

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 10,

21

Approved November 16, 2021

The Urbana City School Board of Education met for a regular board meeting Wednesday, November 10, 2021 at 1673 S US Hwy 68, Urbana, Ohio. President Darrell Thomas called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll call: Mr. Arter, present; Mr. Engle, present; Ms. Finch, present; Ms. Paul, absent; Mr. Thomas, present.

Four members present.

(Motion #1121.01) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was moved by Mr. Arter and seconded by Ms. Finch to approve the agenda as presented.

Roll Call: Mr. Arter, aye; Mr. Engle, aye; Ms. Finch, aye; Mr. Thomas, aye. Motion carried.

(Motion #1121.02) NEW BUSINESS – It was moved by Mr. Arter and seconded by Mr. Engle to approve the following resolution concerning the district-wide mask mandate:

With the recent changes to the quarantine guidance, decreasing incidents of students and staff COVID-19 positive cases, along with the lack of virus transmission within the school, the Board of Education of the Urbana City School District hereby resolves, effective November 11, 2021, to end the mask mandate approved at the Board of Education meeting held on September 21, 2021, and return to the provisions of the 2021 - 2022 Hillclimber COVID-19 Plan as approved at the Board of Education meeting held on August 17, 2021.

Mr. Arter asked if we were implementing the “mask to stay, test to play” guidance. Mr. Thomas said yes, this was latest guidance on quarantining. Mr. Arter asked for clarification on the requirements of the classroom close contact and when masks would need to be worn. He also noted this only applied to classroom close contacts. If there is an in-home contact, quarantine would need to be observed. Athletes may continue to play with a negative test. Mr. Thiel confirmed, noting there is a double testing process for athletes. Mr. Arter asked if masks would still be required on buses. Mr. Thiel said yes, as this is part of the federal public transit guidance. Mr. Arter said he wants kids in school and he recognizes that we are not getting a whole lot of spread in the schools. He said he likes the idea of keeping kids in school and keeping them safe. He asked who would be keeping track of who needs to wear a mask. Mr. Thiel said it will be an expectation of the administration. Mr. Arter asked if teachers would have to help enforce. Mr. Thiel said yes, and that will be a difficulty under the new guidelines. Mr. Arter asked if this new guidance was logistically possible. Mr. Thiel said yes, we have been doing the contact tracing all along. The tracking of quarantines will flip to the tracking of mask wearing. Mr. Arter asked about those who had mask exemptions. Mr. Thiel said those who have filed mask exemptions would have to quarantine. Ms. Finch clarified that the bus masking mandate would still be in place. Mr. Thiel confirmed, noting that masks will still have to be worn on buses.

Mr. Arter said he was not quite there yet on removing the mask mandate. He said he would like to wait a few weeks until the vaccine for the younger students can be rolled out more fully. He said he likes the new quarantine guidance and keeping kids in school. Ms. Finch said she believes it is time to remove the mandate. Mr. Engle said the goal has been to get to a better situation and the numbers are showing that is what is happening. He acknowledged we do not know if the numbers have gone down because of the mask wearing. He said he thinks kids would be safer wearing masks, but he likes the new quarantine plan. He said he is tired of the negative feedback on the masks. We have tried to do what we think is right and this is a no-win situation. He understands that there are people who do not want masks and there are people who want masks to be worn. If the numbers go up again, we may need to make another decision.

Mr. Arter said he has heard kids are not wearing their masks properly and he hopes that with the new mask to stay guidance, those who have to mask will wear the mask properly for the time period. He said he hopes this works; he does not want to have to go backwards. He

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 10,

21

Approved November 16, 2021

hopes we are leaning back to a pre-pandemic setting. He noted the resolution, if passed, would be effective tomorrow and questioned whether that was enough time to communicate this to parents. Mr. Thiel said if the resolution passed, he would send a Remind message, a PreK-12 call, and make social media posts tonight. Mr. Arter said he was concerned about the communication and making sure parents understood the new quarantine guidance. Mr. Thomas said we are returning to the plan from the beginning of the year. Mr. Thiel said he would send a letter explaining the masking and the quarantine guidance. Mr. Thomas said he appreciated everyone making time to come tonight. This has been something we have been dealing with for a while and there are many different feelings, opinions, and information about it. When we decided to go to masking, he was in favor of giving parents the option. Mr. Arter brought forth a motion regarding the need to mask. At the time we returned to school, we were not having an issue with cases. At the next meeting, we had seen lots of different things happening including hospitals running out of beds and numbers climbing. He said he made his decision based on the guidance given by the Ohio Department of Health to go to masking in order to arrest the spread. He said Clark Shawnee and Tecumseh were able to remove their mask mandates and they went to the mandate about three weeks before we did. The mask to stay/test to play is the latest guidance. He said it made the mask mandate somewhat irrelevant. Losing kids to quarantine and sending kids home has been the biggest issue. It is impacting our students' mental health and their ability to learn. The numbers are going down. He said he reached out to the nurses to get their perspective. He said while they supported masking, they said the numbers are going down and the new guidelines and the availability of a vaccine for younger children will make a difference. He said this is a tough place to be. He said he respects everyone's opinions and feelings. He said when he looked at the numbers, there are very few quarantined kids from close contact who are testing positive. The transmission in the schools is low and we have shown a decline after masking. He said we cannot allow ourselves to be divided. Everyone has a right to their opinion, but it is time to have the discussion over the mandate.

