



**WISCONSIN RAPIDS  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES**

John A. Krings, President  
John Benbow, Jr.  
Troy Bier  
Larry Davis  
Sandra K. Hett  
Katie Medina  
Mary Rayome

September 13, 2021

**REGULAR BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING**

LOCATION: East Jr. High School, 311 Lincoln Street, Wisc. Rapids, WI 54494  
Cafeteria

TIME: 6:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: John Benbow, Troy Bier, Larry Davis, Sandra Hett, John Krings, Katie Medina,  
Mary Rayome

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Craig Broeren, Aaron Nelson, Steve Hepp, Brian Oswald, Jennifer Wilhorn,  
Elizabeth Messerli

President John Krings called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Student Representative

Madelyn Hepp provided an update on:

- Back-to-school activities are in full swing, and students were able to explore various extra-curricular and club offerings at Lincoln High School by visiting a number of booths set up and led by students
- Fall athletics is underway
- The requirement for students to wear face coverings went into effect on September 13, 2021
- Homecoming week kicks off on October 3, 2021 and the annual girls powderpuff and boys volleyball games will be played; the theme this year is “The Roaring 20s” with a number of activities planned during this spirit filled week

Approval of Minutes

**Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by Larry Davis to approve regular Board of Education meeting minutes of August 9, 2021. Motion carried unanimously.**

Public Comment

A number of individuals made public comment:

Heidi Kawleski – expressed frustration with the school’s quarantine/isolation protocols and the negative impact it has on student learning and loss of school experiences when they miss in-person instruction; feels it causes division between vaccinated and unvaccinated students; suggested the District explore hiring an industrial hygienist; feels unvaccinated students are being discriminated against

Adam Stublanski – believes the Board is making poor decisions about mask requirements, has moved his students to another school as a result where they are progressing; believes the Board should dialogue and have discussion with the constituents they represent and that decisions relative to masking is akin to religious beliefs since it is based upon the personal beliefs of each Board member

Anita Jacisin – spoke about the great summer she had attending events, some with thousands of people with no masks being worn - she stated it makes no sense to her that masks are now all of a sudden necessary just because school started back up

Tracy VanAsten – doesn’t understand why kids are being masked with the country’s borders wide open and unvaccinated immigrants being allowed in

Madeline Peterson – speaking as a student, she believes masks are not effective and that they negatively impact students who are unable to experience facial recognition and social cues from their peers; she also has concerns about how masks detract from the body's natural immune system and requested that the Board allow a choice for students to either wear or not wear a mask

Ranee Graf – believes people these days are guilty until proven innocent instead of the other way around like it is supposed to be; likewise, now individuals are accused of being sick until they can prove they are not. She will not co-parent with the government, Board members, or a teacher – they can offer input, but believes it is the parent's job to decide what is best for their child. Urged Board members to allow their masks to be medically tested at the conclusion of a meeting if they truly believe they are safe – if they aren't willing to do so, they are part of the problem.

Barbara Malloy – stated she is tired of the Board's dictatorial edicts around masking and believes COVID-19 poses less risk to her children than drowning and that forcing children to wear a mask for a virus that poses essentially no risk to them is child abuse; believes the Board operates with more concern for federal funding and politics than students and suggested parents will have the final say when they make a mass exodus from the district in order to negatively impact district funding

Scott Kissinger – provided a hand-out of article citations, and spoke of the dangers and adverse effects of mask wearing. Believes the tyrannical actions of the Board are being taken without clear evidence that it is effective and in the best interest of students, and that the Board continues to ignore the parents speaking each month at meetings and continually erodes the public's trust in them

Gannon Hahner – speaking as a student he believes the remote learning experienced by students last year caused failure in hundreds of classes, and he is concerned about masks being just one step in a progression of steps leading up to remote learning, which he opposes

Diane Thompson – Feels masks should be optional since students have had 18 months of abnormality in school and they are hurting, angry, and have pent up emotions from all they have experienced; wants students to be given the opportunity to be critical thinkers and decide about whether or not to wear a mask on their own rather than fear for their health

