

# WYOMISSING AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT 2021-6041

## Minutes August 9, 2021

The Public Workshop meeting of the Board of School Directors convened in the JSHS Auditorium at 4:47 p.m. with Mrs. Maria Ziolkowski, Board President, presiding.

### CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Following the pledge of allegiance, Mrs. Ziolkowski asked if anyone would be recording the meeting. Mr. Arnst indicated he would be recording the meeting.

### Board Members Present

Mrs. Harenza (via phone), Mrs. McAvoy, Mr. McCaffrey (4:55pm), Mrs. Phillips (via phone), Mr. Pottieger, Mr. Redner, Mrs. Taylor, Mrs. Waxler, and Mrs. Ziolkowski.

### Board Members Absent:

None.

### Administrative Staff Present:

Mr. Scoboria, Dr. Woodard, Mr. Boyer, Mr. Arnst, Mr. Cafoncelli.

### Attendees:

Alex Gabryluk, Technology Support  
An audience sign-in sheet is included as part of these official minutes.

### MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Board Business Meeting – August 9, 2021, 6:00 p.m. JSHS Auditorium
- Board Business Meeting – August 23, 2021, 6:00 p.m. Community Board Room
- Committee of the Whole Meeting – September 13, 4:45 p.m. Community Board Room

Mrs. Ziolkowski shared a statement explaining the purpose and procedures for tonight's Public Workshop.

### HEALTH AND SAFETY PLAN UPDATE

PowerPoint Presentation – Mr. Scoboria

Mr. Scoboria shared a presentation to review updates and reframe where the District is currently, and allow an opportunity for the Board to review options and have discussion to provide direction to administration to prepare for opening of schools.

Mr. Scoboria shared slides covering the approved transition plan the District followed for the months of June and July, citing a change on July 28 when Governor Wolf lifted the mask order for PA. He reviewed the various summer options and programs that were provided to students during the months of June and July. Mr. Scoboria stated the proposed health and safety plan was shared with parents, guardians and employees on July 9<sup>th</sup> and again on July 27<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Scoboria reviewed the WASD Dashboard available on the District website and said the Dashboard will continue to be updated. He explained at this point there are no mandates regarding building closures and tracking, if that changes, that criteria will be added back to the Dashboard. Mr. Scoboria explained that the CDC COVID trackers

**Minutes August 9, 2021**

highlighted the current models and ratings as of August 7<sup>th</sup>, and noted the graphs on the slide depicted the changes in case positivity, etc.

Mr. Scoboria reviewed the guidance provided by the Governor and DOH explaining that currently there are no mandates related to schools or masks. Mr. Scoboria said there are other ways the District looks for guidance such as with the PA Health Network, the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Mr. Scoboria reviewed the recommendations from each of these organizations including universal mask wearing regardless of vaccination status, mitigation strategies based on county transmission levels, encouraging vaccination, and in-person education recommendation.

Mr. Scoboria said in addition they seek input from local medical advisory organizations such as Tower Health through the Division of Infectious Diseases who provided the District with up to date and current information advising a layered response, increased protections in the high or substantial categories, and to consider the difference to those 12 and under and those 12 and over given their differences to access to the vaccine.

Mr. Scoboria said they also received community feedback. He thanked those who reached out and took time to share their input and, in some cases, their professional expertise. Mr. Scoboria said communications were received from 51 families, either directly to the Board or through the District, and he commended the well-written and considerate messages that were received. Mr. Scoboria stated 40 of the 51 responses were in support of required masks, especially at WHEC where not all have had access to the vaccine. Mr. Scoboria said 6 of the 51 were clearly in support of the current plan with keeping masks optional, and the other 5 had questions for follow-up. Mr. Scoboria said the plan was also shared with District employees and several employees reached out with input or questions. The plan was reviewed with WAEA leadership and Mr. Scoboria thanked them for their input as well.

