

ALL ISLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SUPERINTENDENCY UNION #19
Edgartown School Committee
Oak Bluffs School Committee
Tisbury School Committee
Martha's Vineyard Regional High School Committee
Up-Island Regional School Committee

6:00PM, Thursday, August 12, 2021
Zoom Meeting

Present:	Chair – Kate DeVane (UI), Vice Chair – Michael Watts (TIS)
Up-Island	Roxanne Ackerman*, Kate DeVane, Robert Lionette, Skipper Manter, Alex Salop
Tisbury	Jennifer Cutrer, Amy Houghton, Michael Watts
Oak Bluffs	Kris O'Brien*, Lisa Reagan, Kathryn Shertzer
Edgartown	Kimberly Kirk*, Kelly McCracken, Louis Paciello
Others:	About 200 attendees including: Dr. Henry Nieder, Marni Lipke
Shared Services Office	Superintendent – Matthew D'Andrea, Asst. Superintendent – Richie Smith, School Business Administrator – Mark Friedman, Director of Student Support Services – Hope MacLeod, Administrative Assistant – Ruda Stone, District Physician – Dr. Sonya Stevens
Principals	MVRHS – Sara Dingley, Edgartown – Shelley Einbinder, West Tisbury – Donna Lowell-Bettencourt
FinComs	Oak Bluffs – Maura McGroarty
Press	MVTV – Jada Chatman, WCAI – John Basile
Recorder	Teresa Kruszewski *Late arrivals or early departures of AISC members (see * in text)

Call to Order

(Agenda Item #I)

The All-Island School Committee (AISC) meeting was called to order at 6:03 PM. In order to facilitate the technology: the meeting was being recorded; video cameras should be off except for AISC members or Administrators or when actively participating; attendees were asked to identify themselves with first and last names; the chat feature was turned off. (Recorder's Note: Discussions are summarized and grouped for clarity and brevity).

Chair Kate DeVane stated there was one item on the agenda; to leave the Mask Mandate in place. The discussion would focus on the Mask Policy only; school reopening (part of the agenda) would not be addressed as there was not enough information at the time of meeting. She outlined the expectations of the meeting to streamline the process as follows: 1. A member would need to make the motion for the Mask Mandate to remain in place; 2. School Committee Members would go first with their questions; 3. The public would have time for their questions, instructed to use the Zoom 'hand raise' feature to be recognized. She asked everyone to remain respectful.

Approval of Minutes (5 MIN)

(Agenda Item # II)

TABLED.

Superintendent's Report (30 MIN)

(Agenda Item #III)

A. Mask Policy & School Reopening - Vote

Superintendent Matthew D'Andrea began his report by stating the health and safety of all staff and students was a priority and that the current Mask Policy remains in place until rescinded by this School Committee.

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Superintendent D'Andrea asked for revision to the current Mask Policy as follows:

- **When students and faculty are outside of the buildings, they are not required to wear masks.**

Highlights:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance recommends universal masking and maintaining at least 3 feet of physical distance.
- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Department of Public Health (DPH) strongly recommend all K - 6 students wear masks indoors, (except students who cannot do so due to medical conditions or behavioral needs), to include all unvaccinated staff, students and visitors while allowing vaccinated students to remain unmasked.
- MVYPS Health and Safety Advisory Committee recommends the following:
 - All students and staff wear masks inside the school building.
 - Masks required on the School Bus (mandated by the state)
 - Reasons to support this:
 - Rising case numbers on the Island
 - Keep students healthy and in school
 - Under 12 not approved for vaccination
 - Breakthrough Cases/Delta Variant
 - Long term health impact of virus
 - Help reduce spread outside of school
- MVYPS is pursuing no cost COVID Testing (similar to last year), which has been made available to all Massachusetts schools through DESE.
- Ongoing partnership with the Martha's Vineyard Hospital (MVH) for accurate vaccination statistics of the student population; fully vaccinated staff is estimated at 85%.

*(*Roxanne Ackerman joins at 6:19 PM)*

Superintendent D'Andrea and the MVYPS Health and Safety Advisory Committee (HSAC) have ongoing meetings to determine what would be a tolerable case rate to no longer require masks for students. With the December 2020 school opening, he relied heavily on CDC Guidance, DPH, DESE, the local Boards of Health (MVBOH), District Physician Dr. Sonya Stevens and the school nurses. Their guidance helped return students safely and kept them in school. He underscored the importance of their guidance for the MVYPS to follow through school opening.

