

**THE REGULAR MEETING of the BOARD OF TRUSTEES** of Bigfork Elementary School and Bigfork High School, District No 38, Flathead and Lake Counties, was called to order by Chairperson Sandry on February 17, 2021, at 5:03 pm in the high school library and via Google Meet.

Trustees in attendance: Elwell, Anderson, Kreiman, Sandry, Martinz, Relyea & Parish

Trustees absent: none

Also in attendance were Superintendent Matt Jensen, Business Manager Lacey Porrovecchio, Principals Mark Hansen, Charlie Appleby and Brenda Clarke, staff members and community members.

Pledge of Allegiance

Comments on non-agenda items: Board Chair Sandry addressed the crowd in the room and said the board would take public comment regarding agenda items at this time.

Elementary teacher Jill Morley spoke in favor of continuing masking in the district. She said the kids in her class room have adjusted to masks and at that age it is hard to social distance.

Liz Pendlay spoke in support of optional masks. She said the situation has evolved and mitigation strategies should evolve too.

Sarah Hartig spoke in favor of continuing masking in the district. She asked the board to keep staff and students masked until more people have been vaccinated.

Steve Fainter spoke in support of optional masks. He said masks are ineffective and he is more worried about teen depression and suicide.

Kelly Saari talked to the board about the quarantine process and said she would be in favor of masks if it kept students in school. She also spoke about the effects on teen mental health.

Bobbi Jo White spoke in favor of optional masks. She asked trustees to remember the goal is to educate children and keep them safe.

Seth Price spoke in support of continuing masking in the district. He wants to keep kids in school.

Heath Pendlay spoke in favor of optional masks. He said the CDC says masks are ineffective.

Lori Elwell spoke in favor of optional masks. She said communication for younger kids is facial and for the older kids the concern is mental health.

High school teacher Rhonda White spoke in support of continuing masking in the district to keep students on campus.

Student Isaac Bjorge spoke in favor of optional masks. He said learning is easier without masks.

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Trustee Anderson, seconded by Trustee Parish, and approved by unanimous vote of the elementary and high school trustees.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Consideration of Policy Adoption, Policy 1905 COVID-19 Emergency Measures – Mr. Jensen told trustees the policy would allow them to require masks for the remainder of the school year. He read the school specific portion of Governor Gianforte's February 12 Directive Implementing Executive Order 2-2021, which recommends schools follow guidelines and best practices recommended by the CDC and the Montana Office of Public Instruction. He said state employees will be required to continue to wear masks. The Flathead County Health Director sent

a letter to valley superintendents encouraging continued mask use. He talked about teacher vaccinations and county quarantine procedures. He shared the results of staff and parent surveys. He told the board there may be enough staff who need accommodations if masks are optional, it may compromise the district's ability to hold onsite instruction. He recommended continuing masking through the end of the year to protect all staff.

Nurse Knopik told the board she believes masks in school are one of the reasons for low transmission. She said making masks optional gives the district less control on keeping students and staff at school. She said she is in favor of masks going away but not right now.

Middle school teacher Bronson Erickson told trustees he was part of the COVID-19 task force. He spoke in support of continuing to mask to keep students in school, to keep teachers safe, to keep activities and athletics going, and to keep parents in the work force.

Board discussion followed.

Trustee Kreiman made a motion to adopt policy 1905 COVID-19 Emergency Measures as recommended by administration and in alignment with recommendations from the CDC, OPI, Governor Gianforte, and the Flathead County Health Director. Trustee Relyea seconded the motion.

Trustees for the motion: Martinz, Kreiman and Relyea

The motion failed with Trustees Elwell, Anderson, Parish and Sandry opposed.

Trustees discussed the timeline for when masks would become optional. Mr. Jensen shared it would take time to work with staff who may need accommodations.

Trustee Elwell made a motion to continue with the mask procedure in place until March 12, 2021. Trustee Parish seconded the motion.

The motion passed with affirmative votes from Trustees Anderson, Sandry, Elwell & Parish.

Trustees opposed: Kreiman, Relyea & Martinz

Discussion followed regarding community use of the facilities. The trustees scheduled a meeting on Monday, February 22 at 5:30 pm with facility use as an agenda item.

#### **FUTURE MEETING SCHEULE**

All School Board meetings are held at 5 pm in the high school library, unless otherwise noted.

- o Monday, February 22, 2021
- o Wednesday, March 10, 2021
- o Wednesday, April 14, 2021
- o Wednesday, May 12, 2021

A motion to adjourn was made by Trustee Relyea, seconded by Trustee Martinz, and approved by unanimous vote of the elementary and high school trustees.

Adjourned: 6:52 pm

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District Clerk

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Chairperson