Mr. Scoboria reviewed the guidance received from PIAA and BCIAA and stated the BCIAA is scheduled to meet on August 18. The District is hopeful to receive updated information regarding athletics after that meeting and information will be shared through coaches and with others as received.

Mr. Scoboria noted that he meets regularly with other Berks County superintendents to share procedures and plan development. Mr. Scoboria said they met most recently last Thursday.

**Minutes August 9, 2021**

Mr. Scoboria reviewed a slide listing the current proposal's, key components; covering K-12 in-person instruction and continuing extra-curricular programs, masks recommended and required on school vehicles, distancing procedures, cleaning and HVAC, PPE, quarantine procedures, vaccine opportunities and virtual education available K-12.

Mr. Scoboria shared a slide containing an informational chart listing options regarding face coverings being required or recommended by grade level in the low, moderate, substantial, and high categories. This detail would provide the Board some discussion options as they decide next steps.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Board Discussion:

Mrs. Ziolkowski asked what are the rules for quarantine. Mr. Scoboria said the superintendent's group did discuss this during the last meeting to try to clarify. Having vaccine and wearing a mask will make a difference in quarantine procedures. DOH statement was read regarding quarantine/masks.

Mrs. Taylor asked about the WAEA and their opinion. Mr. Scoboria said they have been very receptive, and they knew over the last month a lot was changing, and may change before the start of school.

Mrs. Waxler asked for reminder from last year, if we would require masks for 7-12 in the substantial field, how long to be in the moderate field before we make the change. Mr. Scoboria recommends if the Board approves this chart or some version of this chart, that the Board allow the superintendent to share this chart. If we move to a less restrictive level, he suggests to allow at least two weeks of data before implementing a change to procedure; if we move to a more restrictive level, then the change would be immediate.

Mrs. Waxler would like this to be a joint Board decision. Mr. Pottieger agrees with Mrs. Waxler due to the variants.

Mr. Redner discussed required vs. recommended masks; what can the District do to ensure recommended is followed by those who should be wearing a mask.

Mr. McCaffery discussed the difficulty to have teachers and principals manage that scenario.

Mrs. McAvoy discussed K-6 as they do not have the opportunity to get the vaccine. It is Board responsibility to get the kids in school and keep them in school.

**Minutes August 9, 2021**

Mrs. Waxler said if kids are masked we don't have to quarantine, this would keep kids in school, allows parents back to work, allows schedules to return to normal. She doesn't recall a pushback from kids to wear a mask, mostly parents who were against it. 7-12 is variable and there can be discussion there, but K-6 doesn't have a choice.

Mrs. Taylor said K-6 group is sometimes with other groups, no ability to control or monitor other locations and intermingling. For public safety a lot of things are required, such as immunizations. We are not requiring the vaccine, but asking kids to put on a mask for a few hours a day allows these kids to be in school 5 days a week, reducing quarantining. Masks should be required for all grades. Policy should be K-12 and dependent upon the level of transmission. Mr. Redner said very good point about siblings who are in different buildings

Mrs. McAvoy said she would like to see a lot of outdoor classes – PE classes outside, so the kids can get their masks off. She is hoping this is not a full year of masks on. Mr. Scoboria said our PE teachers did a good job last year and that would be the expectation again this year and include outdoor breaks, outdoor snacks. He appreciates that teachers added many different ways to get the children outside for breaks.

Mrs. Ziolkowski spoke about initiating and monitoring, keeping fluid and ability to change as the information changes. Mr. Scoboria stated if the Board feels more confident, looking at schedules, we meet twice a month, about every two weeks during the upcoming months. If the Board feels more confident to make changes at a Board meeting, that would be the option. If the Board would rather have a chart to have a known plan for the public, to allow administration to move more fluidly without the Board, that could be an option as well. Administration can work with either plan.

