

WINSTON-SALEM/FORSYTH COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

MINUTES – December 14, 2021

6:30 p.m. – Open Session

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: **Deanna Kaplan, Chair**
 Lida Calvert-Hayes, Vice-Chair
 Alex Bohannon
 Andrea Bramer (virtual)
 Leah Crowley
 Dana Caudill Jones
 Deanna Kaplan
 Elisabeth Motsinger (virtual)
 Marilyn Parker
 Malishai Woodbury

BOARD SECRETARY: **Tricia McManus, Superintendent**

GENERAL COUNSEL: **Dionne Jenkins**

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Kaplan called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m. Ms. Motsinger and Ms. Bramer were present and participating by simultaneous electronic communication via Microsoft Teams.

II. Closed Session

On the motion of Ms. Crowley, second by Ms. Calvert-Hayes, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn to Closed Session to discuss a personnel matter and to discuss a legal matter. The Board adjourned for Closed Session at 5:45 p.m.

III. Return to Open Session

On the motion of Ms. Jones, second by Ms. Crowley, the Board voted unanimously to return to Open Session at 6:26 p.m. The Board returned to Open Session at 6:32 p.m.

IV. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and Invocation

Ms. Kaplan led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance and Ms. Calvert-Hayes led the Board in the Invocation.

V. Agenda Review

On the motion of Mr. Bohannon, second by Ms. Crowley, the Board unanimously approved the agenda.

VI. Special Recognitions

A. Winston Open Tennis Tournament Donation

B. Women’s Golf State Champions – Reagan High School

C. Men’s Cross Country State Champions – Mount Tabor High School

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D. Board Spotlight Video

VII. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Ronda Mays

Ms. Mays spoke in favor of continuing with the requirement for wearing masks indoors. She stated that it is necessary in order to keep students in school to receive in-person learning. The rate of infection continues to be high in this community.

Harold Eustache, Jr.

Mr. Eustache stated that it is important to frame the discussion regarding masks from the standpoint of giving parents the agency over their children. He stated that parents should have a choice in whether their children wear masks.

Allen Daniel

Mr. Daniel spoke regarding the proposed salary schedules. He stated that there are over 300 vacancies in classroom teachers and there will be more after Christmas. He stated that teachers are not being paid enough and educators feel demoralized.

Nikki Reed

Ms. Reed spoke on behalf of the Conservative Women of Forsyth County. She read a statement from a parent who is a member of the group who stated that the main focus of teachers at her granddaughter's school is wearing a mask. She stated that children are not dying of COVID; this is an adult issue not a children's issue.

Dave Lamoureux

Mr. Lamoureux stated that the StrongSchools Toolkit is flawed and discriminates against children who are not vaccinated. He stated that his daughter has received notifications of close contact with another student who was vaccinated. He stated that he would like clarification about the close contact protocols.

Ella Lamoureux

Ella spoke over her father's speakerphone. Ella stated that she has been quarantined because she is not vaccinated. She expressed concerns that she was in close contact with another athlete because she is unvaccinated and was not wearing a mask while playing the sport.

Laura Lester

Ms. Lester stated that people are mad about the mask requirement. She stated she does not believe the Board has the students' best interests at heart. She stated that parents are being ignored. Masks do not stop the spread of the virus. She asked the Board to make masks optional.

Al Jabbar

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Mr. Jabbar stated that this is a political ploy and he thanked the Board for keeping students safe and in-school learning. He stated that the parent's choice is at home but once students come to school the Board governs school policy.

Ashley Wallace

Ms. Wallace stated that her son spoke at the last meeting regarding how he feels wearing a mask everyday. She stated that parents should be able to make decisions for their children's health and wellbeing. Something needs to be done about the length of time that children are out of school quarantaining. She spoke regarding the difficulty in getting children tested for COVID.

Tabitha Hackett

Ms. Hackett asked what percentage of students need to be COVID-free before eliminating the mask requirement. She stated that the number of students reported positive for COVID is consistently less than or nearly equal to 1%.

Myra Bumgardner

Ms. Bumgardner spoke on behalf of a member of the Forsyth Conservative Women's group of Forsyth County. This other member's child was also exposed to a student who tested positive for COVID. She stated that the exclusion policy is discriminatory towards people who are not vaccinated.

