

River Valley School District
Thursday, August 12, 2021
Regular Meeting
Middle School Library
7:00 p.m.

Present: Nelson, Jennings, Young, Minich, Maier, Cates, Iausly, Bettinger, Carstensen

Absent: N/A

Admin: Glasbrenner, Krey, Radtke, Blakley, Peterson, Hegland

Others: Ava Iausly, Rebecca Weidner, Michelle Orcutt, Melissa Hohneke, Vicki Limmex, Caressa Brandenburg, Malissa Dischler, Kristi Hills, Stephanie Osborn, Vicky Dittmer, Grace Stanton, Jodi Feiner, Linda Kettner, Lynn Erickson, Kara Weiss, Masaru Furukawa, Dave Chapman, Paula Wedige (Administrative Assistant)

President Jennings opened the meeting. She noted that the meeting had been properly posted and notice had been provided to the appropriate media and each School Board Member. Maier moved to proceed with the legal meeting. Iausly seconded. Motion carried.

Consideration & Action on Approval of Agenda

Cates moved to approve the agenda. Minich seconded. Motion carried.

Public Comments

Rebecca Weidner spoke in favor of making masks optional. She noted kids are resilient and areas near us are not affected like other areas in the state and nation. She asked the Board to consider what is happening in our community and region and not use a one-size-fits-all model.

Caressa Brandenburg supports making masks optional. She has 3 children and a fourth child with a weakened immune system passed away from pneumonia. For her, masking is not political but is personal. Her children's father served on a COVID 19 task force in Washington DC and also supports making masks optional. Caressa works in an elementary school and sees a large number of kids with headaches during school. She believes masks on children are a bad idea by what she sees watching kids daily. Kids take down masks, sneeze in masks, fidget with masks, and suck on masks. They don't keep them clean and safe.

Eva Iausly is an 8th grader in the middle school and wants to wear masks for safety for everyone. She noted half of the students can't get the COVID vaccine. She feels in-person learning is best for education and she doesn't want to miss homecoming again.

Melissa Hohneke has two students in River Valley who were kept home last year because of the mask requirement. She is requesting masks be optional even though she has a child with health conditions. She wants kids to see mouths while people are talking since learning disabilities make it harder with masks on when you can't see mouths or hear well.

Grace Stanton feels that while masks are a drag, there were very few COVID cases last year at the elementary level. She believes it is safer to wear masks with the Delta variant. She noted experts say masks work and social distancing works. She believes Delta is affecting kids more. She would like to start school by wearing masks for 60 days and then check on how we are doing and make masks optional if we are doing well.

Lynn Erickson has a special needs son and showed a mask that he was wearing was dirty. She doesn't believe masks are healthy and doesn't want her son to wear one since he can't speak to say he can't breathe or communicate. He needs to see teachers' faces. Kids need to see faces of those to trust, like teachers. Social distancing and other protocols are better. Masking is not the way to go for her family and she doesn't want all to be forced to wear masks.

CESA #3 Annual Meeting Report

Jennings attended as the Board's representative. She noted the speaker was worthwhile and very inspirational, noting that we learned a lot last year and that we need to use that information.

2021-22 Annual District Goals

No discussion. On hold until September Board meeting.

Strategic Plan Progress Update

No discussion. On hold until September Board meeting.

Update on School District Operations from Administration

Blakley noted they are prepping the building to welcome back students and staff. Custodians are doing a lot of work. He is looking forward to getting kids back in building. Radtke agreed with Blakley and mentioned the draining and window projects happening outside of the middle school. Peterson stated teachers have been in and out of the building to get ready and the new flooring at the elementary looks nice and is quieter. Hegland stated that after a busy summer, fall sports are up and running and he's excited for the year. Krey thanked food service staff and drivers for delivering 130 meals every week during the summer. He noted that the custodians have been awesome getting ready for school to start.

Board Reminders, Announcements, and Training Opportunities

The Board was asked to let Wedge know if they are attending the January WASB Convention in Milwaukee and if they need a hotel room. The Board members were invited to the all staff inservice at 10:00 am on August 24 at the high school. Thanks was extended to Wedge for her 25 years of service at the district.

Legislative Update

Glasbrenner noted that federal transportation guidelines require masking on public transportation, which includes school buses. Therefore, at this time, masking on school buses is required for the coming school year since it is a mandated process and will not be a part of our decision-making process pertaining to masking.

Consent Agenda: - Checks, Invoices, Receipts – July 2021; Open Session Meeting Minutes – July 8, 2021, Regular Meeting

Young moved to approve the consent agenda items as submitted. Cates seconded. Motion carried.

Consideration & Action on 2021-22 PSLO (Police School Liaison Officer) Services

Bettinger moved to approve the 2021-22 PSLO Services with an increase from \$18 to \$20 per hour. Maier seconded. The rate is the same that is paid by the Village for a part-time officer when Officer Kurek is working as the PSLO. Motion carried.

