

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

February 15, 2022

Live Virtual Online Meeting using ZOOM Audio/Video Conference Software

*** Due to the COVID-19 Crisis, this meeting was live-streamed over the internet using ZOOM video/audio conferencing software in order to adhere with social distancing measures put in place by Governor Baker. This meeting was open to the public for live chat during Public Comment.*

1. Call to Order

At 7:03 PM, Ms. Scoville called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Ms. Guay, Ms. Santiago, Mr. Brosgol, Mr. Morrison, and Student Representative Prakhar Gupta, Hanscom Representative Sarah McGinley, and METCO Madeline Sanabria

Sarah Scoville read a statement saying that the board of health is in charge of public buildings and businesses and that the schools are in charge of the schools. Currently Bedford Public Schools does not have a mask mandate as the district has been following the DESE mandate therefore no mask vote is necessary or will be taken at this meeting. All other options will be discussed during the Superintendent's report.

2. Public Comment

Emily Prince
66 South Road

Ms. Prince spoke on behalf of 148 concerned parents and community members that signed and submitted a petition to Superintendent Conrad asking for a temporary mask mandate until March 8, 2022 given the current mask mandate expires as soon as we return from break. By expending the mask mandate for two-weeks it gives more time for everyone to see if there is, a surge in COVID numbers like what was seen after the last break. The committee can re-evaluate decision at that time. Ms. Prince believes it is premature to get away from masks given that many of the younger students are unable to be vaccinated or reside with older family members or family members with a compromised immune system or have health issues of their own. Ms. Prince asked that the school committee review all data at all schools concerning vaccination rates and case numbers to help guide them in making an informed decision that is best for everyone.

Robin Steele
7 Jeffrey Circle

Ms. Steele stated that she is speaking on behalf of all children. Ms. Steele stated that children are struggling to learn such subjects a phonics because of the masks. They cannot properly see the teachers face/mouth through the mask to hear the correct pronunciation of words. Ms. Steele asks that we follow DESE's guideline to do away with the mask mandate.

Erica Loo

Ms. Loo voiced her concern regarding the social studies curriculum in 7th grade. Ms. Loo does not feel students should be shown riots and disasters as they cannot process the information and it leads children to feel helpless, hopeless, powerless and depressed. Ms. Loo feels discussing such content is not age appropriate. Ms. Loo would like less political content and disturbing images from being shown to students without a balance of other less disturbing content accompanies this material.

Julie Campbell**32 Curb Street**

Ms. Campbell expressed disappointment that the news regarding the change in the mask mandate was shared with students during morning announcement before it was shared with families. Ms. Campbell feels that masks work along with all other proper protocols yet has concerns regarding the 6-10 period in which a student is eligible to return to school after a positive COVID test and not exhibiting symptoms.

Sara Blackman**2 Norte Dame Rd**

Ms. Blackman a community member at high risk spoke about the dismissive nature being taking about mask wearing. Ms. Blackman asked that a subcommittee be formed to address the most appropriate way to go about protecting the most vulnerable community members so that the mask mandate has been lifted.

Dave Feldman**2 Hancock Street**

Mr. Feldman expressed his disappointment that the mask mandate was ending on February 28, 2022, which is right after the break. Mr. Feldman stated that Bedford had some of the highest case numbers in the state and stated his source as the New York Times. Mr. Feldman further requested that a strong recommendation be given to have people test before returning to school after the break.

Mark Levetin**12 Fern Way**

Mr. Levetin would have liked for the mask mandate to stay in place for the remainder of the year. His child wears a mask daily with no issues. Mr. Levetin voiced concern over how this new mask policy will be enforced and is concerned about bullying for those students that choose to continue to wear a mask. Mr. Levetin explained that his child had issues last year with some students at recess and other areas of school.

Mary Couvee**199 Hartwell Ave**

Ms. Couvee a BHS student participating in the Mama Mia musical stated that the cast and crew are concerned about performing without masks. Some cast members have parents and other family members that would not be able to attend a performance with no masks because they

have a compromised immune system. Parents should not have to choose to stay home or come support their child. Not the best choice for students either.

