

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM. Present: School Board Members Joseph Saulnier, John Harmon, Tony Clements, Ada Vadeboncoeur, and Dawn Leamer; Student Representative to the School Board Mason Lord (remote); Interim Superintendent David DeRuosi; Business Administrator Marjorie Whitmore; Student Services Director Michael Hatfield; Raymond High School Principal Steve Woodward; Iber Holmes Gove Middle School Bob Bickford; Lamprey River Elementary School Principal Laura Yacek.

Proof of Posting: It was noted that the meeting was properly posted.

Pledge of Allegiance: All those in attendance stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Non-Public Session: MOTION: John Harmon moved, seconded by Ada Vadeboncoeur, to enter into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 II (b) "The hiring of any person as a public employee," and (c) "Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the public body itself, unless such person requests an open meeting." Upon the Board members being individually polled, the motion was voted in the affirmative by Joseph Saulnier, John Harmon, Dawn Leamer, Ada Vadeboncoeur, and Tony Clements. The Board entered into non-public session at 6:01 PM and resumed public session at 6:06 PM. Other than the vote to exit this non-public session (which was moved by Tony Clements, seconded by Ada Vadeboncoeur, and upon the Board members being individually polled, was voted in the affirmative by Joseph Saulnier, John Harmon, Dawn Leamer, Ada Vadeboncoeur, and Tony Clements), no motions were voted during this non-public session.

Public Input: Raymond School District Youth Program Director Patrick Arsenault approached the Board. He stated that he wanted to take the opportunity of a larger audience at this School Board meeting to reiterate the importance of applying for free and reduced meals. Even though meals are free this year, these percentages factor into other programs.

Cindy Bennett approached the Board. She referenced the New Hampshire Constitution regarding equality of rights. She stated that adults have the responsibility to protect children's rights, and children have the right to breathe free. She doesn't understand why there is a need to mandate masks when it is not deadly to kids and effectiveness of masks is in question. If masks are mandated, she will encourage parents to protect children and keep them out of school.

Joclyn Willis approached the Board. She described the difficulties of the last year and half for her children, and stated that mandating masks would effectively force her children out of school again. She described a test done by concerned parents, sending freshly laundered masks for testing. Results showed evidence of various diseases and bacteria, including pneumonia, meningitis, tuberculosis, etc. She stated that the suggestion is that masks be worn for 20-30 minutes and then disposed of. She urged choice, and stated that her children will not be going to school if they have to wear a mask.

Terry Austrew approached the Board. He stated that children must return to school, and endorsed mask usage. He referenced the use of masks to fight Ebola. We've eliminated 50% of the population from personal risk due to vaccination, but transmission continues. He stated that his opinion is to have a mandate for children but send them back to school.

Ashley St. John approached the Board. She stated that in Fremont, masks are optional and she agrees with that. She added that children learn development skills and when that mask is on her child can't get what he needs. She also referenced the survey done prior to the end of the last school year and that most parents said no masks. She's hoping that's still the case.

A resident approached the Board stating that he feels putting a child in a mask just doesn't make sense. He stated that we have a vaccine, a great recreation program has been going on with no masks, and here we are about to be right back to where we were last year.

Julie Walkner approached the Board. She stated that life is risky but healthy children have almost no risk of dying from COVID. Parents have had it; they want the choice to parent their children. The biggest problem is that it's hard to breathe, hard to hear each other, and it's abnormal, and it's time to seriously question what authorities are telling us. She stated that there should be no bullying about masks, that it needs to be communicated that anyone who doesn't wear a mask is not someone who doesn't care about others.

Tina Smith approached the board. She stated that her children are old enough to tell her how they feel and that last year has been a challenge. COVID is not just about masks and vaccines but also about mental health. Can we meet in the middle instead of all one way or another? She suggested that masks be worn in hallways, and asked why we can't think about what would be best for our children and a compromise.

Samantha Arroyo approached the Board and stated that she would like to see the scientific evidence for mask usage and stated she is against mandated masks.

Haley Elliott approached the Board and stated that she feels wearing a mask should be an individual choice.

Emails from the following residents were read into the public record. These emails are included at the end of these minutes.

