



**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

May 10, 2021

REGULAR BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

LOCATION: Thomas A. Lenk Educational Services Center, 510 Peach Street, Wisc. Rapids, WI 54494
Conference Room A/B

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, Roxanne Filtz, Brian Oswald, Danielle Scott, Ed Allison, Phil Bickelhaupt, Jennifer Wilhorn

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

On behalf of the Board, President Krings acknowledged Teacher Appreciation Week which recently took place, and extended deep appreciation to staff members who the Board has seen rise to the challenge to meet the needs of students and provide them with the best education possible during a year that has been filled with uncertainty around the pandemic and additional stress from unrest and divisiveness in communities.

Student Representative Report

Student Representative Rachel Marten was not present; however, President Krings read a statement on her behalf in which she indicated it is her job as Student Representative to bridge the gap between the Board and student body. While she hasn't spoken with all students, multiple students have approached her to speak about the mask mandate. The resounding sentiment has been that students would feel unsafe (as would she) going to school if unvaccinated students were not wearing masks. Rachel and these students believe the only way to keep COVID-19 numbers low in the county is to continue wearing masks and trusts that the Board will make the right decision to keep WRPS students safe and healthy.

Special Presentation

Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) advisors Caitlin Engel, Laura Cronan, Jamie Winch, and Valerie DeVries-Polman as well as student representative Samantha Schaefer shared the journey, theme, and accomplishments of students who recently participated virtually in regional and state level FCCLA competition. Specific category competition success was shared, and theme boards displaying the fine work of the students was provided as a visual for the Board to experience the great effort put forth by competing students. Numerous students earned silver and gold level awards, with two qualifying projects moving on to national level competition in July, 2021. The Board thanked the FCCLA group for their informative presentation.

Public Comment

A number of individuals spoke on the topic of the continued face mask requirement for students:

Dr. Pete Steinhafel – Dr. Steinhafel stated he lives by the saying, “Do what’s right, not what’s easy.” While it couldn’t have been easy, he thanked the Board for putting the mask topic on the Board agenda. In his practice for over 20 years, Dr. Steinhafel states he has worked closely with patients, including children, to provide information and recommendations he feels are in the best interest of their health and then it is up to the patient/parent to decide on what is best for them. He does not support a school policy that does not take into account every child’s potential underlying condition. He stated that he has been seeing student and staff clients on a weekly basis with symptoms and/or conditions they have never had before, or which have intensified or are more frequent since being required to wear a mask. He encouraged the Board to reach out to other districts who have changed their mask policy to optional, mentioning a conversation he had with Elk Mound School Board Member Kyle Jenson who stated things are going well, especially with younger students who can now see one another’s faces and expressions. Elk Mound Superintendent Eric Wright also confirmed to Dr. Steinhafel that things are going well in the district with optional masking. Dr. Steinhafel encouraged the Board to reach out to other districts with optional masking to learn more about how it is going for them.

Derrick VanOrden – Mr. Van Orden stated he recognizes the difficult position the Board is in with regard to the optional mask topic, and encouraged them to continue to exercise bravery in their position. Mr. Van Orden spoke about Governor Evers' Executive Order to extend the mask mandate being ruled unconstitutional by the Wisconsin Supreme Court, stating that all employees of the school district, with the exception of a very small bit which are "1099 contractors," fall under the DPI and are not subject to President Biden's federal executive orders mandating masks on property with the exception of traveling to and fro on school buses. The information available now was not available a year ago when the pandemic began, and many are operating under old information. Mr. Van Orden encouraged the Board to consider that in his lifetime, the interplay between the Executive branch and the Judicial branch in the state of Wisconsin has never been what it is for this particular instance. He believes we are missing out on an opportunity to teach our young people about how our government works and the separation of powers. The largest thing he would like the Board to consider and really think about is that by today, every single WRPS staff member and all students over the age of 16 who want to receive the vaccination have received it.

David Gorski – Mr. Gorski thanked the Board and Superintendent for keeping schools open during the COVID pandemic under the guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Wisconsin Department of Health. Due to the mitigation efforts employed by the District, schools have been open since day one of the school year, and Mr. Gorski is confident that school leaders will continue to make future decisions regarding the pandemic based on the advice of healthcare agencies.

Destinee Steinhafel and Morgan Benedict stated that they organized a petition to determine how much interest there might be in making masks optional instead of mandatory since it is becoming very difficult for students in many different ways. They brought signatures from over 800 people that are in favor of optional masking. They are excited to see at least two WRPS health and physical education teachers' signatures included in the petition. They noted that some zip codes did not populate correctly which resulted in some out of state and unusual zip codes under some signatures within the petition. A copy of the petition was left for the Board's review and consideration.

