



**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

February 14, 2022

REGULAR BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

LOCATION: Wisc. Rapids Area Middle School, 1921 27th Avenue South, Wisc. Rapids, WI 54495
Auditorium

TIME: 6:00 p.m.

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

BOARD MEMBER EXCUSED: John Benbow

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Craig Broeren, Aaron Nelson, Roxanne Filtz, Steve Hepp, Brian Oswald, Phil Bickelhaupt, Ed Allison

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Public Comment

Lynn Derrie – stated that while the Board claims to follow the science, the recommendation on the agenda to remove masks as a COVID mitigation strategy contradicts current CDC guidance (although she believes masks should have been done with long ago). She also believes the Board bears responsibility for a personal situation in which a person close to Ms. Derrie had a tonsillectomy likely due to masking, and experienced complications involving bleeding and blood clots a week later which caused a need for follow-up surgery. Ms. Derrie stated the Board is being watched closely for possible infringement on personal rights and criminal acts should they require medical devices to be worn or vaccinations to be administered in the future.

Anita Jacisin – spoke of the enjoyment people had over summer of 2021 at gatherings large and small without the anticipated super spreading of COVID that had been predicted, yet children were taught to be fearful of others once the school year began due to the masking and mitigation strategies implemented, which she believes do not work. She stated that children are minimally affected by any variants, and she wants to see the fear and psychological torture end along with the brainwashing she believes occurs in schools that instills fear, suspicion, and confusion in children.

Adam Stublaski – chided the Board for hosting the meeting in a venue where the Board is able to look down on the public from up on stage when he believes there are a host of other locations where the Board would be on equal footing with the public and be able to have conversation; he questioned the timing of the Board to vote on lifting mitigation measures the day before the School Board Primary election even with Superintendent Broeren noting on the local radio station that this contradicts current CDC guidance (although he is in agreement with removing the mask requirement); commended the Board/administration for producing a recommendation on mitigation strategies that has a quantitative component which will be used to determine when masks might or might not be required, but he disagrees with holding unvaccinated individuals accountable with different quarantine requirements than those vaccinated.

Heidi Kawleski – stated she supports the Board moving to masks being optional, but also urged the Board to end contact tracing and quarantine requirements immediately since keeping them in place for the additional two and a half weeks will add to student fears and anxieties. While the Board has medical professionals and the Health Department guiding them, Ms. Kawleski stated there are numerous medical professionals who do not agree with the draconian COVID mitigation protocols adopted by the Board since the risks far outweigh the benefits with children being the least at risk population for COVID. Learning problems, depression, anxiety, behavioral problems and suicide have been allowed to flourish as a result of the required mitigation requirements. Ms. Kawleski stated that while adults may believe it is the job for children to “be resilient” as they endure the mitigation strategies implemented, she believes it is the adult’s job to be resilient for them and spare them from adult fears and worries. Ms. Kawleski asked the Board to think about the words “conformity” and “morality” as they take up the vote on optional masking and contact tracing/quarantining.

Student Representative Report

Madelyn Hepp provided an update on:

- The Mock Trial team competed at regional competition to finish 4th overall
- Student Council recently submitted their “Spirit of Excellence” project and won in the Region 2 bracket
- The “Fire on Ice” dance has been rescheduled to March 12, 2022
- Winter athletics is winding down with basketball and hockey playoffs beginning
- Trimester 2 has 14 days remaining

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by Troy Bier to approve regular Board of Education meeting minutes of January 10, 2022. Motion carried unanimously.

Committee Reports

A. Educational Services Committee – February 7, 2022. 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 of Board Policy 380.1 – Therapy Dogs in Schools and Policy 380 – Animals in the School for first reading.
- ES-2 Approval of the 2022-23 Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools Strategic Plan.
- ES-3 Approval of the LEA ESSER III Grant Funding Plan.

Motion by Larry Davis, seconded by Katie Medina to approve consent agenda items ES 1-3. Motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Rayome provided updates and reports on:

- The Achievement Gap Reduction (AGR) report will be reviewed in March, 2022 when more complete information is available from District schools.
- Committee members learned that two student trips planned for Summer, 2022 are being postponed to Summer, 2023. A decision to postpone a trip to Ecuador and the other trip to France was made by January 31, 2022 in order to minimize the amount of financial loss that students and families would experience. Senior students who are missing out on the opportunity to be involved in the trips will have the opportunity to participate in Summer, 2023 if they are interested.

Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by Troy Bier to approve the balance of the Educational Services Committee report and minutes of the February 7, 2022 Educational Services Committee meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Business Services Committee – February 7, 2022. Report given by Troy Bier.

Mr. Bier 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 Board Policy 830.2 – Facility Use Policy for the Rapids Area Sports Complex, Board Policy 830 – Use of School Facilities, and Board Policy 830.1 – Facility Use Policy for the Performing Arts Center, all for first reading.
- BS-2 Approval of a lease agreement with CESA 5 for use of the Vesper Community Academy Facility for the 2022-23 school year, in an amount of \$24,000.00.
- BS-3 Approval of the purchase a Chrysler Voyager special education wheelchair van from Ewald Motors of Oconomowoc LLC for a total net cost of \$41,458.50 to be funded from the Special Education Budget.
- BS-4 Approval of the purchase 1,500 Chromebook cases for WRAMS and LHS from Bump Armor at an approximate cost of \$20.19 per unit, for a total cost of \$30,291.91 to be funded from the 2021-22 Technology and Curriculum Referendum Budget.

- BS-5 Approval of the purchase of 800 Chromebook 11 G8 EE's for WRAMS and LHS from PDS at a cost of \$253.78 per unit, for a total cost of \$203,024.00 to be funded from the 2021-22 Technology and Curriculum Referendum Budget.
- BS-6 Approval of the purchase of 100 ASUS Flip Chromebooks from PDS at a cost of \$594.78 per unit for a total cost of \$59,478.00 to be funded from the 2021-22 Technology and Curriculum Referendum Budget.
- BS-7 Approval of the purchase of 90 HP Prodesk 400 desktop computers from PDS at a cost of \$870.00 per unit for a total cost of \$78,300.00 to be funded from the 2021-22 Technology and Curriculum Referendum Budget.

With regard to consent agenda BS-1, Ms. Hett raised questions pertaining to Board Policy 830.2 – Facility Use Policy for the Rapids Area Sports Complex. She inquired about references in policy to alcohol being permitted to be served at the complex under specific circumstances, inquiring about what those circumstances might be, what the District's liability might be, and who would have the liquor license to sell alcohol. Mr. Broeren clarified that a separate lease agreement in these instances would be drafted similar to how it was handled with the South Wood County Recreation Center agreement, and the lessee would be responsible for proper licensing and liability. Events where alcohol might be allowed include those that are not youth oriented, such as in cases of adult baseball or softball leagues or tournaments. Mr. Broeren answered another question about which WRPS employee would be required to be present as outlined in the policy, stating that it would be a trained employee who is familiar with the facility. In the future, it is possible that a representative from an organization who frequently rents the facility and has proven to be responsible is allowed to assume the duties that would normally be handled by a WRPS employee. Emergency contact information for an on-call employee would be provided in these instances. Mr. Broeren doesn't see this occurring in the immediate future when the complex first opens, but more so after time has passed and relationships have been established with regular users. In terms of the employee who will be handling facility operations once it opens, at this point in time it will be taken care of through the LHS athletic office since additional time has been added to the athletic department assistant's position to allow for this. Mr. Broeren stated the first year in operation will likely be a bit slow in terms of bookings since everything will be new; however, it is possible that a stand-alone position could be considered in the future and would be brought to the Board for consideration should use of the facility justify it.

Motion by Troy Bier, seconded by Katie Medina to approve consent agenda items BS 1-7. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

Mr. Bier provided updates and reports on:

- Various invoices, bid specs, and purchase orders

Motion by Troy Bier, seconded by Katie Medina to approve the balance of the Business Services Committee report and minutes of the February 7, 2022 Business Services Committee meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

