

**BARTHOLOMEW CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL CORPORATION
SCHOOL BOARD MEETING, MONDAY, August 9, 2021 MINUTES**

The regular meeting of the Board of School Trustees of the Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation was held at the Administration Building, 1200 Central Ave., Columbus, Indiana on Monday, August 9, 2021 at 6:30 p.m., pursuant to notice having been duly given to the media and to all members of the Board in accordance with the rules of the Board.

On call of the roll, the members of the Board were shown to be present or absent as follows:

Present: Dr. Jill Shedd, President
 Dr. Julie Bilz, Vice President
 Mr. Pat Bryant, Secretary
 Mr. Rich Stenner, Member
 Ms. Nikki Wheeldon, Member
 Mr. Todd Grimes, Member

Absent: Ms. Kathy Dayhoff-Dwyer, Member

Administration: Dr. Jim Roberts, Superintendent
 Mr. Chad Phillips, Assistant Superintendent for Business Services
 Dr. Gina Pleak, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources
 Dr. Laura Hack, Director of Elementary Education
 Mr. William Jensen, Director of Secondary Education
 Dr. Brett Boezeman, Director of Operations
 Mr. Charles Edwards, Director of Title Services
 Dr. George Van Horn, Director of Special Education

Attorney: Mr. Chris Monroe, School Attorney

REGULAR SESSION

Dr. Bilz offered reflections.

The business meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Dr. Shedd, President, called the meeting to order at 6:36 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING

Dr. Shedd gaveled out of the regular scheduled Board of School Trustees Meeting, and opened the Public Hearing at 6:37 p.m.

Mr. Phillips noted that this is the first of two required Preliminary Determination Public Hearings. He noted the Public Hearing is to receive input on the proposed, approximately, 13.5 million dollar project renovations. The proposed renovations and improvements to school facilities include Parkside Elementary School, Schmitt Elementary School, roof replacements, solar projects, and the purchase of equipment and technology throughout the district.

The floor was opened for public comment. There were no comments presented from those present.

Dr. Shedd gaveled out of the Public Hearing and back into the regular scheduled Meeting of the Board of School Trustees at 6:39 pm.

WHO/WHY

Recognition of the 2021 Edna V. Folger Outstanding Teacher Award – Ms. Peggy Myers:

Dr. Pleak introduced Mr. John Sadtler, President and CEO of SIHO Insurance Services. Mr. Sadtler shared the history of the prestigious award and introduced East High School, Special Education Teacher, Ms. Peggy Myers, as the 2021 Edna V. Folger Award recipient. He recognized the many teaching accomplishments of Ms. Myers' career and gave account to her contributions to the local community.

Update: COVID-19 Plan of Action for 2021-2022 (Dr. Roberts)

Dr. Roberts acknowledged the number of COVID-19 related emails he received from parents and community members. He noted that masks are definitely the debate and assured that the information and concerns received have been reviewed and cataloged. He reviewed data, both from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Indiana Department of Health (IDOH). He provided an explanation of the color coded COVID-19 maps and highlighted where Bartholomew County stands in regards to positive test cases, compared to the rest of the State of Indiana. He shared that the COVID-19 Community Task Force will update the local metrics twice a week and make those numbers available to the public on the COVID-19 Community Task Force website (<http://covid19communitytaskforce.org/data>) on Mondays and Thursdays. He noted the BCSC metrics, and reviewed the cases reported since the first day of the 2021-2022 school year. Dr. Roberts shared the numbers to be 31 positive test cases, 88 close contacts, and 24 symptomatic individuals that had to be sent home.

Dr. Roberts made a recommendation to the board members to revise the current 2021-2022 BCSC COVID-19 Reopening Plan. The revisions include: a face covering requirement for all staff, students, and visitors while indoors and on school buses; tightening-up of physical distancing guidelines among cohorts; utilizing alternate spaces for lunch; drinking fountains closed off, and filling stations for water bottles utilized. The revised set of guidelines are specifically for indoors and the mitigation strategies may change, at any time, as the need is determined by the BCSC Administration.

