

**MINUTES OF WORK/SPECIAL SESSION OF GLADSTONE SCHOOL BOARD
SCHOOL DISTRICT #115, CLACKAMAS COUNTY
GLADSTONE, OREGON**

March 2, 2022 – Minutes

BOARD ATTENDANCE:

Steve Stewart, Chair

Stacie Moncrief, Vice Chair

Donna Diggs, Member

Tracey Grant, Member (Zoom)

Erik Richter, Member

Jeremy Shaw, Member

Ginger Zimtbaum, Member

Bob Stewart, Superintendent

Natalie Weninger, Board Secretary

The Work/Special Session meeting of the Gladstone School Board of Directors was held in-person at Gladstone High School/Demonstration Room and via Zoom Webinar on Wednesday, March 2, 2022.

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Board Chair Steve Stewart called the session to order at 6:30 PM.

a. Flag Salute

Board Chair Steve Stewart led the flag salute.

2. MASK MANDATE DISCUSSION

Bob Stewart, Superintendent presented a COVID Update. He went over a sequence of events from February 8, 2022 through March 2, 2022. This time period included the State announcing the removal of the mask mandate on March 31, 2022, revising the date to March 19 and then again to March 11. The Oregon Department of Education has released a new Ready Schools Safe Learners (RSSL) guideline. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) announced new COVID-19 community levels with indicators for low, medium and high. The CDC will update a map weekly. Bob Stewart shared a picture of the map showing the current level for Clackamas County at the medium (yellow) level. It is expected to drop to low (green) by the end of the week. The Oregon Health Science University (OHSU) did a forecast for the area. It projects a decline of cases in Oregon. The new RSSL strongly advises the universal use of face coverings in schools due to illness when county COVID-19 community levels are high. At all levels, individuals may choose to mask based on their individual risk assessment. Effective February 25, 2022, CDC does not require wearing masks on buses or vans operated by public or private school systems. The requirement to wear masks on K-12 transport in Oregon will end on March 11, 2022. School systems at their discretion may choose to require that masks are worn on buses or vans as part of their local decisions on the use

of face coverings in school settings. The new information from the state included: pausing contact tracing, pausing quarantines, no longer requiring face coverings on buses, continuing to strive to maintain physical distancing, isolating for five (5) days with an infection (may return if fever free and symptoms are improving). There is no change in school employee vaccination rules. Bob Stewart went over critical considerations with the changes. He said the district will not tolerate bullying and harassment of students over masks. In response to employee concerns regarding air quality, the district has installed a UV-C system that circulates outside air and cleans the air of 99.97% of viruses and bacteria. No other district in our state has an air quality system like this. It is the same as hospitals use. The district is anxious to have volunteers return to schools. The administration team is beginning to look at a process to bring them back into the schools safely.

Each Board member had an opportunity to ask questions.

Tracey Grant asked if teachers were going to be required to monitor masks and seating charts. They will not be required to do any contact tracing, provide seating charts or monitor masks if masking becomes optional.

Erik Richter said he wants to follow the science and statistics. The state is moving to masks optional for a reason and dropping the need to contact trace, test-to-stay and quarantine. He understands that people are fearful but it's time to normalize society. Time for us to be strong for our kids. There are many students who have never been in school without the mask requirement. He is concerned about bullying and supports a no tolerance policy. He will be shocked if the district does not move to optional face coverings.

Ginger Zimtbaum has seen different statistics. She has talked to a number of physicians in the medical community. They do not agree with the new recommendations from CDC. She talked about families experiencing COVID, especially those who are high risk. Some kids want to continue to wear masks. She wants to see a balance and is extremely torn. She believes it is morally and ethically our responsibility to protect vulnerable students.

Jeremy Shaw wants to see it be in the parent's hands to choose. If students want to wear masks they should be able to without being bullied. For two years the district has followed CDC and OHA/ODE guidance. He believes the district should keep following them. He agrees with Ginger that you can find evidence on both sides. It's hard to know what is right and what is wrong.

There was a brief conversation about vulnerable families and universal masking to ensure less spread including the proper way to wear a mask and students not wearing fitted masks.

Donna Diggs wants to look out for the best interest of students. The health and science data is at a point where they have put out new guidance making masks optional. We have been following the guidance and that is what we should continue to do.

Stacie Moncrief said she knows the community has been frustrated with the Board's timeline in making a decision. She wants them to know it doesn't mean Board members haven't been thinking about it. There will be unhappy people whatever decision is made. They have taken their time and appreciate the Board's thoughtfulness in waiting for the new guidance today. Her north star has been to keep kids in school. With the quarantine lifted, there will not need to be entire

classrooms shut down. That means students can stay in school. She thanked the community for taking the time to email. It's time to make face coverings optional.

Those who need to wear the masks can continue to do so. The choice should be respected on both sides. She will keep wearing a mask and ask that her children do the same. She asked the community to support each other in their choice and not to make it a political battle.

Tracey Grant said as an elected official and member of the school board she looks at what is best for students. The district should follow CDC. Her biggest fear was for the contact tracing work load and that has been lifted. She thanked the community for the emails.

Steve Stewart addressed the community regarding the Board agenda changing from a work session to a special session. The posting met the requirement and gave as much notice as possible. Since there was a change in Salem the Board wanted to have a meeting in which they could discuss and vote. He received over 67 emails regarding masks and read them all. He likes everyone getting involved and thanked the community for their participation. He wants to follow the science.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Forty seven public comments were received regarding face coverings. Ten comments were in favor of the district keeping masks mandatory. Thirty seven were in favor of making masks optional or no masks. Chair Steve Stewart offered 10 of the submissions to be read aloud. A few of those selected were able to read them aloud. There were technical difficulties with zoom in addition to some of the community members not present to read their submission.

Gladstone Teacher Association Co-Presidents Torrie Dowdy and Serena Mullen addressed the Board regarding face coverings.

4. ACTION ITEMS

a. Approve Gladstone School District Mask Requirement

Erik Richter moved first and Jeremy Shaw seconded approval of the following resolution:

There was discussion about being respectful of teachers and staff. The consensus of the Board was that if the staff polls were given today they would have different results. There were further comments encouraging people to be respectful of the choice to wear a mask or not. The district will follow the bullying policy for anyone harassing others on their choice. The Board asked teachers and staff if they continue to have concerns, it is important to get that communication to administrators.

(22-12) BE IT RESOLVED, that the Gladstone School District Board of Directors approve following the state's recommendation for face coverings, making masks optional effective March 11, 2022, at 11:59 PM, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Gladstone School District will continue to follow the State's recommendation at the least restrictive levels.

(22-12) Motion passed 6-0. Ginger Zimtbaum abstained.

5. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- a. There was not an executive session.

6. ADJOURNMENT

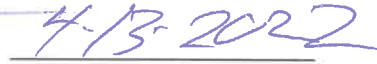
The next regular School Board Meeting is scheduled at 6:30 PM on Wednesday, March 9, 2022. Virtual meeting links will be posted for all meetings.

Board Chair Steve Stewart adjourned the session at 7:38 pm.

ATTEST:



Steve Stewart, Board Chair



Date



Bob Stewart, Superintendent



Date