

**DANVILLE SCHOOL BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, October 5, 2021 - 6:00 p.m.
Danville School Library & Zoom teleconference.**

Members present Bruce Melendy (Chair)*, David Towle, Tim Sanborn**, Clayton Cargill, Robert Edgar | * Phone remote (connection intermittent) **Zoom remote

Administration present Mark Tucker, David Schilling, Sarah Welch

Public present Rob Balivet, Amy Bedor, Tim Bedor, Drew Cameron, Thomas Edgar, Katie Fiegenbaum (*Caledonia Record*), Simon Fisher, Kristin Franson, Molly Gleason, Sara Jimenez, Carolyn Morrison, Deborah Rouelle, Tina Rouelle, Sara Stinson, Kendra Therrien, Ryan Whitcomb, Kaity White, Amanda Winn

1 Call to Order [00:00:00] Bruce called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm via a phone connection. A roll call indicated all members were present -- Tim via Zoom and Bruce via a phone connection. Bruce was travelling out-of-town and passed the conduct of the meeting over to Dave Towle, the board Vice-Chair.

Addition to the agenda. MOTION Clayton moved that we add to the agenda an executive session on school safety under 1 VSA 310 (a)(10); Tim seconded. Vote 4-0-1(Bruce not voting). Motion ADOPTED.

2 Approve Minutes [00:03:39]

MOTION Clayton moved the minutes of the special meeting of September 7, 2021 be approved, as amended (see addendum); Robert seconded. Vote 4-0-1(Bruce not voting). Minutes APPROVED.

3 Administrative Reports

• **Superintendent** [00:04:15] No report received.

Mark indicated the absence of a board report this month was a result of his being preoccupied with SU covid-19 issues for the past month, in particular, the current implementation [of PCR-based surveillance testing](#) of students and staff and the soon-to-be-implemented [antigen-based Test-To-Stay Program](#), announced last week by the Agency of Education. Surveillance testing was conducted today on about 50 staff and 60 students with results expected in two days (Thursday, October 7th). The Test-To-Stay Program is designed to reduce the number of days close contacts are required to be quarantined by permitting them to attend school as long as they test daily as negative for the week following exposure. Mark indicated it was his intent to employ both testing schemes, but a major concern is staff resources, and if he were constrained to one of them, the Test-to-Stay Program would be chosen as it would be more likely result in more kids safely in school.

Clayton clarified that surveillance testing was an opt-in program, that is, parental permission for student testing or permission of the staff member to be tested was required. Mark added that an employee vaccination and/or testing requirement was being worked out with NEA with anticipated guidelines and requirements issued by OSHA (US Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration).

• **Principals** [00:09:20] [Report](#) received.

The Principals reported that the social/emotional needs of students coming off last year are high and ESSER funds are being deployed to address those needs use of ESSR, the CONNECT program is going well and expanding from 5 to 10 students, and funds for security/safety items will be requested later in this meeting in executive session added to this meeting's agenda.

Clayton inquired how many classes were currently not in session because of covid. Sarah indicted two -- grade 6 and some from grade 1/2. This totaled about 40 students. Mark commented on the advantages that would accrue to students in this situation if the Test-to-Stay Program were in place, for example, more likely to retain in-school learning instead of being quarantined.

Tim Bedor expressed reservations to Mark and the Board about any swabs being used in the PCR testing protocol that might have been sterilized using ethylene oxide in that he reported that a CDC web site indicated the compound as a known human carcinogen. He said his concern was shared by others, and he would opt-out his kids from this testing if this kind of swab were used. Mark indicated he would be surprised if these swabs were harmful and a part of kits recommended by state agencies, but he would look into Tim's concerns.

Robert asked about the total school enrollment on October 1st as the count on that day by statute defines the school enrollment for the entire year. Dave S indicated he had not yet generated that count but would do so.

- **[Student Services].** [Report received.](#) This report was not on the agenda and not discussed.
- **Student Representatives** [00:19:30] [Report](#) received from Liza Morse; Ava was playing a soccer match scheduled at this time.

Dave S introduced two members of [OVX](#) (Our Voices Exposed), Cameron Drew and Thomas Edgar, who asked for support for their project promoting student health by discouraging tobacco use/addiction. Cam reviewed a few of the Club's past projects for the board. Their request was outlined but its details were reserved for the executive session later in this meeting. Dave S reinforced the students' concerns at present focused on a serious problem. Marked thank both students for their efforts.

