrone agreed. J. Beausoleil said there is an increase of nearly 60 students.

X. Report of Chairman

J. Beausoleil thanked the audience members who shared their feedback on a very difficult choice that exists in the community. She said she appreciated their positive behavior.

- J. Beausoleil talked about the summer coming to a close and noted the excitement of school starting again. She noted her appreciation for the work done on the re-entry plan and readying the schools for the start of the year.
- J. Beausoleil mentioned the professional development that was conducted for the Board this evening, related to Title IX and FERPA.

She also mentioned the CABE/CAPSS Convention, taking place on November 12.

VI. Communications

J. Beausoleil noted the attachment, which was the letter regarding using the 1% account to repair the airconditioning compressor at the LMC.

VII. VOTE: Approval of Minutes

VII. A. Approve Minutes of July 29, 2021

MOTION: To approve the minutes of July 29, 2021

By: E. Marchand Seconded: M. Sobol

Result: Motion passes 3-0-2 (M. Kortmann and C. Williams abstained)

VIII. Old Business

Information: Facilities Projects Update

W. Trudelle shared a presentation with the Board of the various facilities projects that took place over the summer [presentation available on the district's website].

M. Kortmann asked about the condition of the Pietrantonio field. Mr. Trudelle said it is in good shape.

VIII. A. I. Information and Possible VOTE: Microgrid Update

Dr. Petrone said this item is just a placeholder, as there is not much new to share. Mr. Carroll talked about conflicts of interest between the legal teams, which are being worked out.

IX. New Business

IX. A. Information and Possible VOTE: Use of Remote Learning on Two Inclement Weather Days

J. Beausoleil talked about last year's pilot of using remote learning days on snow days. She said tonight the Board can decide to consider using up to two days of remote learning on inclement weather days.

Dr. Petrone reviewed the survey data, noting about 71% of parents wanted to do some type of remote learning on snow days.

MOTION: To authorize the Superintendent to allow for remote learning on up to two inclement weather days during the 2021-22 school year

By. M. Kortmann Seconded: E. Marchand

Discussion: C. Williams said she likes traditional snow days, and would like to see these remote days used later, after a couple of real snow days. M. Kortmann said there are storms when you know there will be more than one day closed and she would like to see it split. She said since we can only use two, she would like to see them used when there are multiple snowy days together. M. Sobol said at first he was against the remote snow days, but in the end it worked out well, especially because they were half days and he appreciated that the students were out earlier in June. He stated that he is for using two days as remote.

Dr. Petrone, from a Superintendent's point of view, said he likes the idea of using the days up front.

- J. Beausoleil said she would like to see them get used before February vacation, so vacations are not disrupted.
- E. Marchand was in favor of leaving it up to Dr. Petrone.
- M. Sobol said he believes Dr. Petrone has heard the feedback and will use his best judgement. The majority of the Board agreed.

Result: Motion carries 4-1 (C. Williams against)

IX. B. Information and Discussion: Policies for Revision (To be warned for a VOTE at a future Board meeting)

IX. B. 1. 1252 - Possession of Deadly Weapons or Firearms

E. Marchand reviewed the legislative language added by Shipman and Goodwin.

There were no questions; there was consensus for the policy to move forward to the full Board.

IX. B. 2. 9150 - Official Duties - Chairperson

- E. Marchand reviewed the language added to this policy.
- C. Williams said all feedback is usually included in an evaluation even though not everyone agrees. She said this language limits the good conversation. E. Marchand disagreed and stated that this clarifies what we already do and confirms that the Board has to agree on what is included. C. Williams said it is too rigid.
- E. Marchand said language is needed. J. Beausoleil reminded the Board that the Superintendent's evaluation is not confidential. M. Sobol said he likes that this language says it can't be just the Board Chair. The Board discussed these different opinions.
- E. Marchand asked that we move it forward, based on the Policy Committee being unanimous. C. Williams said she would like to push it back to the Committee. The Board continued the discussion.
- J. Beausoleil asked if there were any other members who would also like to send it back. M. Sobol said we have all year and there is time to consider different language. M. Kortmann said she would like to see it move forward, but she is not opposed to sending it back if it

can move along. J. Beausoleil asked that C. Williams send her suggested language to the Policy Committee for their consideration.

X. Report of Board Members

A. Information: Fiscal Committee Report - Meeting of August 26, 2021

M. Sobol noted that all Board members were present during the meeting. He added that it is still early in the year and they are hopeful things will stay on a positive track. Mr. Carroll noted that we have applied to the FCC for some e-rate funding and it will be a little while before we hear about it. He said that the ARP/ESSER grant was submitted as well.

