

**MINUTES**  
**LAMOTTE SCHOOL DISTRICT 43**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES SPECIAL MEETING**  
**January 12, 2022 5:00 p.m.**

The special meeting of the Board of Trustees, LaMotte School District #43 was held electronically on January 12, 2022 for the purpose of considering business to come before the Board of Trustees. Board Chair Knoff called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

**Trustees Present:** Birgen Knoff, Collin Duneman, Ken Miller, Katie Ivester, Edward Kronfuss

**Staff Present:** LeeAnn Burke-Superintendent, Sue Becker-District Clerk/Business Manager, Michelle Clark-Administrative Assistant, Jerry Brunt-Teacher, Liz Spyke-Teacher

**Public Present:** Approximately 25

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Presiding Trustees Explanation of Procedures**

*The LaMotte Board of Trustees welcomes public comment on issues and concerns. Members of the community are given an opportunity to make brief comments to the board on any matter not included in the agenda. Comments on agenda items will be accepted when that item comes up during the meeting. Interested persons may also submit views in written form to the Clerk prior to the meeting, and those comments will be brought to the attention of the Board during the meeting.*

**Statement from Board Chair**

Board Chair Knoff discussed the process she followed for calling the following meetings:

1) December 28, 2021 Special Meeting-based on advice from the Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA) the December 15, 2021 Regular meeting was rehosted due to lack of proper notification of the meeting. At the December 15, 2021 meeting, the mask mandate was reversed with a 3 for mask optional-2 against mask optional Board vote;

2) January 10, 2022 Emergency Meeting-considering the health and welfare of the staff/students and in talking with the Superintendent about the school illness situation, at 9:00 a.m. she decided to call an emergency meeting. She sent a text to all Board members and District Clerk/Business Manager Becker emailed an agenda. There was discussion about prenotification but this was not required as it was an emergency meeting. She attempted to call the meeting to order but officially couldn't as there were three board members absent. This was an informational meeting only.

These are the facts of the Board Chair's decisions. Her decisions were made on the legal advice of MTSBA. Over the past few days her character has been defamed and her decisions questioned. She will continue to perform duties to the best of her ability and integrity.

As we move forward, she clarified a few matters of order. 1) Public comment-you need to be called on. 2) Make your public comment in a respectful way. 3) If actions are out of order, she will ask that you leave the meeting. 4) If you would like to make a comment, raise your electronic hand or if you are unable to raise your electronic hand, unmute to ask that you be called on. 5) State your full name and turn on your camera. 6) Make respectful comments either for or against, the Board is not tallying. 7) Don't feel like you have to repeat information that has already been given as board will use the information to make a decision. 8) The Board has read all letters that were emailed to the Board before the meeting.

## Staff Discussion & Reports

- Superintendent's Report  
None.

## Agenda Action/Discussion Items

### 1. Safe Return to School Plan 2021-2022

#### a. Face coverings

**Board Discussion:** The Board Chair said that moving forward the agenda will give more detail on those items that will be voted on. Trustee Miller stated his motion was based on Superintendent information on cases in the school and what direction we are going. He stated that the Board said in August they would require masks and that the plan would be looked at every month. He said that because the mask order stayed in place, some people think the Board has not been discussing but that is not true. If the current situation goes on until January 26th, they will look at school data again. The Board has given this serious thought. Trustee Ivester feels it's important to detail what she feels and why. She gave a presentation outlining: 1) make all decisions based on independent judgement; remember always that welfare of students is first and foremost; 2) listed expert statements (national and local) on mask recommendations; 3) presented national and local case data; 4) Superintendent recommendation. Vice Chair Duneman said he will respect the decision made. Chair Knoff stated Board members haven't experienced an item this controversial during their time of office. She has gained more experience in the last three days to help her with her Board chair duties and to uphold decisions made by the Board; to necessarily not agree but be able to say her opinion. She said that earlier the County was seeing a consistent percentage drop in COVID cases but unfortunately it has increased drastically. She wants to strive for mask optional to get back to a state of normalcy. She really appreciated that the Board said they would address this issue if there was a drastic change in cases. It is important keep in focus the intent of why the Board approved the mask mandate in the first place-to keep students in school. Board Chair Knoff asked MTSBA about Board member immunity. School districts do have immunity from prosecution under state law if student or staff contracts COVID 19 while at school (HB435). She will ask for documentation from MTSBA. There are ways to lose immunity-ex. so reckless to demonstrate a lack of concern if an injury occurs. That's not to say wearing a mask will prevent every case of COVID-19. She appreciates that the Board can share rational. As Board Chair, she wants to represent the Board to protect them to the fullest extent. She wants to understand the process as well. Also, in talking with the Gallatin City County Health Department (GCCHD), if there is data that the Board would like to see, the Board has the right and ability to request this information from them.

