

SPRING LAKE BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING, AUGUST 16, 2021

The Spring Lake Board of Education held a Regular Meeting on Monday, August 16, 2021 in person at the SL High School Auditorium. Jennifer Nicles called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Board members present: Jennifer Nicles, Curt Theune, Katie Pigott, Kathy Breen, Bruce Callen, Paul Aldridge and Christopher (Chris) Beck. Absent: None

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Dennis Furton provided a statement to the audience, which can be found [here](#).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Curt Theune moved, supported by Kathy Breen, to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of July 19, 2021, as presented.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

ITEMS RECEIVED TOO LATE FOR PRINTED AGENDA

Resignation of Pam VanFaasen, School Psychologist, added as item 6(A)(3) Consent Agenda

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mike Zona, 17049 Roosevelt Rd, SL – commented on his child’s kindergarten experience last year, that nobody wants masks and the district needs leadership. He indicated that influenza kills more children than COVID has and masks have not been recommended for that virus. He advocated for parents to be able to choose for their own children and proposed that a waiver be provided if liability was an issue. He does not believe masks prevent transmission. He stated that he would hold the board accountable for making decisions for students.

Heidi Heinz, 16120 152nd Ave., SL – advocated for parents to make the choice of masks for students and indicated that masks do more damage than good, kids can hardly make it through the day, no one is getting smiles, masks create more depression and sadness and immunities need to be built up. She indicated her child is asthmatic and cannot wear a mask, and teachers yell if students pull their masks down.

Becki Deater, 331 S Lake Ave., SL – stated she was shocked by the change in the mask decision from August 4 , that SLPS was the only district in Ottawa County with the mask requirement and COVID cases in children should be considered, not the community as a whole. She questioned why the Board was being proactive instead of reactive and asked the Board to re-think its strategy and take a step back.

James Conley, 14776 Timberlake Ct., SL– thanked the Board and Mr. Furton for their leadership and for trying to avoid becoming the next Dallas, Texas or Florida. He expressed his appreciation for the emails and approach to masks and believes a proactive approach of masking, while annoying and unpopular, is better than having kids in quarantine and in the hospital.

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Sarah Peterson 18807 Iroquois Dr., SL – thanked the Board for listening and provided this is her 18th year of teaching with last year being her toughest yet with the masks and Plexiglas; students were off. She stated she didn't want to see the students like that again and questioned the reasoning behind the mask requirement if zero students have died and there have been zero student transmissions. She urged the Board to continue to care about staff and student and to make masks optional.

SL High School Student – stated many friends were excited to go back to school and see each other's faces until they learned that mask were required. He advocated for all students and parents to have a say in the matter.

Karlie Parker, 210 N. Cutler St., SL – expressed appreciation for the staff that kept the buildings clean, kept kids in sports, and to the Board and Mr. Furton for in-person learning last year. She indicated that what parents' model as adults would shape the attitude of their children and the attitude they bring to school and, while her three children felt differently about wearing masks, they all managed to make it work.

Mia Davidson, 15524 Oakridge Dr., SL – indicated that her virtual college experience was very difficult and she would have given anything to be in a classroom, even double-masked if that is what it took to have in-person learning. She believes wearing masks in schools will help with fewer students having to quarantine. She thanked the Board for its decision to require masks.

SL High School Student – indicated she was quarantine 8 times last school year, was unable to attend the tech center, was not given credit for 16 weeks of the school year, and had to retake the SAT, even after wearing a mask. She stated it was ridiculous for students who are trying to learn to have to go through that.

SL High School Student – commented she was excited about returning to the classroom with masks optional as she had a difficult year with virtual learning previously. She asked the Board to reconsider its position on masks and give the option to parents. She stated there is a higher chance of dying in a car crash than dying from COVID. She asked the Board to take all of that into consideration and make masks optional.

Brenda Glore, 5330 Hall Rd, Muskegon – indicated she would homeschool forever based on the decision of the requirement of masks. She provided her experience as a firefighter and ambulance driver, understands the disease is very real, but that local hospitals and ICU beds are not full of COVID patients at this time.

