

Hooksett School Board Meeting
11/4/21 David R. Cawley Media Center 8:00 a.m.

Approved

Those in attendance were Board members Greg Martakos, Jim Sullivan, Amy Tremblay, Wayne Goertel, Jim Sullivan and Jillian Godbout. Also in attendance was Superintendent Bill Rearick and Assistant Superintendent Marge Polak.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Greg Martakos led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance

PROOF OF POSTING

Bill Rearick provided proof of posting.

NEW BUSINESS

Clarification Reopening Plan

Greg Martakos called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m., and stated the reason for calling this meeting was to dispel any public concerns that the Board was not being transparent. He said the Superintendent's schedule did not allow for an evening meeting this week, so one was schedule for this morning. He said the number of positive COVID cases have risen, but are not clusters, by definition, and the language in the reopening plan speaks specifically to clusters. This meeting is to clarify Board intent of the Superintendent having the authority to implement the reopening plan..

He continued by saying that the other purpose for the meeting was for the Board to vote on whether to allow the Superintendent to survey parents to see if they would be interested in voluntary COVID vaccines for children ages 5-11. He said there will be public input at the end of Board discussion on these two subjects.

Bill Rearick stated that there have been 38 positive cases in the Hooksett School District and 19 of those cases were between October 27 and November 4, a 47% increase. There are 5-Underhill, 9-Memorial, and 5-Cawley.

He said the numbers have increased significantly from last year, and that he is concerned with that spike. He updated the Board regarding the asymptomatic and symptomatic COVID testing, saying that they are waiting to finalize a contract with Convenient MD after which time the district's attorney's will review it, and ultimately be offered.

Wayne Goertel asked why a survey was sent out after the Board approved asymptomatic and symptomatic tested, to which Bill Rearick stated it was to determine the number of tests to order.

Bill Rearick said the language in the reopening plan is not clear when it comes to high numbers in the schools that are not clusters. He would like to be sure the Board's intent was to allow him to call for targeted masking when numbers rise to levels stated in the reopening plan when they are not part of a cluster.

Amy Tremblay stated that she felt the Superintendent already had that authority.

Greg Martakos stated that he, too, felt that it was the Board's intent to give the Superintendent that authority, but wanted to be sure they were all on the same page.

Jim Sullivan stated he felt the Superintendent had the authority but that it makes sense to have this meeting if he felt the language was unclear.

Wayne Goertel stated he was looking at a spectrum of response, and asked for the definition of a cluster. Bill Rearick stated that a cluster is identified as 3 or more individuals confirmed with COVID-19 who are part of a related group of individuals. He said two or more clusters are considered an outbreak by the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

Wayne Goertel asked if there have been changes in quarantine protocols, to which Bill Rearick said there have been no changes to quarantine protocols, but there have been to close contact protocols.

Bill Rearick spoke to the DHHS website, saying it is experiencing lag time and is not always up-to-date. He said his data is accurate as it is gathered from each principal daily.

Greg Martakos said if the Board wasn't on the same page as one another, an additional meeting could be called for a vote. Jim Sullivan felt there was no need for a vote or another meeting, as the Superintendent already has the authority, but if it was the will of the Board, they could do so.

Jillian Godbout asked if the mask targeting would be by grade or whole school, to which Bill Rearick said it would depend on the circumstances, but that they would target for one week intervals.

Greg asked Board members if they were in agreement with the Superintendent having the authority to call for mask targeting using reopening guidelines regarding mask wearing for both clusters and non-clusters. No vote was taken but it was the consensus of the Board was that the Superintendent has the authority to call for target masking when appropriate.

Bill Rearick said there will be a button added to the website for parents to see COVID numbers at each school in the district.

Voluntary Vaccine Clinic

Bill Rearick stated the reasoning for sending out a survey for a voluntary vaccine clinic would be to gauge interest in parents wanting to participate in a voluntary vaccine clinic for those who are 5-11 years old.

Wayne Goertel stated that this is a very different offering than COVID testing. He said to do vaccines would be blurring the lines between the school and medical communities, and that it is more appropriate for parents to receive medical treatment with their child's pediatrician.

Amy Tremblay said this would be a survey for voluntary vaccines, and that many schools have set up vaccines in the past.

Jim Sullivan was in favor of the Superintendent sending out surveys for voluntary vaccines. This would provide a location for those wanting to receive the vaccine.

Motion by Amy Tremblay, seconded by Jim Sullivan to allow the Superintendent to survey families to see if there is an interest in having a voluntary clinic. With Wayne Goertel voting no, all others in favor, the motion carried.

Opportunity for Public Input

Resident Josiah Smith, referring to the Superintendent's comments about the increase in numbers, asked how they could compare this year's numbers to last year's when there were fewer physically in the building last year. He said parent groups against mask wearing wanted criteria for school spread and not community spread and for the Board not to change the metrics which they use.

Resident Kelly Garriepy agreed with Mr. Smith saying the plan used community numbers and not school numbers. She said this is cold and flu season and increased numbers were expected to happen. She said it is great that there are no clusters and that it is good to hear kids aren't spreading it to one another. She would like to know that if masks were required for a period of time, that requirement would have a determined end date.

Resident Jenna Cote supported the comments by Mr. Smith and Ms. Garriepy, and said her daughter is having a wonderful year, being able to see her teacher's full face and having no separation barriers. She would like the conversation to be around education; critical thinking, math, and reading. She said vaccine clinics and testing don't belong in schools.

Resident Darin Greenburg said the data is there and we should keep our kids safe. He said testing or multiple medical conditions, such as for scoliosis, have historically been done in schools. He thanked the Board for their work.

Motion by Wayne Goertel, seconded by Amy Tremblay, to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 a.m., and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Becki McCarthy