Mike Schedgick – believes masking and vaccinations are a big money-making, corruptive scam and believes Board decision-making shouldn't be based upon the money / funding it receives

Rose Steinhafel – provided a letter to the Board and spoke about potential discrimination occurring due to the COVID mitigation measures in place, and urged the Board to respond to the concerns outlined in her document

Elton Benedict – with vaccinations now available, he believes students and parents should be provided the choice about wearing masks. Furthermore, he doesn't understand what significantly changed from last year to this year causing all of the quarantines or why masks are necessary to make anyone safer; he wants parents to have a choice and would be willing to sign a liability waiver for students not to wear a mask.

Jalaine Britton – appreciates the Board's decision making and how teachers have helped students, including special needs students, understand the reason behind wearing a mask. As a person experiencing long haul COVID, she believes masks are important to avoid others from having to experience the same.

Paula Reaves – as a Lincoln teacher, she supports a mask mandate to keep kids in school. She expressed appreciation to the staff, students, Board members and those in the community who have made efforts for the common good of all by unifying and making sacrifices to combat the pandemic.

Julee Krings – thanked the Board for 2020-21 decision making that kept schools open and allowed students to finish the year and for the senior class to graduate; she appreciates the Board continuing a mask requirement to keep students and staff members safe and questioned what disciplinary measures are used for those who do not follow the rules.

Tony Dowiatt – spoke of primary resources and questioned the resources cited by a Board member when 30 contacts were supposedly made yet were not able to be validated by the Superintendent, and how the primary resource of taxpayers the Board represents who have been showing up monthly get no consideration by the Board. He questions the use of CARES Act funding, suggesting it goes to the teacher's union fund rather than being spent

on effective ways to provide a safe and healthy environment such as with air filtration systems. Stated he has photos of a Board member at their workplace unmasked, where masks are required, which he says is hypocritical.

Katie Campbell – states she represents a larger group of supports who appreciate the Board and administration's action to implement a mask mandate in schools to keep students and staff members safe, and students learning 5-days per week in person

Ida Winker – thanked the Board for their care for students and staff, urged individuals to review the scientific articles and studies performed by John Hopkins University, and stated she supports the use of masks while sharing a personal story about the loss of her brother who didn't believe in masks or immunizations, and sadly passed due to COVID

Gail Robinson – has two children in the District with IEPs and stated that 40% of students cannot properly concentrate while masked which means her children already start at a deficit; local physicians are not easily providing mask exemptions due to their organization's more stringent policy recently implemented – she strongly believes it should be the parent's choice about whether students wear a mask and no one else's

DeeDee Rose – spoke about her senior year ending under COVID which was difficult for both her and her family while trying to remain positive

Heike O'Day – does not support the mask mandate, stating it makes no sense and shared an experience her daughter recently had at a football game at which mask wearing by close contact students was not enforced. She expressed frustration with the masking requirement and the way in which it causes students to be dishonest which, in turn, makes it difficult for parents who are trying to teach their children to be honest individuals that stand up for what they believe is right.

Cliff Doro – he suffers from hearing loss and could not hear speakers who had a mask on when they spoke, and he believes the same thing is likely happening in schools where students who have hearing loss have a difficult time understanding what teachers with masks on are saying. He questioned what percentage of people in the community actually want masking to occur. Feels the Board needs to consider this since they represent the community in their decision-making. Lastly, he cited virologists from Harvard and Yale that believe masking is bad for kids and unhealthy.

Khrys Riley – spoke on research she's been conducting as a student at UW-Milwaukee on the impact of COVID response in numerous countries which has helped her reach reasonable conclusions, and cited a variety of articles around the efficacy of masking. She expressed concerns for immunocompromised individuals who are particularly vulnerable to COVID, and appreciates the science based decisions made by the Board and administration. She cited individual rights under the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment for every student to have access to a safe learning environment, and stated her children are happy and feel safe attending WRPS with the mask mandate in place which she fully supports.