Mike Schedgick – Mr. Schedgick explained that he has an adult family home where he cares for disabled adults. He has only worn a mask during the few times he has had to take his clients to the emergency room for mental health issues which had nothing to do with COVID. It was after these encounters that he contracted COVID himself. He does not believe masks work. He is 69 years old, and survived. His doctor who diagnosed him as COVID positive prescribed antibiotic medication for treatment, which he found to be highly unusual since he is under the impression that viruses do not get treated with antibiotics. After taking the antibiotics, he got better. He hasn't worn a mask since, and no one in his household has gotten COVID. He doesn't believe masks should be worn as they do not work.

Gina Casper – Ms. Casper stated she is present in defense of young people, who are the most precious gift life has to offer and yet utterly defenseless against the tyrannical and unconstitutional practice of masking in schools. She is speaking to ensure that children get a voice at the meeting and stated that making young people wear filthy masks and breathe in their own exhaust for seven hours a day is no less despicable; it's an atrocity, inhumane, and complete and total child abuse. She made reference to Dr. Otto Heinrich Warburg, Nobel Prize winner, and his statements around the root cause of cancer being oxygen deficiency creating an acidic state in the human body. She stated that the Constitution affords a God given, inalienable right to breathe freely in an unobstructed manner without a face covering or mask. She requests that the requirement for children to mask be removed immediately.

Dr. Lawrence Leibert – Dr. Leibert stated he has been a practicing pediatrician for the past 30 years, with 25 of those years being located in Wisconsin Rapids. He has dedicated his life to protect and support infants, children, and adolescents through his practice and applauds the efforts of the Board to keep kids safe and in school. He expressed anger at the COVID virus for killing over 500,000 people in the United States and infecting over 30 million people, and he wishes children were immune to the virus. A year ago it was less than 3% of kids who developed COVID-19 while now they account for 22% of those developing COVID. A recent study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* shows that about 11% of children who contract COVID end up hospitalized with 31% of those needing some intensive care. He recognizes and acknowledges the fact that there are people who contract COVID and do well with it; however, statistically, the numbers are not favorable. The science is strong and studies indicate that adhering to the mitigation strategies of wearing a mask, social distancing, and washing hands plays a huge role in preventing viral spread. While you can still contract COVID wearing a mask, there are no studies showing long-term ill effects from mask wearing. He has also seen patients coming in with various symptoms such as headaches; however, these are not due to mask wearing. These symptoms are related to kids being depressed, sleep-deprived, and experiencing more computer screen as they deal with the on-going pandemic. He encourages everyone to keep their anger directed toward the virus and not the masks.

Samantha Franz – Ms. Franz is a parent and public school teacher who will not make a blanket statement since all parents, guardians, and students have their own personal stance around masking. She, too, protects all children who walk through her doors and proudly encourages students and their families to proudly, intellectually, and sometimes

boldly advocate and voice their opinions just as she is doing as a product of the WRPS system. We are a community of many voices, opinions, experiences, and parenting styles that lends to the uniqueness of our community. All of this provides our children an idea of how a multi-faceted group of people can still work, play, and celebrate together. Taking choice out of the hands of guardians is not showing our belief in their intellectual decision-making. In the classroom, smiles, facial recognition, and goofy, playful faces are hidden under masks. Gone are the community-building group and partner activities, traditional field trips, and experiential learning opportunities. Some say we do this to protect all; however, she believes this can be done without taking away student and guardian choice. Some say not enough are vaccinated; she would argue that those who have a desire to have likely done so already. Some say masking is working; she would argue that the requirement of 6 feet, and now 3 feet and masking do not match the experiences or reality of most classrooms. At the end of the day, next year is too far away, and she would like to see the optional masks go into effect immediately. She wants to see student faces, their smiles, and hear their truest laughter. She wants WRPS students to get back to being a community of learners who know that the voices and choices of themselves and their families will always matter to our district.

