

SPECIAL MEETING

A Special meeting of the Benzie County Central Board of Education was held Monday, August 30 2021, in the Middle School Computer Lab. MDHHS has amended its order to now allow for in-person board meetings that are exempt from the 25 person capacity limit. Updates can be found [here](#). It is recommended that if we are holding an in-person board meeting, we not allow virtual public comment but only allow those in attendance to comment. (If a school board is not conducting a virtual meeting in whole or in part under OMA, MASB recommends that the board limit public comment to individuals who are attending the meeting in person.)
 Description: Dial-in: (US) +1 337-520-0221 PIN: 190 966 910#

President Childs called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Members Present: Mrs. Brown, Mr. Barnard, Mrs. Pomper,
Mr. Childs, Mr. Noffsinger, Ms. Cota Hill, Mrs. Johnston

Members Absent: NONE

21-22-025 It was moved by Mr. Noffsinger and supported by Mrs. Brown to approve the agenda as presented.
 Ayes: 7 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

21-22-026 It was moved by Mr. Barnard and supported by Mrs. Pomper to approve Consent Grouping items as presented.
 A. NONE
 Ayes: 7 Nays: 0 Motion Carried

Board Blueprint Communication: NONE

Student Council Report: NONE

Administration Report:

- A. Health Department Order – Superintendent Erfourth read aloud the [Health Department Order](#) issued Friday August 27th, 2021.
 - On Friday Aug 27th, Superintendent Erfourth, received an order from the Health Dept. mandating universal masking.
 - Superintendent Erfourth read a confirmation letter from the school districts lawyer which confirmed that the Health Department Order was binding. The letter further outlined the consequences for non-compliance and what might happen if the district filled a lawsuit against the health department.

Board of Education/Committee Reports – NONE

Audience Participation (Agenda Items Only) –

- **1st audience participant - Expressed appreciation with the work of the board members, read a letter from a medical doctor which stated the lack of effectiveness of mask wearing and the impact on illness, outlined the detrimental effects of mask wearing including psychological damage.**
- **2nd audience participant – read a letter indicating the number of cases in Benzie and Leelanau counties from the HD website. The numbers were low, currently 4 individuals are hospitalized from the two counties.**
- **3rd audience participant – questioned the number of beds being used by covid patients currently in Benzie County.**
- **4th audience participant – read a statement stating the health department does not have the power to force school to mask students. The participant sighted the 1st amendment and the state constitution. . . . the purpose of the government is to protect our rights and not issue to us our rights. She further stated that the health department does not have the right to legislate.**
- **5th audience participant – virus infections fluctuate, this choice should be up to the parents, cited students with speech issues and other who need the facial expressions of their caregivers. 13% of school aged children were affected by Covid19 last year with 0 deaths. I am all about freedom of choice, my children are happy and healthy and I want them to stay that way.**
- **6th audience participant – my children were home schooled or virtual last year, it did not work very well. We have an order in place that will protect all children, none of whom can be vaccinated. I am grateful for this order to protect all the children. Just because children haven't died yet, does not mean that they will not.**
- **7th audience participant – I work for the school. Much of my time was spent telling students to put their mask on. I am concerned with language development. I am pro-parent choice. Leave it up to everyone in this room to choose what is right for them.**
- **8th audience participant – my five-year-old has speech issues because he can't see people's face to make the words. My mom developed awful acne because of wearing a mask. I think it should be the parents' decision if they wear a mask.**
- **9th audience participant – the BLDH is an over-reach of this department. The constitution was sighted. Mask wearing is detrimental to children. NIH tested the effectiveness of mask wearing in dimensioning disease. Speaker sighted the deaths from obesity, smoking, and heart disease by comparison.**