Lexi Sanchez

1 Russett Road

Ms. Sanchez spoke in response to the parent that had concerns about the Social Studies curriculum being taught at JGMS. Ms. Sanchez stated she feels the materials presented to students at the right time and in the right way. Ms. Sanchez stated that more focus is given to politics in 8th grade and beyond and that when extreme topics are presented the students are guided by their teacher all the way through the lesson and that students are lead to lean towards one side or the other. Just presented with the material.

Astrid Cruz

26 Battle Flagg Road

Ms. Cruz asked the school committee to extend the mask mandate for two weeks after the vacation break.

Caroline Cruz

396 Davis Road

Ms. Cruz a BHS student participating the musical is concerned that the show will be cancelled because it happened last year. Ms. Cruz feels that this is a stressful situation to be in and is concerned that the audience members will not be required to wear a mask. Ms. Cruz asked if the mask mandate could be extended, make it so some performances are mask, and unmasked.

Angela Winter

5 Great Road

Ms. Winter stated that everyone is tired of COVID-kids are tired of masks. Ms. Winter is concerned about long-term mental health issues. Kids should not fear taking off masks. Some people will continue to wear a mask. Not everyone is going to just throw masks in the air because the mandate has ended.

Jane Patterson

20 Paul Revere Road

Ms. Patterson shared that she is in favor of removing masks. Ms. Patterson asked if the school committee could supersede the superintendent or board of health and if a vote would be taken tonight to override decisions already made. Ms. Patterson stated that at some point we all have to move on.

Kelly Horton

7 Evans Ave

Ms. Horton shared that we have a clear strategy and metric concerning data. We should use it and stop all the back and forth with masks. Follow the data as we have been doing.

Zoe Kramer

37 Washington Street

Ms. Kramer a BHS student shared that students are tired of wearing masks. Sees mental health decline in classmates. No one person can fix COVID. We all need to do our part. It is not fair to ask those with compromised immune systems to do more than others are. It is a community effort not just a student effort.

Patty Carluccio

16 Washington Street

Ms. Carluccio is in support of the DESE recommendation to end the mask mandate. Ms. Carluccio stated that there is no difference between a masked school and an unmasked school. People have begun to travel again and we should do away with the masks.

Erin Jeremy

60 Dunster Road

Ms. Jeremy thanked the school committee for putting the kids first. Ms. Jeremy asked that the school committee extend the mask mandate for two weeks following the vacation break due to some people traveling.

Becky Venuti

17 Evans Ave

Ms. Venuti in favor of no longer wearing a mask stating that we need to trust the work being done by the experts. Ms. Venuti is tired of all the negativity surrounding individuals choosing to wear masks. Ms. Venuti encouraged everyone to speak to their children about the changes and the importance of accepting those that will continue to wear a mask or not.

Sheila Mehta-Green

1 Glen Ora Drive

Ms. Mehta-Green Thanked the school committee and Mr. Conrad for all their hard work on this issue. Ms. Mehta-Green was speaking on behalf of the cast and crew of the BHS musical Mama Mia. The cast and crew would like to remain wearing a mask and ask the audience members to do the same when they come to a performance.

Rachel Gould

5 Liberty Road

Ms. Gould expressed her concern that the mask mandate would be ending. Ms. Gould stated that as a student at BHS and current Mama Mia cast member, she would like the mask mandate to stay in place. Ms. Gould further stated that of students in sports and theatre lost so much when the pandemic hit and the students do not want to put in all this hard work only to have events and games canceled again.

Christie Martin

11 Selfridge Road

Ms. Martin asked the school committee to extend the mask mandate for two weeks following the vacation as we had a large surge in COVID cases after the last vacation. Ms. Martin expressed her disappointment in a message going out to families that the mask mandate would not be continued prior to tonight's meeting.

