

# MINUTES

## STEGER SCHOOL DISTRICT 194 BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Monday, February 7, 2022

6:30 P.M.

**Columbia Central School – Cafeteria  
Enter through the East Entrance Doors**

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by President Helsel. Members present, Helsel, Sarek, Raymond, Edwards, Page, Turner and Butkus. Members absent: None

Also present:

Dr. David Frusher, Eric Diehl, Jan Lenci, Kim Mahoney, Bruce Nieminski, Tom Aguirre, Adam Schoff, Tim Tufts, Janet Inglese, Jeff Nelson, Venus Smith, Rachael Diehl, Anthony Graziani and Melissa Cunha.

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Board and audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The board meeting was attended by several parents and community members. Mrs. Helsel stated the meeting will be a discussion about the updated Covid-19 mitigations and throughout the meeting the Board of Education will take questions. Mrs. Helsel stated to the people in attendance to ask any questions because they are all here to discuss the options.

Parent from Steger Intermediate Center stated concerns about their child having to wear a mask. They would like the mask to be optional. Their child has a medical condition and the mask is causing more problems for their child.

Rich Norcutt, Steger Education Association President and Teacher at Columbia Central state the staff would like to keep the mask mandate for now and to wait until the courts have a ruling. Their reasoning was due to going back and forth with students wearing masks.

Parent from Columbia Central stated cloth mask do not work per John Hopkins. Unless kids are wearing N95 mask the students and staff are not protected.

Parent from Steger Primary Center stated her child has asthma and wearing the mask is making it harder for her child to breathe. The child visits the nurse often because he cannot breathe. The parent asked if mask are required will they be N95 and is there an E-learning option?

Parent from Steger Primary Center stated freedom of choice should be the option. The parent stated make mask optional so the kids can breathe and show their beautiful smiles.

Parent stated her family had Covid-19 but her son had no symptoms and the mask did not matter. Her family has been taking all their business to Indiana where they do not have to wear a mask.

Parent from Steger Primary Center stated her child has asthma. Every day she finds blood in his mask and now his mild asthma has changed to severe asthma with a low immune system. The parent stated mask should be optional.

Parent from Steger Primary Center stated she would like the mask to be worn for the rest of the school year. If masks become optional, will there be remote learning options?

Ben Vaughn Steger Education Association, Vice President and Teacher at Columbia Central would like the district to wait for the court's ruling. Mr. Vaughn stated to keep masks on.

Dr. Frusher, Steger School District 194 Superintendent of Schools presented local Covid-19 statistics: Steger 2.94%, Chicago Heights 4.67%, Crete 5.41%, Park Forest 3.61% and stated numbers are going down drastically from last month. Surrounding areas in Frankfort, New Lenox and Moken were 30% last month and now are around 10%. Our district positivity as of today is two staff members and two students.

There was discussion with the group regarding five-day quarantine and accessing schoolwork.

Mrs. Helsel went around to each board member to get their thoughts on wearing a mask in school.

Parent stated she is a teacher in another district and they are mask optional. Today was the first day she saw the students in her class happy. The parent stated football stadiums don't wear mask but we have to in schools. She also stated let kids play, be sick, and see them get excited to see their friends faces.

Mrs. Helsel stated this is a concern for everyone and the safety of our students is always our first priority. Mrs. Helsel stated we know it will be hard for everyone if we switch to optional and then have to go back to mandatory masks. We understand the staff concerns and E-learning doesn't work. While on district transportation and playing IESA sports you will be required to wear a mask.

Parent and Teacher of Columbia Central spoke about how it will be a battle for the teachers if the mask return to mandatory again.

Mrs. Helsel stated if the governor wins an appeal the mask option could be changed back to mandatory.

Parent stated she would like mask to be optional at lunch and recess.

Mrs. Helsel asked the building Principals, Assistant Principals and Dean of Students to give their opinion. All stated to make mask optional for the students.

The Board of Education and district administrators discussed parents keeping their children home if they are sick. Mr. Diehl reported positive student transmission has not happened in our district. Teacher at Columbia Central stated there are many children that come to school sick and requested parents to keep their students home if they have any symptoms.

Parent asked if Homebound services are offered if mask go optional. Remote Learning can only happen if the IDPH closes schools. Homebound services are offered to all students and the procedure is on our district website.

Mrs. Helsel stated along with mask going optional the contract tracing will stop, as it is included in suspending the Covid-19 mitigations.

The board of education took a vote around the room from each board member.

### **BOARD MATTERS (Consent Agenda)**

A motion was made by Mr. Sarek and seconded by Mrs. Turner to approve the following item under Board Matters:

#### **INFO ACTION**

- A. The Board of Education will be discussing updated Covid-19 mitigations.
- B. Amend the SD 194 Plan for the 2021-2022 School Year (August 19, 2021) to follow updated Covid-19 mitigations.

- 1. Mrs. Helsel stated effective February 8, 2022, motion to authorize and direct the superintendent to temporarily suspend the following Covid-19 mitigation measures, in light of the court issued temporary restraining order.

Upon roll call all members voting aye:

Helsel, Sarek, Raymond, Page, Edwards, Turner, and Butkus.

Members voting nay: None. Members absent: None

Members abstaining: None. Motion carried.

## **CLOSED SESSION**

No Closed Session

- ACTION**      A.      The Superintendent recommends that the Board go into Closed Session to discuss:
1. The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline performance, or dismissal of a specific employee of the public body.
  2. Student disciplinary matters.
  3. Collective negotiating matters between the public body and its employees or their representatives.
  4. The purchase or lease of real property for the use of the public body, including meetings held for the purpose of discussing whether a particular parcel should be acquired.
- ACTION**      B.      Motion to adjourn Closed Session.
- ACTION**      C.      Motion to return to Open Session.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

At 8:05 p.m. a motion was made by Mr. Sarek and seconded by Mrs. Edwards to adjourn the meeting.

Upon roll call all members voting aye:

Helsel, Sarek, Raymond, Page, Edwards, Turner, and Butkus.

Members voting nay: None. Members absent: None

Members abstaining: None. Motion carried.

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Secretary, Board of Education

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President, Board of Education