Paula Reaves – As both a teacher and a parent, Ms. Reaves commended the Board, administration, and especially the staff for their work in keeping school open all year long and ensuring the safety of students and staff. She agrees that wearing a mask is not ideal, but if it in any way increases the ability to maintain five-day per week instruction, decreases the time students spend quarantined, and prevents even one student, staff member, or community member from severe illness or death, then it is a small discomfort to endure. Ms. Reaves is thankful that the chances of death or severe COVID among children and teenagers is minimal; however, some students go home to family circumstances such as where a parent is undergoing a stem cell transplant to fight cancer, and is unable to receive the vaccine for another year. All students go home to parents, grandparents, or other adults where some may be at risk for severe COVID and not realize it. While recognizing that mask wearing may produce anxiety in some students, Ms. Reaves is also keenly aware that there are other students who will experience high anxiety in having to be surrounded by others not wearing masks. She expressed support for the current masking policy to continue. Colleagues she has spoken with state that most students are doing extremely well with masking, even to the point of not realizing they are wearing them. She empathizes with students who may experience health problems such as headaches from masking; however, in checking local statistics, 80 people in Wood County have died from COVID while no one in the county has died from wearing a mask. While masks are not 100% effective against the virus, wearing them in congregate settings reduces the risk of exposure. Far less sickness has been experienced among teachers and students this year when compared to prior years. Public schools have the legal right to enact mask mandates and the responsibility to ensure the health and safety of students. Ms. Reaves believes removing the mask mandate not only has potential liability costs for the District, but is simply not good policy during a pandemic. She urged the District to continue following CDC recommendations and finish the school year by requiring masks to be worn.

Renee Fischer – Ms. Fischer questioned what masks might be doing for local youth since COVID cases have decreased. Mask wearing inhibits student participation in the classroom and youth development as kids are unable to see expressions and develop social skills. Mask wearing causes angst between faculty and students as students get humiliated by staff members when they take their mask down momentarily to take a drink or bite of food. Mask wearing causes acne, which can be devastating to youth by lowering their self-esteem. Ms. Fischer questioned whether mask-wearing will be permanent since COVID, like the flu, is not going away. Ms. Fischer stated that in a recent online survey of 18,000 parents, more than half of them reported that mask-wearing is giving their children headaches and making it difficult for them to concentrate. More than one third of them reported an increased reluctance in children to go to school, unhappiness, impaired learning, drowsiness, and fatigue. Lastly, Ms. Fischer stated that masks can be a breeding ground for infectious bacteria, mold, and fungi which is why the CDC recommends that a cloth mask be washed with soap and water whenever it gets dirty or at least daily and for hands to be washed when a mask is being put on or removed. To think that children, let alone adults, are taking these precautions is absolutely absurd. Ms. Fischer acknowledged that COVID-19 is real and she is not arguing the seriousness of COVID, but does argue with the fact that statistically the risk for children to be severely ill is low in comparison to what it is doing to their mental well-being. She stated that students and/or staff members who choose to wear a mask should continue to be able to. She further stated that any staff members or students 16 years of age or older have had the opportunity to be vaccinated if they chose to do so, which is what makes America great – to be able to choose to do what we feel is best for ourselves. She appealed to the Board to put an end to the madness and allow children to begin to live normal lives again.

Heidi Kawleski – Ms. Kawleski referred to Wisconsin State Statute Sec. 448.03(1)(a) relative to “practicing medicine without a license,” stating that requiring an individual to wear a mask is a medical intervention. Unless you are a licensed medical professional, you have no authority to recommend such a practice. Further, a surgical mask is designated by the FDA as a medical device and the Board has no legal authority to require this. No emergency order supersedes established law. Any health order related to mask wearing is unlawful and unenforceable. As of April, 2020, masks are authorized for use by the general public as an investigation product under an Emergency Use

Authorization (EUA). Masks are not an approved product and are referred to in the law as unapproved products because they have not been fully tested and approved for use by the FDA. Under the federal law that allows the FDA to issue EUAs, 21 U.S.C. Section 360bbb-3, no person can be forced to wear a mask or face covering. In her last public comment, Ms. Kawleski spoke about the Nuremberg Code and the Declaration of Helsinki, which she states reinforces that you cannot mandate an experimental intervention or product. It also states in the EUA that there will be appropriate conditions for the monitoring and reporting of adverse events associated with the emergency use of a product. She is unaware of any reporting site available to report adverse reactions to mask wearing. Ms. Kawleski believes the District may have lost sight of the whole picture, and it is extremely important to understand what adverse reactions are happening with the forced mask mandate. She has been in contact with at least 20 people from the District within the past week, and the reactions parents and staff are seeing are not only concerning, but heartbreaking. Headaches, dizziness, light-headedness, fatigue, fainting, mask irritation and facial infections were mentioned along with sadness, depression, and anxiety at times to the point of throwing up. All of this for the COVID virus which is known to have a 99.9% chance of survival rate in children. Under Wis. State Statute Sec. 106.52, individuals with disabilities or medical conditions have the same rights as the general public. Just as you would not be able to deny entry to someone in a wheelchair, you may not deny entry to someone not wearing a mask. Wis. State Statute 118.13 is very similar to Wisconsin Rapids' non-discrimination policy. You are not able to deny an Equal Educational Opportunity based upon a person's creed or religious belief. Ms. Kawleski implored the Board to modify its mask wearing policy to optional based upon a person's guaranteed freedoms as well as consideration of each person's right to decide what is best for their own, or their child's, overall health and safety.