Stacy Pummill, 15495 Oak Ridge Dr., SL – stated she moved her family to Spring Lake last year because the district was allowing in-person learning. She provided that, due to mask wearing, her child never made a connection and still does not have friends and believes he is in a state of depression because of that. She stated she loves the district but doesn't want that for her son. She asked that parents/ students be allowed to make the decision to mask for themselves.

SL High School Student – commented that many days he didn't have any motivation to get out of bed or go to school due to masks and that students were disconnected because of them. He stated there were many times he did not speak a word to his classmates and that it was hard to meet new students and interact when he couldn't see their faces.

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SL High School Student – stated, as a football player, it was tough not knowing whether they were going to have a season or not. He stated Spanish was his favorite class because they were outside with masks off, and could see the faces of his classmates. He stated kids go to school to connect with each other and make friends, and it was difficult to do that with the Plexiglas and masks.

Rob Davidson, 15524 Oak Ridge Dr., SL – thanked the Board and Mr. Furton for following the public health recommendations. He stated while masks are not perfect, they do help protect others more than not wearing one would. He believes the purpose is defeated if not everyone is wearing them and proactive decisions are what keep people safe. He urged the Board to keep following the public health recommendations.

Marcy Bogerd, 15328 Oakridge Dr., SL was the conduit for Ross Ziegenthaler, 15620 Willows Dr., SL (via cell phone) – stated his concern about the decision making by the Board and demanded it revert the mask mandate and allow for individual choice and commented on a FOIA request he emailed to the district and Board.

Josh Kasnowicz, 11485 Cleveland St, SL – stated his patience was pushed right to the limits last year with his 5-year-old lacrosse players having to wear masks and being yelled at when they fell down. He stated that COVID does not exist in the sun, and that masking requirements are unacceptable and he is not putting up with it anymore.

Jeromy LaRock, 15391 Oak Ridge Dr., SL – expressed his concern for the emotional welfare of children and the cost of having to wear a mask as you can't tell if child is happy or sad, children's identities are erased because of masks, masks are dehumanizing and there are increased mental health issues and suicide because of them. He stated that the blood is on the Board's hands for their decision.

Molly Beecham 14916 Saint Claire Dr., SL– stated that if the health department is suggesting masks be worn but not mandating then it should be a personal choice to wear a mask. She provided her student has asthma and while wearing a mask 8 hours a day she is not getting enough oxygen. She requested a waiver to allow her children to not wear masks.

Bob Wood, 15316 Krueger St., SL – expressed his appreciation that the Board was progressive enough to require masks. He stated that while this is hard, it would not last forever. He believe kids are resilient, and this will be an opportunity for them to take life on and deal with as it comes. He urged the Board to keep the mask mandate because it is the right thing to do.

Danielle Fogel, 16110 Louis Ln, SL – supports the decision to mandate masks and believes it is our duty to take every precaution and do our part. She believes science indicates that masks are valuable and effective tool and that we are all part of a community and need to do things for the greater good.

Jon Mulder, 18799 Mohican Dr., SL – commented that a study from a lab in Florida has shown masks have been found to be full of bacteria, yeast and other dangerous pathogens. He believes it is his right to make a decision for his children and respects the right of others to choose; he is not asking for permission, this is what he is going to do. He stated that there are plenty of people that would be more than happy to bring change that is needed to school boards and other governmental positions.

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Suzanne James, 18521 148th Ave., SL – provided that her children came home from school with headaches and missed several days of school due to lack of oxygen and believes that masks were creating the headaches. She indicated her youngest was diagnosed with anxiety, while the school dealt with it effectively, her belief is that it came from wearing the mask as she is doing very well this summer without wearing a mask.

Gregory Stempky, 2921 Judson Rd., SL – stated, as a family physician and Air Force veteran, he believes the data does not support mask wearing for children. He requested, as a father and parent, to have a say in how we take care of our kids, to be able to make the decisions and have a choice.

