

BOARD OF EDUCATION  
LEVITTOWN UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
LEVITTOWN, NY

MINUTES

**THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION** was duly called and held on Tuesday, June 8, 2021 in the Board Meeting Room of the Levittown Memorial Education Center.

**CERTIFICATION:**

The District Clerk certified that pursuant to Section 104, Open Meetings Law, notice of meeting was sent to the Public Library and posted on the district's website. Further, all members of the Board of Education had due notice of said meeting.

**BOARD MEMBERS**

Ms. Peggy Marengi, President  
Ms. Christina Lang, Vice President  
Ms. Jennifer Messina, Secretary  
Ms. Marianne Adrian  
Mr. Dillon Cain  
Mr. Michael Pappas  
Mr. James Moran

**ADMINISTRATION**

Dr. Tonie McDonald - Superintendent of Schools

**OTHERS**

Ms. Suzanne Mallozzi - District Clerk

**CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Marengi, President, called the Special Board Meeting to order at 7:35 PM. .

**I. STATEMENT BY BOARD OF EDUCATION:**

Ms. Marengi read the following speech prepared by the Board of Education:

*"We thank the members of the community who have come out tonight to provide us their feedback about mask wearing in our schools. In order to ensure that everyone has the most up to date information, copies of the guidance we have received as well as other memos have been copied in case anyone would like to read them at a later date:*

*Week of May 24: Commack schools announced new protocols for mask wearing, effective 5/26. Governor Cuomo's office directs the school district to reinstate the mask policy immediately. Commack rescinds their decision and reinstates the mask policy on 5/25. The Commack school district was told that the district would incur sanctions for noncompliance, which would include, but not be limited to monetary fines, school closures and the ability to operate in person.*

*Week of May 31: NYS DOH Commissioner, Dr. Howard Zucker sends a letter to the CDC requesting that K-12 schools be allowed to remove indoor mask use. In his letter, Dr. Zucker indicates, "If there is any data or science that you are aware of that contradicts moving forward with this approach, please let me know as soon as possible. We plan to make this guidance effective on Monday June 7"(6/4). The media picks this up and states that mask rules are "expected to change." (6/4) School community residents believe that this is guidance from NYS, and begin to request that Boards change mask policies which would lift restrictions on indoor mask wearing. On Sunday June 6, a memo is sent to all school districts from NYS Department of Education stating "SED has been in communication with Executive staff regarding the attached letter from Dr. Howard Zucker, New York State Commissioner of Health. According to conversations with Executive staff, the intent of this letter was to obtain a response from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) regarding differing standards for summer camps and schools; it has not changed any existing arrangements. **Therefore, schools should continue to operate under their existing procedures until further notice.** No changes have been, or will be, made by the Executive until after Monday June 7 to afford the CDC an opportunity to respond to the letter." At this point, the media reports that masks will be required on Monday, June 7.*

*Week of June 7: Districts begin to announce that they will change their mask policy. Boards have emergency meetings to adopt regulations allowing optional mask wearing in schools. 3 districts on Long Island allowed students and staff to come to school without masks this past Monday. 6/8: After receiving calls from the Governor's office directing the school districts who removed the mask mandate to immediately reinstate mask wearing indoors and threatening sanctions, including closing our schools and taking away state aid. As a result, Sachem, Massapequa and Patchogue rescind mask policies (6/8). Governor Cuomo released information and clarified Guidance allowing mask removal outdoors. This is sent to all districts and he reiterated that indoor protocols remain the same; therefore tying the hands of the local school Boards and Superintendents across New York State. Even if we wanted to lift the mask mandate the schools could be forced to close immediately as per the Governor.*

*The New York State Insurance Reciprocal (NYSIR), (the company that insures the school district) has advised that if school districts adopt a policy that is in controversy to state regulations, and if individuals bring a lawsuit against the district on these grounds, the lawsuits will be "hard to defend." To clarify, if someone were to contract the Coronavirus in a school district that was not following the regulations and mandates set forth by the Governor of New York, a lawsuit brought upon by this person may cause extreme harm to everyone in the district. For all of these reasons previously stated,*