Consideration & Action on 2021-22 All Staff Employee Handbook

Bettinger moved to approve the 2021-22 All Staff Employee Handbook. Cates seconded. Each revision in the handbook was approved individually at different Board meetings, but this action approves the handbook in its entirety. Motion carried.

Consideration & Action on Resolutions Accepting Resignations, if any
None.

Consideration & Action on Hirings, if any
Iausly moved to approve the hiring of Whitney Bindl, Grade 1 Teacher. Minich seconded. Motion carried.

Consideration & Action on Instructional Model for the 2021-22 School Year
Glasbrenner outlined a proposed “Reopening Schools Overview – Instructional Model for 2021-22 School Year” that was formulated from discussions between administrators and school nurses, keeping in mind academics, social/emotional well-being, school safety, and community impact. An earlier draft was reviewed two weeks prior by the Policy Committee during a discussion about Policy 728 Wearing Masks and Face Coverings, but there was no Committee recommendation for Board action.

The Model recommends in-person instruction, 5 days a week, with a full-time virtual option through Rural Virtual Academy @ River Valley School District out of Medford. The Model is based on local data but the district would follow any mandates set by the county, state, or nation. The Model requests face coverings be optional but highly recommended if not vaccinated. Federal transportation guidelines require masking on public transportation, which includes school buses. Signage, social distancing, support of masking choices, use of individual water bottles and supplies, and use of hand sanitizer are all encouraged. Ventilation and cleaning protocols were changed last year.

It was highly emphasized that sick kids and staff cannot come to school. Those with symptoms who are vaccinated or test negative can return to school when they are symptom-free. Those with symptoms who are not vaccinated, don’t test, or test positive must isolate at home for 10 days before returning to school. If a person is home with symptoms, or is choosing to stay home due to a close contact situation, daily work will be posted or parents can pick up homework, similar to any other illness. Teachers will not be providing live, synchronous learning for these situations.

To provide a sustainable decision-making model, the Model outlines thresholds for when to mandate masks, using internal data that we will track for our students and staff. By tracking positive cases, a masking mandate will be implemented in a building when 5% of that entire building is positive.

Bettinger asked about close contacts with someone who tests positive. Per the Model, we would notify families of a close contact situation but would not require quarantine. A close contact would be allowed to attend school or a family could choose to keep them home. During 2020-21, there were over 4,000 days lost for close contacts, with only 5 resulting in a positive. Cates noted that we were masking during 2020-21. Nelson asked if the notification of a close contact would include if the person was wearing a mask. It was noted it would not. Nelson is concerned with no internal data on the new Delta variant and the use of data from last year.

Iausly likes the use of internal data and is comfortable with the percentage thresholds listed in the Model for when to mandate masks. He questions what data to use for the first day of school. Blakley noted that there were no spikes in our community this summer when sports, summer school, and community members were unmasked. Iausly noted we weren’t tracking kids in the

summer and the Delta variant is just starting and creates a different factor. Iausly is more comfortable starting with masks, collecting data, and then using thresholds and rolling back if numbers are lower.

Blakley noted that kids are in school for about 7 hours a day, 5 days a week. They may not wear masks at home, at lunch, after school, or during sports. It is a mixed message and hard to enforce with kids. While Iausly understands the difference between buildings and vaccine eligibility, he wants to start cautiously. Blakley thinks maybe the middle ground is letting parents make the decision about masking. Many in the audience clapped at this point. It was noted that an online parent survey taken the day before regarding masking showed 63% want masks optional and 35% want masks required.

Jennings pointed out that administration formulated a Model that works for them. Iausly noted that his criticism is that we have no internal data at this point. He would prefer starting with masking and then if numbers are low, then make masks optional. Young would rather see we say masks “recommended” instead of “optional” to show we are listening to the CDC and the medical community. In her discussion with Dr. Furukawa, studies show that masks are effective in high risk situations. Jennings noted parents feel it is their choice on how to protect their kids. Carstensen noted that just because masks are optional, that doesn’t mean a family won’t wear masks.

Cates has a concern with not quarantining close contacts. She feels schools are a hub of public health and we have an obligation to mitigate spread. She wants us to follow quarantine protocols for close contacts. Blakley noted it is difficult as a principal to notify students that they must quarantine because of being a close contact. Cates understands this burden. Carstensen noted a higher probability of spread if not masked.

Nelson listens to experts for recommendations and keeps hearing that making masks optional is not a good idea indoors. She is fine with no masks outdoors. Bringing kids indoors with no vaccine with the Delta variant scares her. She wants to start with masks and see what happens and then react.

Bettinger noted that CDC uses the term “recommend.” He feels we could change our decision regarding masking if our internal data shows an increase after school starts. Young clarified that threshold percentage was for active cases by building. Jennings asked if we require masks, could parents still say they don’t want to mask. Glasbrenner noted only if they have a doctor excuse for health reasons or special needs.