4 Board Business

Both policies C28 and C35 were discussed at the board's September 7, 2021 meeting but could not be adopted because the warning period for the actions (10 days) was not met, so action on them was postponed to this meeting.

- **Policy C28 - Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students** [00:26:20]

Mark reviewed the origins of the policy in federal and state statutes and its recommendation for adoption by the VSBA. He noted the policy provisions have been in effect in the SU for years and that this policy more formally codifies them.

MOTION. Robert moved that Policy C28 on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students be adopted by the Board; Clayton seconded. Vote: no roll call but recorded as 4 yes and 1 not voting. Motion ADOPTED. [See Motions on minutes page 6,]

- [Policy C35 - Covid-19 Mitigation](#) [00:29:50]

Reviewing his comments at the Board's September regular meeting, Mark explained this policy was drafted by the CCSU board in response to recommendations from the AOE and modified slightly by the Danville School Board. It places administration decisions on covid-related safety of students and staff largely in the hands of the superintendent. For the present the policy requires masking for all persons inside the school building but leaves it optional for those outside the building. This masking requirement is a directive of this Board to the Superintendent; it is not a state or federal governmental requirement, although it is consistent with and based in part on their recommendations. Mark further reviewed situations which might suspend or eliminate the mask requirement, e. g. percentage of eligible students vaccinated. Dave T provided vaccination rates from various groups in Caledonia County based on Department of Health data. Given the facts that an appreciable proportion of the Danville School's preK-12 population remains, and will likely remain for a while at least, unvaccinated and that vaccinated and unvaccinated students are not isolated from one another due to their being housed in the same building, Mark expects the mandatory masking to remain in effect until local conditions support its removal. There is no specific timeline for such an action, and he considered at present with respect to covid that the school was amongst the safest of indoor public spaces. Clayton spoke in favor of the policy, especially as it bears on protection for unvaccinated students.

Public Comments: Dave T opened the meeting for public comments on this agenda item.

• **Amada Winn** [00:41:45]

Amanda noted so far this year that two classes have been quarantined (in whole or in part), but none of the nearly 40 close contacts had tested positive. Nevertheless, they were kept away from school for up to 10 days despite additionally showing no symptoms, while their siblings were allowed to attend the school. She was concerned with the consequent loss of educational and social experiences/opportunities maybe unnecessarily costly in her own and other children. If masking were expected to endure for a while, then the board should consider making adjustments to these current rules to reduce these potential impacts. Mark indicated he was sensitive to the difficulties this quarantining imposed on parents and kids, and that everyone here (board, teachers, administrators) wants kids in school - but safely. Accordingly, he indicated he is currently following the quarantine recommendations of the VT Department of Health. However, he notes that in the past few days the Department has introduced a [Test-to-Stay](#) Program which he expects to put in place in the school as soon as guidelines and resources for the program are received and that it will largely ameliorate the problem Amanda describes.

• **Amy & Tim Bedor** [00:47:49]

Amy pointed out that although the board asserted it is following the Department of Health guidelines, the masking mandate is actually not the Department's decision but that of the Danville Board. Consequently, she would like proof that masking "works", and she does not see that possible unless we engage in our own school a masked versus not-masked comparison. Mark agreed conceptually with that idea, but it was not his recommendation to the board that we do that."

She further inquired directly about the goal of the masking mandate? What happens when the 80% threshold is reached; "do we all take off our masks?" Mark expressed his view that the 80% threshold for Danville did not have strong consideration in his current decision-making because of the age-structure of all the students in the building. His goal was to get the school

to the point where covid could be managed as any other infectious disease, like the flu, and in-school learning would not be encumbered by the substantial disruptions and dislocations which it has experienced in the past year.

She also asked for further clarification of the guidelines/mandates on quarantining that were derived from the Department of Health . Mark responded that quarantine guidelines are issued by Department of Health, in contrast to masking guidelines which are derived from the Agency of Education (in consultation with the Department of Health) Neither has issued mandates recently as, at present, neither has no authority to do so, whereas last year they did under the Governor's Executive orders.

