

MINUTES
VSWEA BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2022
VIA Zoom

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kerstin Kubina (KK)–President
April Sauer (AS)–Secretary
Dan Franks (DF)–Treasurer
John Tanner (JT)
Danielle Martinez (DM)

Nellie Grossenbacher (NG)
Ben Fong (BF)
Myriah Mhoon (MM)
Scott Edwards (SE)

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

The President, Treasurer, and Secretary were present, and a quorum was reached.

GUESTS

Invitees of the Board:
Frank Mirizio (FM)
Michelle Kratzer (MK)

Members of the public present via Zoom/Registration through Google Forms:

Heather Sullivan
Ms. Falconburg
Chelsea Cascketta
Myself
Deb
Andrew
AMCofH Classroom 2
Rachel
Goodman
Sophie McCurley
Laura Slayton-Garcia
W
Zoom User
Barnaby McGillicuddy
Sami Rank
Laura Heaney
Vincent Slayton-Garcia

Roxana Elixavide
5678
Sarah Baize
Helena Moriarty
Shannon
Megan
JJ
Alison Easter
Dan Warner
Kelsey Orosz
Addie Heartkin
Peter Rennick
Anthony
Tammy/Tom
Deborrah Allen
Barb Cunningham

02.16.22 Approved

OPENING VERSE / INTRODUCTIONS

Meeting was called to order at 6:33pm. KK welcomed the public to the meeting, read the opening verse, and reviewed the agenda.

The Board members introduced themselves along with FM and MK.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE

FM Covid situation: number of students with Covid is down since we last met. 2 students have Covid right now and 1 teacher. Hopefully, we're hitting a lull. With contact tracing, not one student was sent home. I've taken on contact tracing and am asking clearer questions to our teachers, and I think that's helping. We're at 287 for enrollment. We got a new kid today, another new kid will come on Friday, and another on Monday. We have a couple openings in first grade. A lot of our grades are at capacity. We have space in the high school. I'm meeting with the high school staff to discuss recruitment at some k-8 charter schools. The winners of the January Virtue of the Month are: 1st grade teacher Denzel Rustimpasic, 3rd graders Kara Smith and William Monson, 6th grader Kyra Blount, 8th grader Scarlett Flynn, 11th grader Julian De Shaw. These virtues are Waldorf virtues, and they were brought to me by Jean and JT. We'll be having lunch together and checking in on what they like and don't like about DMS. Capital Projects are taking time due to permits. We're hoping to get an answer this week. I'd like to have those jobs done right after Spring Break.

DM Can you tell us about the recruiting?

FM I'm meeting with the teachers to see what they'd like to do. We'll use a list to start from, mostly small charter schools. I'll contact their director, see if we can come do a talk, hand out flyers, send out emails, and so on.

NG Do you know if any of them have any faire nights where we might get a table?

FM I won't know that until we finish that list and start checking in.

SE Isn't there a schedule we're supposed to approve tonight?

FM Yes, parents have been asking for the calendar, so I sent that out to you all.

AS It's on the agenda; it's just on page two.

SE Can we talk about that now, or should we wait?

AS It's on the agenda, so we can talk about it now or later. It's up to you.

SE Asked a question regarding the date for the Halloween Carnival.

FM The calendar dates that are most wanted are for the breaks.

MK Pointed out that typically the Halloween Carnival date has been chosen by the high school.

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NG I'm happy to see job postings are on Waldorf sites, but I'd like to see something more professional looking. Can we make sure these look better?

FM This is a formatting issue when we have to transfer it over.

NG Ours is the only school that looks unprofessional.

FM The document looks good in person, but when it's pasted, the formatting goes. I'll check with Crystal and see what we can do.

NG Do you want me to look at that?

FM Sure, I'm not sure why that's happening. I'll send it to you.

NG Maybe we just rewrite it instead of copy and paste.

FM I'll show you that tomorrow, and we can go through it. You can't download anything. It's a small box you can paste it into. It's very challenging. I'll talk with you tomorrow about that.

NG In an email we received, we didn't get to talk about it.