XI. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 10:06 p.m.

By: C. Williams Seconded: M. Kortmann

Result: Motion passes unanimously

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberlee Arey Delorme Board Clerk

Approved: September 9, 2021

From: <u>Caroline Davis</u>
To: <u>audienceBOE</u>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] In Support of School Masking
Date: Sunday, August 8, 2021 11:02:23 PM

To the Coventry Board of Education,

I would like to address my fears regarding the "Unmask Our Children" campaign and express my overwhelming support for a mask mandate inside all school buildings during the 2021-2022 school year. My concerns do require an understanding of some basic neuroscience, but I'll do my best to keep the explanations clear and concise. I am a teacher with a Masters degree in Child Development with an emphasis on neuropsychological development and evaluation, and educational therapy. In short, I studied the brain and its many complex roles in learning, memory, language, and behavior. This background has been crucial to my understanding of how covid impacts the brain now, and for considering how it may impact the brain in the future.

The least discussed and most terrifying aspects of covid are its neurological symptoms and their similarities to those of Alzheimer's Disease(*). This specifically includes loss of smell, brain fog, language retrieval problems, and other memory problems. It's crucial to this conversation that you understand that our sense of smell (via the olfactory center of the brain) is directly connected to our hippocampus. The hippocampus does two absolutely critical things: (1) forming, storing, and retrieving long and short term memories, and (2) regulating executive functions, which are necessary for effective high-level cognitive processing skills (exerting impulse- and self-control, accessing and utilizing working memory, the ability to plan ahead, judge time, organize and prioritize new information, etc.). Therefore, as I'm sure you have surmised, our sense of smell via the olfactory center is inextricably linked to our neurological ability to form, store, and retrieve memories. As we also all know by now, covid has been scientifically linked to both loss of smell and memory retrieval difficulties(**). This link implies that even fairly mild covid cases may have serious neurological impacts that we are unlikely to fully understand for years to come. Scientists can begin their studies now, but we cannot know just how detrimental covid will be to our brains as we age until we, well... age.

My sister-in-law has her PhD in neuroscience and microbiology and is a research scientist at NYU's Neuroscience Institute in Manhattan. At the height of the early pandemic in 2020, she was pulled off of her own projects and asked to section the brains of hundreds of deceased covid patients for further research (i.e., cut them into thin slices, much like a loaf of bread). She has described to me many times her horror of seeing just how much hemorrhaging was visible throughout every single brain she sectioned. She was specifically distraught about the amount of hemorrhaging she found in the hippocampus of each brain(***), which, again, is the area critical to memory. Her concern, and mine as well, is that if this is what has happened to the brains of covid patients who have passed away, what will the brains of covid survivors look like in 5, 10, or 20 years? It is especially concerning for those who are long haulers, those who have permanently lost their sense of smell (and taste), and those who are having memory problems, but we must also consider those who had moderate or mild cases. Covid may not have damaged their hippocampi enough to have caused noticeable problems at this point in time, but again, we have no

idea how that past illness will play out.

Do you want to be the one to find out? Do you want your *children* to be the ones to find out? If you could drastically reduce your child's chance of experiencing something akin to Alzheimer's Disease later in life, would you do it? I can't imagine a world in which any of you would want that possibility hanging over yourself, let alone your children. I know you love and care about your children, their well being, and their futures - it's why you have dedicated yourselves to serving this town.

Do right by your children and their futures and require that masks be worn in their schools to protect them from covid. Its long term impacts will be serious and they will be scary - and that's all without even getting into the numerous, long-term pulmonary and cardiac issues that we are already becoming too familiar with.

Show us that you not only recognize, but also truly respect the role and *value* of science in keeping our town safe and healthy, even if it's an unpopular truth. We have all had to tell someone we care deeply about a hard truth. It's not fun and it's not easy, but *do not shy away from scientific research and evidence*. Your jobs on this council are all about stepping up to make the hard choices that you know will keep our children, teachers, and residents safe and healthy.

This really all comes down to whether to wear a piece of cloth. Please do not choose to actively expose our children to the potential of life-altering memory disorders over of a piece of cloth. Masks must be mandatory in all Coventry schools for *everyone's* health and well-being - both now, and in twenty years.

I know this has been a long letter, so thank you for taking the time to read it, and thank you for respecting the safety and mental *and* physical health of the many students and teachers in our town.