Michaela McCormick

55 Evergreen Ave

Ms. McCormick asked if the teacher's union were consulted before this decision was made and if all considerations were taken into account when agreeing to lift the mask mandate. Ms. McCormick suggested that we look at mistakes that happened globally because mask mandates were removed too soon.

Maria Barrino

Ms. Barrino stated that although she has no students in the district she is in favor of lifting the mask mandate. Ms. Barrino stated that we should follow the science and have the right to choose to wear a mask or not.

Michael Indelicato

6 Sorens Way

Mr. Indelicato stated that as a physician that he does not take COVID lightly when advising his patients or others when making decisions about how to keep oneself safe. Mr. Indelicato supports removing the mask mandate as he feels we have more options available than we had two years ago. Mr. Indelicato spoke of the importance of following the data and interpreting the data when making decisions.

Keira Doyle

28 Sweetwater Ave

Ms. Doyle stated that it is important for students to voice their concerns regarding masks. It is an important issue and students should weigh in on the matter.

Bing Bing

10 Madawaska Street

Ms. Bing stated that we should continue to follow state guidelines concerning the mask mandate. Kids and parents should get to choose if they want to wear masks all the time. She is worried about the long-term effects on kids if they continue to wear masks.

3. PR Report

Appointments:

Jessica Savas	LTS Elementary Teacher	Lane
Abigail DeAngelo	BCBA	JGMS
Kristin Ferrari	LTS Guidance Administrative Assistant	BHS
Chauncey Williams	SPED Liaison	BHS

Internal Transfers:

Alyssa Catanzano	1.0 TA/BT	Davis
Linda Kennedy	Custodian (Nights)	BHS

Substitutes:

Kate Rotman	5 Day Building Sub	Davis
Maxwell Hughes	Per Diem Sub	District

4. Award Presentation- MYP High School Annual Poster Contest Winner: Katie Noh

Mr. Conrad introduced BHS senior Katie Noh, Marcia Daniels, Executive Director of Mass Partnership for Youth, BHS principal Ms. Galante and BHS art teacher Mr. Hagan to the school committee so they could speak about the poster contest and congratulate Katie on winning this year's competition. Ms. Galante congratulated Katie on winning this award after speaking highly of her many other accomplishments during her high school career.

Ms. Daniels explained details of the contest along with this year's contest theme, which was Peace Brings the Word Together. Ms. Daniels explained that Katie was one of 441 students that submitted an entry and her artwork. The contest has three divisions, elementary, middle school high school, and Katie's artwork was unanimously chosen as the winner. Mr. Hagan spoke about how the students created and submitted their art for the contest. It was an option assignment during his class and Katie eagerly wanted to participate and submit her creation for the contest. Katie spoke of the process she went through to create her poster entitled "We are Stronger Together". She spoke about wanting to make sure everyone was included and represented in her art.

5. BHS Now Presentation

Ms. Galante and Ms. Butler along with BHS students spoke about BHS Now spoke, which is a student lead announcement/news platform. The 18-19 students currently involved create, film, edit and distribute content twice a week to the student body at BHS. The students feel it a way to bring them all together as they show a variety of topics, they shine a spotlight on students and activities and sports to help build a stronger student community. All the students along with Ms. Butler spoke on the enjoyment they get from participating and they all hope to grow the program to one day. The students shared the need for a bigger space and more up to date

equipment but said they are enjoying learning about production and hope that one day this “club” can become a curriculum-based course offered to more students

6. Gift Acceptance- Donation of GBC Binding System

Mr. Conrad read an email from Tom Scanlon expressing his desire to donate a GBC Binding System and supplies to the Davis Elementary School estimated at \$5,000. Mr. Scanlon describe in his email that his company was closing and how he recalls his children creating books and pamphlets when they attended Davis and wanted to give back to Davis.

