

MINUTES OF THE HINGHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE

August 19, 2021

Remote via Zoom Webinar

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by Kerry Ni.

Chair Kerry Ni read the following statement: This meeting is being held remotely as an alternate means of public access pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021 temporarily amending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law. You are hereby advised that this meeting and all communications during this meeting may be recorded by the Town of Hingham in accordance with the Open Meeting Law. If any participant wishes to record this meeting, please notify the chair at the start of the meeting in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 20(f) so that the chair may inform all other participants of said recording.

Jenna Manto of the Hingham Journal stated that she will be recording the meeting, as well as Harbor Media.

Members Present: Chair Kerry Ni, Vice-Chair Michelle Ayer, Secretary Nes Correnti, Liza O'Reilly, Carlos DaSilva, Jen Benham, and Tim Dempsey

Central Office Present: Interim Superintendent Dr. Gary Maestas, Assistant Superintendent Dr. James LaBillois, Director of Business and Support Services John Ferris, Director of Human Resources Susan D'Amato, and Executive Director of Student Services Dr. Suzanne Vinnes

Visitors Present: There was no sign in as this was a remote meeting.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Nes Correnti,

It was **voted:** To approve the minutes of the School Committee Meeting held on August 9, 2021

Michelle Ayer – aye
Nes Correnti – aye
Liza O'Reilly - aye
Carlos A.F. DaSilva - aye
Jen Benham – aye
Tim Dempsey - aye
Kerry Ni – aye

Face Covering Policy

The Committee discussed the draft of the Face Covering Policy EBCFA (first read).

Chair Ni stated that the goal is to listen to public comment and then to discuss. She explained that the School Committee would note vote at this meeting, and will discuss it again at the meeting next week. Chair Ni stated that the Committee has set aside the first 90 minutes of this meeting for public comment.

Questions and comments from the community included:

- A comment that masks should be optional
- A concern about the affects of masks on children
- A question asking the number of people on the call
- A comment that requiring masks is an opportunity to teach students to take care of each other

- A comment stating the mask recommendations are guided by science
- A comment in support of masks being optional
- A call stating that optional masking will not be helpful and that it is important to respect science
- A call encouraging the committee to use the data to guide and change policy when it makes sense
- A call stating that COVID cases have increased significantly since mask mandates went away proving that masks work to avoid transmission
- A comment in support of masks, noting the long-term side effects being reported after COVID infections
- A comment stating that DESE guidance supports masking and that it is not a personal decision if it affects those around us
- A comment in support of following the science
- A comment in support of masks being optional for families
- A concern for the safety of the youngest children who are not yet eligible to be vaccinated
- A comment noting the fear of infecting others accidentally if students are unmasked
- A comment stating concern of long-term effects of mask wearing, and a suggestion to make a policy that has benchmarks to be revisited to reverse the mandate
- A concern for the social development of young children, and a statement of support of parent choice
- A comment stating concern regarding the strength of the recent variant of the virus, asking the committee to follow the science
- A comment in support of optional masking
- A suggestion that the committee have differing policies with regard to the schools, using vaccination rates to determine policy
- A concern for the immunocompromised if masking is optional
- A comment that the policy should be individualized for each school
- A concern noting the statistics in southern states where masks are not required and many schools have had to close due to COVID infections and the need to quarantine
- A request to mandate masks to avoid losing just one student to COVID
- A call from an eighth-grade student at Hingham Middle School who commented that masks will help them stop the spread of COVID, stating that not all students will keep them on if it is optional
- A concern that those without masks will spread it to vulnerable family members

Items not reasonably known within 48 hours of the meeting

Carlos DaSilva suggested looking into a policy with regard to teacher vaccination status.

Adjourn

On a motion by Michelle Ayer and seconded by Nes Correnti,

It was **voted**: To adjourn at 9:44 PM

Michelle Ayer – aye

Nes Correnti – aye

Liza O'Reilly - aye

Carlos A.F. DaSilva - aye

Jen Benham – aye

Tim Dempsey - aye

Kerry Ni – aye


Respectfully Submitted By:


Nes Correnti

Documents Included:

 08_09_21 Minutes.pdf 

 Agenda_2021_0819.pdf 

 EBCFA_08_10_2021_DRAFT.pdf 

 Mask recommendations.pdf 