Respectfully, Caroline Davis 302 Pine Lake Drive

(*): https://www.alz.org/aaic/releases 2021/covid-19-cognitive-impact.asp

(**): https://www.cedars-sinai.org/blog/covid-19-brain-fog.html

(***): https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/04/covid-19-damages-brain-without-infecting-it-study-suggests

(****) https://www.pnas.org/content/114/30/7892

Hello, my name is Bishop Marion. I am 10 years old and will be starting 5th grade next week.

First I would like to say I am so happy we were able to be in school all of last year because it wasn't like that for most schools.

I want to speak on behalf of other students like myself. I have ADHD and anxiety. When I am forced to wear a mask it causes me to become distracted and it makes it very hard for me to stay focused and calm. This makes it very hard for me to learn in school. It also causes me to become more disruptive and disturb all my friends in my class. It makes me feel bad and then it starts to make me have more anxiety.

I have also noticed that it's hard to understand what people are saying and how they are feeling because I can not see their mouth and facial expressions. This also makes it very hard to learn.

I believe that masks should be our parents choice if we wear them or not. We should not be forced by school to wear them.

I hope you take this into consideration. Thank you so much for your time and letting me speak.

Hello, my name is Korbin Marion. I am 7 years old and I will be starting 2nd grade next week.

Like my brother I am happy we were able to be in school all of last year.

I want to tell you what happens to me when I have to wear a mask all day in school.

When I wear a mask it makes my head start to hurt. It hurts so bad that it makes me throw up. Last year in school I threw up in my mask in front of my whole class. I was embarrassed that this happened. I cried because my head was hurting so bad. I got headaches every day in school because of my mask.

Please don't make us wear masks in school this year.

Thank you for letting me speak.

We are now a 1/2 out from the start of this pandemic. We are no longer in a "state of emergency" so why are we continuing to follow mandates that are treating it as such? I have commended this district's diligence + Persignt in Obtaining the resources that made it possible for Coventry to re open full time as it d'd successfully in the fall. Let is continue moving forward by making decisions to support this concerted effort. ing Over this 1/2 we've been able ing this time ine-we've had the responsibility to gather factual information + make informed decisions for ourselves. Your science, my Science, CDC Science, they are all different + conflicting but what remains The same is OUR RIGHT TO CHOOSE / OUR RIGHT TO OUR BASIC FREEDOMS.

7 MD Stmf.?

We can argue the efficacy of masks thow they are more physically psychologically emotionally detrimental to the heart soff of our children that they are beneficial will be can even go as far as to say that NONE of the masks on the faces of our children in school the prevent over the prevent of the masks of this a useful mitigation strategy? Very basic medical knowledge tells us that only 1995 mask what (if specifically to properly filed) can prevent aerosolized particle transmission.



will you be providing N95 masks in schools? If so, and will you also be providing fit testing and monitoring how long each student is wearing one? (for which there is no data to soport, will included.

We can go on to argue the data on infectivity rates in not only air district but surrounding founds that would fully support auswing the option for masks.

with all this conflicting information tour children' livelihoods caught in the middle, how do you justify taking this decision away from parents? How does the Governor, you, or the CDC know what's best for my children?

Mandak is NOT LAW + does not supersede my rights to informed consent. With mask wear considered an experimental and investigational medical intervention, why have I not received documents to allow permission for its USE on my children? Institute We, as parents, are the authorities on assessing the not to aur own children + are the ones responsible for taking action accordingly - this is why we recieve documents for permission to implement ANY medical intervention on school grounds. When were we given the specific information regarding this mitigation

3) and its implementation

strategy you are imposing? and

You have made the choice and have had the apportunity to do it by way of your authority t guidance— We, as parents, by way of our authority are allowed to do the same. We are the authorities in making informed decisions for our children. It is our right as protected not only by the constitution but by State + Rederal law to do so.

You, Gov. Lamont, the CDC, DPH DO NOT Govern or dictate medical choices/olecisions

for my children.

You are not employees of the government. As board members you do not take an oath to represent the state, DPH, or CDC-you took an oath to represent and advocate for the children + parents of this community. We rely on you as our educational headers to make sound, resourceful; decisions in promoting education. NOT perpetuating fear + compliance.

THIS NEEDS TO STOP!!

Since does when den pall on our 7 onliden.