Mr. Brosgol made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion to accept donation of GBC Binding System valued at \$5,000 to the Davis Elementary School from Mr. Tom Scanlon.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Santiago

MOTION APPROVED 5-0-0

Ms. Guay	Yes
Ms. Scoville	Yes
Mr. Brosgol	Yes
Mr. Morrison	Yes
Ms. Santiago	Yes

7. Bedford Charter Contract- 2nd Read & Vote

Mr. Conrad presented a brief overview on the Bedford Charter Contract and asked the committee for any further questions of concerns about what was previously presented during the first read of the Bedford Charter Contract renewal.

Mr. Morrison made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion for School Committee to approve the request by Bedford Charter for a one-year contract renewal

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Brosgol

MOTION APPROVED 5-0-0

Ms. Guay	Yes
Ms. Scoville	Yes
Mr. Brosgol	Yes
Mr. Morrison	Yes
Ms. Santiago	Yes

8. FY22 Midyear Fiscal Update

Ms. Kirrane presented the following as part of her midyear fiscal update as of January 31, 2022. The forecast focuses on the school’s FY22 operating budget, and then provides an update on the status of approved Covid-19 contingency spending. As of January 31, 2022, 56% of the operating budget expended or encumbered, the operating budget has a projected deficit of -\$326,762.

The deficit is attributed to out-of-district tuition expense to be covered by a town reserve approved for this purpose up to \$450,000. Other savings in the operating budget are having a positive impact and the operating budget, which should have a surplus of \$62,328 at the end of the year.

Expenditure category changes:

- Salaries –are projected to the end of the year with a positive balance of \$104,984.
 - The savings are the result of a positive balance in salaries due to attrition, turnover savings and vacant positions.
- Operating Expenses – All expense accounts through the end of the year will possibly end with a net negative balance of -\$69,548.
 - This is the result of higher than anticipated contracted services
- Out-of-District Tuition – The originally projected deficit of -\$450,000 has improved to -\$389,089.
- Regular Transportation – All costs of regular school bus routes are encumbered. A transfer from the salary accounts was necessary to cover the costs related to late buses, which were not budgeted accurately in the original FY22 budget process.
- Special Education Transportation – All costs for transporting students to specialized programs within Bedford Public Schools and to out-of-district placements have been a positive balance of \$23,860.

The school department continues to work closely with the town to manage federal relief funds to minimize the impact on local budget dollars and to maximize use of relief funds as appropriate.

9. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Conrad provided the following during his Superintendent's report to the school committee. Mr. Conrad stated that both Commissioner Riley and Governor Baker made an announcement last week stating that the current DESE mask mandate due to expire on February 28, 2022 would not be extended. As a district, we consulted with our doctors, BEA, Bedford Board of Health and SC Chair to conclude that we would continue to follow DESE guidelines and therefore end the mask mandate on February 28, 2022. With that said it is now a personal decision to wear a mask. All other current COVID-19 protocols will remain in place (i.e., HVAC systems running higher, HEPA, testing and cleaning) Mr. Conrad encouraged everyone to take advantage of getting free testing either through the pool testing at school or by picking up free test at any Town building. Mr. Conrad also strongly suggested that everyone returning to school or work after the break test himself or herself on February 27, 2022.

Mr. Conrad also spoke about the work that building principals and staff are doing to mitigate any ill will towards those that choose to continue wearing a mask. Reiterating that the narrative being provided at school is that everyone has a right to choose to wear a mask or not and that no one should be made to feel bad for their choice. Students will however have to continue wearing masks when riding the school bus. This is not a state directive but a federal one. All person riding a plane, bus, train etc. must continue to wear a mask.

10. Adjournment

Mr. Brosgol made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion at 10:47 PM to adjourn not to re-open in Open Session.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Guay

MOTION APPROVED 5-0-0

Ms. Guay	Yes
Ms. Scoville	Yes
Mr. Brosgol	Yes
Mr. Morrison	Yes
Ms. Santiago	Yes

Exhibits/Documents

Donation Letter from Tom Scanlon

PR Report

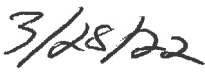
FY22 Midyear Fiscal Report

Bedford Charter Renewal Contract

Annual Poster Contest



School Committee Secretary



Date