Cheryl Bournoville – Ms. Bournoville stated that upon enrolling her son at Lincoln High School, her expectations were simple: committed, effective teaching staff; intellectual and emotional growth fostered by the school; and strong home/school communication. She didn't want or expect WRPS to be making health decisions for her son and by mandating masks for all, this is exactly what she feels has taken place. Under Emergency Use Authorization, masks are not an approved product and are referred to in the law as unapproved products because they have not been fully tested and approved for use by the FDA. When reopening conversations began in the District, Ms. Bournoville contacted Superintendent Broeren to express her concerns around her son having to wear a mask all day, and requested to be a part of the discussions. In the beginning, Mr. Broeren stated that masks would be optional. She was told "no" when she requested to be a part of the Reopening Committee. When she countered to state that parents should be a part of the discussion, Mr. Broeren assured her that there would be teachers that have children in the district, therefore parents would be represented. She believes that it would be very difficult for teachers on the committee who may oppose the mask mandate to voice any opposition. In speaking with other parents, many have voiced concerns of their student(s) experiencing headaches, fatigue, and depression. This isn't just about a virus with a recovery rate of 99.9% in children; there are many more factors to consider. Ms. Bournoville stated that it is her job to advocate for her son's physical and mental well-being. She urged the Board to reconsider the mask mandate and make masks optional.

Teri Hetze – Ms. Hetze has two children attending WRPS schools, and on behalf of them and hundreds of other families feeling the same way, she requested that the Board make masking optional. She stated that parents have the right to make health and medical decisions for their children which they feel are in their best interests. Ms. Hetze stated she has heard about how reliant decision-makers have been upon the advice of the two medical doctors who served on the Reopening Committee, and feels that there are many other medical doctors, holistic doctors, and chiropractors putting in countless hours of research in studying viruses and how God-given human immune systems work. Many of them think wearing a mask every day is a terrible idea, especially for children, and Ms. Hetze questions why the District cannot choose to agree with them. She stated that the virus isn't going anywhere, and wonders when this all might end and whether children will now be required to wear masks every cold and flu season. She stated that being exposed to viruses is what builds healthy immune systems. In her business, she has many teachers, school staff, and parents as clients and all are fed up with this overreach of power. Many are angry and depressed over their rights being taken away. After reading through a recent school communication around prom guests showing vaccine documentation, she can see where things might be heading with a push of the vaccine as a way to take the masks off. She and many others are opposed to this. The masks and vaccine must be optional. The District is not promoting informed consent, rather they are pushing what they believe and should not be pushing an experimental drug on children. Having children vaccinated is a parental decision. She urged the Board to research who funds the CDC to learn more about the types of companies, organizations, and unions that are donating millions of dollars. She believes that one cannot conclude that their information and motives are unbiased. If everyone is afraid to be held liable, then she wants parents provided the ability to sign a waiver to opt their child(ren) out of mask wearing, urging the Board to let kids be kids and give parents a choice.

Lindsey Smith – Ms. Smith questioned the legality of requiring masks to be worn since they are medical equipment and have been authorized for use as an investigational product, not being fully tested and approved by the FDA. Current law allows an individual to refuse the product, such as in the case of a face covering. She questions where informed consent exists with the District's current mask mandate, and why individuals are not provided the ability to refuse this product as stipulated in law. Ms. Smith stated that there are a number of families who are choosing to

homeschool which the District may not be able to hear from very often. Nine out of ten homeschool families are keeping their child(ren) home due to the mask requirement, not because of the virus. She urged the Board to provide families a choice with optional masking.

Potential Modification to Face Mask Requirement

Superintendent Broeren stated that he invited medical advisors Dr. Falk, Dr. Olson, and Sue Kunferman, Director of the Wood County Public Health Department, to provide information and answer questions Board members may have around potentially modifying the District's current mitigation strategies including the masking requirement. Dr. Falk stated that the Board's decision to rely on evidence-based strategies with regard to mitigation has allowed students to enjoy in-person instruction and participation in extra-curricular activities throughout the entire year. As more information has been gathered and circumstances have evolved with regard to the pandemic, adjustments to mitigation strategies have been made as appropriate. Dr. Falk does not believe the current state of the pandemic is at a point where masks can become optional, and her recommendation would be to continue the mask requirement as originally voted on by the Board in August until all age groups are eligible to be vaccinated. With masking required through the end of the year and during summer school, Dr. Falk stated the topic could be revisited toward the end of summer before the new 2021-22 school year begins to determine if new recommendations apply based upon the status of the pandemic at that time.