Chair DeVane reminded all of the attendees that the Martha's Vineyard School System, with the help of the HSAC, has done an outstanding job of flattening the school curve and would hate to see a move away from such great progress. She thanked the Administration for all of their hard work and countless hours to make this happen.

AISC DISCUSSION:

With uncertainty of who represented the HSAC, AISC members asked if there was a spokesperson to support the presentation from Superintendent D'Andrea and that the recommendations were fully that of the HSAC. A written statement was requested to support their recommendations for the vote.

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Dr. Stevens, a HSAC member, agreed to be the acting spokesperson and supported the statistics presented by Superintendent D'Andrea. She added: DESE and the DPH are not aligned with recommendations put out by the CDC or the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) , both of which strongly recommend masking.

Comments in Favor of keeping the mandate:

- Listen to current advisories and watch what is happening in our community
- Breakthrough Cases continue to rise
- Protect the more vulnerable students
- Vaccinated people can still spread the disease
- Rates go up much faster without masking
- We can't afford to put people at risk with those that choose not to get vaccinated
- Vaccination rate of the student population is less than 50% when including students under 12 years of age
- Keeping kids in school is the #1 priority while keeping them safe and healthy
- Data supports this as a correct public health policy for not just the student population but the total Island

Comments in Favor of rescinding the mandate:

- There isn't a goal post set - what statistic will drive the removal of masks?
- National statistics indicate children under 17 are at no or low risk of contracting a severe case or hospitalization
- Data presented at this meeting is favorable for removing the mask mandate
- Mr. Paciello stated for the record he was 100% against the Mask Policy

Public Comment (5 MIN)

(Agenda Item #IV)

Based on the interest of this controversial topic, the public discussion period was extended to accommodate everyone that wished to express a point of view. Committee members supported the right for the public to be heard. Concerns for a quorum to vote were overshadowed by the need for the public to express their views. If a quorum was not present at the time of the vote, it would be taken up at another time. Comments from the public were asked to be specific to the amendment on the table. Chair DeVane underscored these policies were in place for all children, to keep them in school in a safe and healthy way. The attendees were asked not to attack the Committee and that comments be civil, respectful and short-winded.

(*Kris O'Brien leaves at 7:00 PM)

(*Kimberly Kirk leaves at 7:07 PM)

Question:

- In reference to social responsibility, will the schools notify parents of teachers that are not vaccinated? Will schools require all school staff to be vaccinated? Superintendent D'Andrea responded that parents will not be notified and discussions with the legal staff are ongoing; more guidance is anticipated from the DESE in the coming weeks.
- Will there be disciplinary action for children that do not wear masks? Superintendent D'Andrea replied yes, disciplinary actions of the schools would be followed.
- Are there options for students that choose to stay out of school, those that reject the Mask Policy? Superintendent D'Andrea said remote learning would not be an option but offered homeschooling. (Applications available at the Central Office)

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PUBLIC DISCUSSION:

Asst. Superintendent Richie Smith said this conversation is centered around the value and dignity of peoples rights. Closing school last year had an emotional toll on students. The School Committee and Administrators are motivated to do all that is possible to protect the kids while getting them back to the best possible 'normal' school day.

Dr. Henry Nieder, a longtime Family Practice Specialist on the Island, responded with statistics of pediatric infections, indicating the surge across the country will cause a rise in pediatric cases in the future. The opening of schools will provide more potential for that infectious rise and should not underestimate the degree of illness as well as the potential of long term disability after recovery.

Many were concerned about the social and emotional wellness of the kids, a decline in mental health if students didn't get to interact. It was suggested that more programs targeting the challenges of isolation and separation from their peer group be conducted as afterschool programs.

Comments in Favor of keeping the mandate:

- Kids are accustomed to wearing masks and do not mind
- Wearing masks has kept everyone safe
- Concerns of community spread and how health care facilities have limited capacity
- Not enough data available now to understand the Delta variant impact
- It's a mask not an iron lung, we will survive this
- Wearing a mask is like having a child brush their teeth; reinforces good healthy practices
- Health for kids is paramount; we do everything to protect our children - this is just another one of those things
- Keeping the mental health of everyone in mind; we are in a crisis and this is what we do right now

Comments in Favor of rescinding the mandate:

- No one should speak for my child except me (the parent)
- It is sad that we are normalizing mask wearing
- Damage to kids wearing a mask outweighs any risk
- Masks are an assault on the kids and are damaging their immunity
- A claim that more kids are hospitalized right now of the common cold than COVID
- More data to support the continued masking policy is needed

Ms. Houghton thanked everyone for their thoughtful comments. She explained decisions made by the School Committees have to address all of the people in the buildings for the safest options to move forward; these are very heavy, difficult decisions to make, those that could damage someone's health. She also encouraged interested parties to run in future elections.

