



Cohasset Public Schools
143 Pond Street
Cohasset, MA 02025
Empower Students to Improve Communities
Cohasset School Committee Meeting

School Committee Minutes

Wednesday, January 19, 2022

Learning Commons

Cohasset Middle and High School

143 Pond Street

Cohasset, MA 02025

Virtual Access via Zoom and Facebook

6:00 P.M.

In Attendance:

Craig MacLellan, Chairman

Ashley Colleary

Lance Dial

Paul Kearney

Lydia St. Onge

Also, in Attendance:

Dr. Patrick Sullivan, Superintendent

Dr. Leslie Scollins, Assistant Superintendent

Susan Owen, Director of Finance & Operations

Chairman MacLellan called the School Committee Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call: Ashley Colleary – Present, Lance Dial - Present, Paul Kearney - Present, Lydia St. Onge - Present, Craig MacLellan - Present.

Public Comment: none

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Sullivan is excited to be back meeting in the schools. It's been a tough few weeks with increased COVID cases due to Omicron. Still so much great teaching and learning is happening in the schools.

Vaccination clinic, Saturday, January 22, 1PM – 3PM for ages 5 – 11 at Deer Hill School. Open registration – link is available in Superintendents Newsletter and Town website. Next Wednesday a clinic for Moderna shots.

Governor Baker has released information about a potential change in testing program. Nationally and locally the rates of close contacts that turn out to have COVID19 are quite low. DESE presentation highlights:

- More than 98% of in school close contact tests have been negative by January 9. ^
- Secondary transmission rates are 0.7 – 1.5% based on studies
- Connecticut and Vermont have shifted to at home tests
- Anyone participating in symptomatic testing may choose to continue those testing strategies and discontinue contact tracing and test and stay.
- School health professionals may determine if specific situations warrant contact tracing.
- Schools may provide at home test kits for at home testing and inform school if test is positive. This is an OPT IN program. Tests would be provided to staff and families every other week so one test could be used each week.



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- This option is only available to districts that are currently using symptomatic testing programs such as test and stay.

School Committee members asked questions about test availability and distribution. If this goes through, we will send out information for families to opt in by January 28 so that program can begin on January 31. CPS is already signed up preemptively.

Maura Sharry, 15 Virginia Lane, is the data of low close contact transmission found in schools that have mask mandates or not. To note: you are contagious with omicron before you have symptoms.

Dr. Sullivan presented the updated language that was included in the most recent DESE mask mandate. The change was brought to the attention of the school community in an earlier email. Dr. Sullivan wants the committee to be able to consider the policy with the most up to date information.

Lilane Miller, 195 Hull St. I work as an aide in the Cohasset High School, During the last two weeks I have noticed more than one fifth of the students and teachers have been absent due to COVID – 19. This rate of absenteeism has a very serious impact on the education of our young people. If everyone would wear a mask, the spread of COVID-19 infections would be greatly reduced. Not only would a mask mandate reduce illness among our students, teachers and their families, but it would also result in an improved, less stressful educational experience. Finally, are schools not considered municipal buildings? If so, the Town of Cohasset requires that everyone entering a municipal building wear a mask. These are but a few reasons why we should resume mask mandates till the omicron pandemic is curtailed.

Jenna Cunningham, 15 Hill Street, You have much experience working with and following DESE guidelines closely this school year. I am curious as to why the members of this school board and superintendent Sullivan think DESE changed the wording from “required” to “highly recommended” on January 10, 2022, for those unvaccinated in schools that have attested to 80% vaccination rate and no longer have mask mandates for the vaccinated?

Maura Sharry, 15 Virginia Lane, Don’t we see the wide spread of omicron reason for returning to masks as protection temporarily

Silvia Family, 40 Fair Oaks Lane, I want to voice my support of the updated DESE guidance to also unmask the unvaccinated along with the vaccinated due to the segregation and discrimination once the 80% threshold et. I appreciate the school committee following the DESE guidance.

Katie Lubitz, 103 Border Street, I want to start by thanking this Committee for their service. This is our oldest daughter’s first year in the Cohasset Public Schools, and we are very grateful for the work done by the School Committee, Superintendent and his team and the teachers and staff at the schools during these challenging and unprecedented times.

One issue that I have had as a parent with the narrative surrounding any discussion related to masking children is that it is always framed with concepts like, “the kids don’t mind wearing the masks” and “the kids are so resilient.” It’s a dangerous catch phrase that has become part of our everyday lexicon. Yes, children are resilient and their teachers are resilient and creative...but I think it is important for the members of this committee to acknowledge that requiring children (who, data has shown, are generally the very least vulnerable to COVID-19) creates a massive barrier to their social and emotional learning



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and their development. I don't think anyone should forget that as they are making these important policy decisions.

I do want to be clear that I am opposed to any type of mask mandate for school age children in our community, regardless of vaccination status but I will focus on the narrow question being addressed today by the committee. The CDC has acknowledged (and I think most of us are seeing and experiencing this firsthand in real time) that the Covid vaccine does not prevent a person from getting COVID or from transmitting it to another person. This is particularly true if you are looking at the Omicron variant which is the primary variant that is now infecting most people in the New England states. If the purpose of a mask is to reduce the numbers of people who contract and transmit COVID in our schools, then should vaccination status matter? I would urge this committee to take this important first step of allowing the unvaccinated students in schools that are over 80% vaccinated to choose whether to wear a mask.

Eileen Norton, 390 Beechwood Street, Test and stay was not available to vaccinated individuals. Will the new at-home tests be available to both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals?

Mrs. Colleary shared that she feels that our committee should not be in charge of public health decisions. She shared that she is not ready to make a decision, but she appreciates that she and her family are able to be vaccinated and wear masks.

