

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

February 11, 2021

6:00 PM

The special meeting of the Baker School Board was called to order by Chairperson Gye Varner at 6:00 pm in the Boardroom of Baker High School. Trustees Johnna Koenig, Mike Gunderson, Klint Flint and Quentin Burdick were in attendance. Also present were Principals Bo Lingle and David Breitbach, Vice Principal Jacob Gion, Superintendent Aaron Skogen, Technology Director Scott Anderson and District Clerk Jennifer Mettler. No guests were present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

ACTION ITEMS:

BOARD POLICY REVISION – BP1905

Mr. Skogen stated as of February 12, 2021, Governor Gianforte lifted the statewide mask directive. In the absence of a statewide mask directive only a local health board can authorize a county mask directive. Additionally, in the absence of a county mask directive only a local school board can authorize a mask requirement for their district/schools. The initial policy was adopted April 2020 when closure started. During that time, County Health had not issued a mask directive so it was up to local school boards to make the changes.

In August 2020, the Board approved our reopening plan. In our original plan the Board approved the following language regarding face coverings/masks:

- *At this time we are not requiring students and/or staff to use a face covering (mask, shield, scarf, product that covers both mouth and nose) for the entire school day; however, to ensure our 7th-12th grade students can transition (move from class to class at the bell) on a normal schedule, we are requiring that students and staff wear face coverings during transition. This would include walking the hallway in the morning prior to school starting. There may be other situations where we need students to wear face coverings, but at this time, we are not mandating that they be worn all day and in every situation. We ask that parents/students supply their own appropriate face covering, but we'll provide students with a mask (cloth and/or disposable) should they need one. We will provide facing coverings for our staff.*

**It should be noted that a mandate for face coverings (State, Federal, etc) could be issued that may supersede the authority of our local Board of Trustees.*

Our original language for BP 1905, adopted in April 2020 and stated:

- *Staff and students may wear a mask while present in any school building. The School District does not require the use of masks and will not provide masks except in cases required by this policy or at the discretion of the administration. The Board of Trustees' decision to not require or provide masks is based on a review of the circumstances in the community and consultation with local health officials on issues including but not limited to the possibility of exposure and availability of masks.*

BP 1905 was revised in August 2020 to state:

- *Staff and students may wear a mask/**face covering** while present in any school building. The School District does not require the use of masks/**face coverings** and will not provide masks except in cases **except for 7-12 students***

during passing time in the hallways and/or as deemed appropriate when physical distancing is not feasible. Masks/face coverings may be supplied to students as supplies allow but students will need to bring their own mask/face covering required by this policy or at the discretion of the administration. The Board of Trustees' decision to not require or provide an unlimited number of masks is based on a review of the circumstances in the community and consultation with local health officials on issues including but not limited to the possibility of exposure and availability of masks/face coverings.

BP 1905 was revised in September 2020 to align with Governor Bullock's directive and stated:

"Staff and students may wear a mask/face covering while present in any school building. The School District does not require the use of masks/face coverings except for 7-12 students during passing time in the hallways and/or as deemed appropriate when physical distancing is not feasible. Masks/face coverings may be supplied to students as supplies allow but students will need to bring their own mask/face covering. The Board of Trustees' decision to not require or provide an unlimited number of masks is based on a review of the circumstances in the community and consultation with local health officials on issues including but not limited to the possibility of exposure and availability of masks/face coverings. Allegations of harassment of any person wearing face coverings will be promptly investigated in accordance with District policy. A student, staff member, or visitor who, after an investigation, is found to engaged in behavior that violates District policy is subject to redirection or discipline. If the number of active COVID-19 cases in the county where the school district is located is four (4) or more after this provision is adopted, the Board of Trustees authorizes the superintendent to implement a requirement for face coverings to be worn as specified in the directives from the State of Montana until such time as the Board of Trustees can adopt an applicable District policy. The superintendent shall coordinate with the county health department to determine whether face coverings are required at the school in accordance with the requirements issued by the State of Montana. In the event face coverings are required, the superintendent shall announce the face coverings requirement to students, parents, staff, volunteers, and visitors for the immediate successive school day each day by 3:00pm. If the superintendent determines face coverings are required, signs will be posted to inform students, parents, staff, volunteers, and visitors, of the face covering requirement while present in any school building or at any applicable outdoor school event.

We started the school year not requiring face coverings/masks. Even after Governor Bullock's first state directive was issued, we still did not need to require face coverings/masks as our county was under the four (4) + active cases. Eventually we surpassed four (4) active cases and were required to adhere to the statewide directive.

Our school, and our county have only required face coverings/masks in accordance with state directives that have been issued. Currently there is no statewide and/or local mask directive that would require our District's staff and students to wear a mask/face covering.

Yesterday I surveyed our staff. Below are the questions I asked and the results of those questions.

- Do you feel masks should be required in Baker Public Schools even in the absence of a statewide and/or countywide mandate? Additionally, do you feel masks should be encouraged but optional to each individual?
 - 23%--Yes-masks should be required
 - 23%--No-masks should not be required.
 - 54%--Optional-each individual may choose to wear a mask.
- Do you feel masks should only be required in Baker Public Schools up until two (2) weeks after staff have had access to their 2nd vaccine dose? (CDC guidance on effectiveness of vaccine administration—staff are set to have their 2nd vaccine dose available on Friday (2.26.21) thus two weeks after the dose would be Friday (3.12.21)
 - 38%--Yes-masks required until two (2) weeks after 2nd vaccine dose administered to staff (3.12.21)
 - 62%--No—masks do not need to be required regardless if staff have had their 2nd vaccine dose
- Do you feel there should be a threshold for when masks should be required in Baker Public Schools? (if number of positive cases in the schools reaches a threshold)
 - 30%--Masks required if four (4) or more active cases within the school/district
 - 13%--Masks required if eight (8) or more active cases within the school/district
 - 6%--Masks required if ten (10) or more active cases within the school/district
 - 42%--No threshold for when masks would be required in the district
 - 9%--Other

Mr. Skogen presents to the board with three options to choose for revision to BP1905:

- Option 1
 - Require face coverings through March 12, 2021.
 - Face coverings are optional as of Monday March, 15, 2021
 - Only board action will require face coverings after March 15, 2021
- Option 2
 - Face coverings are optional.
 - Only board action will require face coverings after BP1905 policy revisions are approved (anticipated approval 2.16.2021)
- Option 3
 - Face coverings are optional.

Klint Flint moved to approve Option #2 as presented with changes to strike “optional” and replace with “recommended and encouraged” in the policy as presented. Mike Gunderson seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