Dr. Olson stated that to remove the mask requirement at this point would go against all major medical recommendations and scientific consensus concerning the importance of continued masking in schools as a major tool in preventing the spread of COVID-19. There has been great success with the modified quarantine protocols in the District; however, if the mask mandate is dropped, it will likely have negative consequence of potential increased quarantines and impede various students' ability to participate in extra-curricular activities.

Ms. Kunferman stated that new and more infectious variants of the virus such as the UK strain B117 which has been diagnosed in Wood County residents, combined with loosening mitigation strategies have turned states like Michigan into hot spots. In the past few weeks Wisconsin and Wood County are seeing more cases in individuals under the age of 18 than any other age group, which is a change from the beginning of the pandemic. WRPS developed robust and effective mitigation protocols moving into the 2020-21 school year that have helped to prevent in-school spread of COVID-19 and keep schools open. She concurs with the recommendation of Dr. Leibert, Dr. Olson, and Dr. Falk as well as the professional medical entities mentioned to continue the mask mandate. Not only do face coverings help curb viral spread, but doing everything possible to keep schools open is extremely important to the mental health and well-being of students.

The Board discussed the topic of continuing the masking requirement in schools, acknowledging the fact that there are definitely different viewpoints as has been expressed. Consideration was given to the fact that COVID cases continue to circulate in the community along with new variants of the virus, the fact that there is an increase in cases among younger individuals when compared to the beginning of the school year, the current recommendations provided by professional medical organizations and the District's medical consultants as well as Public Health, the highly effective results of the District's mitigation strategies up to this point, the potential to contribute to increased spread within the community should prevention protocols be lifted, the fact that vaccine eligibility is opening up for additional age groups in the near future, and the possibility that there are a number of students who may be fearful to attend school at this point in time without the mask requirement in place. The Board questioned whether or not there are legal concerns around continuing the mask requirement, and Mr. Broeren clarified that the Board has the authority to legally continue the mask requirement.

Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Larry Davis to approve of continuing with the mitigation measures as outlined in the WRPS Reopening Plan and approved by the Board in August, 2020, including the wearing of face coverings, until such time that the Public Health Department and medical advisors deem the measures to no longer be necessary. The precautionary measures in place will also apply to Summer School. Motion carried unanimously on roll call vote.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by John Benbow to approve regular Board of Education meeting minutes of April 12, 2021, special open and closed session Board of Education meeting minutes of April 12, 2021, and special Board of Education meeting minutes of April 26, 2021. Motion carried unanimously.

Committee Reports

A. Educational Services Committee – May 3, 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 of the proposed math curriculum acquisition of \$319,335.00 to be paid using ESSER grant dollars and the estimated yearly cost of \$34,240.00 to be paid from District Curriculum Referendum dollars.
- ES-2 Approval of the proposed counseling curriculum acquisition of \$64,161.98 to be paid using Behavior and Mental Wellness Grant dollars and ESSER grant dollars.
- ES-3 Approval of the 2021-2022 Professional Development Plan.
- ES-4 Approval of the proposed Professional Development Day schedule for the 2021-2022 school year.
- ES-5 Approval of the proposed changes/revisions to the New Colleague/Mentor Handbook as presented.
- ES-6 Approval of the proposed increase in staffing at the elementary level for school years 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 at an estimated cost of \$760,000.00 for two years to be funded through ESSER grant dollars.
- ES-7 Approval of the proposed modifications to the LHS Agenda Planner with discussed changes for the 2021-2022 school year.
- ES-8 Approval of the proposed modifications to the WRAMS Agenda Planner with discussed changes for the 2021-2022 school year.
- ES-9 Approval of the proposed modifications with discussed changes to the elementary schools' Agenda Planner for the 2021-2022 school year.
- ES-10 Approval of the recommended revisions to the Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools Co-Curricular Activities Code of Conduct including the updates as presented.
- ES-11 Approval of the purchase of Gaggle Therapy for \$44,000.00 as proposed, through ESSER dollars.
- ES-12 Approval of the 3-year purchase of Turn It In for a total cost of \$26,216.25 to be paid through ESSER grant dollars.
- ES-13 Approval of the purchase of No Red Ink for \$53,300.00 covering a span of three years to be funded through ESSER grant dollars.
- ES-14 Approval of the noted revisions for Policy 347 Rule (1) – Guidelines for the Control and Maintenance of Student Records for first reading.

Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by John Benbow to approve consent agenda items ES 1-14. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

Ms. Rayome provided updates and reports on:

- Roxanne Filtz, Director of Curriculum & Instruction provided an update on expenditures under \$25,000 using ESSER funding. The expenditures include a SAM Site License for Microsoft Office, an ultrasonic musical instrument cleaner, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt digital and hard copy materials for grades 6-12 English Language Arts, Bridges math intervention program, and District hosting of a Solution Tree Professional Learning Communities (PLC) conference.
- An update was provided to the Committee on the status of various grants including the Peer Review and Mentor Grant, and the School-Based Mental Health Services Grant.
- As requested by the Board at its April, 2021 meeting, Ms. Filtz provided an update on the possible impact of quarantining due to COVID on District Benchmark Book data results. Ms. Filtz stated that there are some common reasons that can be attributed to a lack of progress, including:
 - Learning loss from the school shutdown in March 2020 – September 2021
 - Change in teaching strategies that reduces one-on-one and small group support
 - A change in Reading and Math Intervention delivery
 - Transiency between schools, virtual and building
 - Change in family dynamics which may cause more stress on students

- Reduction in interventionist staffing due to an increased need for virtual teaching staff
- Emotional and mental fatigue of students and teachers

The data indicates that all of these factors combined with the on-going quarantining of students and staff members throughout the past year have contributed to a reduction in student learning progress. The proposed plan to reduce class sizes in Grades K-2 and in identified Title I buildings for grades 3-5 made possible through ESSER funding is intended to help address learning losses affiliated with the pandemic.

- Craig Broeren, Superintendent, provided updates on the Performing Arts Center (PAC) in terms of its operational response to COVID. A staff member communicated via email with John Krings and Mary Rayome inquiring about operational aspects of the PAC. Concerns and questions were raised around what is or isn't allowed given the pandemic, potential District liability, and an unwillingness of staff members to be involved in working events if COVID protocols are not followed by groups using the space. Mr. Broeren stated there seemed to be some confusion around the topic which he responded to, and hasn't heard any more as a result.
- Ms. Filtz provided an enrollment update of off-campus/virtual programming. Elementary student numbers continue to decline as students transition back to in-person learning at their schools.

Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by Larry Davis to approve the balance of the Educational Services Committee report and minutes of the May 3, 2021 Educational Services Committee meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Business Services Committee – May 3, 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 for Board Policy 672.1 - Proposals for Professional Services to be deleted (First Reading).

BS-2 Approval to purchase a Jacobsen HR 660 11' mower from Horst Distributors in the amount of \$63,970 to be paid from the 2020-21 Buildings & Grounds Budget.

Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Katie Medina to approve consent agenda items BS 1-2. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

Mr. Benbow provided updates and reports on:

- Invoices for technology items and financial support for the Teen Director position at Boys & Girls Club.
- A District budget update was provided by Aaron Nelson, Director of Business Services.

Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Troy Bier to approve the balance of the Business Services Committee report and minutes of the May 3, 2021 Business Services Committee meeting, and special closed session Business Services Committee meeting minutes of May 3, 2021. Motion carried unanimously.

C. Personnel Services Committee – May 3, 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 Kimberly Kinsey (Teacher – Lincoln), Andrew Ohm (Teacher – WRAMS), Rachel Schilling (Teacher – Howe, Woodside, Central Oaks), and Matthew Brown (Teacher – WRAMS).

PS-2 Approval of the support staff appointments of Teri Jazdzewski (Noon Duty Aide – Mead), Tasha Cedeno (Special Ed Aide – Mead), and Carole Pfahning (Secretary – WRAMS).

PS-3 Approval of the support staff early retirement of Lynn Peterson (Food Service - Howe).

PS-4 Approval of the professional staff resignations of Jessie Szprejda (Teacher – Lincoln) and Daniel Novinska (Teacher – Mead).

PS-5 Approval of the support staff resignations of Maria Martinez (Special Ed Aide – Lincoln), Tori Elmhorst-Koltz (Special Ed Aide – Mead), Jodi Pelot (Special Ed Aide – WRAMS), Amanda Bullock (Health Aide – Lincoln), Carissa Payne (Library Aide – Howe), and Jane Franz (Cashier - Lincoln).

PS-6 Approval of the 2021-22 Open Enrollment applications under the Open Enrollment law, pending a review of discipline records and special services needs.

PS-7 Approval of the dental insurance renewal rate effective July 1, 2021.

Motion by Sandra Hett, seconded by Katie Medina to approve consent agenda items PS 1-7. 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 May 3, 2021 Personnel Services Committee meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Agenda Referrals/Information Requests

None.