The following information was given in response to questions from the board:

Dr. Roberts clarified the numbers of positive test cases this school year, and noted the calculation method is the same method that was used during the 2020-2021 school year.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Misty Hunter – Columbus, IN

Ms. Hunter asked the school board to please take all factors and medical data into consideration before making a mask decision for the students and staff. She expressed her concerns with some of the medical findings in regards to students wearing a mask, and asked the board to look at all medical data before voting on a mask decision for the children.

Devin Hunter – Columbus, IN

Mr. Hunter spoke in regards to freedom for the children. He asked for a call to listen to all perspectives. He feels it is time to balance the scales for safety and liberty.

Roy West – Columbus, IN

Mr. West thanked the school board for their July 19 vote, allowing parents a choice in regards to masks. He asked the board to stand with their original decision and allow parents to have the freedom of choice, as to whether to send their child to school with or without a mask.

Brennan Dunville – Columbus, IN

He thanked the school board for allowing parents to come and express their opinions. He feels that only him and his wife know how their children are responding to the mask situation. He believes masks muffle voices, prevent non-verbal communication, and are hard to keep clean.

Justin Stott – Columbus, IN

Mr. Stott would like to see the guidelines for contact-tracing revised and asked the school board to follow-up with the Indiana State Board of Health on his request. He noted he was speaking on behalf of his children, and requested the board not vote for a mask mandate.

Sarah Huff – Columbus, IN

Ms. Huff referenced a video that was presented to the Mt. Vernon School Board, as well as additional data that she emailed to the BCSC school board members. She shared she stands for medical liberty and parent choice. She acknowledged that the school board has a tough decision to make and asked they vote to allow parents to make the choice whether to send their child to school in a mask or not in a mask.

Amy Menefee – Columbus, IN

Ms. Menefee asked that parents be able to decide what is best for their children. She asked that the current contact tracing guidelines be revised. She feels there is not much evidence that children contracted the COVID-19 virus last school year while sitting in the classroom, and feels students should only quarantine if they develop symptoms. As a parent, she feels there needs to be more open conversations with medical providers to help provide multiple options to deal with the virus.

Jenny Heichelbech – Columbus, IN

Ms. Heichelbech asked the board to keep the students safe and do what is best for the children. She requested the board to institute mandatory mask wearing to help keep students in in-person learning.

Michelle Carr – Columbus, IN

Ms. Carr shared her concerns with students attending school without masks. She feels with the rise in new cases, masks are needed for everyone. She realizes that not everyone will be happy, but feels with freedom comes responsibility. She asked the school board to take the same precautions as last year to protect students and staff.

Gwen Kresovsky – Columbus, IN

Ms. Kresovsky is a local family nurse practitioner. She believes the community has a common ground, and that is to keep every student in in-person learning. The low vaccination rate among teenagers is concerning, and she noted the need to use all layers of protection available. She feels it is the job of the school board to keep students in school and keep them safe. She believes the evidence is clear, masks will help slow the spread of the virus.

William Reid – Columbus, IN

He thanked Dr. Roberts and the school board for their continued work. He shared he is thankful he lives in America and we have options and choices. He asked the school board to give parents the choice in regards to face masks.

Dani Kareur – Columbus, IN

Ms. Kareur read comments from a local teacher. The local educator stated it has been a blessing and a joyous time to see students return to the classroom. The impact on the well-being of students, both emotionally and socially has and will continue to be a challenge for students. She asked the school board to do what is best for the whole student.

Noel Taylor – Columbus, IN

Dr. Taylor provided several resources in regards to masks. He feels that a face mask offers little to no benefit with the virus. He feels that the CDC and the IDOH are counterfactual.

Anna Denoyer – Columbus, IN

She feels as a community we have a responsibility to protect our children. With the COVID-19 positive cases rising on a daily basis, she requested the school board mandate masks at the elementary level.

Amanda Dornfield – Columbus, IN

Dr. Dornfield noted that she wants to keep her children in school and feels that the best chance of that happening is to require a mask for every student and staff member. She asked the school board to keep the children in masks.

Amy London – Columbus, IN

Ms. London is the president of the CEA (Columbus Educators Association). She noted that the CEA wants to work with the school board to find the best solutions for the students and staff. In regard to

mask, she indicated that CEA had given a survey to its members and the majority wanted some mask requirement.