Neva and Wayne Cole
Shelley Roy
Beth Paris
Jen Johnson Wells
Alicia Post
Maria Rodriguez
Brenda Fortier
Roger McGee
Lindsay Rothwell
Sara Kelley
Lisa Dufour
Tracey Merrill

Kera Clements approached the Board and stated her support of the current reopening plan with masks optional, and asked to please mandate hand washing and sanitization of the hands.

Robert King approached the Board and stated that he is a bus driver and he wasn't sick all this year. He stated that it's a fraud, a mockery.

The meeting was recessed at 7:02 PM.

The meeting resumed at 7:05 PM.

A resident inquired if money is given to the School Board for emergency situations, is there any stipulation to mandate masks? The response from administration was no, there is no such stipulation.

Tara Campbell approached the Board, stating that students don't know the staff or the teachers; they have no connection. There is no relationship between staff and students when in masks.

Christine Darling approached the Board. She stated she is very much against masks, most students don't wear them correctly, and that her children should be exposed to good germs.

Mrs. Whitmore provided a response to an earlier question about whether applications from home schooled students would count toward Raymond Free & Reduced counts. She stated that only students who are enrolled in the district can submit applications. No remote meals are provided unless the District is forced into a remote situation. However, free and reduced will matter with the after school program for a homeschooled student.

Dale Morin approached the Board and stated he does not support mandating masks. He asked, in reference to the section of the plan which stated that "during instances of high community transmission, masks will be recommended indoors," what constitutes high community transmission?

Student Representative to the School Board Report: Student Representative Mason Lord stated that he has been talking with students about wearing masks. They don't want to wear masks, but going remote was hard and wearing masks may help us not go remote. He also stated that students like the idea of Blizzard Bag days to allow more summer days.

2021-22 School Year Reopening Plan: Dr. DeRuosi reviewed the proposed changes to the reopening plan, including the recommendation of mask wearing indoors based on local numbers and data.

Ms. Vadeboncoeur suggested updating the School Board member list to remove former member Janice Arsenault and add Dawn Leamer.

Ms. Vadeboncoeur stated that regarding masks, each district makes their own decision based on where they are. She's not comfortable making a medical mandate fully based on something she didn't go to school for. She stated her support for optional masks.

Mr. Clements stated that fully vaccinated people who are exposed should be held to the same standard as unvaccinated, knowing what we know about transmission. He doesn't like the word "recommended" because it turns into expected and then required.

Mr. Harmon stated that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has definitions for what thresholds are “high transmission.” Mr. Harmon asked the principals how many students/staff members in the schools were positive last school year as a result of interactions at schools. All principals stated zero. Mrs. Yacek stated that there have also been no cases during current summer programming with no masks. Mr. Woodward stated that high school cases were centered around sports teams, not necessarily a positive student but exposure at home causing quarantines. Mr. Bickford stated that for every case he did contact tracing for, exposure was in the community.

Mr. Harmon stated that the CDC, the State of New Hampshire, and the American Academy of Pediatrics all recommend masks, especially in areas of substantial transmission. He believes that masks should be mandated throughout the District. He asked that regardless of the mask decision, that parents do not send in their students if they are the least bit sick. We have a responsibility for the safety of students and staff; half of our student population don't have the ability to be vaccinated.

Mr. Harmon noted that seating charts should be designated as mandatory consistently throughout the plan.

Ms. Leamer stated that she leans toward masks being an option, in light of students who need the emotional/social piece of interaction.

Mr. Saulnier stated that he is in favor of optional masks.

Regarding the masking recommendation during periods of high transmission, Dr. DeRuosi stated that if cases increased to that point, mandating masks would need to be reconsidered and would be brought back to the Board.

Mr. Clements stated he would like to see the level of transmission defined in the plan with a hard number.

Ms. Leamer noted that regardless of masking in schools, masking on school buses is still mandated and cannot be changed.

Mr. Saulnier asked, of those Board members who are in favor of optional masking, would they support masking in hallways? Mr. Clements, Ms. Vadeboncoeur, and Ms. Leamer replied no.