KK We need to be sure we're talking about items that are on the agenda. That's based on Open Meeting Law.

SE I think we need to put that on the agenda. It sounds important.

DM Is it related to the executive director report?

NG No. Can we add an open discussion item to the agenda? How does that work?

AS We can only discuss items that are on the agenda. Those items have to match up in the minutes. They need to match one to one. But you can always email KK with an agenda item. Or when she sends out the draft agenda you can respond and ask her to add something.

NG Okay, thank you.

DM Is there an autoresponder for job applicants?

FM If they don't qualify, I don't respond, but I do screen. We don't have a lot of applicants, so we are interviewing most people.

DM Do we say thank you for applying?

DF We could set up an autoresponder email if we wanted to.

DM Thank you, DF.

DF I can follow up on that.

CONTINUING BUSINESS/OPEN ISSUES

02.16.22 Approved

Discussion and Approval of Minutes

KK moved to approve the 02/02/22 Meeting Minutes. MM second. No further discussion. Unanimous Votes in favor: KK, DF, AS, JT, MM, BF, SE, NG, DM. **Motion passes.**

COVID-19 Policy 2022 Motions

KK We're trying something different by adding agendized motions so that board members can have time to review them before the meeting. We've had two-three meetings with in-depth discussion, and I think we're going to see where we can get from passing motions. So for the person posing the motion, if you wouldn't mind reading the motion, we can discuss, and then vote.

AS moves to amend the first sentence on Page 1, Paragraph 2 of the 2022 Covid-19 Policy and Procedure document to: Students may obtain a medical exemption from their doctor, *written on official letterhead*, if they have a medical condition that prevents them from wearing a mask. These parameters were sent in a communication from FM on Parent Square on 9/18/21, and the italicized words add clarity to the document. BF Second. No further discussion. Unanimous votes in Favor: KK, DF, AS, MM, BF, JT, DM, SE, NG. **Motion passes.**

SE I sent in some context to the board for them to review. Can we discuss that?

KK I want to be cognizant of time, but sure.

SE The CDC review of the current data and contact tracing demonstrates unequivocally:

- It is extremely rare for a child to become seriously ill from any variant of SAR-CoV2
- Child-to-child transmission of SAR-CoV2 does not tend to occur in school, even with only modest mitigation strategies in place. If a child contracts COVID-19, it likely will be from outside the school.
- School closures and openings have no effect on the community infection rate.

Other data has strongly suggested that:

- In children, fever has been the most consistent and reliable indicator of COVID-19-related illness.
- Although it is possible, asymptomatic individuals, especially children, are unlikely to transmit the virus.

Resources were provided. The current CDC recommendations for quarantining and isolation were implemented at DMS a few weeks ago and have not been satisfactory for the following reasons:

- The current recommendations attempt to approach a "zero infection" rate, which is not necessary given the literature-supported scientific facts listed above.
- Sending children home unexpectedly under any circumstances but especially without a true justification of an eminent health risk poses a substantial burden to parents.
- Contract tracing and policing the quarantining are extremely time and resource consuming tasks for the school administration. This time could be better spent.
- Parents want to reclaim being the gatekeeper of their children's health and well-being.
- The current recommendations are not practical for a school environment.

As a relevant point, healthcare systems, such as Banner Heath and Atlas, do not follow the CDC's guidelines regarding close contact isolation.

I'd like to replace that with a Stay Home When Sick Policy. Read the motion: SE moves to "Replace DMS' adoption of the CDC QUARANTINE and CLOSE CONTACT guidelines with:

02.16.22 Approved

STAY HOME WHEN SICK POLICY: Parents are to keep their children home if children display “flu-like symptoms.” Children with fever will stay home. Fever is defined as a temperature over >100.0 F. Children will stay home until they have remained afebrile for 48 hours. Daily screening of temperature checks at the beginning of the school day may be implemented by each class at the discretion of the teacher.” We were told we’d be fined if we didn’t follow guidelines, and that turned out not to be true.

MM SE, we need to have a second for the motion.

SE That’s fine, but I’m not done. I have to speculate that the reason people aren’t supporting these motions is that they are going for a zero transmission policy.