Mr. McCaffrey asked, if a student does have to quarantine, are our teachers very well prepared? Mr. Scoboria said administration will monitor this throughout August and September, but currently asynchronous assignments will be provided. If we see we are quarantining a higher number of students, we would look to organize other options such as using homebound procedures where direct contact with teachers is provided.

Mrs. Waxler asked are we looking to follow the CDC quarantine guidance? Mr. Scoboria said our hope is to get clarity of how the pieces work together, proof of vaccine would have a bearing on quarantine.

**Minutes** August 9, 2021

Mrs. Waxler said have we had in school transmission – if we had a positive, were there other kids who tested positive because of that student? Mr. Scoboria said very limited in school transmission. Last year we only had a couple of cases. Most of the cases were pretty clear, and then there are those where the individual doesn't know. Mrs. Waxler said but out of all the quarantined kids we only had a couple who were positive.

Mrs. Ziolkowski asked for an opportunity for Board members on the phone to comment

Mrs. Harenza said she agrees with Mrs. Waxler – in favor of mandatory masks K-12, but questions whether all are in favor of reducing the masks requirement for kids with sports especially when outside. Important to communicate to parents very clearly and separately from other communications, and in bold and Spanish. Our belief is the policy will be that if your children are fully vaccinated they would not have to quarantine. Could be very important information to push out to parents as soon as possible. It keeps kids in school.

Mrs. Phillips said she agrees with Mrs. Harenza as well as Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Waxler and others, she has a child in K-6 and husband and her are worried with Delta variant that is affecting children. Agree kids should be masked right now. Seeing what is going on in other states, school districts are having hundreds of quarantine students, and she is concerned. She doesn't feel it is going to be a long-term thing, but right now K-12 should be required for masks. She also asked, when children are at lunch, since they are not doing the social distancing and unmasked, how are we keeping them safe when they take the masks off? Mr. Scoboria said this is another area the Administrative team is working on. The principals have two plans. They have Plan A, a traditional plan where we can serve all students at once in the cafeteria, and Plan B, which is dividing those students. Plan B would be used in the gym here at the JSHS, and would not use the auditorium. Dr. Babb has a plan at WREC where he can rotate like he did last year. At WHEC it is most difficult with lack of space, and that is being addressed through current construction, but it would involve using classrooms and cafeteria. Given the recent move to substantial we anticipated we would be utilizing Plan B to start the school year. Specific information will be shared with parents next week. The hope is to be back to Plan A at some point this year, but to start, we would be in Plan B.

Mr. Redner asked, so Plan A and B would be associated to the different levels? Mr. Scoboria said it was not attached exactly as was written last

**Minutes August 9, 2021**

year, certainly K-6 we were anticipating to be there already knowing the children there did not have access to the vaccine.

Mrs. Ziolkowski said she would like to discuss the layered mitigation strategy including HVAC. What we did last year and what we continue to do, what is working? Mr. Cafoncelli explained we increased outside air to maximum capacity. He reviewed the standard percentages and how the District will continue to operate at maximum, also using windows as another layer of outside air into classrooms where available.

Mr. Scoboria clarified that we have been able to upgrade some of the units and equipment to improve airflow. Mr. Cafoncelli shared some of the upgrades occurring at WHEC including a higher rate of filtration and outside air improvements. Mr. Scoboria mentioned we can also purge a space on demand. Isolate, purge and clean certain areas if the need would be identified.

Mrs. Waxler commented to assure the public, whichever side you are on, masks or no masks, everyone at this table has done their due diligence talking to people in community, doctors, etc. Keep in mind this is a volunteer position, and with your students' best interest in mind. She would hope that whatever decision is made you can go home satisfied. Your kids follow your lead, if you go home dissatisfied and complain to your kids, then your kids will come to school complaining. Just know that regardless of what decision is made, we have worked really hard and have done everything we can to make a good decision.

Mr. Scoboria thanked the Board for their great comments. He shared that Board members have been in touch with him over the last few weeks and he knows they have been working very hard. He said he feels the Board is indicating a significant push to make masks required. He is looking for guidance on whether the Board would like to use the chart.

