

## SPRING LAKE BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING, SEPTEMBER 27, 2021

The Spring Lake Board of Education held a Regular Meeting on Monday, September 27, 2021 in person at the SL High School Auditorium. Jennifer Nicles called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Board members present: Jennifer Nicles, Curt Theune, Katie Pigott, Kathy Breen, Bruce Callen, Paul Aldridge and Christopher (Chris) Beck. Absent: None

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **PRESENTATION**

None

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Curt Theune moved, supported by Chris Beck, to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 16, 2021, as presented.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

### **ITEMS RECEIVED TOO LATE FOR PRINTED AGENDA**

Retirement of Diane Lindberg added as item 7(A) (3) Consent Agenda, and an employee recognition as item 4.5 before Public Comments.

Curt Theune moved, supported by Bruce Callen, to add the above items to the Agenda.

Vote: Yes - Unanimous

### **EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION**

Mr. Furton described the details of a bus accident that occurred at the corner of Leonard Road and 148<sup>th</sup> Avenue on Friday, September 24, 2021, from when he arrived on the scene. The bus was on its normal route with six students and a bus aide on board. A car turned out in front of the bus at a full rate of speed and hit the bus in the area directly behind the driver, about two seats back. The bus eventually went into a ditch on the south side of the road and ended up on its side. There were multiple administrators, firetrucks, deputies, ambulances and everything was well under control. Mr. Furton recognized the driver – Michael McPherson – as a hero in this situation because of his ability to stay calm in a very stressful situation. Mr. Furton heard from the bus driver who was trailing Mr. McPherson's bus that he had the students outside of the bus within seconds of it coming to rest. Mr. Furton stated that Mr. McPherson stepped up tremendously, along with the Transportation Department, and made sure his students were safe. The Board and audience showed their appreciation for Mr. McPherson with an ovation. Mr. Furton advised that Mr. McPherson told him the most important thing is picking up and delivering students home safely every day.

Board President, Jennifer Nicles, added that she met Mr. McPherson (Mr. Mike) when he would drive her kids to sporting events and stay to cheer for the players. She thanked Mr. McPherson for caring for our children, cheering them on and for doing everything that he can to keep them safe.

Mr. Furton thanked him for all he does and for being a hero on Friday afternoon.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mike Zona, 17049 Roosevelt Rd, SL – stated he is surprised that masks are not required at this meeting but children are required to wear a mask in the classroom. He added that the CDC says children who get COVID 16 years and younger have a 99.9% chance of recovering fully without intervention and he finds it illogical and devoid of science why masks are required. He indicated parents are still here, dissatisfied with the fact that children are forced to wear masks as they are the least vulnerable to the illness itself, and that medical and religious exemptions are not granted.

SL Student – commented that there is very little to no evidence that masks are effective, case rates in states with heavy mask mandates are nearly identical to case rates in states with no mask mandates and in SLHS there have been a total of 9 cases as of September 16, showing the lack of necessity for masks for students. She stated that even if masks were effective, most students do not where them right and further cited a Singapore study from 2014 showing only 12% of people could wear the masks properly after being given written instruction. She further stated that if vaccines work properly, it should eliminate the need for masks. She believes there are no logical reasons or clear goal for students to continue wearing masks in schools. She asked the Board to reconsider the requirement of masks in the classrooms.

Mick Bricker, Spring Lake resident running for a Michigan 89<sup>th</sup> District House seat – introduced himself to the Board, indicated the election is next summer and provided that he wanted to come and see how the process works. He thanked the Board for all they do. He further commended the citizens for what they do as well, and he feels our democracy continues to grow stronger and healthier as the process plays out. He stated he was tickled to death to see the Board recognize one of the bus drivers as he was a sub bus driver in the past for the district, attested to the toughness of the job and wanted to put on the record that Marian (Karell) does a phenomenal job with the Transportation Department.

Charity McMaster, 227 Prospect, SL – commented she believes the best protection against COVID is a vaccine and, until students 12 and under can get them, she appreciates everything the Board is doing with requiring masks. She added she feels Superintendent has done an excellent job explaining all of the things that have to be considered, even as things change.

Kathleen Kasnowicz, 11485 Cleveland St, SL – stated she is asking, for a fourth time, for a parent survey on the issue of masking as other schools are out there surveying their parents, and she wishes the same for this district. She provided positive case histories rom surrounding districts with varying mask guidelines compared to positive case history in the district. She asked the Board to reconsider and reach out to Ottawa County to get the masks off all of the students. She added that the elementary buildings have taken it upon themselves to decide what masks are appropriate and she feels that is an overreach, as the Board or the Superintendent has not decided that. She ended by asking that the right to decide be given back to parents so they can decide what is best for their families and their students.