KK Please read the motion, so we are clear.

SE moves to “Replace DMS’ adoption of the CDC QUARANTINE and CLOSE CONTACT guidelines with: STAY HOME WHEN SICK POLICY: Parents are to keep their children home if children display “flu-like symptoms.” Children with fever will stay home. Fever is defined as a temperature over >100.0 F. Children will stay home until they have remained afebrile for 48 hours.

NG second. The following discussion took place:

BF I’ll say more when we reach my motion, but I’ve been thinking a lot about the Covid policy. I personally feel sympathetic to the proposal that DM made, and I see this as something similar. Personally, I think it’s a disruption on parents’ and kids’ lives to be sent home when there’s little visible evidence of illness. Omicron is going down. That being said, as a board member, I think there’s a clear standard of care that’s outlined. It’s on MCDPH’s site. We’re following the legal standard of care. I don’t want to fall below that standard of care. I think that would be irresponsible, so I will not be voting for this motion. I don’t think we should be making Covid policy when it’s already clearly outlined. I wanted to spell out that reasoning.

SE I appreciate what BF is saying, but they’re looking for a zero percentage risk. There’s nothing legally binding about this. It’s a recommendation. I don’t agree that it should be a zero risk situation. If you think that then stay home; keep your kids home.

KK I’d like to take a step back. We’re getting a little heated.

SE This is not a legal standard. I don’t think a lot of other people want to do this as well. I don’t think we need to get to the lowest common denominator. We wouldn’t do that in an educational setting based a child’s needs. But I understand people feel differently.

KK I’m wondering if the temperature screening left up to teachers should be left out or made standard. It puts so much onus on the teacher. FM, if a kid’s ill and goes to the office we take their temperature, right?

FM Yes, that’s right. If it’s 100 degrees or higher we call the parents. I agree with KK, that I don’t want to put this on the teachers. This is polarizing. I’d like to stick to if the kid isn’t feeling well, they can go to the office.

SE For anyone like BF thinking to vote against this, if the wording is changed would it sway anyone’s vote?

KK JT, I know you don't speak for all teachers, but when you think of your day, is it feasible to take temperatures during the day?

JT I'm not sure. I don't think so. I think you're putting a lot of pressure on a teacher to be responsible for that. That's why I motioned for a school nurse months ago. We haven't been able to fill that role.

DM Students used to be lined up every morning.

JT It's inappropriate for a teacher to be administering medical equipment to children.

DM I wasn't advising for it, just commenting on the lining up of the students when they were greeted by their teacher in the morning.

SE Okay, does anyone care if I take that out?

AS You can reword the motion. That's fine.

SE Then I'd like to take out that line on temperature checks.

Votes in Favor: SE, NG, DM. Against: KK, AS, JT, DF, BF, MM. **Motion fails.**

SE The best evidence reviewed by the CDC supporting their opinion regarding mask use is:

- In Bangladesh, in late 2020, there was a 9% difference in transmission rate in villages with and without mask mandates.
- In Germany, in 2020, schools that had no mitigation strategies demonstrated a 1 case per week across the nation difference over when strict layered mitigation strategies, including masks, were implemented.

These modest benefits have been contradicted by other high-level evidence studies:

- In Finland, in 2021, a randomized-controlled study following 6000 subjects and showed no differences in SARS-CoV2 infection rates between masked and unmasked individuals.
- In Vietnam, Level-1 study in 2015 demonstrated a higher infection rate of influenza in those that wore cloth masks over no masks at all.
- In South Korea, in 2021, a study demonstrated that after two hours of use, all mask types lost their efficacy.
- A Cochrane meta-analysis reviewed 67 Level-1 studies on the topic of masks to date and found that the data "did not show a clear reduction in respiratory viral infection with use of medical/surgical mask" and that "Harms associated with physical interventions were under-investigated."

The World Health Organization (WHO) disagrees with the CDC in mask use for children. The WHO recommends:

- No child under the age of 5 years should wear a mask under any circumstances.
- Children between 5-12 years should only wear masks in extreme circumstances such as during a wide-spread community outbreak, but only after considering the potential impact on learning and development.