Mr. Arter asked if students and staff with religious exemptions would need to wear a mask if identified as a close contact. Mr. Thiel said they would be subject to quarantine. Ms. Finch said with the new guidelines, students would not have to stay home if they were not sick.

Roll Call: Mr. Engle, aye; Ms. Finch, aye; Mr. Thomas, aye; Mr. Arter, nay. Motion carried.

(Motion #1121.03) NEW BUSINESS – It was moved by Mr. Arter and seconded by Ms. Finch to approve the following resolution implementing a district-wide “Wellness Week” November 22 – 26, 2021:

Whereas the staff, students, and families of the Urbana City School District have undergone a tremendous amount of change, transition, and uncertainty over the past two school years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board of Education recognizes the importance of the mental health and wellbeing of our staff, students, and families;

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Board of Education is hereby declaring the week of November 22 – 26, 2021 as a “Wellness Week” for the students attending schools within Urbana City School District. The Board intends for this week to be used by students, families, and staff as an opportunity to rest and renew.

Students attending schools within the District will not be in session as previously scheduled on November 22nd and November 23rd. Staff of the District will be provided two paid days off during this week or, based on their employment contract, granted two additional vacation or equivalent days. These days are not considered as calamity days and will not be made up later.

The Superintendent and Treasurer are hereby authorized to take such actions in order to implement this resolution.

Ms. Finch said this a good way to let the staff know how much we appreciate them. It will give everyone a chance to get refreshed. Mr. Engle said he agreed and knows how tough it has been for the teachers. This is a good gesture and the staff deserves to have this. Mr. Arter

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 10,

21

Approved November 16, 2021

asked if we have enough minutes to cover being out of school for two days. Mr. Thiel said we confirmed today that we did, with the caveat being an excessive number of two-hour delays that would impact the instructional minutes. We already plan for five calamity days and take those into account in the total minutes. Mr. Arter asked about students who attend in other districts. Mr. Thiel said we will still need to transport to the Career-Tech Center and private and parochial schools, as well as to the ESC units housed in other districts. Mr. Arter asked what staff may be impacted. Mr. Thiel said staff on a 260-day contract are scheduled to work three days that week and will be provided with two additional vacation days if they are required to work during the wellness week. If a driver is required to drive, they will be provided with an equivalent day of pay. Mr. Arter said this is definitely a unique situation and asked if the intent was for this year only and to return to normal for next year. He said he is concerned about parents being able to find childcare with the somewhat short timing. Ms. Finch said she felt like there was time.

Mr. Thomas said the reason we put this on the special meeting agenda, rather than the regular meeting was with the timeframe in mind. He said he has given this a lot of thought and he hopes people have backup plans in place for calamity days and may be able to do something similar. Overall, from his perspective, these have been challenging times and this year has been increasingly difficult on the staff. This year we have tried to return to normal but are still dealing with the masks and contact tracing and he feels everyone needs a break. He wants people to relax and enjoy time with their families and rest and regroup. He said he knows people are stressed out and this is a good opportunity to recognize this. Mr. Arter said he agreed with Mr. Thomas, noting it seemed like the state gave some leeway last year, but seemed to not be so accommodating this year. He asked if other activities would still be held. Mr. Thiel said they would, noting this does not fit the legal definition of a calamity day. He said this is an opportunity for the teachers to destress and he does not want them to have to pay for it later on and add days at the end. He wants this to be a win-win.

Roll Call: Ms. Finch, aye; Mr. Thomas, aye; Mr. Arter, aye; Mr. Engle, aye. Motion carried.

(Motion 1121.04) ADJOURNMENT - Being no further business to discuss, it was moved by Mr. Arter and seconded by Ms. Finch to adjourn the meeting.

Roll Call: Mr. Thomas, aye; Mr. Arter, aye.; Mr. Engle, aye; Ms. Finch, aye. Motion carried.

The President declared the meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

President

Treasurer