Amy asked the Superintendent and the Board to further explain their proof/justification of the claim that masks work and thus justifies a masking mandate -- that "masks are the reason our kids are now protected." Mark indicated that was "his opinion and a lot of people that I talk to." Robert briefly offered that despite the caricature of science as "proving" things, it does not, as in producing statements with 100% certainty of being true. To Amy he said "So, if you are looking for proof in that sense, you are not going to find it." What science does on questions of the truth of empirical statements is to conduct studies testing their claims: some studies support the truth of the claim, others do not support it and others may be inconclusive. Given this pile of studies, scientists evaluate this evidence like in a court -- on the preponderance of the relevance and quality of the evidence -- in drawing a conclusion and applying it to judgments about the question at hand. He pointed to papers listed on the CDC (Centers for Disease Control), especially under their scientific briefs, as source for good source masking studies and recommendations.

Tim B did not see that masking makes any difference if both vaccinated and unvaccinated persons can both contract and spread the virus. These processes would be going on regardless of the percentage vaccinated; masking does not stop them. He further understood some covid tests being used (at least few weeks ago) did not differentiate between influenza and covid viruses. and so, testing reports would be suspect. He asked the board to investigate this, He wanted his kids in school, but he was concerned that the physical, social and emotional harm/costs to them based on his experiences with them may be too high, reinforcing a point Amy B had made earlier that more studies addressing social/emotional/self-image concerns needed to be conducted. The Board "should consider every aspect of this."

- **Amy Hornblas** [00:58:40]

Amy H introduced identified herself as a health educator, who has worked at several local schools. At the onset she characterized her presentation as playing a game of Jeopardy, seeing it as "more fun" and role-modeling for students. Some board member asked that she dispense with the game aspect and get to her points, noting they found this current issue before the board as serious and not fun. She informed the board that the CDC had reported that "a N95 user is always going to be experience difficulty in breathing" and this generates hypoventilation due to carbon dioxide build-up beneath the mask beyond acceptable limits which can produce medical problems in health care workers and others. She followed that with a report of a German study in children which found carbon dioxide build-up under the mask 3 times higher than the room-permissible maximum. She added that we "we have no way of knowing if prolonged use is safe."

Finally, she stressed the importance of mask breaks for children and questioned that schools were providing adequate time and opportunity for such breaks. She asked the board to examine her website and her [Vermont Mask Survey](#). A copy of her *Survey* had been emailed to all board members over a month ago, and several volunteered that they had already examined it. She felt that "when we are informed on the issues, we can make these decisions." She advocated that we must take the time to inform ourselves. "Why aren't we protecting kids the same way we protect adults?" Robert took issue with the implication that the board did not inform itself on covid-masking issues and her characterization that "all mask studies show they are dangerous."

- **Carolyn Morrison** [01:07:57]

Although she feels there is a time and place for masks, she conveyed to the board her concerns about the effects of masking on her kids. Her observations of the masks being wet, soiled and contaminated by the time her kids get home, producing eczema around the mouth of one of her children, interfering with normal speech with a child, and causing uncertainty of the effects of this "muzzling" on development and social interactions among the kids, gives her serious doubt masking is a good idea. She has found the demands of the pandemic exhausting and is discouraged that the goal posts of "getting beyond the pandemic" keep moving.

Clayton responded that she was not alone in her frustration and weariness, but it was something all parents were experiencing, some more than others. And though it was difficult the board is intent on having kids safely in school learning, as it is preferable to their taught remotely. Mitigation of the effects of the virus are necessary to this end, and masking is one such mediation strategy. He expects the forthcoming Test-to-Stay program to contribute toward achieving this goal.

Additionally, Carolyn asked if federal funds were tied to universal [mandated] masking. Mark emphatically said "no": federal funds, including ESSER funds had nothing to do with the masking requirements.

Dave S indicated he and Sarah found the concern for more mask-break time an "absolutely valid" concern, along with more outside activity, and would look to implement this.

- **Kristin Franson** [01:15:30]

Kistin supported the board's "following the science" and experts' advice on the masking issue as communicated through State leadership, responses to which she characterized as changing as the virus and our knowledge about it changed. Board actions from her perspective protected the kids. The routine masking of medical professionals with respect to the control of airborne infectious diseases she viewed as testimony to masking working. Even though she was vaccinated, she indicated she wore a mask everywhere as a protection for others, as she presumed herself a "silent carrier."

