

**Portland Board of Education
Special Meeting
Tuesday, February 22, 2022 @ 7:00 pm**

Note: Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, attendees participated via in person and Zoom

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Sharon Peters, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm

BOE Members Present: Sharon Peters, Meg Scata, Lauren Christensen, Laurel Steinhauser, Tim Lavoy, Stacey Benham, and Dave Murphy

Administration Present: Superintendent Dr. Charles Britton

Others: Russ Melmed, Chatham Health Director

2. Approval of Agenda

~~L. Steinhauser~~ **L. Christensen moved to approve the agenda for the February 22, 2022 Board meeting as presented, seconded by T. Lavoy. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.**

3. Discussion/Possible Action on the Following:

a. Policy 4118.237 – Emergency Policy on Wearing Face Masks/Coverings

Dr. Britton stated they have been currently working under the executive order for staff to be vaccinated and staff and students to be masked. There were two policies adopted for mask wearing and vaccinations back on 9/2020 and 10/2021. The Board will need to decide whether to continue working under these policies or suspend. The district sent out a survey to faculty, parents and students. Received over 1,000 responses. This survey gave a good indicator of how the community was feeling. Dr. Britton shared results of the survey, which was also posted in the Rivereast and on the website. Received updated guidance from DPH. Dr. Britton asked R. Melmed what does the current data indicate for the transmission of Covid-19? R. Melmed stated that the current average is 22 per 100,000. The percentage is coming down about 20-40% every week for the last four weeks. Currently there is a 70% vaccination rate for 12-17 year olds, and 45% for 5-11 year olds. There are currently good treatment options available. R. Melmed suggests parents reach out to their pediatrician for guidance on children wearing N95 masks. Some outreach programs could include N95 fittings. Additional mitigation strategies for any outbreaks should be implemented. L. Steinhauser asked what parameters would be considered an active outbreak? R. Melmed answered that there isn't a magic number. They need to compare numbers seen over time and if a cluster of cases happens over a short period of time then that would need to be investigated. Metrix are not a go to, but rather looking at the local situation. Need to weigh what risks the district is willing to assume vs the benefits when making a decision to remove the current masking policy. Board members shared their feelings on their comfort levels. Discussion on CIAC guidelines. Dr. Britton stated that if the decision was to have masks optional, there are many ways to support staff and students who want to continue wearing masks. Discussion

on strategies, additional measures for Covid positive cases and non-exclusionary contact tracing. Additional discussion on town policies vs school policies. Schools would operate under school parameters, not town. Dr. Britton feels they have more tools now than ever before, along with two years of understanding. We have fully engaged nurses and a good relationship with DPH. They are currently, and will be, consistent with the DPH and CT Dept. of Education.

T. Lavoy moved to rescind policy 4118.237 effective 2/28/22 at midnight, seconded by ~~L. Steinhauser~~ L. Christensen. Discussion on suspend vs rescind terminology. Question was moved with 1 opposition by M. Scata and 6 approved. MOTION CARRIED.

b. Policy 4118.239 – Required COVID-19 Vaccinations

T. Lavoy moved to rescind policy 4118.239 effective 2/28/22 at midnight, seconded by L. Christensen. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

4. Adjournment

T. Lavoy moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:06 p.m., seconded by S. Benham. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tricia Dean, Clerk