Jennifer Vollmer, 17860 144th Ave., SL – stated that last year masking is not something she wanted for her children so she enrolled in virtual classes but decided to send them back to school after three months even with her reservations about masks. She is questioning what the right decision is this year with the back and forth over mask mandate and inconsistency. She may withdraw her three children from SLPS and find other education options in the community.

SL High School Student – provided her school experience last year with masks and Plexiglas and indicated there was a lack of communication amongst the student body and teachers. She was excited when she learned masks would be optional then disappointed when she learned masks would be required. She asked the Board to reconsider and make masks optional.

Sean Davis, 15713 Littlefield Ln, SL – stated he is in favor of making masks optional, and questioned if it would be slippery slope with mask requirements creeping into outdoor activities and sports. He asked if the CDC offers mask wearing as a recommendation, not a requirement, when and how did the Board turn it into a mandate. He inquired when the vote took place, requested the tally be released, why it was not a public vote and asked if the public comment has changed the Board's mind.

Riley Dean, 16354 Pinewood Ave, SL – commented on her experience as a 911 dispatcher with teen suicide, believes it is mentally exhausting for kids to wear masks and that more high schoolers will commit suicide than will die from COVID. She stated that mental health is bigger than COVID.

Kirk Semlow, 15550 144th Ave., SL – indicated children have a 99.98 survivability rate without intervention and believes there is unfounded public hysteria driven by politics. He inquired if the Board is hearing what parents are saying or just listening to the health department. He stated he has lost faith in the Board and will be dis-enrolling his son from school per his son's request.

Carla Segaar, 18690 N. Shore Dr., SL – indicated that the American flag stands for the land of the free, there is a Constitution and Bill of Rights, and people have the right to speak. She thanked the Board for letting that happen and asked parents be given the right to choose for their children. She questioned whether money was involved in the decision. She suggested all the children take vitamins everyday instead of wearing masks.

Katie Bator 13709 Cypress St., SL – provided her experience as a 6th grade classroom teacher last school year and she saw happy kids who were excited to be back in school and masks didn't really seem to bother them. She advised worried parents that their children will be taken care of again this year and staff will do their absolute best to make sure they are okay. She stated how thankful and relieved she is that her son, who has cerebral palsy and a rare genetic disorder and attends the SXI program in the district, will be protected in the classroom by others wearing masks.

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Astin Brown-Hudelson, 16726 152nd Ave., SL – relayed her two children’s experience last year and the struggles they had, including a combined 15 times in quarantine between the 2 with no positive COVID test for either, and both severe headaches due to masking. She stated it was especially difficult for her child with autism to connect with others.

SL High School Student – provided there are psychological effects, including depression, and students feel oppressed from wearing masks, teachers did not fully accommodate her through Zoom when she was in quarantine and she felt ignored. She feels that even if students wear masks, they do not wear them properly, and they are not going to stop COVID. She stated suicide rates are extreme and the Board representatives are ridiculous.

Board President, Jennifer Nicles, reminded the audience to be careful about how comments are spoken and to be respectful of each other.

Sarah McKee, 569 Farr Road, SL – stated masks should be a choice. She inquired why masks were not required at middle school smart start and how she was supposed to explain to her daughter that they are now required even though her other daughter at Mona Shores has a choice.

Nicki Jones 517 Buena Vista Dr., SL – commented she chose another school last year for her son where he did not have to mask up and that school stayed in person the entire year. She opposes mask mandates for school age population, and does not believe masks protect from the spread of COVID and provided that 0-17 age group has a COVID death rate of .05% which is less than all common childhood diseases. She believes masks interfere with learning and reduce verbal, motor and cognitive performance. She believes government agencies should not be making medical decisions for the children and parents should be allowed to choose.

Sandy Betten – 2805 Judson Rd, SL – believes COVID has dehumanized us as masks cover facial expressions, hide social cues, and stated there are many studies that detail the harm of masking children.

