

**NEWBURYPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE
SPECIAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS MEETING
Virtual Meeting via ZOOM
Friday, February 18, 2022**

Present: Mayor Sean Reardon, Sarah Hall, Juliet Walker, Sheila Spalding,
Bruce Menin, and Steve Cole

Absent: Brian Callahan

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Mayor Sean Reardon called the Special School Committee Business Meeting to order at 9:02 AM. Roll call found all members present except Brian Callahan. All those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION:

Mayor Sean Reardon gave an overview of recent events relating to the face covering policy. The Board of Health met last night and voted to lift the face covering mandate. It will be optional as to wearing or not wearing masks. Recently masking was lifted for athletes by the Athletic Association.

Superintendent Sean Gallagher said he has touched base with parents. He credited the Medical Advisory Team and school nurses for all their work. With monitoring data during the last 4 weeks, the number of cases has been dropping with no new cases reported this week. He stated the percentages of vaccinated students school by school. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of staff is fully vaccinated. Wearing masks will be optional. There are still places where masks must be worn, such as the Health Offices. Newburyport District was one of the first districts to reopen and it is our mandate to keep schools open. We are in a good place right now.

Mayor Reardon stated that city wide we will continue to set up vaccination clinics.

Steve Cole asked what to do with children 5 or under. **Mayor Reardon** said this was discussed at the Board of Health meeting last night, and it will be mask optional. **Superintendent Gallagher** said masks are encouraged for the unvaccinated and he will update families as new data becomes available.

Juliet Walker inquired of the Superintendent what was the comfort level of staff. **Superintendent Gallagher** said he has been meeting on a weekly basis, and he is confident of the comfort level. He will keep discussions open.

Bruce Menin said he will support the lifting of the mandate but was uncomfortable with students returning after a school vacation with a possible upsurge. His position is that we should encourage masking.

Sheila Spalding inquired as to how many Pre-K or K teachers were vaccinated. **Superintendent Gallagher** said 98% of staff were fully vaccinated. He stated that Dr. Lundergan encouraged masking.

Sarah Hall read a statement from Committee member **Brian Callahan** who could not be present at today's meeting.

Sarah Hall said that she is supportive of lifting the mandate, but it was a decision she did not take lightly and felt we should create a culture of mask choice.

Motion:

On a motion by **Juliet Walker** and seconded by **Sheila Spalding** it was

VOTED: To rescind the Face Covering Policy.

Juliet Walker stated that the Policy Subcommittee met this week and discussed this.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Mayor Reardon	Yes
Sarah Hall	Yes
Juliet Walker	Yes
Sheila Spalding	Yes
Bruce Menin	Yes
Steve Cole	Yes

Brian Callahan absent for vote

Motion Passed

ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion by **Bruce Menin** and seconded by **Sarah Hall** it was

VOTED: To adjourn the Special Meeting of the Newburyport School Committee
At 9:31 AM.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Mayor Reardon	Yes
Sarah Hall	Yes
Juliet Walker	Yes
Sheila Spalding	Yes
Bruce Menin	Yes
Steve Cole	Yes

Brian Callahan absent for vote

Motion Passed