

WESTMORELAND COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
MONTROSS, VIRGINIA
BOARD MINUTES
February 16, 2022

The Westmoreland County School Board held a Special Called Board Meeting on Wednesday, February 16, 2022 at 4:30 p.m. at the Gerald B. Roane Center for Excellence Building, Montross, Virginia.

Present:

Mr. Ralph Fallin, Chair
Ms. Iris Lane, Vice Chair
Mrs. Katherine Lewis, Member
Mrs. Sandra Ramsey, Member
Dr. Daniel Wallace, Member

Others Present:

Dr. Michael Perry, Superintendent
Ms. Cathy Rice, Deputy Superintendent

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Fallin, Chair.

Approval of Agenda

Upon Dr. Perry's recommendation, the agenda was revised to delete Action Item A: Masks for Staff and add Information Item B: Masks for Staff. The sequence for the agenda changed to:

- Information Item A: VDH Guidance on Mitigation Strategies
- Action Item A: Guidelines for Isolation & Quarantine
- Information Item B: Masks for Staff

The revised agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

Information

Virginia Department of Health Guidance on Mitigation Strategies

Dr. Perry presented current prevention strategies being followed by the schools and school division. Ms. Rice presented the current guidance from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) regarding isolation and quarantine. In brief, the current guidelines set the length of isolation/quarantine at five days, followed by proper masking for five days OR ten days of isolation/quarantine for those unable to mask.

Board members discussed the current guidance on isolation/quarantine from the VDH. Board members also discussed the current rate of transmission in the county and in the school division. Board members also discussed the division's current guidelines for isolation/quarantine.

Action Items

Guidelines for Isolation/Quarantine

The Superintendent recommended that the division's guidelines be changed to reflect the current isolation/quarantine guidelines from VDH.

A motion was made by Board member Dr. Wallace, and seconded by Ms. Lane to accept and implement the current VDH guidelines for isolation and quarantine, thus reducing the length of isolation/quarantine required by the division.

Voice Vote: 4 Ayes/1Nay; Mr. Fallin, Aye; Ms. Lane, Aye; Mrs. Ramsey, Nay; Mrs. Lewis, Aye; Dr. Wallace, Aye.

Information

Masks for Staff

Mr. Fallin read aloud a portion of the law signed into effect by Governor Youngkin on February 16, 2022. SB739 reads, in part: “The bill permits, notwithstanding any other provision of law or any regulation, rule, or policy implemented by a school board, school division, school official, or other state or local authority, the parent of any child enrolled in a public elementary or secondary school, or in any school-based early childhood care and education program, to elect for such child to not wear a mask while on school property. The bill provides that no parent making such an election shall be required to provide a reason or any certification of the child’s health or education status and no student shall suffer any adverse disciplinary or academic consequences as a result of this parental election.”

Mr. Fallin communicated that the law goes into effect immediately, and school divisions have until March 1 to comply with the law. Mr. Fallin stated that it is not necessary for the School Board to take any action to revise the division’s policy for universal masking. The School Board follows the law, and the law gives parents the right to opt out of masks for their children. No student should be bullied for either wearing or not wearing a mask. The division is prepared and able to follow the law effective immediately, so the School Board will proceed with implementation immediately, as opposed to waiting until March 1.

Dr. Perry clarified that SB739 does not apply to students riding school buses or to employees. Masks still must be worn on school buses in accordance with federal law. Masks still must be worn by employees in accordance with DOLI (Department of Labor & Industry) regulations.

School Board Member Comments

Ms. Lane stated that this was an important meeting. Mrs. Ramsey indicated she is neither for or against masks, but in favor of freedom of choice. Ms. Lewis stated she is disappointed with the way VDH has handled the pandemic.

Public Comment

Although not on the agenda, the Board accepted public comment.

- Robert Gilhully provided public comment regarding 1) widespread misinformation regarding masking, and 2) the dangers of COVID-19 vaccinations.
- Larry Hinson provided public comment regarding the ineffectiveness of masks. He agreed with parents being given the right to decide whether their children should mask.

Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mrs. Ramsey, seconded by Mrs. Lewis, and unanimously approved by Board Members to adjourn the meeting.