Mr. Clements recommended clarifying in the plan that distancing will be maximized when possible *except when outside*.

MOTION: Ada Vadeboncoeur moved, seconded by Tony Clements, to accept the reopening plan as amended. Motion passed with Joseph Saulnier, Ada Vadeboncoeur, Tony Clements, and Dawn Leamer voting in the affirmative and John Harmon voting in opposition.

Snow Days/ “Blizzard Bags”: Mr. Harmon stated he asked for this agenda item so that a consistent policy can be developed as to expectations for students and staff. Dr. DeRuosi stated that he has been told by New Hampshire School Boards Association that the NH Department of Education is expected to reconsider this August the current requirement for districts to submit a plan in order to hold classes remotely on inclement weather days. He stated that he could develop a plan and how it would be implemented for the Board to consider.

Mr. Harmon stated that he would need to hear from the principals as to whether they think live instruction is doable.

Mr. Saulnier stated that a neighboring district uses paper as well as Chromebooks. Ms. Leamer expressed her concern for families who don't have access to the internet.

Mr. Woodward stated that he feels as long as high school staff aren't being asked to do remote instruction every day of the week, it would be acceptable to them. Mrs. Yacek stated that there is concern at the elementary level about engagement for the full day; there would be live instruction and some not live instruction. Mr. Bickford stated middle school staff would be very comfortable with live instruction and recommended that cameras be required to be on.

There was some discussion about how to determine completion of work, especially if the student has no power. It was noted that in the past, work has been product-based, attendance can be entered retroactively, and students have a certain amount of time to submit work.

During discussion, Dr. DeRuosi clarified that if an inclement weather day is to count as a school day, then everybody works, including para-educators. He stated that he shies away from delayed openings and early releases, and prefers to notify of a school closure the night before if possible.

Mr. Harmon stated he is not looking for every snow day to be used as a remote day, but it should be an option. It was generally agreed that administration will come back to the Board with a proposal which can be fine-tuned at that point.

Review of District Administrative Positions: Mr. Harmon stated that he asked for this agenda item. He stated that enrollment numbers have been dropping the last ten years. Currently there are 18 administrators. In 2011 there were 17. He realizes that there are some grant-funded positions. He'd like to have a discussion about looking at the number of administrators and whether things can be done differently with what we have or less.

Dr. DeRuosi reviewed the current administrative staff. He will include his recommendations in an upcoming Friday Memo. He stated he needs to further understand the capacity of the assistant principals; that perhaps they could be trained for instructional leadership and then maybe take on more curriculum. He can't say how successful the restructuring of the special education department is since it's so new.

Retention of Surplus Funds: Mrs. Whitmore reviewed the surplus funds document with the Board, which showed the approved warrant article allowing for up to \$75,000 of surplus funds to be placed in the maintenance capital reserve fund. MOTION: John Harmon moved, seconded by Ada Vadeboncoeur, to approve the \$75,000 from the year-end fund balance available on July 1 to be moved into the maintenance capital reserve fund as per warrant article 8. Voted unanimously in the affirmative.

MS-25 and DOE-25: Mrs. Whitmore reviewed the MS-25 and the DOE-25 with the Board. MOTION: John Harmon moved, seconded by Dawn Leamer, to authorize the signing of the MS-25 and the DOE-25. Mr. Harmon withdrew his motion, Ms. Leamer withdrew her second. MOTION: John Harmon moved, seconded by Dawn Leamer, to authorize the Board to sign the MS-25 and the DOE-25. Voted unanimously in the affirmative.

Nominations/Resignations: MOTION: John Harmon moved, seconded by Dawn Leamer, to approve the nomination of Irene Martin for Raymond High School teacher. Voted unanimously in the affirmative.

School Board Committee Assignments: The following adjustments were made to the current School Board Committee assignments:

- Ada Vadeboncoeur will be the first representative to the Strategic Planning Committee; Joseph Saulnier will serve as the alternate
- Dawn Leamer will serve as the alternate to the Transportation Committee
- Dawn Leamer will serve as the first representative to the Raymond Coalition for Youth

It was generally agreed to bring School Board Committee Assignments back to the next meeting.