Mr. Dial, do we adjust to the updated DESE guidance in our threshold schools? DESE has input from experts and they have come to this decision. If this change is motivated by a concern with enforcement of mask policy, then our district does not have the same issues.

Mr. Kearney basically DESE is highly recommending all students and staff wear masks. He thinks that we should go with DESE and give people the option to mask up or not.

Mrs. St. Onge stated that as research evolves and this virus evolves, the CDC, state, DESE will provide guidance that changes. It makes sense to align with that guidance and to encourage all to make the best decision for their families.

Mr. MacLellan, stated that there is no national or state mandate to mask in schools. Studies have shown that masks are not making a compelling difference in COVID numbers in high schools. As a community we want to protect the most vulnerable citizens, so priority needs to be made for their vaccinations and educational tools. The data relative to our district at this time shows that there are more infections.

Tara Chisholm, 450 Jerusalem road, With a 21% positivity rate in town, it would be reckless to have the children remove their masks at this time.

Dyane O'Leary, 16 Wood Way, Thanks to the School Committee for yet again careful consideration of these issues. Everyone has a personal opinion, experience, or anecdote about COVID and masks but that's not what should guide this decision, given that the Committee has been consistent with DSSE guidelines every step of the way through this. Why stop now? If we've followed the state through its most stringent guidelines, why stop just because those guides now perhaps become less stringent? If the community can pretend to deserve anything through this saga, it's at least consistency.



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Monique Armstrong, 255 Pond Street, Thank you for your service. We are all navigating the unknown and scientists themselves are still researching and debating the facts. Mask or not should be a personal decision right now but we should not discriminate between vaccinated and unvaccinated.

Tim Davis, 16 Fair Oaks Lane, Comment from Marylou Sutters, Massachusetts Health & Human Services Secretary commented last week: "Masking has not proven effective in places like New York."

Christopher Luvisi, 20 Brewster Road, Point of clarity: Is DESE recommending both that schools mask even if they are threshold communities AND that in those communities unvaccinated can unmask?

Mr. Kearney moves to adopt DESE's updated guidance as it applies to 80% schools, seconded by Mrs. St. Onge.

All – aye

Superintendents Goals Formative Review: Cycle Step 3 – Superintendent Plan Implementation and Collection of Evidence –

Goal #1 – District Improvement Goal (copy from email)

Benchmarks

- Evidence of discussions with leadership, staff, and community regarding effective use of technology - List completed but work still on-going – effective technology measures during the pandemic that was created by leadership team. Collaborations by our newly formed Web Site Management team.
- Strategy developed for recruiting a more diverse staff
- List of culturally responsive look fors and evidence of implementation in learning walks
- Evidence of professional development that fosters culturally responsive teaching
- Evidence of feedback from leadership to staff
- Format in each school established that promotes inclusivity and learning regarding diverse cultures

Goal #2 – District Improvement Goal

- List of current learning collaboration with the community across the district (completed)
- Plans established at each building to further collaborate with the community (on-going)
- List of existing engagement with families across the district (completed)
- Evidence of increased family and community engagement (on-going)
- Evidence of effective use of committees, which include families (ongoing)

Goal #3 – Student Learning Goals

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QUESTION re: Goal #3 - Cassie Muir, 40 Red Gate Lane, Is TLA working on just assessing and building out general education ELA curriculum or are they also evaluating tier 2 and tier 3 Ela intervention curriculums?

TLA skills and strategies Support Tiers 1, 2, 3 and also looking into iReady tools to support tiers 2 and 3



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Goal #4 – Professional Practice Goal

Multitiered supports

- Established district wide MTSS Steering community (completed)
- Evidence of building based professional development (on going)
- Consistent documentation established (on going)
- Family notification letters created (completed)
- Established resources guide for tired interventions (on going)

Goal #5 – District Improvement Goal – resource allocation

Finance Update –

Monthly Update – As of December 31, 2021 the school department has expended \$8,820,330 out of the \$21,684,432 budget awarded (48.66%) and we are 50% through the year. We have encumbered supplies and materials on purchase orders in the amount of \$1,732,798. There is a remaining available balance of \$11,131,304 which will be expended by salary accounts and any other school department needs that cannot be anticipated or have not yet been entered as a purchase order. Mrs. Owen updated the committee on SpEd tuitions, capital outlay funds for FY22, athletic revolving, cafeteria revolving

Prioritize Capital –

Tier 1

1. Bus Lease
2. AC/ Heater split in mS health clinic
3. MS bathroom access
4. Locker mechanisms in MS
5. Chromebook lease
6. Safety shades at Osgood

Tier 2

1. Field lights
2. Score board
3. Middle high paging zones

Low Priority - Cove Base

Schedule special meeting to discuss school budget and look into what we can do to get the money we need.

We haven't updated our sub rate and need to reconsider that going forward. Administration is recommending an increase in sub rate for nurse from \$80 to \$160 per day.

Motion to increase nurse sub rate from \$80/ day to \$160 / day by Mrs. St. Onge seconded by Mr. Dial. All – aye



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School Committee Comments and Communications -

Committee discussed progress on SC Goals.

School Facilities Committee – put a bid out for a design for all schools in district. The committee has selected AI3 to look at existing conditions to identify areas of major need or deficiency. The committee will present on March 30.

Policy Subcommittee has a draft of the wellness policy and continuing to make progress on binder review.

Communications Committee developing a survey of district staff. Working with Lisa Radden on survey for staff and website development.

Topic Not Reasonably anticipated – gift from Paul Kearney – solar lights for CHS stairs to parking lot.

Motion to accept solar lights to Mrs. Colleary seconded by Mr. Dial.

All - Aye

Motion to adjourn meeting by Mrs. Colleary, seconded by Mr. Kearney.

All – aye

Meeting adjourned at 9:34PM