C. Personnel Services Committee – February 7, 2022. 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 non-represented staff appointment of Steve Smith (IEP Coordinator - District).
- PS-2 Approval of the support staff appointments of Reed Zirnhelt (Kitchen Helper – WRAMS), Lisa Gamboa (Second Cook – Howe), Holly Ihrcke (Cashier – Howe), Dawn Sukala (Title VI Liaison – District), Becca Austin (Activities Clerk – LHS), Cindy Bell (Cashier – WRAMS), Lacey Peck (Special Ed Aide – Woodside), Debbie Jepson (Special Ed Aide – WRAMS), Angie Feutz (Special Ed Aide – Washington), Carol Koeshall (Baker – WRAMS), Michael Sallet (Special Ed Aide – Woodside), and Rae Ann Nelson (Kitchen Helper – LHS).
- PS-3 Approval of the professional staff resignations of Sydney Dorschner (Teacher – LHS), Brett Weinfurter (Teacher – LHS), and Thomas Crockett (Psychologist – LHS/RCHS).
- PS-4 Approval of the support staff resignations of Cindy Tork (Custodian – East), Sally Nelson (Custodian – WRAMS), Melissa Hafeman (Special Ed Aide – Woodside), Tammy Southworth (Noon Duty Aide – Woodside), McKenzie Kruk (Noon Duty Aide – Woodside), and Rebecca Johnson (Aesop Coordinator – District).
- PS-5 Approval of professional staff retirement of Karen Scarseth (Teacher – LHS).
- PS-6 Approval of the non-represented staff retirement of Steven Johnson (IT Support Specialist – District).

PS-7 Approval of the support staff retirements of Janet Babcock (Aide – Pitsch Early Learning Center) and Jennifer Koback (Aide – River Cities).

Motion by Sandra Hett, seconded by Mary Rayome to approve consent agenda items PS 1-7. Motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Hett provided updates and reports on:

- The Committee received an update from Director of Human Resources Brian Oswald concerning the status of District substitutes.
- Mr. Oswald provided an update on the District HSA program as BMO Harris has informed the District that continuing their program will cost the District an extra \$13,000 per year. After exploring other options, the administration has found that if HSA accounts were moved to Associated Bank, this firm would only charge a one-time fee of \$1,000. A recommendation will be made at the regular Board meeting on February 14, 2022 to change to Associated Bank.

Motion by Sandra Hett, seconded by Larry Davis to approve the balance of the Personnel Services Committee report and minutes of the regular February 7, 2022 Personnel Services Committee meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Agenda Referrals/Information Requests

Mr. Davis made mention of his concerns about the current teacher shortage and the potential for many educators to leave the profession. He would like to see initiatives developed around ways to support and retain staff.

Legislative Agenda

Troy Bier shared the following information:

- Governor Tony Evers will deliver his “State of the State” address on Tuesday, February 15, 2022 beginning at 7:00 p.m.
- Mr. Bier reminded voters to get out and vote in the February 15, 2022 Primary election.

Bills

Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by Larry Davis to note January, 2022 receipts in the amount of \$11,090,064.62 and approve January, 2022 disbursements in the amount of \$6,527,993.34. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

New Business

Employee Appointments, Resignations, and Retirement Requests

Mr. Oswald provided the following professional staff resignation request:

Christopher Bondioli	Location:	LHS
	Position:	Counselor (1.0 FTE)
	Effective Date:	February 14, 2022
	Date of Hire:	August 21, 2000

Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by Troy Bier to approve of the professional staff resignation of Christopher Bondioli effective February 14, 2022. Motion carried unanimously.

COVID-19 Mitigation Measures Including a Potential Move to a Mask Optional Environment

Superintendent Craig Broeren reviewed a proposal to modify masking and contact tracing requirements within WRPS facilities as follows:

COVID-19 Masking/Mitigation Proposal to be Effective February 16, 2022

Thresholds for Moving Back to Masks Required

- 3% of the total building population has tested positive for COVID-19 over a three (3) day period
- 5% of the total building population is absent from school for COVID related reasons (isolation and/or quarantine) over a three (3) day period
- A three-day rolling average will be calculated to determine the percent of positives and/or percent of absences due to COVID-19 for each facility