Legislative Agenda

Troy Bier shared the following information:

- The state Assembly on Education held a public hearing on April 22, 2021 to hear public testimony on Assembly Bill 160 related to payments to parents for transportation to a private school during the 2020-21 school year for pupils who reside in a first class city school district (MPS); Assembly Bill 261 relating to the Department of Public Instruction's (DPI) waiver authority related to parental choice programs, the Special Needs Scholarship Program, and independent charter schools. The committee also heard testimony from the DPI and the public on Clearinghouse Rule 21-011 relating to changes to criteria around specific learning disabilities. Assembly Bill 122 is being considered to be recommended to the full Assembly, and would create another educational option, micro education pods, to potentially be used to satisfy the compulsory school attendance requirement.
- The Education Committee also held a public hearing on April 27, 2021 to receive invited testimony from the DPI and Legislative Fiscal Bureau on the topic of school funding related to the counting of students. The governor's budget proposal includes an adjustment to the rolling three-year membership average to account for the effect of the pandemic on school district enrollment by allowing school districts to use the greater of the 2019 and 2020 pupil counts for both summer and fall in the calculation of revenue limits to adjust for distortions in pupil counts due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Senate Education Committee recommended passage of Senate Bill 182 which is a bill to return local school board control of the school start date beginning in the 2022-23 school year. The bill passed unanimously out of committee.
- Assembly Bill 162 and Senate Bill 177 to change the payment of equalization aids to four equal installments (25% each) in September (currently 15%), December, March, and June (currently 35%) passed out of committee. This would be phased in by increasing the September payment by 2% and decreasing the June payment by 2% each year for five years.
- The Joint Finance Committee (JFC) is beginning to take votes on the governor's proposed budget which is the first step toward preparing its own version of the 2021-23 state budget. The first item before the committee is a motion to remove nearly 400 policy items that the Governor included in his budget proposal, including numerous K-12 related items.
- Governor Evers and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) announced \$635,089 in grants for 28 school districts to help establish or expand "Fab Lab" facilities which are high-tech workshops equipped with computer-controlled manufacturing components like 3D printers, laser engravers, computer numerical control routers, and plasma cutters. WRPS is a recipient of the Fab Lab grant in the amount of \$25,000.

Bills

Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by John Benbow to note April, 2021 receipts in the amount of \$1,137,885.27 and approve April, 2021 disbursements in the amount of \$3,938,175.20. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

New Business

Employee Appointments, Resignations, and Retirement Requests

Brian Oswall, Director of Human Resources, presented the following professional staff appointment:

Amanda Schwartz	Location:	Grove and Woodside Elementary
	Position:	Teacher (1.0 FTE)
	Effective Date:	Beginning of 2021-22 School Year
	Salary:	\$46,500/annual

Motion by Mary Rayome, seconded by Larry Davis to approve of the professional staff appointment of Amanda Schwartz effective at the beginning of the 2021-22 school year as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Oswall presented the following professional staff resignations:

Amanda Beaurain	Location:	THINK Academy
	Position:	Teacher (1.0 FTE)
	Effective Date:	June 7, 2021
	Date of Hire:	August 29, 2017

Sawyer Ladick	Location:	Lincoln High School
	Position:	Teacher (1.0 FTE)
	Effective Date:	June 7, 2021
	Date of Hire:	August 29, 2017

Motion by Larry Davis, seconded by Mary Rayome to approve of the professional staff resignations of Amanda Beaurain and Sawyer Ladick effective June 7, 2021. Motion carried unanimously.

Amendment to the Plunkett Raysich Architects, LLP Contract

Superintendent Broeren explained that based upon the District’s past experience with Plunkett Raysich Architects, LLC, and given their knowledge of WRPS facilities, they were involved in guiding the District through both the Construction Management selection process as well as the development of cost projections and designs for the April, 2021 referendum. With the referendum now passed, the administration recommends that the architectural contract with Plunkett Raysich Architects, LLC be amended to include the projects outlined in the bond issue referendum. Utilizing the terms of the previous contract for work that was performed at Lincoln High School and Wisconsin Rapids Area Middle School to include the new referendum projects makes sense and is cost effective since the original contract has already been vetted by District legal counsel.

Motion by Troy Bier, seconded by Larry Davis to approve of the proposed amendment dated April 7, 2021 to the Plunkett Raysich Architects, LLP contract for inclusion of projects added since the last contract amendment. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

Update on Quadplex, Football Field, and Track Project Timelines and Progress

Superintendent Broeren provided an update on progress being made and associated timelines for the quadplex, football field, and track updates at Lincoln High School. The football field/track updates began in April, 2021 and are scheduled to be completed by mid-August, 2021, just in time for the first football game of the season to be played on the new turf field. Construction of the quadplex project also began in mid-April and is anticipated to be completed by early October, 2021; however, the facility will likely not be up and operational until winter has passed due to hook-up of water and sewer needing to be done by the City of Wisconsin Rapids which is not able to occur until late October or early November. A number of stumps and wood debris was discovered while excavating the track/football field area which tacked on an additional \$60,000 over what was bid; however, a local contractor, Kolo Excavating, has stepped up to provide an in-kind donation which reduced the cost to \$22,000.