Mariai Mahala

Ms. Mahala spoke regarding the transition from substitutes from WS/FCS employees to ESS and that it has been negative. She stated that she now has to pay for benefits and takes home less money now than she did when she worked for the district. She stated that substitutes have done everything that teachers have done during COVID.

Robert Capizzi

Mr. Capizzi asked the Board to consider lifting the requirement for wearing masks indoors. He stated that wearing masks is a tax on the social emotional learning of students. He commented on the limited information provided in the Board discussion materials and items.

VIII. Superintendent's Update

Ms. McManus announced that Mr. Kevin Sherrill was named Regional Technology Director of the Year. Ms. McManus recognized Atkins High School, Early College of Forsyth County, and Middle College of Forsyth County for outstanding graduation rates in the 2020-2021 academic year. Ms. McManus also highlighted the schools and coaches participating in the 46th annual Frank Spencer Holiday Classic. The WSFCS Board of Education received the Silver Bell award from the State Board of Education for training excellence during the 2020-2021 school year.

IX. Discussion Items

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A. 2022 Board of Education Meeting Calendar – Dionne Jenkins

Ms. Jenkins presented a proposed board meeting schedule for the 2022 calendar year. Ms. Jenkins proposed reducing the two meetings in December to one, leaving the remainder of the month for newly-elected board meeting business. Ms. Jenkins entertained comments from the Board.

B. School Improvement Plans – Nathan Craver

Mr. Craver presented the school improvement plan for Board approval per North Carolina General Statute § 115C-105.27. All schools have at least one achievement goal and address equity through a standalone goal or action step. There were no questions from the Board.

C. Covid-19 Update and Mask Recommendation – Katie Key and Fredricca Stokes

Ms. Key and Ms. Stokes presented a Covid-19 video update from Dr. Christopher Ohl of Wake Forest School of Medicine, Infectious Disease Section. Dr. Ohl stated that case numbers remain high at this time. The district is not currently near or projected to be near the metrics desired to safely discontinue wearing masks. Dr. Ohl also stated that the Omicron variant is likely to become the dominant variant by the end of January. Dr. Ohl recommended continued mask-wearing. Ms. Stokes reported that Winston-Salem/Forsyth County is still under a mask mandate at this time. Ms. Stokes then entertained questions and comments from the Board.

X. Action Items

A. Consider Approval of 2022 Board of Education Meeting Calendar

On the motion of Mr. Bohannon, second by Ms. Crowley, the Board voted unanimously to approve the 2022 Board of Education meeting calendar.

B. Consider Approval of School Improvement Plans

On the motion of Ms. Parker, second by Ms. Woodbury, the Board voted unanimously to approve the school improvement plans.

C. Consider Approval of District Mask Mandate

On the motion of Mr. Bohannon, second by Mrs Parker, the Board voted 6-3 to approve the district mask mandate. Ms. Jones, Ms. Crowley and Ms. Calvert-Hayes opposed the motion.

D. Consider Approval of Salary Schedules

On the motion of Ms. Crowley, second by Mr. Bohannon, the Board voted unanimously to approve the salary schedules.

XI. Consent Agenda Items

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- A. Consider Approval of General Personnel Report
- B. Consider Approval of October 5, 2021, Special Called Board Meeting Minutes
- C. Consider Approval of October 7, 2021, Special Called Board Meeting Minutes
- D. Consider Approval of October 12, 2021, Board Work Session Minutes
- E. Consider Approval of October 28, 2021, Board Meeting Minutes

On the motion of Ms. Calvert-Hayes, second by Mr. Bohannon, the Board voted unanimously to approve all consent agenda items.

XII. Announcements

There were no announcements.

XIII. Meeting Open to the Public

Allen Daniel

Mr. Daniel spoke regarding a call he received last week regarding a gun being found in his children's school for a firearm and a BB gun. He also spoke about the shooting incident at Oxford High School in Michigan.

XIV. Adjournment

On motion by Ms. Crowley, and second by Ms. Calvert-Hayes, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:12 p.m.