Resources were provided. Given this, it would seem difficult to justify mandating mask use in children. At the same time, we would not want to deny parents who feel it is in their child's best interest to wear masks.

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When there is a void in science to support or deny an action, there cannot be a sound justification to over-ride a parent's autonomy over their child, either by mandating masks or denying the option.

SE moves that "Mask use will be optional." NG second. No further discussion. Votes in Favor: SE, NG, DM. Against: KK, DF, AS, MM, BF, JT. **Motion fails.**

SE Religious freedoms has drawn skepticism recently as many individuals have used Constitutional rights to justify their desire not to wear masks. This creates conflict. As a result, fraudulent religious exemptions have been exposed while other more legitimate ones have been validated by the courts. Plaintiffs whose exemptions were upheld by the courts were able to demonstrate that their beliefs to abstain from masking are (1) part of their religion; and (2) an integral part of their lives.

Many corporations, as well as health care systems in Arizona, have resolved this conflict by granting religious exemptions only to those who are able to demonstrate (1) that it is part of their religion; and (2) their beliefs are an integral part of their lives. These employers challenge their employees wishing to be granted religious exemptions to submit thoughtful applications. Only those that are able to explain how wearing masks violate their religion and how this belief is an integral part of their lives will be granted exemption.

Probing questions in the applications may include:

- PLEASE DESCRIBE THE NATURE OF YOUR OBJECTION TO THE COVID-19 MASKING REQUIREMENT AND THE ACCOMMODATION YOU ARE REQUESTING
- PLEASE EXPLAIN HOW YOUR SINCERELY HELD RELIGIOUS BELIEF, PRACTICE, OR OBSERVANCE CONFLICTS WITH THE COVID-19 MASKING REQUIREMENT.
- WOULD COMPLYING WITH THE COVID-19 MASKING REQUIREMENT SUBSTANTIALLY BURDEN YOUR RELIGIOUS EXERCISE? IF SO, PLEASE EXPLAIN HOW.
- PLEASE PROVIDE ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION THAT YOU THINK MAY BE HELPFUL IN REVIEWING YOUR REQUEST.

SE moves that "Religions exemptions from masks will be reinstated. Those who wish to apply for an exemption will be required to submit an application to be reviewed by the COVID Mitigation Team. Submission does not mean an automatic approval." NG second. The following discussion took place:

NG SE, submitting religious exemptions to the mitigation team allows them to determine if those exemptions are serious religious beliefs?

SE Right. If you're worried about bias, these questions have been vetted out by legal teams of corporations. If they can answer those questions respectfully then in court they should hold up.

MM I agree with SE that these questions would be sufficient.

NG Okay, thank you.

SE It protects both the school, FM, and parents. It protects everybody.

Votes in Favor: SE, NG, DM. Against: KK, DF, AS, MM, JT, BF. **Motion fails.**

KK Next up is BF.

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BF I'm sympathetic with the idea that the Covid policy needs to be changed in certain ways since it messes with kids'/parents' schedules. It's hard to figure that out when your kid isn't showing signs of sickness. I think the policy is clear from the county for k-12 schools, and from what I can tell we are following it, so the first one involves inviting a representative from MCDPH to direct questions to. As a board member, I feel constrained by existing county policy and getting a rep to answer our questions may be helpful. I think the ire should be aimed toward the county.

BF moves that "The VSWEA Board will invite a representative from the Maricopa County Department of Public Health to discuss Covid-19 policy in a special town hall open to the entire DMS community." DF second. The following discussion took place:

NG Do we plan on having this be in person with open discussion and debate?

BF I haven't thought that far ahead. I don't think it's that detailed so far. But I think that could be the case.

NG The last town hall was set up as a webinar. I want to make sure that everyone gets to ask questions. I don't want to sit through a PowerPoint.

MM I don't think DMS needs to be the agent or guiding force for parents to contact or question the county. I don't want to land a county official into a group that may not be so kind. I'm not sure what this would do to change anyone's mind.