With regard to the quadplex excavation, there are areas of unsuitable soil that have been discovered which will need to be removed due to the soil’s retention of moisture, and clean fill will be brought in to replace it. The estimated cost is projected to be around \$30,000 and will be able to be covered by contingency dollars included in the overall project. Aside from these discoveries, the projects are moving along fairly smoothly.

The Board is interested in hosting an open house of the facilities upon their completion, with proper recognition provided to those who contributed or donated in any way to the projects. Mr. Broeren confirmed that plans are being made to recognize both in-kind and monetary contributions on a display board once the projects wrap up.

Update on Preliminary Bond Issue and Status of Referendum Projects

Superintendent Broeren shared a generalized timeframe for the 2021 referendum projects. A “Phase 1” addition to Lincoln High School (LHS) is the first project that will begin with the design phase occurring from April through August, 2021, bidding in September and October, with construction hopefully to begin in November. The Phase 1 project includes the addition for the new Student Resource Center and LHS office, and would wrap up by the beginning of September, 2022. The LHS project was selected to occur first in order to avoid escalating construction costs as much as possible. Other timelines were shared for the second phase at Lincoln which includes science classroom upgrades, the addition of a gym at THINK Academy, and secure entrance modifications at all other schools. While the timelines are flexible and subject to change, all projects are anticipated to be completed by the end of December, 2022. There will be various job superintendents assigned to the projects to ensure that each project stays on track and gets the attention it deserves.

Public Hearing to Consider Waivers for the 2020-21 School Year

Superintendent Broeren presented a recommended resolution to the Board to submit a request to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to waive the following for the 2020-21 school year only due to the COVID-19 public health emergency:

- i. The instructional qualified teacher requirement in elementary and high schools in health, physical education, art, and music as stipulated in Wis. Stat. § 121.02(1)(j);
- ii. Administrative rules promulgated by the department regarding required regular instruction as stipulated in Wis. Stat. § 121.02(1)(L) and 253.15(5);
- iii. Waiver of the requirements to evaluate the effectiveness of each teacher and principal (Educator Effectiveness) based upon measures of student performance and the extent to which the teacher's or principal's practice meets specified core teaching standards or educational leadership policy standards as stipulated in Wis. Stat. § 120.12(2m), including waivers of the requirements to meet PI. 8.01 and Wis. Stat. § 115.415 and 121.02(1)(q).

Mr. Broeren explained that the waivers being requested are similar to the minutes/hours of instruction request in spring, 2020 except the minutes/hours of instruction piece is not necessary for the 2020-21 school year since the District delivered instruction that is equivalent to or exceeds the State's expectations in terms of contact minutes. The request around teacher licensure and grade level requirements as well as rules regarding required regular instruction is related to atypical occasions such as where a part-time instructor was brought to full-time status to cover an assignment in a grade level outside of their licensed content area. Without the flexibility of these waivers, the District likely would have had difficulty staffing classrooms and the virtual program during the 2020-21 school year, as well as providing substitute support and covering for staff members out on quarantine when necessary. The waiver around Educator Effectiveness is similar to the spring waiver. There were expectations in place for staff members during the 2020-21 school year, but not to the extent as outlined in state statute given the time and effort staff were required to devote to pandemic related adjustments and duties to meet student needs.

Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Troy Bier to approve of opening the hearing for public comment on the waiver request. Motion carried unanimously.

There was no public comment.

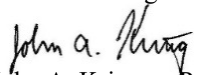
Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Larry Davis to approve of closing the public hearing. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Troy Bier to approve of a Resolution to submit a request to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to waive for the 2020-21 school year only due to the COVID-19 public health emergency: the instructional qualified teacher requirement in elementary and high schools in health, physical education, art, and music as stipulated in Wis. Stat. § 121.02(1)(j); administrative rules promulgated by the department regarding required regular instruction as stipulated in Wis. Stat. § 121.02(1)(L) and 253.15(5); waiver of the requirements to evaluate the effectiveness of each teacher and principal (Educator Effectiveness) based upon measures of student performance and the extent to which the teacher's or principal's practice meets specified core teaching standards or educational leadership policy standards as stipulated in Wis. Stat. § 120.12(2m), including waivers of the requirements to meet PI. 8.01 and Wis. Stat. § 115.415 and 121.02(1)(q). Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

Calendar

Calendar items were reviewed.

President Krings adjourned the meeting at 8:06 p.m.


John A. Krings – President

Maurine Hodgson – Secretary

Larry Davis – Clerk