Tamie Iorio – Columbus, IN

Pediatrician and BCSC parent, Dr. Iorio, shared that a year ago there were very few cases of COVID-19, but this year kids are being affected. There are more children in the hospital this year and the children hospitals in Indianapolis are full. She stated the medical community cares about the children and families of the community, and requested the school board vote for required masks in schools.

Lyndsay Anderson – Columbus, IN

Internal Medicine Physician, Dr. Anderson, spoke to advocate for universal masking. She believes the Delta variant is spreading, and the previous belief that COVID-19 is not affecting children is no longer true. She asked the board to follow the universal guidance of the CDC, IDOH and the local COVID-19 Task Force and vote for universal masking.

Tara Heritz – Columbus, IN

Ms. Heritz urged the school board to make face masks mandatory. She feels that the positive cases are on the rise. She noted the beauty of a mask mandate is that the policy can be easily reversed if the numbers decrease.

David Porter – Columbus, IN

Dr. Porter is a family physician in the Columbus area. He noted that he has taken care of COVID-19 patients directly and this year children are getting the virus. He feels masks and vaccines do prevent illness. He feels the debate needs to stop and masks need to be worn to protect the students.

Rachel Kerschner – Columbus, IN

Dr. Kerschner is a physician and mother of four. She noted seasonal respiratory illnesses were down last year because of masks. The masks worked and kept our children safe.

Donna Robbins – Columbus, IN

Ms. Robbins feels a mask will help protect in a surgical procedure, but they are not affective for viruses. She believes viruses will past right through a mask. She feels students continue to breathe bacteria back through the masks, and they are also potentially harmful if worn for an extended amount of time.

Rachel Reed – Columbus, IN

Dr. Reed noted, as a concerned parent, her two children are too young to be vaccinated. She feels the right decision in the mitigation effort is to have a universal mask policy in place.

Erin Cole – Columbus, IN

Dr. Cole is a physician at Sandcrest Medical. She feels the closer individuals are to each other the easier the spread of the virus. She reported that there has been less cases of the Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), and other breathing issues over the past year. She believes masks work, and asked the school board to please vote to require masks for the school year.

Justin Gifford – Columbus, IN

Mr. Gifford noted he has two children and they are too young to be vaccinated. He feels children need to be protected and required to wear masks.

Marcus Smith – Columbus, IN

Mr. Smith is a parent of two children within BCSC. He stated he opposes racism, bullying and CRT (Critical Race Theory). He feels CRT is pulling down one group of people to lift up another group. He shared concerns that local employers are teaching CRT in the workplace, and he doesn't want to see it being implemented into the school system.

Amy Hale – Columbus, IN

Dr. Hale noted the pre-symptomatic spread of COVID-19 is real. She shared health care providers do care about the community spread and they feel wearing a mask will help with the spread of the virus. She shared this is not a normal school year, but it does not need to be a bad one, wearing a mask will help.

Sivagama Valli Ramasundaram – Columbus, IN

Dr. Ramasundaram feels the virus is active and a true threat to human life. She noted that even mildly infected individuals could have symptoms that last for years. She asked that the school board make a decision to keep kids happy, healthy, and most importantly alive.

Ian McGriffen – Columbus, IN

Mr. McGriffen asked the board to wait a few weeks before making a decision in regards to masks. He shared that his children would rather have school at home than be required to wear a mask to school. He feels a mask mandate would not be useful, and feels he should be able to make the decision for his children.

Jennifer Thomas – Columbus, IN

Dr. Thomas is a physician and a parent. She expressed her appreciation for the extra efforts of Dr. Roberts and the school board. She shared that the medical community is constantly researching and educating themselves to improve COVID-19 care. Her plea is that everyone will mask up now for the good of the community, so that numbers will decrease, and masks can be removed for good.

Jason Major – Columbus, IN

Mr. Major noted some of the many benefits of having students engaged in in-person learning. He shared a story of a high school student that occurred last year, and the support that the student received from staff and peers. He feels it is extremely important to keep students in school and for them to have the interaction and the support of other students.