You have made the choice to blindly follow of CDC guidance + Gov. Lamont mandates but I will not comply and do the same. So ... What does this mean for my



Children when they are entrusted to our educators for 7 hours a day? If they do not comply with wearing their masks will they be harrassed, n'diculed + buillied? Will the teachers wontinue to support

my childrent their education or will the focus be on their compliance? As it states in the student handbk:
"The aventry BOE is committed to creating + maintaining an educational environment that is physically emotionally + intellectually sate + free from bullying..."
The Boards Safe Climate Plan states that "the Board prohibits any form of bullying behavior on school grounds...
The schools safe climate plan is I'n knded to promok school safety in an atmosphere conducive for learning."

Our children deserve the right to respect Relightend themselves their be liets free of fear or recroim. They deserve the freedom to learn, grow t develop in an environment free of government agendas and must be protected in their rights to do so. This is not about defying rules or authority, this is about supporting critical thinking t autonomy. That their fundamental rights over themselves their most prized possession)



Jam urging you to reconsider
your decision and make masks
gotional in our schools. Use your
knowledge + authority to ensure
an environment that encourages
growth, in dependance + cntical
thinking not one that supports +
encorages an agenda that violaks
their basic human rights. Lets
make decisions from a humanistic
perspective rather than one that is
forced by political purpose.

Thankyou

*Adult interventions do not translate to Children *

Elissa Eclecter-Perkins Wirector of ER medicine + infectious disease mgmt. at Boston Med. Ctr.) "A year ago I said masks are not the end of the world, why not just wear a mask? But the world has changed, there are real downsides to masking Children for this long, with no known end date, and without any clear upside. I'm not aware of any studies that Show conclusively that kids wearing masks in schools has any effect on their own morbidity/mortality or on hospitalization or death rate in the community around them. . Sk goes on to state, "I don't think the Desta variant changes the calculus because it SHII seems clear that it doesn't cause more Severe disease soit still doesn't change the fundamental question of the hat are we trying to achieve by masking kids when they are extremely unlikely to Suffer from Severe illness or death IF infected?"

Pediatric immunologist:
"Even up to new variant the onus is on those who recommend masking kids to robustly demonstrate a meaningful benefit, especially when the probabilities socio-emotional teducational harms com musting children for this impressing and desired

To The Members of the Coventry Board of Education

From Elizabeth Bauch 110 Seagraves Road

I am writing to inform you that as of September 1 the organization known as Coventry Bridges (Special Education PTO) will no longer exist. I have made the decision to end Bridges and the cooperative relationship between it and Coventry Public Schools.

I have decided to end Bridges for several reasons. One being lack of parent participation and interest in meetings and other events. Like many other organizations the COVID pandemic hurt us in the ability to hold in person meetings which was our way to connect to parents. I tried very hard to develop ways to reach parents during the pandemic but was often unsuccessful. I created a Facebook group, email address and YouTube channel in my efforts to reach parents virtually. Also, in an effort to give myself working space for virtual meetings etc. I have been renting an office in town at 1153 Main Street twice a month. It is a small office building with individual spaces for professionals to rent. I also published a newsletter every three months and put together flyers focusing on particular topics that were posted to Pupil Services web page and hopefully distributed to staff. Another reason why I am ending is what I feel a lack of cooperation from district administration and staff. I had difficulty connecting to parents virtually because of not being provided with parent contact information, being prevented from contacting staff and restricting the informational resources that I wanted to share. My third reason is what I feel is a lot of misunderstandings between myself, parents and district staff about my intentions and the projects that I was working on.

When I formed Bridges three years ago my goals were to provide a supportive environment for parents to share about their experiences, provide resources to parents and to bring parents and staff together to help improve special education. I am pleased to say that I was able to do that. The ppt process has become more parent friendly including explanations of professional language that is used, parents and staff have a better understanding of each other's roles. I have developed relationships/contacts with providers to bring important information to parents. I have also developed contacts at two college level programs in New England and was able to give that information about those programs to staff at the high school. In April in honor of Autism Awareness Month, me and my children made a video to raise awareness about Autism that was shared in classrooms at CGS and GHR, copies of the book that was read were provided to my children's teachers including the ABA room at CGS for future use. There has been some confusion about my intent and how I shared information that I brought to parents. It was never my intention to recommend the services/agencies or providers that I gave to parents. My intent was just to provide information to save staff and parents the leg work of doing it themselves. I wanted Bridges to be a resource center for parents to come and get assistance. I don't feel that I was able to meet this goal fully.

I have informed pupil services of my decision and recommended that this district seek permission to form a chapter of SEPTA/SEPTO in order to make a formal group so that no one parent has all the responsibility and there will be no misunderstandings of roles and responsibilities.