A homeschooling recap was requested, as the school year gets underway, to understand how many students have made this decision vs. returning to school.

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Vote-

After a lengthy procedural discussion, it was determined the vote to revise the current Mask Policy must be completed by each of the Island School Committees; all earlier AISC motions were withdrawn.

Superintendent D'Andrea repeated his request for a motion to amend the current Mask Policy as follows: students and faculty outside of the buildings are not required to wear masks.

The AISC recessed to allow the local school committees to vote.

- **THE TISBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE (TSC) WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 7:36 PM.**

CHAIR AMY HOUGHTON MOVED TO AMEND THE CURRENT MASK POLICY AS FOLLOWS: STUDENTS AND FACULTY OUTSIDE OF THE BUILDINGS ARE NOT REQUIRED TO WEAR MASKS; MICHAEL WATTS SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 3 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS. MS. CUTRER—AYE, MR. WATTS—AYE AND MS. HOUGHTON—AYE.

JENNIFER CUTRER MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 7:37 PM; MICHAEL WATTS SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 3 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS. MS. CUTRER—AYE, MR. WATTS—AYE AND MS. HOUGHTON—AYE.

- **THE UP ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (UIRSC) WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 7:38 PM.**

SKIPPER MANTER MOVED TO AMEND THE CURRENT MASK POLICY AS FOLLOWS: STUDENTS AND FACULTY OUTSIDE OF THE BUILDINGS ARE NOT REQUIRED TO WEAR MASKS; KATE DEVAN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS. MS. ACKERMAN—AYE, MS. DEVANE—AYE, MR. LIONETTE—AYE, MR. MANTER—AYE AND MR. SALOP—AYE.

SKIPPER MANTER MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 7:39 PM; KATE DEVANE SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS. MS. ACKERMAN—AYE, MS. DEVANE—AYE, MR. LIONETTE—AYE, MR. MANTER—AYE AND MR. SALOP—AYE.

- **THE OAK BLUFFS SCHOOL COMMITTEE (OBSC) DID NOT HAVE A QUORUM TO VOTE.**

- **THE EDGARTOWN SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ESC) DID NOT HAVE A QUORUM TO VOTE.**

- **THE MARTHA'S VINEYARD REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL COMMITTEE (MVRHSC) WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 7:40 PM.**

ROBERT LIONETTE MOVED TO AMEND THE CURRENT MASK POLICY AS FOLLOWS: STUDENTS AND FACULTY OUTSIDE OF THE BUILDINGS ARE NOT REQUIRED TO WEAR MASKS; SKIPPER MANTER SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS. MS. ACKERMAN—AYE, MS. HOUGHTON—AYE, MR. LIONETTE—AYE, MR. MANTER—AYE, MS. SHERTZER—AYE AND MR. WATTS—AYE.

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SKIPPER MANTER MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 7:41 PM; ROBERT LIONETTE SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS. MS. ACKERMAN—AYE, MS. HOUGHTON—AYE, MR. LIONETTE—AYE, MR. MANTER—AYE, MS. SHERTZER—AYE AND MR. WATTS—AYE.

The AISC reconvened at 7:42 PM.

Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair (5 MIN)

(Agenda Item #V)

Robert Lionette asked Superintendent D'Andrea to organize a workshop for the AISC regarding legal ramifications of vaccines moving forward, and other issues related to COVID policies. He suggested the legal team lead the discussion through all aspects, to help the Committee with future recommendations, what can and cannot be done. He requested the timing of this workshop to happen before school begins. Superintendent D'Andrea agreed.

Adjournment

(Agenda Item #VI)

CHAIR DEVANE MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 7:46 PM; ALEX SALOLP SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 10 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: MS. ACKERMAN—AYE, MS. CUTRER—AYE, MS. DEVANE—AYE, MS. HOUGHTON—AYE, MR. LIONETTE—AYE, MR. MANTER—AYE, MR. PACIELLO—AYE, MR. SALOP—AYE, MS. SHERTZER—AYE AND MR. WATTS—AYE.

Documents on File:

- Agenda 08/12/21
- MVPS Mask Policy.pdf