Mary Beth Freeh – currently serves as WRPS Science teacher and scientist, and worked previously performing medical research in an immunology lab as well as with a clinical microbiologist which gave her the background needed to perform research and draw her own conclusions around whether masks work. She has concluded through numerous scientific studies that while masks do not prevent COVID-19, they definitely reduce the spread. Numerous professional organizations support masking, particularly in environments such as schools which are ideal environments for the virus to be spread. Ms. Freeh thanked the Board for their decision-making to date, and urged them to continue to maintain a masking requirement.

### Committee Reports

A. Educational Services Committee – September 7, 2021. Report given by Mary Rayome.

Ms. Rayome reviewed the following consent agenda items brought before the Board through the Educational Services Committee, and asked if there were any motions to be held:

ES-1 Approval to have the recommended candidate chosen as the parent representative, Christopher Inda, serve out the remaining year in the vacant parent representative position on the District Council for Instructional Improvement. This appointment is for the 2021-22 school year.

**Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by Larry Davis to approve consent agenda item ES 1. Motion carried unanimously.**

Ms. Rayome provided updates and reports on:

- Ms. Roxanne Filtz, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, explained that the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to hold schools accountable for student achievement. In addition, ESSA requires every state to measure performance in reading, math, and science which the District does through the annual Forward Exam. ESSA includes entitlement grants that come from the federal government through the states. Included in the grant are Titles I, II, III and IV. The District will receive \$1,060,274.18 in Title I, \$180,473.68 for Title II, \$16,812.00 for Title III and \$59,623.25 for Title IV. These amounts do not include any carryover dollars on hand from unspent Title dollars from 2020-2021; those carryover amounts are being determined. A total of \$1,317,183.11 in ESSA grant funds is designated for 2021-2022. This is an increase of \$90,721.11 from the 2020-2021 school year. The District currently has four Title buildings: Grove, Howe, Mead and River Cities High School. Uses for Title funds was reviewed.
- Mr. Steven Hepp, Director of Pupil Services, updated the Committee on the Behavior and Mental Wellness Grant received by the District which covers a span of two years with \$75,000 in funding provided for each year. Grant dollars will be utilized for purchasing programs, providing staff training, and building community partnerships that address student mental health needs. Items covered by the grant were explained.

**Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by Troy Bier to approve the balance of the Educational Services Committee report and minutes of the September 7, 2021 Educational Services Committee meeting. Motion carried unanimously.**

**B. Business Services Committee – September 7, 2021. Report given by John Benbow.**

Mr. Benbow reviewed the following consent agenda items brought before the Board through the Business Services Committee, and asked if there were any motions to be held:

- BS-1 Approval of the newly developed EJH rental and policy agreement and changes to Board Policy 830 for first reading.
- BS-2 Approval of a change to the original proposed loan type from WoodTrust Bank approved by the Board on June 14, 2021 to be a taxable 5-year loan of \$385,945 at an interest rate of 2.8% for the purchase of a Daktronics video display board to be installed at Lincoln High School and the affiliated Exhibit A Resolution.

**Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Katie Medina to approve consent agenda items BS 1-2. On a roll call vote of 6-0, motion carried. Troy Bier abstained.**

Mr. Benbow provided updates and reports on:

- Purchasing updates
- An accident that occurred on July 30, 2021 in which a vehicle drove into the southeast corner of the Performing Arts Center which resulted in structural damage. The District's property insurance provider has been in contact with the responsible party's insurance carrier, and quotes are being gathered from vendors to repair the damage.

**Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Katie Medina to approve the balance of the Business Services Committee report and minutes of the September 7, 2021 Business Services Committee meeting. Motion carried unanimously.**

**C. Personnel Services Committee – September 7, 2021. Report given by Sandra Hett.**

Ms. Hett reviewed the following consent agenda items brought before the Board through the Personnel Services Committee, and asked if there were any motions to be held:

- PS-1 Approval of the professional staff appointments of Sunshine Broeren (Teacher – District), Brooke Fisher (Teacher – Howe/Grant), Patricia Friday (Teacher – Lincoln), Meghan McCabe (Teacher – Central Oaks), Kyle Dorosz (Teacher – Woodside), Desiree Robinson (Teacher – Mead), Lorna Jentz (Teacher – Grove), Brittany Handrich (Teacher – Howe), and Kirsten Kissner (Teacher – Woodside).

- PS-2 Approval of the support staff appointments of William Fischer (Custodian – Howe), Tricia Joosten (Breakfast Server – Pitsch), Aron Braund (Meal Delivery Driver – District), Dawn Sukala (Noon Duty Aide – Lincoln), Lita Rosenow (Special Ed Aide – Woodside), Shannon Cornette (Special Ed Aide – Grant), Heidi Goodreau (Behavior Intervention Aide – Howe), Kim Elgersma (Tutoring and Testing Coordinator – Lincoln), Letty Schmick (Kitchen Helper – THINK), Dana Laskowski (Special Ed Aide – Lincoln), Amanda Motto (Noon Duty Aide – Washington), Sativah St. Claire (Title VI Liaison – District / Noon Duty Aide – Woodside), Penny Quinnell (Noon Duty Aide – Lincoln), Scott Freeberg (Custodian – Pitsch/River Cities), Mercedes Erdman (Special Ed Aide – Washington), Jake Linzmeier (Custodian – Lincoln), Tayla Palacios (Certified Occupational Therapist Assistant – District), Heather Eklund (Special Ed Aide – Grove), Lacy Alling (Instructional Aide – WRAMS), and Daniel Doerrler (Custodian – Lincoln).
- PS-3 Approval of the professional staff resignations, pending liquidated damages, of Brooke Strand (Teacher – Woodside) and Steven Luedtke (Teacher - Lincoln).
- PS-4 Approval of the support staff resignations of Patricia Smith (Special Ed Aide – Washington), Joanne Smaby (Noon Duty Aide – Lincoln), Hannah Jake (Special Ed Aide – Grove), Karleen Hilgers (Kitchen Helper – THINK), Mary Hilgers (Noon Duty Aide – Woodside), Tasha Cedeno (Special Ed Aide – Mead), and Rhonda Bentz (Cashier – Howe).

**Motion by Sandra Hett, seconded by Mary Rayome to approve consent agenda items PS 1-4. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Motion by Sandra Hett, seconded by Larry Davis to approve the balance of the Personnel Services Committee report and minutes of the regular September 7, 2021 Personnel Services Committee meeting. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### Agenda Referrals/Information Requests

John Krings requested that Superintendent Broeren secure a legal opinion on behalf of the Board concerning the acceptance of certain mask exemption forms as it relates to District liability should forms be accepted from non-medical physicians, as well as liability for bus contractors not wearing face coverings when required to do so under the federal transportation order.

#### Legislative Agenda

Troy Bier shared the following information:

- Board resolutions for the Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) Delegate Assembly are due by September 15, 2021.
- A memo from the Legislative Fiscal Bureau indicated that tax collections for the 2020-21 fiscal year have come in \$319 million higher than previously estimated in June.
- A bill authored by Sen. Howard Marklein that proposes raising the legal age for sale, purchase, and possession of cigarettes, nicotine and tobacco products and vapor products to 21 will have a public hearing in the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety on Thursday, September 9, 2021.
- The State Assembly Committee on Education will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, September 14, 2021 to receive public testimony on two bills. Assembly Bill 446 relates to reading readiness assessments and includes specific mandates regarding screening, assessments, interventions, parental notification and reporting requirements, and dictates which companies and products are to be approved for use. Assembly Bill 420 pertains to payments to an independent charter school authorized by a tribal college, eliminating the different per pupil amount paid to independent charter schools and, beginning in the 2021-22 school year, has DPI paying the same per pupil amount to all independent charter schools.