WHAT

1) Board Commendations:

Mr. Grimes noted, under the direction of Mr. David Rodgers and Mr. Tim Brookshire from East High School, and Mr. Bryan Munoz and Mr. Keith Burton from North High School, the two high school band programs merged this school year to form, "The Sound and Spirit of Columbus". The directors noted it has been a wonderful experience, the students have worked extremely hard and supported each other well.

2) Board Member Reports - No reports were given.

3) Cabinet Reports

Teacher Performance Evaluations (Dr. Pleak)

Dr. Pleak shared the Annual Certified Staff Performance Evaluations. She highlighted the notable differences, evaluation averages and shared a breakdown of the BCSC years of experience. The 2019-2020 evaluations were “hold harmless” due to COVID-19 and the teachers had the option to keep their same score or request another evaluation. She shared the total years of BCSC experience versus the years of experience within their profession. The more years of service the higher the evaluation scores.

The following information was given in response to questions from the board:

Dr. Pleak added, out of the 728 certified BCSC teachers, 44 of them have zero years of experience. Professional Development continues in the instructional framework of UDL (Universal Design for Learning) and the behavior framework of PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports). Each individual school identifies the areas they need to develop and plan professional development accordingly.

HOW

4) Requests for Approval (Dr. Roberts)

Dr. Roberts reviewed the following items for the Board.

a. Revisions to 2021-2022 BCSC COVID-19 Reopening Plan

Dr. Roberts shared additional information on the reviewed item and requested approval.

Mr. Bryant made a motion to approve the reviewed item and Dr. Bilz seconded the motion.

Upon a call for the vote, Item 4-a) was unanimously approved.

b. Minutes of the Regular School Board Meeting of July 19, 2021 and Minutes from the Strategic Planning Session of July 30, 2021

c. Supplemental Contracts (Dr. Hack/Mr. Jensen)

d. Field Trips/Professional Leaves (Dr. Hack/Mr. Jensen) – no requests

e. School Fundraisers (Dr. Hack/Mr. Jensen)

f. Claims and Payroll (Mr. Phillips)

g. Resolution to establish savings parameters and hire Underwriter and Bond Counsel (Mr. Phillips)

h. Permission to receive bids for HVAC Building Control Projects (Dr. Boezeman)

Dr. Roberts shared additional information on the reviewed items and requested approval.

Ms. Wheeldon made a motion to approve the reviewed items and Mr. Grimes seconded the motion.

Upon a call for the vote, Items 4) b-h were unanimously approved.

5) Request for Approval of Human Resources Recommendations (Dr. Pleak)

Dr. Pleak requested approval of the Human Resources Recommendations as presented.

Mr. Bryant made a motion to approve the Human Resources Recommendations and the motion was seconded by Dr. Bilz.

Upon a call for the vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

BOARD INPUT/REVIEW

Mr. Grimes thanked those who provided public comment. He shared as a teacher, he too would like to see the facial expressions of the students and not have them hiding behind a mask. It is important to consider all feedback and as an elected official listen to our constituents. He noted the importance of remaining flexible as we move forward.

Ms. Wheeldon stated the plan the board approved on July 19 was the right plan for the information the school board had on that day. She noted she feels the right decision was made this evening with the information that is available today.

Mr. Stenner shared the courageous efforts of two Columbus East students. The two students provided life-saving techniques to a student who was injured.

Dr. Bilz thanked everyone for their emails and public comments.

Mr. Bryant shared the virus is unpredictable and will more than likely change right up to the last day of school. He noted that the mask decision is not in stone and it can change. We will continue to look at the data and be flexible.

Dr. Shedd shared appreciation of all the information shared. She feels we are in alignment with the county and city. We all believe we need to keep our students in school. As new information comes to us, other good choices will be made.

Dr. Roberts noted that the effective date for the revised 2021-2022 BCSC COVID-19 Reopening Plan will be Wednesday, August 11. The remaining three days of this week will be used to adapt to those revisions and see if any adjustments are needed.

NEXT BOARD MEETING

The next Regular School Board Meeting will be on Monday, August 23, 6:30 p.m. in the Terrace Room of the Administration Building.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:21 p.m.

_____ President

_____ Secretary