Donation Acceptance: MOTION: John Harmon moved, seconded by Ada Vadeboncoeur, to accept the donation of \$12,008.67 from NH Special Olympics to Raymond High School. Voted unanimously in the affirmative. The Board congratulated the high school on their efforts and thanked the fire department for spraying.

Committee Reports: None.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. DeRuosi reviewed the work he's been doing this week, including looking at Blizzard Bags, talking with special education, and trying to open school up with as much of a sense of normal as possible.

It was agreed to set September 22nd as a meeting date to go over things talked about at the August 11th meeting such as test scores, etc.

Manifest Signing: A quorum of the Board signed the manifest. Account Payable total \$673,061.40. Payroll total \$544,878.24.

Approval of Minutes: John Harmon moved, seconded by Tony Clements, to approve the August 4, 2021 minutes as presented. Voted unanimously in the affirmative.

Non-Public Session: MOTION: John Harmon moved, seconded by Ada Vadeboncoeur, to enter into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 II (c) "Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the public body itself, unless such person requests an open meeting" and (i) "Consideration of matters relating to the preparation for and the carrying out of emergency functions, including training to carry out such functions, developed by local or state safety officials." Upon the Board members being individually polled, the motion was voted in the affirmative by Joseph Saulnier, John Harmon, Dawn Leamer, Ada Vadeboncoeur, and Tony Clements. The Board entered into non-public session at 9:06 PM and resumed public session at 9:57 PM. Other than the vote to exit this non-public session and seal the minutes (which was moved by John Harmon, seconded by Dawn Leamer, and upon the Board members being individually polled, was voted in the affirmative by Joseph Saulnier, John Harmon, Dawn Leamer, Ada Vadeboncoeur, and Tony Clements), two motions were voted during this non-public session.

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Adjournment: MOTION: John Harmon moved, seconded by Tony Clements, to adjourn the meeting. Voted unanimously in the affirmative. Meeting adjourned at 9:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Heywood,
Raymond School Board Clerk

Raymond School Board Non-Public Session
August 18, 2021

Not voted to be kept confidential.

Present: School Board Members Joseph Saulnier, John Harmon, Tony Clements, Ada Vadeboncoeur, and Dawn Leamer; Interim Superintendent David DeRuosi.

Dr. DeRuosi reviewed this evening's nomination with the School Board.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Heywood,
Raymond School Board Clerk

Emails read during the public input portion of this meeting:

Thank you to the Raymond School Board for meeting today and carefully considering the mask policy for the Raymond students at the start of the 2021 school year. My husband and I have grown up in Raymond, and are now raising a very opinionated and awesome soon to be fourth grader in Raymond.

I'm sure I don't have to say it, but her last year was difficult. Being remote was a huge struggle for everyone in our family and it was not an ideal learning situation. But the awesome teachers did what they could and somehow we got through it in one piece. Going back to in-person learning saw a huge improvement in my daughter's joy, confidence, and abilities. I don't want to go back to remote learning. I'm sure I'm not alone.

I'd love to leave it there and have that be the extent of my statement, but Covid is still raging and Delta is making things difficult again. I know all the arguments against requiring masks, most of which are not based in well researched fact (For example, no, masks do not cause oxygen deprivation. Those videos showing carbon dioxide levels inside masks registering at dangerous levels are detecting exhaled breath which contains gases such as carbon dioxide and nitrogen. Oxygen molecules are small enough to pass through masks when you inhale. If such masks were not safe, medical professionals would not be trusted to wear them while performing surgery.) And I know all the reasons why we should all be wearing masks. And in my opinion, requiring us all to wear masks a few more months to help prevent the spread of Covid while the vaccine for children is safely developed, seems like a very small sacrifice to make for our community.

I will point out a few things in support of my opinion:

1. Many studies are coming out that say vaccinated people can become infected with Covid and while they may be asymptomatic, they still carry the same viral load as those who are unvaccinated. In other words, vaccinated people can still spread the virus.
2. The Delta variant is 200% more transmissible than the original strain of COVID19 (Alpha) that swept through the US last year. Kids are just as effective at spreading the virus as adults, perhaps more so because they can have fewer symptoms when ill.
3. Only 45.5% of Raymond residents are fully vaccinated. To reach herd immunity, we need to be closer to 85% vaccinated.
4. We know from last year's experiences in schools around the world what works and what doesn't work. Schools that implemented masks, physical distancing, and student cohorting experienced way less transmission.