- **Sara Stinson** [01:18:35] Sara interjected as a second "super happy" mom approving of the board's position: "Mask it up!"

- **Sara Jimenez** [01:19:02] Sara expressed concern about the curriculum in general but directly only addressed the masking issue. She asked if when the testing starts, do the masks come off? And what rights do we, as parents, have to not have our children masked -- will they be turned away if they are not? Dave S responded that the testing [Test-to-Stay] applies only to the proposed quarantine period of close-contacts, but that surveillance testing is done weekly. Mark indicated the superintendent and the board have the authority to turn an unmasked student away from school when mandatory masking is in effect. He indicates such a situation has not occurred in the school to date.
- **Ryan Whitcomb** [01:21:37]. Ryan spoke to his perception that the board, which is making decisions regarding our school children, was being rude to a woman "who has taken time out of the day" to address the board and ask questions about its knowledge of masks. He asked why it seemed like the board "did not have the time to answer these questions." Dave T responded that the survey to which the speaker referred had already been distributed to the board and was available on the board website. Ryan asked why the document had not been distributed to the public. [The document referred to here, the [Vermont Mask Survey](#), has not part of the minutes of a Danville School Board meeting, because it had not been discussed by the Danville board in association with any agenda item or at any previous meeting of the board. However, the document and website referenced by Amy H had been presented to the CCSU Board at its August 8, 2021 meeting, and a provided in the CCSU minutes. Since it has been referenced and discussed at this Board's meeting for the first time, links are provided here: [document](#), [website](#).]

On another topic Ryan inquired if the school had a security guard to check masking but also to prevent weapons from being brought into the school. Dave S indicated that the school did not have one. Robert added that the board had considered the idea of a school resource officer (SRO, security guard) nearly a year before, and those deliberations were in the minutes of those meetings.* The Chair judged the school guard issue off topic for this agenda item.

[* The issue was addressed initially at the December 2, 2019 board meeting and then briefly again at one on January 7, 2020.]

Ryan raised the question of whether persons administering the new testing [Test-to-Stay] program were medical doctors and would they wear full PPE and change it between administrations to each student. Additionally, he asked would pay for all this. Both Mark and Dave S indicated the costs would be borne by the State of Vermont. Mark elaborated that the program was new and had been introduced to the superintendents only 3 days ago [Friday, October 1st] and that guidelines for PPE use have not yet been received, but he said that such information would be in the school/community notice of the program, when it was implemented.

- **Kaity White** [01:27:58] Kaity related that she was "pretty happy" to support her kids wearing masks in school.
- **Kristin Franson** [01:20: 27] Kristin addressed the broader perspective of masking as a means of reducing virus transmission from oneself not only to our families, who may have members who cannot be vaccinated, but importantly to the larger community.

MOTION Clayton moved that Policy C35 on Covid-19 Mitigation be adopted; Tim seconded. Roll call vote: Bruce - not voting, intermittent phone connection; Dave T - yes, Tim - yes, Clayton - yes, Robert- yes; tally is 4 yes, 1 not voting. Motion ADOPTED

* Robert explained to the public that Vermont statute requires voting by the board to be done by roll call when all members participating in the meeting are not physically present at the same location [and the vote is not unanimous]. This action was omitted in the adoption of policy C28, so:

MOTION Clayton moved that the board affirm the adoption of policy C28; Tim seconded. Roll call vote: Bruce - not voting, intermittent phone connection; Dave T - yes, Tim - yes, Clayton - yes, Robert- yes; tally is 4 yes, 1 not voting. Motion ADOPTED.

A member of the public question asked if a vote required all board members. Mark explained that only a quorum of the board was needed, in this case 3 of the 5 members, to both convene a meeting and take any actions in it, such as voting.

- **Replacement of gymnasium bleachers** [01:34:22]

MOTION Clayton moved that the Board appropriate up to \$90,000 for the removal of the current gymnasium bleachers and replace them with ADA-[American for Disabilities Act] compliant, plastic, electric-switch retractable bleachers; Tim seconded. Roll call vote: Bruce - not voting, phone connection problems; Dave T - yes, Tim - yes, Clayton - yes, Robert- yes; tally is 4 yes, 1 not voting. Motion ADOPTED

Dave T and Dave S agreed that Seigny Funds were not expendable for this project.