Mrs. Taylor suggested revisiting as necessary, as we've seen in the last couple of weeks, things change so quickly.

Mr. Redner clarified so if we don't have the chart, just institute masks until further notice, then we have to meet as a Board to change that. If we do the chart, then the school could adjust along the way based on the parameters of the chart? Mr. Scoboria said yes, and whatever the Board decides, he feels we will be back together as a Board throughout the upcoming months. This chart may not have a long life as things change and new information may be presented. Either way we can start the year, he is just looking to be clear on how he should communicate this out.

**Minutes** August 9, 2021

Mrs. Waxler is okay with chart but also communicate to be in moderate for at least two weeks to make a change. More communication the better. Mrs. McAvoy said if you just have this chart and a parent sees we are in moderate, then they may just decide to remove masks before direction is given. Mr. Scoboria said we could build that into the plan so that if there is change, parents would need to wait for additional direction before making any changes to procedure. It would have to come with direction from the District.

Mrs. Taylor said we first need to decide how we are doing masks, then we need to decide to keep the policy in effect until direction is given and clearly communicated. Moving forward, at every Board meeting, we need to recap where we are, so everyone in the community is clear where we are. Even if we discuss it briefly at each meeting. She is okay with chart, but for moderate and higher, masks required for everyone.

Mrs. Ziolkowski said, so basically saying the same K-12 and do not make it different which is different from what the chart says.

Mrs. Ziolkowski asked for consensus.

Mr. Redner asked what is the difference between substantial and moderate. How much different is moderate? He is uncomfortable with 7-12 group regarding moderate and substantial. He would recommend to have a chart to give the flexibility. He would not support required masks for moderate level 7-12.

Mr. McCaffrey said if we have this chart, we are still going to have to meet to change? Mr. Scoboria said if the Board is okay with the chart, they could add subject to Board approval, and it would be brought back to the Board. The chart would provide the framework and target, but ultimately changes would be done at the Board level. That would prevent administration from putting out a change without working through the Board. In two weeks, we will be back together and review the chart.

Mrs. Ziolkowski asked if everyone was okay with that.

Mrs. Philips said we keep talking about last year, but things have changed and we have to rely on science and the strain that is more transmissible. She is worried about the recommended for 7-12 in moderate.

Mrs. Waxler said she is undecided because maybe half of those kids are vaccinated, which we didn't have last year. We are dealing with a different population even it if is a stronger strain. She feels okay to keep

**Minutes August 9, 2021**

as is knowing we are going to meet again in two weeks. We can go to recommended and if we get more and more cases we can change it.

Mr. Pottieger is concerned that this chart is what we put out, and people will always refer to this chart, even though the chart may change. Mr. Scoboria said we can change the block to read *required/recommended* for 7-12 moderate and the Board will revisit that in the next two weeks.

Mrs. Ziolkowski asked for agreement and noted the time was 6pm that they should begin the second meeting.

Mr. Scoboria reviewed the next steps to be; Board action for decision, communication sent to all parents/guardians, update FAQ and work through building level procedures and any needed plan revisions.

Mrs. Waxler asked is it not true that all kids who wear masks are not subject to quarantine? She doesn't want to separate out the kids who are vaccinated vs. the kids who wear masks. Mrs. Ziolkowski said fully vaccinated do not have to quarantine. If everyone is masked and you are in close contact you do not have to quarantine.

Mr. Scoboria said maybe in instances where you cannot wear a mask, such as in sports, the vaccine would provide another layer of protection against quarantine. We could make it clear that there are different scenarios and one or both of them would limit the quarantine status.

Mrs. Taylor thought she read that if you were vaccinated and exposed you should still quarantine for 3-5 days. Mr. Scoboria said yes, that was in some of the items they were working through with the county, and they are working to be as clear as possible on some of those items.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 6:10pm.

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Board Secretary