- Necessary changes would be addressed by building/ location, not District-wide

Mask Optional Quarantine Procedures – Contact With a Positive Individual

Positive Individual Wearing a Mask Appropriately

- ♦ Close contacts will be notified and told to monitor for symptoms

Positive Individual Not Wearing a Mask

- ♦ Close contacts will be addressed as follows:
 - Vaccinated individual is within 0 to 6 feet for more than 15 minutes
 - Will be notified of possible exposure
 - NO need to quarantine, but must monitor for symptoms
 - Wear a mask appropriately for 10 days post-exposure*
 - It may be reduced to 5 days with a negative COVID test (PCR or rapid test administered by the school district, County Health Department, healthcare provider or pharmacy) on day 5 or later
 - Individual positive for COVID within the past 90 days is within 0 to 6 feet for more than 15 minutes
 - Will be notified of possible exposure
 - NO need to quarantine, but must monitor for symptoms
 - Wear a mask appropriately for 10 days post-exposure*
 - Testing is not an option due to the probability of false-positive as a result of a recent infection
 - Unvaccinated individual (and/or not within 90 days of having been positive) is within 3 to 6 feet for more than 15 minutes
 - Will be notified of possible exposure
 - NO need to quarantine, but must monitor for symptoms
 - Wear a mask appropriately for 10 days post-exposure*
 - It may be reduced to 5 days with a negative COVID test (PCR or rapid test administered by the school district, County Health Department, healthcare provider or pharmacy) on day 5 or later
 - Unvaccinated individual (and/or not within 90 days of having been positive) is within 0 to 3 feet for more than 15 minutes
 - Need to quarantine for 5 days
 - Return to school on day 6 if no symptoms
 - Continue to monitor for symptoms
 - Wear a mask appropriately for 10 days post-exposure*
 - It may be reduced to 5 days with a negative COVID test (PCR or rapid test administered by the school district, County Health Department, healthcare provider or pharmacy) on day 5 or later

* Individuals with mask exemptions who are considered close contacts will either need to remain home during the quarantine period or have a medical professional update their exemption to allow for mask-wearing for the 5 or 10 day period.

Note: Masks remain required on buses and District transportation as a result of an existing Federal Order.

The District will continue to offer COVID testing at WRAMS and LHS as has been done throughout the year.

Individuals should stay home and get tested if one “high risk” symptom potentially attributable to COVID-19 infection is being experienced (cough, shortness of breath, new loss of taste or smell). Individuals experiencing two or more symptoms (runny nose, sore throat, congestion, fever, etc.) not attributable to something else such as allergies, are encouraged to stay home until symptoms clear and/or a test for COVID-19 has been administered with negative results received.

Due to the fact that additional illnesses are circulating, it is imperative that individuals monitor for symptoms and take measures to ensure they are COVID-negative and/or feeling well before attending school or work.

Mr. Broeren explained that due to vaccine availability for the majority of school-aged individuals as well as the relatively high number of individuals who have recently been positive for COVID-19, District schools have seen a precipitous drop in the number of positive COVID-19 cases as well as in the number of school absences due to COVID. Case counts on average per day went from 20-40 per day in January to 5 cases per day by the first week in February. There are currently 3 active student cases and 3 active staff cases District-wide. While the CDC has not updated their mask guidance recommendations for the school environment, Mr. Broeren explained that the District hasn’t always rigidly followed all CDC guidelines because if it did, the 2020-21 school year likely would have had no in-person instruction at all. Additionally, the implementation of a reduced approach to contact tracing and shorter quarantine times was done by the District three weeks prior to the state Department of Health Services (DHS) giving their nod of approval to this approach.

In consulting with the District’s medical advisors and Wood County Public Health, there is agreement that moving to a “mask optional but strongly encouraged” approach would be appropriate at this time. The District would continue to track positive cases, and contact tracing/quarantine procedures would continue until Friday, March 4, 2022 at which time they would cease if case numbers remained low. COVID-19 positive individuals would continue to be excluded from school for a minimum of 5 days as required by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, and testing would continue to be recommended for individuals with symptoms. The option to reinstate masking requirements and contact tracing/quarantine protocols may be reconsidered in the future should case counts warrant it.

The Board had an opportunity to discuss the proposal. Questions and conversation took place around K-95 and KN-95 mask availability for younger students, staff reaction to the potential changes, active county case counts compared to the District’s numbers and the difference between school and community transmission rates, behavior of the Omicron variant compared to the Delta version, and the fact that the plan takes into consideration changes that can be made should things become unsafe again so that the goal of maintaining in-person instruction for students can continue to be met.