- **Air Handler maintenance fund** [01:37:45].

MOTION Clayton requested that the board approve up to \$60,000 to maintain the roof air handlers for the next year; Tim seconded. Roll call vote: Bruce - not voting, phone connection problems endure, Dave T - yes, Tim - yes, Clayton - yes, Robert- yes; tally is 4 yes, 1 not voting. Motion ADOPTED

Dave S noted that if new units were installed, they would need to be replaced if the renovation project were to go through, and so he recommended against replacement. System heating coils were replaced and the ducts cleaned last year and the system worked last winter in supplying warm air to the building, although not efficiently. The proposed maintenance focused on the exhaust air portion of the system, and Shawn was confident the existing units could be maintained another year. Maintenance funds would be drawn from unrestricted surplus funds with a current balance of around \$700K.

- **Architect's Update on school renovation project** [01:42:31]

Dave S indicated the architects are working on an initial construction cost estimate so we can meet to discuss the next step in likely mid-October. Landscape architects have been conducting a boundary survey and drawing up a proposal with the retention of a Little League field in mind. New site plans will not propose an exit from the school directly onto Route 2, because the VT Department of Transportation would be very unlikely to approve it.

- **Student Representation on the School Board** [01:45:50]

No responses yet from initial solicitations. Dave S asked interested students to attend this; the search process continues for one addition member, who is not a senior.

6 Other Business

EXECUTIVE SESSION [01:47:00]

MOTION Robert moved that the board go into executive session under 1 VSA 310(a)(10); Clayton seconded. Roll call vote: Bruce - not voting, phone connection problems endure, Dave T - yes, Tim - yes, Clayton - yes, Robert- yes; tally is 4 yes, 1 not voting. Motion ADOPTED. Session entered at 7:44 pm. Thomas Edgar was invited into the session at the request of Principal Schilling, but exited after the session's first item had been discussed.

MOTION Clayton moved that the board exit executive session; Tim seconded. Roll call vote: Bruce - not voting, phone connection problems endure. Dave T - yes, Tim - yes, Clayton - yes, Robert- yes. Motion ADOPTED. Session exited at 8:08 pm.

[01:50:30] **MOTION** Clayton moved that the board appropriate up to \$61,251 for safety/security items for the school; Tim seconded. Roll call vote: Bruce - not voting, phone connection problems endure. *Bruce, Dave T - yes, Tim - yes, Clayton - yes, Robert- yes; tally is 4 yes, 1 not voting. Motion ADOPTED.

* Immediately after adoption Bruce made connection again, and said he had voted "yes" on this item, but it apparently had not been heard.

7 Public Input [01:52:00] There was no additional public input.

8 Future Agenda Items [01:52:32] architect's report, facilities update, nomination and possible board approval of student representative

9 Adjourn

MOTION Tim moved to adjourn the meeting; Clayton seconded. Roll call vote: Bruce - yes, Dave T - yes, Tim - yes, Clayton - yes, Robert- yes. Vote unanimous. Motion ADOPTED. Dave T adjourned the meeting at 8:14 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Robert Edgar (Clerk), 10 October 2021. .

Meeting video recording:

https://ccsu.zoom.us/rec/play/85m7vNXe379vvpFw80tVc4VFRtrF7YCR_cWaKpVlz4ukgyf_g43z9lhbmus2KHEOm4BJGwOWlg4w5yiG.6c-RdfNpAZuvoj4C?continueMode=true&_xzm_rtaid=MKXVf2JIOH2xoeDErf_ipO.163355579615.8bbebb4767051efe34b5caa9a5175812&_xzm_rhtaid=794

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The next Regular Meeting will occur on Tuesday, November 2 at 6:00 pm

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* Danville School Board - Amendments/Corrections for minutes scheduled for approval on 5 October 2021

Regular Meeting of September 7, 2021:

Page 3, Policy C28 ..., paragr. 1, line 1: Dave S I asked

Page 4, Policy C35 ..., paragr. 2, line 5: ...decision on unmasking ..."