SE The first message is to have someone come up and say listen to public health. Question him, don't question us. The second thing is the message is getting clear to parents is that we are letting the school be run the public health officials with policies that may better be applied to high schools that have 1000 kids in them. It seems like we're saying we can't think for ourselves.

NG Have you contacted the MCDPH? Are they willing to do this?

BF I haven't contacted them.

NG I would think their plate is full.

BF Yeah, me too.

Votes in Favor: BF, DM, DF. Against: AS, KK, MM, JT, SE, NG. **Motion fails.**

BF We voted down DF motion for Test to Stay, but I think it's not a bad option. So this motion is another option. If the county is willing to work with us on different options, then it's worth exploring. I'm trying to lay out different options for ways that are responsible to the school.

KK Please read your motion.

BF moves that "The VSWEA Board will attempt to work with the Maricopa County Department of Public Health to see about the possibility of piloting a quarantine exemption for unvaccinated students identified as close contacts." DF second. The following discussion took place:

SE I'm vague in what this means.

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BF The district that piloted the test to stay program was something that they worked out with the county. I think it's a smart way to do it because it gives the board cover, but I'm not sure if it's feasible or not.

DF This also helps community know that we are collaborating with health officials and not just making up what we want.

AS What action will come from this vote? Will you call the county or will FM? What does that look like?

BF I would make that call and see if I can set up a group discussion to come up with a viable plan.

Votes in Favor: BF, KK, AS, DF. Against: SE, MM, JT, NG, DM. **Motion fails.**

KK moved to approve the 2022 Covid-19 Policy and Procedure document with the motion that passed this evening until we revisit the policy. AS second. No further discussion. Votes in Favor: KK, AS, DF, BF, MM, JT. Opposed: SE, NG, DM. **Motion Passes.**

NEW BUSINESS

Town Hall

KK We had our last town hall in January. We discussed rotating from virtual to person, so our next one should be in person. I was thinking March would be a good time.

DM I'm sorry. Are other people allowed to propose motions or just board members?

KK No, only board members. Okay, FM, any dates that you think will work for you?

FM I think we meet right after Spring Break when everyone is fresh.

MM I think we need to avoid the webinar Zoom. It's clear that parents want to be heard. We need to have them be able to have discussions with us.

SE I agree that we need to have a message out to parents that they can have a discussion. We need to have clear communication.

FM I have no problem sending that out. I will also add a reminder to PS the week before.

SE I think we need to explain why we're doing Zoom at all. That message isn't getting out.

KK Can you put something in the communication regarding us rotating from in person and zoom and the reasons for the zoom—people who live far away, child care issues, etc?

FM Sure, I will. If we do it in March, it should be nice out, so we can do something outside. I can put benches out so we can sit.

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MK If we have to move to Zoom to the next one, can it not be a webinar and just be a Zoom? I think you can have 100 participants. Then people can see each other; it feels more personal when you can see everyone.

KK Good suggestion. How do we feel about that?

MM I think that's a great idea.

NG I think we should do a week night so it's outside and in person.

KK We have our board meeting that Wednesday, so we have 21st, 22nd, or 24th.

FM I say the 22nd.

KK Okay, March 22nd. Thanks for taking care of that, FM.

22/23 Academic Calendar

KK moved to approve the Desert Marigold 2022-2023 Academic Calendar. DF second. No further discussion. Unanimous votes in favor: KK, DF, AS, JT, MM, BF, SE, NG, DM. **Motion passes.**

Board Goals

KK A few meetings ago, we discussed goals. I put those in a board folder called Board Goals. I'd like to bring that up at our next meeting so we can discuss those.

AS KK, you want me to create a shortcut and put it in our meeting documents folder for our next meeting?

KK Yes, please. Thank you.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

KK Our next board meeting is February 16th at 6:30pm.

KK moved to adjourn the Wednesday, 2/2/22 meeting. DM second. No further discussion. Unanimous vote in favor: JT, DF, AS, DM, NG, KK, MM, SE, BF. **Motion passes.**

CLOSING VERSE

DM read the closing verse.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:56pm.

Prepared by AS on 02.02.2022.