What we do to protect our kids in school, in this instance, directly impacts our community as a whole. All New Hampshire counties are back to having substantial community transmission. Now is the time to take precautions, because if we wait and "see how it goes for now" and only implement required mask wearing in a few months time, it will be too late for many in our community.

We're exhausted too. This hasn't been easy for anyone, especially the kids. My kid will be wearing a mask regardless, but we all know how it goes in any social situation. You don't want to be the odd person out. It won't

take much to convince my child to stop wearing her mask while in school because “everyone else is doing it” and she has already experienced bullying for being different in way more insignificant ways than wearing a mask. Let’s make it easy on them all: Require masks, offer accommodations for children who have sensory issues, autism, or asthma, and get on with the fun and joy of in-person learning.

Thank you
Neva Cole
Wayne Cole

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am a parent of a Senior this year. My Senior has had COVID and has also been vaccinated.

My opinion on mask wearing in school is that it should be VOLUNTARY and **not mandatory**.

In the high school level, many of the students are of the age where they can keep their hands to themselves and they can use proper hand hygiene. It is up to them to keep themselves safe.

If I had a student in the lower schools who was not able to be vaccinated, I would definitely have them wear a mask, but it would be MY CHOICE as a parent.

The Governor of New Hampshire does not foresee a mask mandate, therefore I feel that the schools should not either. It is a major over reach in my opinion.

Please take into consideration that these students are trying to get back to normal and making them wear a mask is a huge back step.

Thank you,

Shelley Roy

As a nurse who has worked nonstop throughout all of this, please do not mandate masks. Let the parents decide. I will be having my child
Wear a mask but please don’t force it.
Thank you
Beth Paris MSN RN

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Hello,

I am unable to attend tonight, but wanted to email in hopes that you would maintain the original openings plans of no masks/parent choice, or at least no masks while seated in classrooms and outdoors. I understand the mask mandate on buses.

My girls have both done sports unmasked (both indoors and outdoors) throughout the summer and we have not encountered a single positive case. Raymond's number is still low considering the population. My eldest (8th grade) asked to be vaccinated so that she could have a normal school year. My youngest (6th grade) will be vaccinated once it is available to her.

Please allow the kids a "normal" start to school this year. If numbers rise in Raymond or if we see transmission within the school, then I understand that masks may have to return for all. I would prefer that and 100% in school to last year.

Thank you,
Jen Johnson Wells

To whom it may concern,

Please think long & hard about enforcing masks this school year. Think of our children, pre-k through 12! They need smiles, facial expressions, no mask interaction. They deserve this. Please do not enforce masks for the reopening plan. Please please allow them to be optional!

Thankyou,
Alicia Post

I'm writing to express my concerns over the mask wearing in school this fall. I do not think these kids should need to wear masks any longer in school. I think the school board should keep the no mask option that they put in place in June!

Thank you for your time!
[Maria Rodriguez]

I am supporting the use of masks for the fall reopening. I will be watching the meeting. I wish you all the best tonight.

Thanks a bunch
Brenda Fortier

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Honorable School Board Members,

Please read my email into the public record.

I'm writing to express my concern over the possibility of changing our school opening policy.

I strongly support a "MASK OPTIONAL" policy, which effectively is what we have now. Any parents concerned for their child's safety can provide their children with a mask that complies with state/local standards. The same goes for our fine Raymond school staff member

If a mask mandate does materialize, please provide the detailed studies that demonstrate effectiveness. Insure it is published in a reputable scientific publication, and peer reviewed. Please do not provide any "opinions" from magazine writers or Bill Guy the Science Guy basement experiments.

I'd like to see the school continue effective control measures, like the sanitation stations for hand washing and social distancing of three (3) feet.