This is a heartbreaking decision for me as I enjoyed my work and trying to help parents and I have enjoyed meeting so many people both in and out of the district. My future is that the work of Bridges will continue but the cooperative partnerships with other organizations. I have been selected to be a Parent Partner in new national coalition of autism treatment programs and Autism Speaks in order to make service delivery make accessibility to children and families nationwide. I am working with the Hospital for Special Care in New Britain where my son is a patient and has been given a national sticker of excellence in the care that it provides. I was selected for this based on my passion for working with children with disabilities. This spring my son and I had the opportunity to make a YouTube video for the hospital to help celebrated Autism Awareness month. I invite you to see this video on the Hospital for Special Care YouTube channel. On another personal note I want it to be known that I often spend my own money to support Bridges including using change to make copies of meeting agendas/flyers at the library, purchase supplies and materials and pay to rent the office I am using.

I sincerely hope that you members of the board of education continue to make special education a priority and to listen to the needs of parents fully. I will continue to make the quality of special education in Coventry a priority for me but just not in this role.

Thank you very much for your attention and your support.

Andrew Menard - 441 Merrow Rd

To the board chair and members

We are here today to address our concerns with the overreach our Government has set forth on our Constitution as well as our ability to make our own decision on what we feel best for our children. We did not sign up to co-parent with the Government. It is the duty of this Board of Education to listen to the concerns of its' constituents as you are our elected representatives and do not work for the Governor but for the people of this town.

We understand that the Board of Education has received a letter from Shipman and Goodwin stating if this Board or any Board of Education in Connecticut stands up for their residents and children, leaving the mask choice up to the parents of each child, that they will consider such action a "symbolic action of protest". They will even take it a step further and remove federal funding from the school. For those in this roomwand the school of the house and the school of the house and

Land Jackey's lawfirm. This is beyond overreach, it is 100% tyranny. I would say they are builting for board members even thought leave that to sink in for a minute and discuss the true matter at hand, the mask mandate and the

effects it has on our children as young as two years old.

 Masks do not work and according to the CDC website once a person/child has been occupying the same space for more than 15 minutes, the masks do not matter.

2. Wearing masks for an extended amount of time causes the following: headaches, drowsiness, discomfort, nose itching, overheating, weakness, dental problems, and skin issues to name a few. Plus, some masks have toxic chemicals

3. Kids are dirty no matter how much we teach them hygiene, especially under the age of 10. The benefits of mask wearing in children no longer outweigh inherent risks.

- 4. Directly on the WHO website it states children aged 5 and Under should not be required to wear masks. This is based on the safety and overall interest of the child and the capacity to appropriately use a mask, yet Connecticut is requiring children 2 years and older to wear masks. Masks also effect the behavior of many children which we have witnessed first hand in our preschool. Children that have been outgoing since infants are now quiet and barely want to interact with others. It also causes impairment in learning, irritability in the classrooms, development of new fears and resistance to wanting to go to preschool/school. Parents and caregivers are supposed to ease children's fears yet we are letting our Government and other unelected officials like Shipman and Goodwin dictate these mandates and pushing fear on to our kids. Schools have been singing songs and teaching their students to be fearful of each other or if they remove their masks even for a moment, they are going to "kill" grandma. It is NOT our children's responsibly to keep adults safe. NEVER EVER.
- 5. Mask also impedes social development of children and self-esteem issues. Wearing a mask creates a feeling of hiding.
- The undeniable evidence that suicide amongst children are all up exponentially compared to
 prior years due to the pandemic and the protocols our Governor is implementing with no
 present facts.

It is your job as our elected Board of Education to listen to our concerns and no longer follow these tyrannical governor orders. In the end more families will remove their children from public school

unfamilian with

a zero bullying

systems and the so-called funding the governor wants to take away, will not be there anyway. It is the job of our teachers to teach, it is that simple. Do the right thing and stand up for Parent's Choice. If we do not all unite now, there will be no rights left.

One last note that I find important to share. Many CT residence have called the Governors office to address their concerns especially when it comes to masking our-children. In the past few weeks, these calls have led to the Lamont Administration telling its constituents that they are uneducated, to read books, that they are just pencil pushing desk workers and that Lamont does not care if we were to leave the state. This is no longer about our rights or our parental rights, it is all about control. Do the right thing and stand up with us. If you do not want to stand up for our children than please step aside so we can elect those willing to fight for our children.