*Attorneys for school districts across Long Island have advised Boards that districts are required to follow all regulations set by the Governor, the Department of Health and the NY State Education Department, or face sanctions for the district, that would cause more harm than good. Our students deserve to be in school every day and the Governor should not have any reason to take our students out of school.*

*Although the Levittown Board of Education is frustrated by the mixed messages about this issue and understands the concerns of parents, there is no legal option for the district to change its indoor mask policy at this time. Should the Governor, or the NY State Education Department issue updated guidance indicating that indoor mask wearing is optional, of course we will comply.*

*If residents wish to advocate for changes in mask policies for schools, they should contact the Governor's office and/or the Commissioner of Education. We have provided a contact sheet with their addresses and emails if you would like them."*

## II. PUBLIC BE HEARD

1. Heather Orlandi - 122 Willowood Drive, Wantagh: *"Parents need to be the ones to make decisions for their children, not State Governors."* Disappointed in the Levittown Schools' Board of Education and Administration in not allowing children to remove masks.
2. Jill Pinner, 371 Blacksmith Road, Levittown: Very disappointed that the District would not take the opportunity to get rid of masks for one day (Monday, June 7<sup>th</sup>).
3. Meeting adjourned for 5 minutes, reconvened at 7:58pm
4. Keri Sabella, 36 Rosewood Lane, Wantagh: *"We do need you to work with us to join together to be our voice and help us to get heard. The majority of people, not just in Levittown, really see that the masks are a pre-requisite to the COVID vaccine."* Concern over mask mandate for school age children and the vaccine requirement that will eventually follow for 2021-2022 school year..
5. Jackie Kondyra, 115 Saddle Lane, Levittown: All we want is for Levittown to stand up for our kids to remove the mask mandate, like others in neighboring states. *"join forces and stand up to our tyrant Governor. There are power in numbers. Cuomo can't punish the entire State of NY and shut down every school in NY if everybody comes together in the name of the kids."*
6. Jennifer Ferrell, 5 Book Lane, Levittown: BOE needs to stand up for our children. Governor Cuomo is not going shut down all schools if the Districts band together. *"You all need to stand and band together with all the other Boards and get together because like she just said, Cuomo is not going to close every school on Long Island or NY, Cuomo is not going to punish everyone."*
7. Danielle Grodotzke – Declined to speak.
8. Jennifer Sampugnaro, 85 Orchid Road, Levittown: *"This is also very emotional for me. I have two children, one is 5<sup>th</sup> grader and I have a special ed student in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. I would say he is most affected by this because of his situation being in special ed. He's already got a fight ahead of him in life."*
9. Jason Giachetii, 21 Haven Lane, Levittown: Pleaded to keep having the children wear masks in school for the final 12 days of schools (including field days, testing). *"I ask you to consider continuing the mask mandate and indoor use for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year. At the time of this meeting there will be 12 school days remaining. When you factor in field days, half days, 1 hour for the final day of school, regents exams, final exams and all the other things that pull kids out of school, you can probably count what's left on one hand. It would be really unfair, after these children have lost so much, to put them in a situation of increased risk".* Would be unfair to these kids to have them miss out on graduation, prom, etc. if the Governor cancels things now.

Ms. Marengi concluded the public be heard portion of the meeting by thanking all the concerned residents for attending.

**III. MOTION TO ADJOURN**

**The Board adjourned the public meeting at 8:15 PM.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>MOTION CARRIED (7-0-0)</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	James Moran
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Michael Pappas
<b>AYES:</b>	Adrian, Cain, Lang, Marengi, Messina, Moran, Pappas

Suzanne Mallozzi  
District Clerk

**NOTE: Recordings of the meeting are available for review at the Levittown Library.**