Becki Deater 331 South Lake, SL – commented that elementary schools are trying to regulate what masks students can wear, and stated that some of the masks students are wearing are completely fine in other settings such as doctor’s office or airplane. She added that she believes it is unacceptable for students to be told they have to wear something different. She provided that high school teachers were trying to give out detentions for masks slipping below students’ noses and she thanked Mr. Gilchrist for resolving the situation. She provided positive case rates for surrounding schools compared to district

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positive case rates. She asked the Board to reconsider lifting the mask requirement for older kids and to speak on behalf of parents to the health department and ask them to lift the requirement across the county as well.

Jeromy LaRock, 15391 Oak Ridge Dr., SL – stated that it pains him to keep on addressing the school Board over this mask issue and that actions and decisions by the Board have divided the community. He questioned if anyone on the Board or in leadership considered other solutions or plans consistent with the values of the school promoting kindness and respect. He suggested a conversation on promoting mask wearing not as a mandate but out of kindness and respect, such as wearing a mask when you are close to someone at high risk and then remove the mask after interaction.

SL Student – commented she believes mask are dehumanizing and that some students struggle getting an education with not being able to read lips or see expressions. She added that she sees up to 10 kids every day running around with no masks. She questioned why teachers and principals enforce but do not have to follow the guidelines, and why masks are not required at lunch but are in the classroom.

SL Student – stated she hates wearing a mask as it makes her feel like she can't breathe or her face is stuck in a cage. She doesn't want to be homeschooled but she doesn't want to wear a mask either. See added that masks give her headaches and zits and she hates schools because of the masks. She believes it should be choice to wear the mask or not.

Courtney Holmes, 11422 Leonard Rd, SL – questioned what if we are wrong about the masks. She expressed appreciation for Board members being present and noted parents haven't made it easy for them because they are so passionate about having a choice. She asked to take some of that stress, burden and anxiety away from the Board by giving parents the choice for their own families. She stated that the district has lost families by forcing the mask mandate and questioned whether families would have been lost if parents had been given a choice.

Derek Mazurek, 12580 Leonard St, SL – thanked the Board for doing their best to keep kids safe and added that science evolves over time based on facts. He views this as the Board following the facts and data, making the best decision for the kids, and expressed his gratitude. He believes it is the responsibility of all of us to keep each other in the community safe and that, right now, masks are the best way to do that.

Jeff Deater, 331 South Lake Ave., SL – questioned what the Board is thinking and if there is a bogey they need to hit. He stated a lot of frustration comes from parents not knowing what they need to do and not knowing what the Board is looking for. He stated he is empathetic with the position the Board is in, but thinks that they should error on the side of freedom and let people make choices for themselves.

Heidi Heinz, 16120 152<sup>nd</sup> Ave., SL – commented there are many good points and stats provided which clearly show masks are making no difference. She indicated that, as the seasons change, numbers will go up, and, according to the CDC, tests do not tell the difference between regular flu and COVID. She believes it should be an individual's choice to wear a mask. She asked for a poll or a town hall to have some back and forth from the Board. It is her understanding that Mr. Furton made the decision by himself and the Board did not have any say in it. (Ms. Heinz was cautioned by Board members Chris Beck and Jennifer Nicles to not to go after a staff member and to stick to the topic.) She continued that she feels Mr. Furton is not listening to the parents and questioned why the Board is letting Mr. Furton

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make the decision and they are not taking any responsibility for it. She stated parents are passionate about this topic because it involves their children.

Ashley Pelfresne, 290 N 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave, Fruitport, – commented that while she wanted her daughter to attend SL and it had been good up until this point, she withdrew her daughter from school and is homeschooling her because of the way the mask requirements were handled. She would like her daughter to come back to the district in the future, but is ashamed of the things she has seen. She believes vaccines and masks are a person's choice, and the Board needs to start listening to parents as parent will fight back for what is right.

Molly Fyvie, 15435 Trail Court, SL – stated when she thinks about the Board's role and this being a public institution, it is much different from our homes or when we go so the store. She hopes it is always encompassing the largest number or group of people. She added that she feels the actions and decision of the Board have been consistent with trying to encompass and protect as many children as possible and thanked the Board for adapting through this pandemic, making responsible decisions thus far, looking at the numbers and the research, and listening to a whole variety of people.

Ross Ziegenthaler, 15620 Willows Dr., SL– read from a prepared statement indicating the current mask mandate was issued by the Superintendent with no vote from the school Board and without a public hearing. He provided case history data in Ottawa County and Michigan for ages 0-19, the number of Ottawa County hospital beds being occupied with COVID patients, the median age for COVID hospitalizations and added the current vaccination rate of Ottawa County. He continued with providing definitions of the words tyranny, totalitarianism, and autocratic. He went on to cite provision 380 of Michigan Revised School Code act of 1976 providing the rights of parents and legal guardians. He ended with asking for proof that masking does not physically or mentally harm children, to unmask the children and free their smiles.

