



Northbridge Public Schools

Northbridge School Committee

87 Linwood Avenue, Whitinsville, Massachusetts 01588 (508) 234-8156 FAX (508) 234-8469 www.nps.org

Steven Falconer, Chairperson, sfalconer@nps.org
Brian Paulhus, Kathryn Atchue, Allan Richards, Erin Donahue

Northbridge Public Schools School Committee Meeting Wednesday, August 18, 2021 6:00PM Northbridge High School Media Center

- I. Call to Order (6:00)
- II. Pledge of Allegiance
- III. Attendance

Steven Falconer	Present
Brian Paulhus	Present
Allan Richards	Present
Kathryn Atchue	Present
Erin Donahue	Present

Also in attendance were Superintendent Amy McKinstry and Director of Business and Finance Melissa Walker

- IV. Statement of Audio and Video Recording
- V. Statement of Mission
- VI. Public Forum

Members of the public were invited and speak regarding the development of a mask policy for the upcoming 2021-2022 school year.

Beth Dumouchel provided data regarding the deaths in children from covid-19, as well as the use and efficacy of masks. She brought up handwashing as a means of protection and classroom cleaning supplies. She brought up the fact that facial expressions and emotions are hidden by masks and it presents risks to social skills and that children with special needs often struggle with these skills.

Brandon King advised he has a non-neurotypical student in the district and if he can't see someone's face he struggled to understand what they are saying. He stated that masks are amplifying the social disconnect in youth and supported Beth's comments.

Travis Bergeron spoke and advised he removed his children from another district last year and brought them to Northbridge. He believes it is the parents' choice on whether kids should wear masks in school. He mentioned the transitioning from not wearing masks at home to needing one at school.

Keith Bolt advised he has 4 children in the school system and believes it is the parents' right to make decisions for their kid. He expressed concerns about compromised immune systems from masks.

Mark Audette spoke and advised he was there to speak up for the kids. He identified that children who have medical conditions that require them to wear masks should do so and that it is the individual choice of the parents.

Heather Aubin of 100 Delmar Drive advised that her son is 8 years old and has not been able to enter school. He has been other places with no masks. She will be teaching this year and will struggle to teach students to read if they can't see her mouth because of the mask.

It is the policy of the Northbridge Public Schools not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, or homelessness in its educational programs, services, activities, or employment.

BJ Clark reiterated the issue of not being able to see mouths while learning and addressed socialization issues. He advised he will have students in the school system this year and mentioned the possibility of concerned families to participate in remote learning.

Erica Foster spoke from the standpoint of someone who has experienced facial recognition disorder and autism spectrum disorder. She doesn't feel as though masks are conducive to a good learning environment and that the media always skews the numbers.

Nina Rowan of Cottage Street advised she has a son who is special needs and has social concerns regarding social cues. She feels as though rights are being taken away in increments and it is a disservice to students. She believes in doing what is best for you.

Nathan of 46 Mcquades lane does not consent to children wearing masks and advised there is no science that shows that masks aren't harming them. He expressed concern about kids wearing the same masks all day.

Danielle Stoll lives in Douglas but has a son in NPS. She believes the decision must be made by parents and stated that science says children are not at risk of dying from the virus and that kids can't be relied on to wear masks correctly. She mentioned that Whitinsville Christian School has voted no to masks.

Andrew Dupont of 68 Evergreen Circle expressed her opposition to any form of mask mandate on her children and respects parents for either choice. She expressed concerns for masking with children who have difficulty regulating emotion and social cues, and having nobody for her child to model behavior after.

Talia Berkowitz of 590 Church Street spoke of no in school transmission last year, and believes that instead of mandating masks, the parents should be asked what they are doing to not send their students in sick and to be sanitary. She expressed concern for the quality of masks and teaching students with autism and IEPs, and teachers making connections with students.

Heather Duquette of 11 East Street provided information from a University of Florida children's mask study and questioned the end game if masks are chosen.

Emily of High Street is an ex biology teacher and spoke of her student's success compared to how they did during the last year while struggling with social anxiety and reading emotions. She would prefer students to have the choice.

Michael McLaughlin of 67 Laurel Lane expressed his experience with home schooling his students due to this and advised people to think about how not everyone has this option. He is for letting parents have choice to mask their children.

Angela Tivnan of 455 Romanowski Drive expressed her support for parents' choice for masking and how good it is to see children interacting. She had concerns for dehydration and glasses fogging up.

Shannon Canoy of 114 Conservation Drive supported it being the parents' choice to mask and emphasized the emotional stress.

Meghan Burke of Brooke Street has an incoming kindergartener and second grader. She said we have a choice to consider taking care of each other and expressed concerns of protecting the kids and not wanting to go back to school shutdowns. She also reminded that there is no vaccine for children under 12 yet.

Rebecca Wright of Linwood Avenue advised that the bottom line is to keep children safe and she came undecided to listen to everyone and understand there are people still gripped with fear. The decision ultimately affects her job with the drama program in the schools.

Brittany O'Donnell advised that if there is a chance that something could happen, it should be a concern as a parent. She has an immunocompromised child and her brother is on chemotherapy, and despite the vaccinations, could be at risk.

VII. Action Items

It is the policy of the Northbridge Public Schools not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, or homelessness in its educational programs, services, activities, or employment.

A. Empowered Use Policy

A motion was made by Brian Paulhus to approve the empowered use policy. The motion was seconded by Kathryn Atchue.

Steven Falconer	Yes
Brian Paulhus	Yes
Allan Richards	Yes
Kathryn Atchue	Yes
Erin Donahue	Yes

5 members having voted in the affirmative

0 members having voted in the negative

The motion was accepted with a roll call vote of 5-0.

VIII. Adjournment (7:40)

A motion was made by Allan Richards to approve the funding of middle school sports. The motion was seconded by Erin Donahue.

Steven Falconer	Yes
Brian Paulhus	Yes
Allan Richards	Yes
Kathryn Atchue	Yes
Erin Donahue	Yes

5 members having voted in the affirmative

0 members having voted in the negative

The motion was accepted with a roll call vote of 5-0.

Note: The listings of matters are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law. Also, the timeframe for each topic is a general guideline and may not be strictly adhered to.