Maier noted that the Board voted in June to make masks optional for summer school. There was no state or public mask mandate then and there isn’t one now. He wants to remain consistent. Glasbrenner noted we would follow a state or public mandate. There is a federal mandate to wear masks on school buses since that is public transportation. Maier wants to follow the Model and look at data per building. Jennings noted this recommendation comes from administration and she wants to support them. Cates noted she is trying to balance all needs.

Cates moved to recommend the plan as presented except to reinstate masks beginning Monday and review data after three weeks and to do contact tracing as recommended in the plan but to also require quarantine of close contacts. Iausly seconded.

Iausly, Cates, Nelson raised their hands in favor of the motion. Bettinger, Maier, Minich, Carstensen, Young, Jennings raised their hands against the motion. Motion failed.

Carstensen moved to approve the plan as presented. Maier seconded.

There was discussion to amend the motion to change masks optional to masks recommended and to quarantine close contacts. Glasbrenner noted the district is working with the Spring Green EMS for testing services. Dr. Furukawa advised not to allow return to school right away after a negative test since not guaranteed to shed virus right away and that masks are important in an exposure situation.

Carstensen moved to amend her motion to recommend the plan as presented except to change masks optional to masks recommended and to do contract tracing as recommended in the plan but to also require quarantine of close contacts. Cates seconded.

Young, Cates, Nelson raised their hands in favor of the motion. Bettinger, Maier, Minich, Carstensen, Iausly, Jennings raised their hands against the motion. Motion failed.

Carstensen moved to recommend the plan as presented except to change masks optional to masks recommended and to follow the plan recommendation to do contract tracing and notification to families without requiring quarantine of close contacts. Maier seconded.

Bettinger, Maier, Minich, Carstensen, Jennings raised their hands in favor of the motion. Iausly, Nelson, Cates, Young raised their hands against the motion. Motion carried.

It was noted that a COVID data threshold tracker will be updated daily on the district website.

At 8:35 pm, there was a five-minute break in the meeting.

Consideration & Action on Policy Committee Recommendations

As recommended by the Policy Committee, Jennings moved to approve the second reading of the following policies: (NEW) 852 Distribution of Electronic and Printed Material; 345.4 Academic Honors and High School Laude System; 345.4 Exhibit Laude Chart; 320 Organization for Instruction; and 322 School Day. Cates seconded. Motion carried.

As recommended by the Policy Committee, Jennings moved to approve the first reading of the following policies: 346 Testing Programs of ~~English Language Learner (ELL) Students~~; 346-Rule 2 Testing of ~~English Language Learner (ELL)~~ Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Students; (NEW) 342.5 Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Program; 361 Selection of Instructional Materials; (NEW) 411.4 Foster Care Children; 751 Student Transportation Services; (NEW) 526.1 Employment References and Verification (Aiding and Abetting Sexual Abuse); and (NEW) 671.3 Employee Compensation - Unexpected or Extraordinary Circumstances. Maier seconded. Motion carried.

Consideration & Action on Curriculum and Instruction Committee Recommendations

Young noted the Committee met twice since the last Board meeting. The major item for discussion has been the CESA 3 curriculum audit results. There are no recommendations for action from the Committee.

Consideration & Action on Buildings and Grounds Committee Recommendations

Iausly noted that the stormwater drainage project is being done along with the window replacement project. The athletic stadium project and fundraising efforts are moving forward and will kick off in a few weeks. A brochure, data, and 3D renderings are being prepared. A “round up” effort during purchases at local businesses is being looked at and a “Go Fund Me” page will be created. There are no recommendations for action from the Committee.

Jennings asked to return to the update from the Policy Committee since the Committee did recommend changes to Policy 728 Wearing Masks and Face Coverings since federal transportation guidelines require masking on public transportation, which includes school buses. Iausly moved to approve this language change to the policy. Cates seconded. Motion carried.

Consideration & Action on Budget/ERC Committee Recommendations

As recommended by the Committee, Bettinger moved to approve substitute pay rates for 2021-22 to be the same as 2020-21 and to keep a total of three designated substitutes. Young seconded. Motion carried.

Consideration & Action on Resolutions Accepting Gifts, if any

Maier moved to adopt the Resolutions Accepting Gifts as follows: \$2,003 from Athletic Booster Club for a 10x20 EZ Up Tent to be used by the Track and Field and Cross Country Teams; \$3,000 from Athletic Booster Club for East Gym upgrades, painting, and matting; a drone valued at \$350 from the Scott Schuerman Estate for district use; and \$100 from Bethany Helmich for school supplies for families in need. Minich seconded. Polled vote was 9-0 in the affirmative. Motion carried.

Iausly moved to adjourn at 8:53 p.m. Maier seconded. Motion carried.

Submitted by Paula Wedige for:

_____ Deborah Nelson, School District Clerk9”00