

COCALICO SCHOOL DISTRICT

Denver, PA

A special meeting of the Cocalico School Board was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, November 15, 2021 by the President, Rev. Kevin Eshleman, who welcomed all those in attendance. A moment of silence was held, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Rev. Eshleman announced that the Board met in Executive Session earlier in the day to discuss legal matters and to discuss personnel matters, specifically to conduct an interview. He also shared that the Board members had been invited to participate in a tour of the District's school buildings earlier in the day.

Board Members Present

Richard Brenner
Pamela Blickle
Juanita Fox

Lin Sensenig
Randell Renninger
Brett Buckwalter

Desiree Wagner
Douglas Graybill
Rev. Kevin Eshleman

Administrators Present

Dr. Ella Musser
Sherri L. Stull
Andrew Price
Angela Marley
Brad Kafferlin

Dr. Stephen Melnyk
Chris Irvine
Anthony DiMatteo
Dr. Andria Weaver

Dr. Beth Haldeman
Scott Bennetch
Dr. Bryan Watkins
Rebecca Culbert

Guests Present

Raymond Hohl
Zachary Hohl
Michelle Hohl
Miranda Hohl
Tom McCurdy
Shannon McCurdy
Aidan McCurdy
Fiona McCurdy
Jeremiah Weber
Ali Weber
Maggie Weber
Mollie Weber
Beverly Hagan
Lindford Hurst
Michael Balsler
Jodell Balsler
Melia VanZant
Melissa VanZant
Alex VanZant
Buddy Gentry
Patty Gentry
Tammy Miller
Mark Miller

Amy Maier
Katrina Swangren
Eli Swangren
Peter Rebristy
Valentin Rebristy
Jared Fritz
Nic Beamesderfer
Travis Graham
Nicole Graham
Tanya Burkholder
Amy Weber
Cornel Weber
Lonny LeVan
Mary-Beth LeVan
Clarence Rutt
Jason Lutz
Shana Lutz
Leah Lutz
Erin Carty
Nathan Hanna
Chris McCray
Jennifer McCray
Mike Price

Theodore Price
Lee Sauder
Lisa Sauder
Jordan Weaver
Logan Weaver
Leah Shenk
Tara Griest
Ashley Leaman
Shawn Buckwalter
Brent Martin
Jon Hibshman
Dan Burton
Tonia Burton
Randy Hostetter
JoAnne Hostetter
Keila Bollinger
Kurt Bollinger
Melanie Walsh
Vince Weaver
Crystal Weaver
Ben Hurst
John Callen
Quint Zwally

Kirstie Zwally
Rachel Davis
Brenda Miller
Becky Grimwood
Jennifer McClellan
Rodney Nussbaum
Tara Nussbaum
Treva Bollinger

Rachel Kane
Austin Laudermilch
Kali Laudermilch
Jamie Baxter
Patrick Jasinski
Amber Martin
Susan Meck
Angie Lutz

Brenda Mason
Bronson Reedy
Rick Jacobs
Tara Jacobs
Jennifer Dirks
Ben Keesling
Liz Lockman

Virtual Attendees

Diane Hoover
Matt Landis
Joe Kolarz
Ed Blatt
Matthew Behney
Lynn Detterline
James Gehman
Diane Hurst
Kelly Youndt
Sara Weaver
Jaclyn Huber
Susie VanZant
Sue Cammauf
Shad Sahn
Tyler Cugino
Faith Horst
Nathan Hess
Michelle Colon
Abby Bayley
Jess Campbell
Denise Kidwell
Amber Aungst
Stacy Slaymaker
Stephanie Miller

Alisha Wambolt
Janae Hoover
Greta Stoner
Katie Steckbeck
Heather Hibshman
Katie Tihansky
Stacey Sola
Aubree Fahringer
Allison Ohline
Melanie Glassey
Lauren Bennett
Suelda Hurst
Adam Riggs
Megan Burkett
Joanne Colon-Hess
Suzann Engle
Ken Walsh
Renelle Martin
Laura Stehr
Tanya Ryder
Matt Noll
Julie Zaorski
Jared Davis
Stephanie Noll

Megan Bingham
Torri Esch
Wendi Miller
Shannon Rios
Katrine Martin
Melissa VanZant
Mary Stophel
Sherry Brunick
Claudia Hambright
Emily Monk
Kelly Leshner
Stephanie Cooper
Lisa Knarr
Heather Griest
Donna Moran
Jim Cage
Carolyn Reiste
Robin Boyer
Kristine Butz
Jessica Colon
Erin Kregar
Jodi Garman

Mr. Richard Brenner made a motion to amend the agenda to add an action item regarding the Health and Safety Plan and the wearing of masks. Mr. Lin Sensenig seconded the motion. Roll call vote, all members voting yes. Motion carried 9-0.

