

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
MINUTES OF THE GRANDVIEW HEIGHTS SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION
Special Meeting – February 28, 2022

The Grandview Heights Schools Board of Education met in special session in the new Larson Middle School Media Center.

Call to Order: President Eric Bode called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

Roll Call	Members Present:	Members Absent:
	Eric Bode	
	Emily Gephart	
	Kevin Gusé	
	Katie Matney	
	Molly Wassmuth	

Discussion

Mr. Bode explained the purpose of the meeting was to vote on an updated COVID-19 masking resolution. He stated that he was going to start with a few remarks and allow each Board member to do the same prior to voting on the resolution.

Mr. Bode explained that he thought it was important to acknowledge three points:

1. The great news of COVID rates dramatically declining at the national, state, and local levels over the past month, including infection rates, hospitalization rates, and ICU usage rates. Also, the Centers for Disease Control issued new guidance recently indicating they no longer recommend indoor masking for areas with rates as low as Franklin County.
2. How we reached this point was through the wonderful contributions of students with all that has occurred over the last two years with social distancing, masking, increased disinfecting efforts, and vaccinations. There has been a lot done not only to protect themselves, but also out of concern for their classmates, teachers, parents, grandparents, younger siblings, and community in general.
3. Over the last two years, the Board has approached the pandemic trying to be flexible. As facts changed, the Board has reacted accordingly and the Board will continue to do so. Mr. Bode also stated that he feels with the recent decline in COVID rates, this is the time to act accordingly.

Mrs. Gephart stated that she agreed with Mr. Bode. She expressed that she is excited to move forward beyond mandatory masking but also stated that COVID is not done and masking would still be necessary for positive cases. She also explained that she is looking forward to moving forward and supporting each other.

Mrs. Matney read the following prepared statement:

Good afternoon and thank you to everyone who was able to join us tonight. We recognize that this meeting was rescheduled quickly from our original set time of March 3 and it was done to be able to react to the new CDC guidelines in a timely and appropriate manner.

In my conversations I have had with families who have been most vocal against having masks in school in the first place, we can agree on a few things:

1. We hope that as we make the recommendation tonight to move to mask optional, we want all families to talk with their children about respecting the rights of others to either continue to wear a mask or to no longer do so. Our staff and administrators will continue to go to great lengths to enforce the message of no bullying based on choice. And, we also know that kids say what they hear at home. If we want our children to be respectful of others then we need to do the same.
2. Covid has taught all of us something. Personally, I have learned the importance of where I spend my time and energy. I've learned that vulnerability is a strength and that my time is precious and life is too volatile sometimes for us to waste it.

As a community, it has taught me that as much as I love Grandview, COVID has shown some chinks in the armor and that now is the time to set the example of how we work together as a community in a respectful manner. Because another obstacle is on the horizon and we will once again be faced with the challenge of working together when we disagree.

3. I hope that we behave in the way we want our children to. That personal phone calls and one on one interactions always are more civil and respectful than taking our issues to social media or sharing our opinions via e-mail behind a screen. That billboards divide and that conversation gives us a chance to actually hear each other and feel where the other is coming from. It's where we can empathize and hopefully realize we had more in common than we thought we did.

I am new to the Board and commend the leadership who has been in this landscape for the past two years for making the hard decisions. As we start to come out of COVID 19 protocols, I hope to play a role in seeing each other with dignity

Public Comments

Dr. Jeremy Young, an infectious disease specialist at The Ohio State University, addressed the Board expressing his agreement with the proposed resolution. He also stated that he feels it is important to allow voluntary masking as some students may have younger unvaccinated siblings or other immunocompromised family members in the home. He also explained that it is important to understand that if there is another variant outbreak, it may be necessary to temporarily put masks back on. Dr. Young concluded by encouraging everyone to vaccinate their children.

Mrs. Stephanie Wolfe thanked the Board of Education for their work over the past year. Mrs. Wolfe expressed her support for the resolution and appreciated the language stating that no students shall be bullied or harassed for deciding to wear a mask moving forward. She encouraged the district to have conversations with students around empathy and tolerance and acceptance to ensure there is no bullying. She encouraged people to treat each other with respect.

A Stevenson Elementary student addressed the Board explaining that she is better able to speak without wearing a mask.

Mr. Rick Kinsinger asked that the district communicate a clear trigger that would lead to going back to masks, if reached.

GHHS student, Connor McCormick, explained that he recently received a mask exemption and stated how much better his outlook is going to school without wearing a mask.

Mr. John Conlin explained that he has two children with speech challenges and he is very pleased with the Board's consideration of eliminating the mask mandate. He also asked that the school district begin to allow parent volunteers back into the classrooms.

Mr. Jeff Wahl addressed the Board saying he feels that everyone needs to do their part with extending grace to each other. He reiterated his position that he was an opponent of the mask mandate throughout the pandemic and thanked the Board for moving up the timetable for voting to eliminate the mask mandate.

COVID-19 Masking

Recommendation for Approval (Motion 22-077) Mrs. Gephart moved to approve the following:

1. Rescinding of Mandatory Masking Policy

WHEREAS, on February 25, 2022, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) updated its guidance and no longer recommends universal indoor mask wearing in K-12 schools in areas with a low or medium COVID-19 community level, and Franklin County, Ohio is at a medium COVID-19 community level;

WHEREAS, on February 25, 2022, the CDC published the following statement on its website, "Effective February 25, 2022, CDC does not require wearing of masks on buses or vans operated by public or private school systems, including early care and education/child care programs."

WHEREAS, ODH recommends that "Mask to Stay/Test to Play" be in place for direct contacts to COVID-19 (revised January 26, 2022) and recommends masking for five days following self-isolation for those with COVID-19 (January 25, 2022 "COVID-19 Self-Isolation and Masking Guidance");

WHEREAS, Ohio Revised Code Section 3313.67 authorizes boards of education to make and enforce such rules to prevent the spread of communicable diseases among the students attending or eligible to attend the schools of the district, as in its opinion the safety and interest of the public require;

Therefore, be it RESOLVED by the Grandview Heights City School District Board of Education that:

1. Effective March 1, 2022, the Board's August 11, 2021 Masking Resolution is rescinded.
2. Effective March 1, 2022, masking will be required of every individual coming into any school facility consistent with the ODH "Mask to Stay" recommendations for close contacts and the ODH COVID-19 Self-Isolation and Masking Guidance for individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19. Students participating in extracurricular activities must also comply with all requirements of OHSAA and ODH's "Test to Play" recommendations. The Superintendent (or designee) will consider exceptions for individuals with disabilities who cannot wear a mask or cannot safely wear a mask for reasons related to the disability.
3. In all other circumstances, universal indoor masking will not be required. The Board acknowledges that members of the school community will make their own decisions about masking based on their individual circumstances. No person shall be subject to harassment, intimidation or bullying for wearing or not wearing a mask.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Superintendent is authorized to adopt procedures to implement this resolution, directed to monitor current guidance, recommendations and requirements from public health authorities, and directed to make recommendations to adjust mask requirements as necessary.

Mr. Gusé seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Mr. Bode, aye; Mrs. Gephart, aye; Mr. Gusé, aye; Mrs. Matney, aye; Ms. Wassmuth, aye.

Motion carried 5-0.

Adjournment

Motion 22-078 (Adjourn) Ms. Wassmuth moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Gusé seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Mr. Bode, aye; Mrs. Gephart, aye; Mr. Guse, aye; Mrs. Matney, aye; Ms. Wassmuth, aye.

President Bode declared the meeting adjourned.

ATTEST:

President

Treasurer