SL High School Student – commented that children are resilient and can have mature conversations with their parents about masks, dying, getting COVID, and being in quarantine. She believes masks protect not just oneself but protects others, especially those that are health compromised.

Kathleen Kasnowicz, 11485 Cleveland St, SL – stated when she told her sons that masks would be required in school it robbed their joy of coming back to school. She believes there are emotional effects of masks, and it is dehumanizing when teachers can’t see their faces. She commented that everyone is talking poorly about the district because of the mask mandate, and the Board should consider what they have heard from parents tonight or take a survey of all parents.

Daniel Koert, 15334 Pruin St., SL – questioned if kids are allowed to unmask outside and at other times, and masks are not properly worn or washed regularly, what sense does it make to mandate kids wear them. He believes by doing that it essentially says that COVID only affects people sometimes.

Shelly Slater, 15815 144th Ave., SL – indicated she has been in education for 10 years, masks interfere with her ability to see student faces and assess their needs, and masks should be a choice and not mandatory.

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Laura Engel ? – Inaudible – would like masks to be optional – her children were depressed and had suicidal thoughts last year due to masks.

Jodi Bricker, 15765 Vine St., SL – thanked the Board for getting kids back to school last year and commented she believes students can go safely back to school without masks this year.

Jason Koert, 17855 168th Ave., SL – expressed thanks for the Board’s willingness to listen but believes there is a blatant disregard of common sense in telling kids that they have to wear masks. He indicated vaccinated individuals are spreading COVID faster and are the ones in the hospitals. He believes science does not support claims that masks protect from the spread of COVID. He asked the Board to reconsider their decision.

Board President, Jennifer Nicles, reminded the audience that everyone is entitled to express their opinion without audience interruption or outbursts

Kelly Goetzinger, 16698 152nd Ave., SL – provided her support for the mask mandate and stated it is important to give children a means to protect themselves for those that can’t get vaccinated. She believes that if all are wearing masks it is better protection than not all wearing masks. She expressed appreciation for the proactive approach, hopes that parents who disagree can be kind and respectful about it, and not pass a negative message on to their children.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

CONSENT AGENDA

Curt Theune moved, supported by Bruce Callen, to approve the consent agenda as presented:

- Accounts Payable – Food Service, SLCFAC, General Fund, Student Activity, etc. – totaling \$786,038
- Payroll – totaling \$2,098,066

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

ACTION ITEMS

CONSENT AGENDA

Curt Theune moved, supported by Chris Beck, to approve the consent agenda as presented:

- New Hires –
 - Aaron PoletChoir TeacherMiddle/High School
 - Christine BakerSE TeacherHigh School
 - Daniel DeWeeseBus Driver Transportation
- 2021 Fall Coaching Assignments
- Resignation – Pam VanFaasen, School Psychologist, accepted with regrets. Ms. VanFaasen will be missed by students, staff and parents.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

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RATIFICATION OF SPRING LAKE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

Curt Theune moved, supported by Bruce Callen, to approve the SLEA CBA as presented.

Mr. Furton provided that this is a two-year extension of the current CBA with a teacher salary schedule increase of 2.5% for each of those years.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

DISCUSSION/INFORMATION ITEMS

None

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jennifer Schippers – 363 S. Lake Ave., SL– thanked the Board for listening and indicated there were zero cases of COVID at NOCH. She is an essential worker, is against the mask mandate, believes what the district is doing is wrong and her child will not return to school this year.

Veronica Constantine, 16489 124th Ave., SL – expressed appreciation for what the Board is doing and the difficult situation they are faced with, but believes masks create fear, anxiety and mental health issues in children and asked that the decision to mask children be left to the parents.

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

None

UPCOMING MEETING

- Regular Board Meeting – September 20, 2021, 7:00 p.m., IS/MS Media Center

ADJOURNMENT

Curt Theune moved, supported by Chris Beck, to adjourn the meeting.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

Jennifer Nicles adjourned the meeting at 9:18 p.m.

APPROVED: _____
Date Board Secretary