#### Bills

**Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by John Benbow to note August, 2021 receipts in the amount of \$9,811,233.84 and approve August, 2021 disbursements of \$7,603.90 from 2020-21 fiscal year books, and \$4,048,631.40 from 2021-22 fiscal year books. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.**

#### New Business

##### Employee Appointments, Resignations, and Retirement Requests

None.

Update on District Referendum Construction Project Schedule

Superintendent Broeren provided an update on the District referendum capital project schedule. Timelines for the start of construction at Lincoln High School have been moved to the end of February or March, 2022 due to a shortage in steel and other construction materials. Secured entrance updates at other facilities will occur in 2022 and conclude by January, 2023. Even with the project start delays, costs are anticipated to be within budget.

Amendment to Plunkett Raysich Architects Contract/LHS Technology Upgrades

With construction happening from the capital referendum at Lincoln High School, Mr. Broeren explained that the timing is ideal to make upgrades to the building's technology infrastructure and relocate the aging data center. Project funding for the technology updates would come from Technology Referendum funds and is estimated to cost approximately \$550,000.00. Plunkett Raysich Architects (PRA) is currently being utilized on the capital referendum projects, and has provided a proposed "Amendment 8" to the current contract between PRA and the District to provide architectural design and engineering coordination services for the information technology infrastructure and data center upgrades at a cost of \$52,000.00. Using PRA for the technology upgrades will provide continuity to all of the projects involved. The administration recommends approval of the technology project updates and proposed PRA contract amendment. The Board had an opportunity to ask questions.

**Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Troy Bier to approve of an amendment to the Plunkett Raysich Architects contract to include architectural design and engineering coordination services for information technology infrastructure and data center upgrades at Lincoln High School. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.**

**Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Troy Bier to approve of a project budget not to exceed \$550,000.00 for information technology infrastructure and data center upgrades at Lincoln High School to be funded from Technology Referendum dollars. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.**

District COVID Mitigation Measures

Mr. Broeren provided information concerning the high number of students (154) at Lincoln High School that have been subject to quarantine as of Friday, September 10, 2021 due to their being identified as a close contact based upon the current quarantine guidelines set by the Wisconsin State Department of Health Services and local Wood County Health Department. In an unmasked environment, close contacts are identified based upon whether individuals were within 6 feet of a positive COVID case for more than 15 minutes of time. Based upon the District's overarching goal of providing in-person instruction as much as possible, a decision was made by Mr. Broeren to implement a face covering mandate for all students, staff members, and visitors at LHS effective September 13, 2021 in order to lower the potential quarantines caused by the rapid spread of the Delta virus variant. With masking in place, the physical distancing gets reduced from 6 feet to 3 feet, which means significantly less students would be required to quarantine. With regard to mask exemptions, Mr. Broeren explained that there are currently few exemptions district-wide which means mask efficacy should be able to be maintained. However, he will obtain legal counsel opinion about what, if any, mask exemptions could be denied should a slew of forms come in that are suspect and be a detriment to the effectiveness of masking in the school environment.

In terms of simply not following state and local quarantine guidelines, Mr. Broeren would advise against this since it could put the District at risk of litigation and loss of insurance coverage.

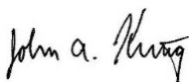
When asked what percentage of students at LHS were wearing masks in the mask optional scenario, Mr. Broeren stated it was very few, estimating that it was less than 20%. After some discussion, the Board agreed that the wearing of masks is not a political issue, but an educational issue. The goal of the Board is to ensure as many students as possible are able to remain at school receiving in person instruction in a safe learning environment.

**Motion by John Benbow, seconded Larry Davis to approve and affirm Superintendent Broeren's changes to COVID mitigation protocols implemented at Lincoln High School effective September 13, 2021 which requires face coverings to be worn by all students, staff, and visitors. Motion carried unanimously.**

Calendar

Calendar items were reviewed.

President Krings adjourned the meeting at 7:46 p.m.



John A. Krings – President

Maurine Hodgson – Secretary

Larry Davis – Clerk