Cadence Ziegenthaler, 15620 Willows Dr., SL– provided her views as a registered nurse and trained COVID nurse on the ineffectiveness of masks due to not being fitted or worn properly. She questioned the logic of the Board in its thinking that this is effective. She believes masks are not decreasing the infection rate. She questioned the logic in students having to wear masks during the school day and not during after school activities or athletics. She urged the Board to look at the numbers of the other schools.

Carla Segaar, 18690 N. Shore Dr., SL – pointed out things she loved about the school such as the pledge of allegiance every day, having a patriotic program and loves the school because it seems like there are a lot of good morals, good values and solid ground. This is an awesome school, she still thinks it is, but she thinks eyes are being covered with what really may be going on. When COVID came out – everything is a pandemic – nobody was sick yet – masks are going to be the new normal and we have to get used to it, she asked “what game are they playing with our heads” – there is nobody dying, they are telling us we have to wear masks, and there is nobody dying, hardly, yet, in America – we didn't see much happening and they are telling us it was going to be going on forever. Anyway, so then you have to wear a mask and then you gotta be six feet apart – also, if you didn't know, Dr. Fauci and Bill Gates had a plan to, while Trump was in office, there was going to be a way to depopulate the world – it is proven. How else to depopulate the world ... make a pandemic, make a vaccine, all this good stuff, like a lot of this is that our minds are being played to fall into all of this. Do you know that on the satanic rituals – this stuff is all evil – this is good versus evil – on the satanic rituals, guess what they do? They wear a mask and they stand six feet apart. If the masks aren't working, why are we doing this? And, again, follow the

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money – if one person on this school board has made this decision – I suggest the rest of you on the school board figure out where that money went if there is money involved.

Chris Beck asked is Ms. Segaar believes that COVID is not real and she stated that she believes it is real, that it is a bioweapon, but not a pandemic. How can it be a pandemic if there is 99.47% adults that don't die and, I don't even know, 99.8 of kids getting it – why do they even have to wear masks if they don't get it and where is our choice? Where is our choice? Our freedom of choice? More people die of the flu than they do of the pandemic.

**FINANCIAL REPORTS**

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Curt Theune moved, supported by Bruce Callen, to approve the consent agenda as presented:

- Accounts Payable – Food Service, SLCFAC, General Fund, Student Activity, etc. – totaling \$707,379
- Payroll – totaling \$1,785,078

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

**ACTION ITEMS**

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Curt Theune moved, supported by Bruce Callen, to approve the consent agenda as presented:

- New Hires –
  - Kevin Baker .....Psychologist .....District-Wide
  - Whitney Ferrell .....Assistant Director ..... FAC
  - Marcia Boik .....2<sup>nd</sup> Grade LT Sub..... Holmes Elementary
  - Stacey Johnston .....Instructional Parapro ..... Holmes Elementary
  - Madison Spencer .....Instructional Parapro ..... Holmes Elementary
  - Kate Hedrick.....Instructional (31a) Parapro ..... Holmes Elementary
  - Danielle Laug.....Special Ed Parapro ..... Jeffers Elementary
  - Christine Gerritsen.....Special Ed Parapro ..... Jeffers Elementary
  - Olivia Cornelisse.....Special Ed Parapro ..... Jeffers Elementary
  - Kelly Wood.....Food Service Assistant ..... Jeffers Elementary
  - Kate Johnson.....Instructional Parapro ..... Intermediate School
  - Kysa Meigs .....Special Ed Parapro ..... Intermediate School
  - Danielle VanderMeulen .....Security Parapro..... High School
  - Kimberly Stark.....Food Service Assistant ..... High School
  - Jessica Burns .....CCC Aide..... Community Child Care
- Resignations/Retirement – Hope Kavos, High School ASD/Special Education teacher, and Melissa Keller, Intermediate School Special Education teacher, have provided letters of resignation effective October 1 and October 15, respectively. Both are moving out of state with their families and their resignations are accepted with regrets. Diane Lindberg has provided her official letter of retirement effective December 31, 2021. Mr. Furton noted that Ms. Lindberg

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has been a picture of efficiency in her role, has always been on top of things, understands the job well and is tremendously appreciated. She will be missed by all!

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

### TECH PURCHASE – SUPPORT STAFF COMPUTER UPGRADES

Curt Theune moved, supported by Chris Beck, to approve the purchase of 31 Dell Latitude laptops, 20 Dell OptiPlex desktops and 12 Dell Chromebooks from Presidio for a cost not to exceed \$34,547, as presented.