**Motion** that the Board reinstate mandatory masking as soon as practical and the mandatory masking will be in place until the end of the school day on January 26, 2022.

**Motion:** Trustee Miller

**Second:** Trustee Ivester

**Public Comment:**

- Morgan Potter
- Michelle Clark
- Marci Torres



- Brad Hammerquist
- Jerry Brunt
- Rose Quinn
- David Carter
- Nathan Preator

Motion passed 3-2. Chair Knoff, Trustee Ivester and Trustee Miller voted for the motion. Vice Chair Duneman and Trustee Kronfuss voted against the motion.

#### **b. Isolation/Quarantines**

**Board Discussion:** Thus far, the Board has used the Superintendent recommendations regarding isolation/quarantines. Superintendent Burke said the Center for Disease Control (CDC) came out with new recommendations which the GCCHD Department then adopted. This is a health directive from the County. She has no concerns with the GCCHD recommendations. Symptomatic testing is being done at the school with parent consent.

**Motion** to have Superintendent Burke continue isolation/quarantine per the 2021-2022 Safe Return to School Plan.

**Motion:** Trustee Ivester

**Second:** Chair Knoff

**Public Comment:**

- Morgan Potter
- Rose Quinn

Trustee Ivester rescinded her motion.

**Further Board Discussion:** Superintendent Burke recommends following the current GCCHD guidelines. She will edit the 2021-2022 Safe Return to School Plan and send the edited document to the Board for review.

**Motion** that Superintendent Burke will follow the GCCHD isolation/quarantine recommendation and will distribute this information to the parents.

**Motion:** Trustee Ivester

**Second:** Chair Knoff

**Public Comment:**

- Rose Quinn
- Morgan Potter

Motion passed unanimously.

## **2. Crisis Response Team**

**Board Discussion:** In the summer of 2020, Chair Knoff and Trustee Kronfuss along with parents and teachers were appointed to the Crisis Response Team whose task it was to discuss COVID-19 safe return to school procedures. The team disbanded when the Safe Return to School Plan was adopted. It has been suggested to reestablish this team to make recommendations to the Board. The Board would make final decisions. Trustee Kronfuss said he feels there are two major issues: policy implementation and fracture of the LaMotte community. He believes the decision lies with the five elected officials and that enlisting a task force will add significantly to an already contentious situation. Trustee Ivester said more voices can be heard in a committee meeting and it would bring people together to have a dialog without being at a Board meeting. Chair Knoff is worried about the state of the community right now. She wants to be sure the Board doesn't create a source of contention with the group taking time for recommendations and then be deflated when the Board doesn't

vote with recommendation. The original intent of the team was to craft goals and objectives. Trustee Ivester said the Bozeman School District team makes recommendation to the superintendent with a consensus process who then takes the recommendation to the board. Trustee Miller is not sure if this is the time for a task force as decisions may need to be made before the task force could meet. Vice Chair Duneman said that with such a fast-changing situation, it would be hard for the team to meet timely for recommendations. He thinks it would create more division in the community.

Motion to create a COVID task force that will meet and make a recommendation to the Superintendent who would then bring the recommendation to the Board.

**Motion:** Trustee Ivester

**Second:** Chair Knoff

**Public Comment:**

- Morgan Potter
- Rose Quinn
- Brad Hammerquist

Trustee Ivester rescinded her motion.

### **Trustee Discussion and Reports**

**Board Discussion:** In closing, Chair Knoff requested that Superintendent Burke send absence numbers to the Board so they can be aware of the day-to-day numbers. The Board agrees this information will be kept confidential. Due to confidentiality, the Board discussed which information they will receive from Superintendent Burke. The Board agreed it is important to have this information on a day-to-day basis to use in making decisions that impact the school.

**Public Comment:**

- Rose Quinn
- Jerry Brunt
- Erika Malo

**Further Board Discussion:** Trustee Kronfuss would like to have the most accurate information but this might not be possible-he is not trying to single anyone out. Chair Knoff wants the data reported to be valuable to the decision making. Superintendent Burke reiterated that the Board needs to understand that the situation is constantly changing. She will try to send out a report by 3:30 every day.

### **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn 7:14 p.m.


Motion: Trustee Ivester


Second: Trustee Miller

Public Comment: None.

Motion passed unanimously.

**The next regular meeting of the Board of Trustees is scheduled for Wednesday, January 26, 2022 at 5:00 p.m.**

  
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Birgen Knoff, Board Chair

  
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Sue Becker, District Clerk/Business Manager