Should we see a rash of infections, and more importantly hospitalizations, we can always adopt more stringent policies.

Thank you kindly for your time and consideration.

Warmest Regards,

Roger McGhee
18 Pamela Lane, Raymond

To the Raymond school board, and other concerned parties:

I was disheartened to see the information in the 'face covering' section of the revised reopening plan.

I have read the most recent version of the NH State Covid-19 School and Childcare Toolkit linked in the agenda for tonight's meeting, and, to my understanding, Raymond in general and the schools specifically DO NOT meet the criteria set forth for discontinuing the use of masks in a school setting.

Raymond's vaccination rate seems to be about half of the recommended 80%, consistent physical distancing of 6 feet will be next to impossible at full capacity, and a large and vulnerable portion of the school population is unvaccinated, with no hope of changing that before the start of the 21/22 school year.

I understand the conflicting opinions surrounding this issue. I know that some parents and families will be angered by a face mask requirement. I understand that implementing such a requirement may cause a backlash, or cost you, the board, the approval of those families, and possibly even your seats.

Do it anyway.

Do it because it's the right thing. The best, safest thing. The only way to keep our schools open AND our children safe is to follow the guidelines laid out by the State of NH, outlined in the very toolkit attached to the meeting agenda.

I appreciate your taking the time to read this, and your dedication in carefully considering your next steps as guardians of the health and safety of Raymond's youngest residents.

Lindsay Rothwell

Dear School Board Members,

My name is Sara Kelley and I am a parent of two children who will be attending the middle and elementary school this upcoming school year.

I am writing because, like you, I want to see all students safe and healthy for the school year. I am concerned that if a mask mandate is not implemented for the start of school these outcomes will not be reached. With the rise of the Delta variant and the increase of children contracting COVID we very much should have something in place for the beginning of school and then to be reassessed at subsequent School Board Meetings.

As parents, we are emotionally invested in our children and we are all worried about the toll this pandemic has had on them physically, socially and mentally. However, we at times need to take a step back. This current situation is not about one person's individual rights. This is a public health matter and we need to treat it as such. How can we as a community come together and put forth a plan that has the whole student body at the center? Our children's health is what is important. No matter what the decision is here tonight, you will have people upset so the question remains: Do you err on the side of safety and caution for our children or will we continue to put them in a situation that does carry a higher risk to their health and wellbeing?

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sara Kelley

I am a mother of 3 children in the Raymond school district and I want mask to be optional. If people feel they need them then they are welcome to have their children wear them. It should not be mandatory it's a long day for kids to deal with wearing mask a lot of these kids get together without wearing them anyway. The school board needs to realize how many of these kids are getting together after school or on weekends and not wearing masks. At this point with vaccinations it should be a choice. If masks become mandatory the Raymond school district needs to offer remote learning for those that do not want to participate in wearing a mask on their face all day long.

Thank you Lisa Dufour

Good Evening Mr. Saulnier,

We will be unable to attend this meeting and wanted to share our thoughts on the mask issue and "Blizzard Bags." Can you please share this letter with the board and submit it to your meeting minutes?

As far as the use of masks, we are comfortable with sending our children to school without masks. They have been spending all summer mask free in camp, sports, and play dates with their friends. They will continue to wear no masks outside of school as it is and so makes it senseless to make them wear them all day long. They should not be forced to wear masks, especially if social distancing will still be enforced. We also believe that masks can be detrimental to social development. Masks should continue to be optional.

As for the "Blizzard Bags" and using remote options in the event of snow days and weather related closures, we do not agree with this. Snow days are a part of living in New England. Those are days that are meant for outdoor winter fun like building a snowman and snowball fights and curling up with the family under fuzzy blankets for movies and hot coco. Other factors that need to be considered is that there is the possibility of electrical and internet outages. Also, our children deserve to get as much in-person learning as possible, especially after all the remote learning they have already been subjected to. Remote learning is not suitable for everyone. Many people NEED traditional, in person learning. For those that do well remotely, there are other options out there such as VLACS and traditional home schooling. Our children need in-person instruction.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and consider our children's needs.

Mr. & Mrs. Phil Merrill

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Tracy Merrill