Mr. Furton noted the devices being replaced are 6 years old or older, technology bond funds will be used for the purchase and this purchase fits within the 10-year technology obsolescence plan.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

### DISCUSSION/INFORMATION ITEMS

None

### PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

### SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Furton reported on the following:

- Legislative update – none
- Homecoming – this week throughout the district. Events include:
  - Money Wars all week with proceeds collected going to Helen DeVos Children's Hospital
  - Spirit Days
  - Pep Assembly Friday
  - Parade Friday at 6:00 p.m.
  - Football game Friday at 7:00 p.m.
  - HS Dance Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.; tent outside on the Lacrosse field
- COVID – Mr. Furton addressed a couple of questions that came up during public comments as follows:
  - Regarding religious exemptions, zero will be granted, as there is no religious reason to not wear a mask.
  - Regarding medical exemptions, there are a few in the district for students specifically who are incapable of removing their masks. These are students typically with multiple impairments.
  - Recognition for students who spoke during public comments - Mr. Furton commended those student for stepping up as public speaking is not easy and is the greatest fear known to man.

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- Regarding masks being decided by the elementary building, there is a policy on what constitutes a suitable mask in the school setting, it is published on the district's website and the principals can share it if they think they have a reason to. It is based on MDHHS and CDC guidelines.
- Regarding the decision process, the district does not have a mask policy but has mask guidelines. Mr. Furton cannot write policy for the district, only the Board can approve policy. However, Mr. Furton can write guidelines based on the Board policies. Several district policies pertain to this particular issue. Based on those and based on Mr. Furton's knowledge of the Board's expectation, Mr. Furton developed guidelines and published them to families. It works this way for many different things; this is not a unique issue. Mr. Furton does not have a desire to have a supreme amount of authority to make decisions, particularly ones that become controversial. However, Mr. Furton does feel an obligation to follow the Board's policy and write guidelines that reflect the interest and the intention of the Board, which is what has been done in this instance.
- These mask guidelines are protecting the school day and are not extended to extracurricular activities or to evening activities for students, which was done very deliberately, and particularly because those are all voluntary. Students/parents make those choices. Children don't have a choice about school, as children need to be in school. The district's school-day mask guidelines significantly limit the potential for students to be placed into quarantine. It is a matter of only having to measure out 3 feet versus a full 6 feet because students/staff are masked at all times in the school setting. This makes a difference in the terms of the number of families/students who need to make decisions about accepting a voluntary quarantine. If students were unmasked, the number of students affected would increase to a 6-foot radius and more students would be missing in-person learning. In-person learning is what the district strives to protect at all times.
- On August 4, mask optional guidelines were issued. At that time, on the CDC transmission indicator, Ottawa County was at the moderate level of transmission, then quickly moved to the substantial level and then into the high level. The district reissued guidelines requiring masks K-12. At that time, it was communicated to families what is mask optional and what is mask required. If the county does get to the point of low transmission, or below substantial, and is sustained on a community wide basis, Mr. Furton would recommend new guidelines with masks optional.
- The COVID Dashboard was included in the Board packet, which indicates 34 cases within the district as of today with five new cases within the last 7 days. The number of staff and students in quarantine is low. Things appear to be optimistic at this point, both regionally and in the district. The notion or the insinuation that this is a longer-term thing because the school board or superintendent wills it to be is simply without merit or basis in fact.
- M-Step – Spring 2021 results were provided to the Board. District students performed well, particularly in ELA/Math.
- SLHS Marching Band – received first place in Class B and Grand Champions at their first competition of the year in Grand Haven on Saturday.
- Spring Lake Senior Ian Hill set a new school record in Cross Country, timing in at 15:34, which is the second fastest time in Class B so far this year.
- Board Member Katie Piggott inquired about the accident history at Leonard and 148<sup>th</sup> and it was noted from Marian Karell, Transportation Director, that she can recall only one other bus accident in recent history about four or five years ago.

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- Board Member Chris Beck inquired about the M-Step and any learning loss over the last year because of COVID. Mr. Furton advised, while it is a question that would be best answered by Scott Ely and each of the five principals, learning loss was not as big of a factor in Spring Lake because students were in person for almost the entire year last year, and learning loss is grossly overstated in general because learning that was missed as opportunity doesn't mean it was lost, it just means it wasn't taught yet. Mr. Furton doesn't think that missed instructional time or curricular content from last year will have a long-term impact on children, but lost in-person instruction can. He provided that the district's teachers were strategic with their curriculum design last year and he is very proud of the results achieved on the spring testing.

**UPCOMING MEETING**

- Regular Board Meeting – October 18, 2021, 7:00 p.m., location TBD

**ADJOURNMENT**

Curt Theune moved, supported by Chris Beck, to adjourn the meeting.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

Jennifer Nicles adjourned the meeting at 8:14 p.m.

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Board Secretary