Under General Comments, the following individuals shared their thoughts/concerns on agenda item #2 regarding the Health and Safety Plan and the wearing of masks, asking that the Board stand with them and make mask wearing optional: Michelle Hohl, Beverly Hagan, Maggie Weber, Linford Hurst, Elizabeth Lockman, Amy Weber, Leah Lutz, Dan Burton, Melia VanZant, and Rachel Davis.

Dr. Ella Musser, Superintendent, shared a timeline summary of the Mask Order:

- 11/10/2021 – The Commonwealth Court decided the order is unlawful.
- 11/10/2021 – A Department of Health appeal was filed, resulting in an automatic supercedeas, or stay, of the masking order.
- 11/11/2021 – A request was filed to lift the stay imposed by the Commonwealth Court’s ruling until the PA Supreme Court decides whether to hear the appeal.
- 11/12/2021 – The Commonwealth Court announced a requirement for the Department of Health to respond to the application.
- 11/15/2021 – The Department of Health is now expected to file a response by the end of the day today.

Dr. Musser continued that the Commonwealth Court will then need to decide whether or not the supercedeas will be lifted. It could be tomorrow, this week or next week. The timing of that decision or what will happen in the Courts in the days and weeks ahead is unknown. She requested direction from the Board regarding any additional communication on the matter.

Rev. Eshleman commented that last Wednesday, the mask order was overturned, but that it only lasted several hours due to the filing of an appeal. He added that the District has been caught in the middle of the courts wrestling back and forth on this issue.

As agenda item #2 had been amended to an action item, Mr. Brenner made a motion to update our Health & Safety Plan, so that masks will remain optional, regardless of any action on the mandate. Mr. Sensenig seconded the motion. Discussion then commenced amongst the Board members, beginning with Mr. Brenner who read a prepared statement expressing his reasoning for keeping masks optional so that the focus could remain on teaching and learning. Rev. Eshleman thanked the District’s administration, teachers, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, custodians and other staff members for all their efforts in keeping the kids safe using all kinds of creative means. He stated that we must respect what each person needs to do to remain healthy while waiting for a legal decision regarding the masking order. Ms. Wagner reiterated the need to stand up for our kids, and that everyone should be free to choose whether to mask. Ms. Wagner recognized that not everyone will be happy regardless of the decision, but feels that masking is jeopardizing the students’ well-being. Mr. Buckwalter expressed his concerns about a decision to keep masks optional when a mandate requires the district to do otherwise. He cited Board members’ certificates and licenses and the risk this would place on their livelihood.

There being no more discussion on the action item, Board President Rev. Eshleman asked for a roll call vote, with six Board members voting yes and three Board members voting no. Motion carried 6-3.

Dr. Musser requested that communication regarding the decision to keep masks optional be provided by the Board President, rather than her, since her role is to carry out and implement policy and legal mandates. The decision to keep masks optional in spite of the mandate could not come from her. She also stated that some details for how to carry out the Board’s decision would need to be clarified in the communication from the Board President. Specifically, she raised a question about upcoming Elementary and Middle School parent-teacher conferences. Several Board members stated their support of keeping the format as scheduled, with virtual conferences or in-person conferences with masks.

Under General Comments, Mrs. Michelle Hohl thanked the school board for putting the children first. Mr. Patrick Jasinski stated that the mask mandate was working. Now that masks are optional again, he will be watching the number of cases in our District. Mr. Jasinski shared that you cannot get COVID from the vaccine, that it is different from the small pox vaccine and that personal choice affects others, so we need to be vaccinated and mask in public. Mr. Dan Burton thanked the Board members for their courage, and now hopes parents will have choice, and teachers also. He said he will stand with the Board for the trials to come, and that the Board members have a very important role in the function of our government.

There being no more business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned on a motion by Mr. Lin Sensenig and a second by Mr. Doug Graybill, with all Board members voting yes.

Sherri L. Stull
Secretary