Motion by Sandra Hett, seconded by Troy Bier to approve of the implementation of “masks optional but strongly encouraged” in all District facilities with the thresholds and quarantine procedures as outlined above effective Wednesday, February 16, 2022. Additionally, quarantine procedures will continue until Friday, March 4, 2022 and if COVID-19 numbers remain low, contact tracing and quarantines will cease at that time. COVID-19 positive individuals would continue to be excluded from school for a minimum of 5 days, and testing would continue to be recommended for individuals with symptoms. Should a need for required masking return based upon case counts, the option to also reinstate contact tracing and quarantines may be reconsidered. Motion carried unanimously.

Change in District Health Savings Account Custodian

Mr. Oswall explained that the District’s Health Savings Account (HSA) Custodian, BMO Harris, is switching their program to Lively which would cost the District around \$13,000 per year. If the District changes to Associated Bank, there would be a one-time set-up fee of \$1,000 and no additional cost to the District or staff members. Employees would be able to keep their current account balances in their BMO Harris account or transfer their balance to Associated Bank. The estimated start date to change is April 1, 2022, and all future District and employee HSA contributions would be deposited into Associated Bank. The Board had an opportunity to ask questions.

Motion by Troy Bier, seconded by Larry Davis to approve of changing the District Health Savings Account (HSA) Custodian from BMO Harris to Associated Bank with a tentative effective date of April 1, 2022. Motion carried unanimously.

2022-23 School Year Calendar Modifications

Ms. Filtz reviewed a proposal to modify the 2022-23 school year calendar to move the October 28, 2022 Professional Development Day to a required date in August for professional staff members. Elementary staff would work on August 25, 2022 while secondary level staff would have the option to work on a date during the week of August 22-26, 2022. Since grade level teams meet together from all elementary buildings in October, a common date is needed for these staff members to report in August. At the secondary level, staff would have their District-directed Professional Development Day occur on one of the currently scheduled in-service days, likely August 30, 2022. This allows them a choice to decide which date during the week of August 22-26 they will work in lieu of the October date. Staff members were surveyed to determine their level of interest in moving the October 28 date, and 67.1% of the 234 employees who participated are in favor of changing the date to August. Due to the overwhelming interest in moving the date, the administration recommends doing so as it will not impact families since the date was a non-instructional day for students.

Motion by Larry Davis, seconded by Troy Bier to approve of a change to the 2022-23 WRPS school year calendar to move the October 28, 2022 Professional Development Day to Thursday, August 25, 2022 for elementary staff, and to a flexible day between August 22-26 for secondary staff. Motion carried unanimously.

Update on District Referendum RFP/Bidding Process

Mr. Broeren provided an update on the progress being made by the District to work through the RFP/bidding process. Overall, after reviewing all of the bids, estimated project costs came in under budget by \$477,163 for everything bid up to this point. Mr. Broeren reminded the Board that just over \$1,000,000 of the \$34,000,000 approved referendum amount has also been budgeted from referendum funds to be devoted toward other capital maintenance projects not affiliated with the secure entrance and facility upgrades taking place. The bid summary sheet provided includes the Lincoln High School (LHS) data project at a cost of \$550,000 which is being funded through levy override funds as opposed to capital funds. The District data infrastructure was in need of upgrading and was included with the other projects occurring at LHS since the projects are intertwined.

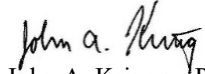
A detailed list of bids by project was reviewed, and Mr. Broeren explained that low appropriate bids were selected throughout the process. Board members are welcome to request additional detail about a particular bid or project as

Mr. Broeren has further breakdowns available. A number of local contractors have bid on various aspects of the projects, and were awarded the work in many cases. A good number of subcontractors involved in the projects have done work for the District in the past, and are familiar as reputable firms. Timelines for the projects were reviewed and haven't changed. Lincoln High School will begin changing traffic patterns in the coming weeks to accommodate the construction zone being set up. Families and students impacted have begun to receive communication concerning the changes, and will continue to receive updates as construction moves along. The Board had an opportunity to ask questions concerning the referendum project costs and schedule.

Calendar

Calendar items were reviewed.

President Krings adjourned the meeting at 7:25 p.m.



John A. Krings – President

Maurine Hodgson – Secretary

Larry Davis – Clerk