- 10th audience participant – we experienced the lessened number of illnesses last school year. Masks are difficult for elementary school students, we don't like them, but we wore them.
- 11th audience participant – recently moved my children to Benzie from TC because Benzie supported parent choice. The HD's over-reaching mandate is compared to the overwhelming support I see from parents.
- 12th audience participant – you are in a no-win situation. You will be sued for doing what is right. The hypocrisy is glaring. They tell you to vaccinate and mask up. This is called tyranny. You were elected by us to do this job. You have to do what is morally and ethically right. Unfortunately, this will probably be the end of Benzie Central Schools. Call your representatives, I have. BLHD was not an elected official, you were.
- 13th audience participant – Thank you for the board for going through these muddy waters. The August 10th call made me think, good, we are finally doing something right, we are doing something for the kids and their education. Let's be the president. They state that this is an emergency, where is the emergency? Have we reached out to a constitutional lawyer? I think a constitutional lawyer would help us get a different outcome. If you guys go down, a lot of us will go down with you. If you have lawyer feeds, start a go-fund me.
- 14th audience participant – I speak for a few of our younger parents who are thinking of homeschooling this year. I will more than likely full my kids and a lot of other parents will as well. Superintendent Erfourth responded regarding the likelihood of offering virtual options for families that opt for that option listing the regulations and constraints for offering a K-5 virtual option.
- 15th audience participant – I am a health care worker. I was directly working with Covid patients with little direction on how to do their jobs. Whether or not to get the vaccine is my choice and my child's choice. I feel like you are just going to roll over and let the health department tell us what to do. This is unconstitutional, find a new lawyer.
- 16th audience participant – current student, if you tell a small child not to do something, they will do the opposite.
- 17th audience participant – I was asked not to talk. It should be the choice of the person. More people die every year from the flu than from Covid. You have our support. My son won't wear one, I'll stand beside him and ensure it.
- 18th audience participant – Has the HD outlined how they will back down? Superintendent Erfourth read from the HD mandate in response.
- 19th audience participant – people are just fed up with mandating. That's what people are irritated about. Outlined that her friend is a nurse downstate which will be requiring vaccinating, so nurses are quitting, and patient care is going down.

- 20th audience participant – school of choice, that's it, it's a choice. You are letting the HD govern where they do not have authority. Get a constitutional lawyer.
- 21st audience participant – wondering if a parent has a choice for all the other diseases and can sign a waiver, I'll sign a waiver.
- 22nd audience participant – anybody messes with my kid; I will fight for whatever it takes. I would like my boys to come back to a school that fights for their rights. If you need a front runner to step up and speak for the parents. I will say whatever I need to say to whoever needs to hear it. They are lying to us, and we should be able to stand up for that. I'd like to see my kids come back to a school that stands for merits and rights.
- 23rd audience participant – the people that dies from covid, I am sad about the people dying. I am also sad about the people who went overseas and died to give us the rights that we have. They went over there and did what they have to do so that the people in this country can do what they want to do.

Board President, Brian Childs, responded to the public discussion. Health Department representatives and directors were invited to answer questions. They did not respond to the invitation. He also encouraged the audience to contact the Health Department regularly and civilly to get answers to their questions.

Discussion Topics:

- A. Return to Benzie Plan/Health Department Order - Board members were each provided an opportunity to express their various opinions regarding this issue.

Action Topics:

21-22-027 It was moved by Mrs. Johnston and supported by Ms. Cota Hill to approve the Return to Benzie Plan (including policy 3409 which follows the BLHD universal face mask policy for students and staff K-12)

Ayes: 2

Nays: 5

Motion Failed

Audience Participation (Open Topics):

- 1st audience participant – Thank you for listening to us. We will be wherever we need to be to support you. TC commissioners limited the HD regarding vaccinations. Why can't we do the same for our HD regarding masks.
- 2nd audience participant – this is a business, there are ways to lose on our side too. The board can face charges from both sides. If there is no mask choice, many will leave. Keep in mind a virtual option.
- 3rd audience participant – we appreciate the hard work. You are in for a fight. In 48 hours you will have to readdress this. I will not hold you responsible if you reverse your decision. Our next step is to call your local

commissioner, our state reps, and let them know that we are standing on our constitutional rights. Call the HD. You are teaching the children about their constitutional rights. I pray that you don't have to go bankrupt to stand up to this.

- 4th audience participant – I really stirred up. I would like to say that I pulled my boys from this school because of things I thought were detrimental to them. I was thinking about keeping my boy's home. Tonight, I decided to send them back to this school. Anyone you voted for our students tonight I am behind you. In the law there is always loopholes. I will fight for my boys, and I will fight for you. I'd like to know, they can shut it down, but what will they do if we all show up in the parking lot and have school. I appreciate everything you have all done. You guys have just won me over.
- 5th audience participant – I do not envy any of you the place you are in. If we are thinking of our children. Where will our children go? You are booting our students out of school. The best place for our students is in school with a teacher qualified to teach. I will send my kids; they will be in school regardless of the decision that is made here.

Board Communication: NONE

Announcements: NONE

21-22-028 It was moved by Ms. Cota Hill and supported by Mr. Noffsinger to adjourn the regular meeting 8:34 PM

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0

Motion Carried


Secretary, Board of Education

Sharyl Corey, Betsie Valley Elementary Principal

Catina Crossman

Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

Board of Education Administrative Assistant

Benzie County Central Schools