

MINUTES OF MARCH 1, 2022 COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
GLENCOE PARK DISTRICT
ZOOM AND 999 GREEN BAY ROAD, GLENCOE, ILLINOIS 60022

Commissioners and members of the public confirmed they could see and hear. The meeting was called to order at 7:04pm and roll was called. All commissioners gave permission to be recorded.

Committee Members present:

Lisa Brooks, President
Stefanie Boron, Vice President
Bart Schneider, Commissioner
Carol Spain, Commissioner

Staff present:

Lisa Sheppard, Executive Director/Secretary
Bobby Collins, Director of Recreation/Facilities
John Cutrera, Director of Finance/HR
Erin Classen, Supt. of Marketing/Communications
Jenny Runkel, Administrative Assistant

Committee Members absent:

Michael Covey, Treasurer

Members of the Public in attendance who signed in or spoke: Eve Angulo, Erica Block, Stephani Briskman, Bridget Daly, Mark Deming, Matthew Duggan, Susan Felts, Robert Gray, Nisha Hakhu, Jackie Kozelka, Marny Kravenas, Karen Lloyd, Rachel Mallik, Melissa Trumbull Mitchell, Cheryl Myhre, Abbey Paulson, Jackie Perez, Francisco Rios, Kelly Schade, Ania Szulc, Katherine Unger, James Wigoda, Adam Wohl, Jennifer Yeo, Steven (no last name), and one unidentified attendee

Motion to move Other Business: A motion was made by Commissioner Schneider to approve to moving 'Other Business' up in the agenda. Commissioner Boron seconded the motion. No further discussion ensued. Roll call vote taken:

AYES: Boron, Schneider, Spain, Brooks

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Covey

The motion passed.

Other Business: Masks in early childhood settings: Executive Director Sheppard reviewed the State of Illinois and DCFS day care center change in the mask order that happened about 24 hours ago. There was no indication of this change coming prior to the announcement. Immediately following the announcement, our teachers were surveyed and separately, early childhood program parents were surveyed, mostly from Children's Circle and ELC (full-day and part-time preschool). Individual day cares or park districts have the legally authority to require precautions above state requirements. If the Board chooses to do that, an emergency Board meeting would be called for approval. To date, when making COVID decisions throughout the last two years, the District has followed all CDC mandates, the Dept. of Health recommended guidelines, and the Governor's mandates. Before going to mask optional, staff wanted to make sure the Board was aware of all the ramifications and underlying factors that may come into

play with that decision. For the parent survey, 203 were invited and 147 responded, a 72% response rate. The District's struggle with ongoing shortages and a change in the mask policy may result in a disruption of care, which could include a temporary reduction in school hours, reduction in class population, or room closures. Staff will be unable to follow each individual families' mask preference. The policy may change again based on rates and metrics. If staff feel uncomfortable with everyone taking their mask off and then leave us, it may result in a staff shortage. The District wants to be very honest about the ramifications of a decision. The parent survey indicated that 65.3% of parents want masks optional, 34.7% prefer to continue with mask wearing. The Board received the full survey results and additional comments from the public. For the staff survey, 46 were invited and 37 responded. 67.9% would be open to mask optional, 24.3% would be concerned and continue to work and 8.1% (3) would not feel safe and look for work elsewhere. The District and all child care centers since the pandemic are still staffed below 88%.

Director of Early Childhood Jessica Stockl reviewed the extremes to which our staff and parents are recruiting and newly hired staff not showing up on their first day. The whole child care industry is experiencing full closures, rolling closures, shortened hours, and sending children home due to a lack of staff.

Executive Director Sheppard explained that this decision is not just about masks, but also about quality of child care service. Staff cannot guarantee which child is supposed to wear a mask or that it is consistent throughout the day.

Director Stockl reviewed current quarantine requirements. Jellyfish, frogs, and turtles have an immediate 10-day closure should a child or adult test positive for COVID. For older children, there is the option of a 5-day closure and, if masks are optional, only the child with COVID would need to wear their mask properly all day in order to return after the five days. These guidelines have not changed.

Glencoe is not a high-transmission area. If the rates rise, we would likely go back to a mask mandate following the CDC. Based on the survey, Glencoe families want to drop the mask mandate.

President Brooks opened commissioner discussion by sharing that we feel great empathy for our families and children and we are very aware of the angst from the last two years raising little ones in this environment. Staff has born the weight of the challenges of all the regulations and requirements to provide something that is desperately needed, which is quality child care.

Executive Director Sheppard reminded the Board that there is no vote tonight. At the beginning of the pandemic, the Board gave staff direction to follow CDC guidelines. We would need a special Board meeting to vote, but only if the Board wants to continue the mask mandate. If the Board decides to continue to follow CDC guidelines, then no vote is necessary.

Staff who leave would most likely leave the child care industry as a whole. We are one of the few DCFS-licensed Park District child care facilities. One other DCFS facility is mask optional, another is discussing it now. Per Director Stockl, it is about ½ and ½, KinderCare has not gone mask optional.

Discussion continued including reasons to lift the mask mandate, lack of age 5 and under vaccines, waiting until the rate goes down even further, the indicator that ends mask requirements, not being able to demand lower rates than we have now, balancing the risk of learning delays versus illness, no right answer, learning delays are not reduced if teachers continue to wear masks, if we go mask optional that includes teachers and staff, and specific age groups adaptation to masks.

Matters from the Public on masks in early childhood settings:

Bridget Daly commented that there is not a lot of transmission at this point, be a policy maker not a policy follower, mask optional parent, wants to see data on why it's safer for children to be in masks, and metric should not be a moving target.

Robert Gray shared that he is a physician and surgeon used to weighing life/death decisions, would never jeopardize people but it is past time, children are safe, the risk of disease is extremely low, masks never really helped and current rates are low, and that it is time.

Nisha Hakhu's daughter had no problems wearing a mask, a physician who experienced the drastic December outbreak, staff shortages, masks won't be forever, children do well with acute COVID infections, long-term effects, masking doesn't cause developmental concerns and there are adaptations for those already delayed, infants can acknowledge expression with or without masks, everyone should mask until there is a vaccination available for all and reevaluate in the future, and staff do a fantastic job keeping everyone safe.

Erica Block, commented that teachers have come and gone, appreciative of staff, her son has a speech delay that he receives care and has no problems wearing a mask, and follow DCFS recommendations.

Abbey Paulson, reiterated that a loss of three teachers is critical with staff already working extra hours, re-evaluate in a few weeks.

Eve Angulo, an allergy and immunology specialist, vocalized concern regarding unvaccinated children and at-risk staff, potential vaccine in the coming months, doesn't see the rush, there is no evidence that masks are the cause of speech delay, and major concerns of putting kids at the risk of long-term consequences.

James Wigoda commented that kids can be anywhere without masks, the only kids that have to mask up are 2-5-year-olds and only when in ELC, vaccines are only to protect from serious effects, when assessing risk no one has died under the age of 30 in area

communities and all were over the age of 60, the transmission is so low when is the ending point, and tons of evidence regarding mask speech disruptions.

Jennifer Yeo is for the mask optional policy, the 3 teachers who would look for other opportunities does not mean they will find another opportunity and will leave, the argument could go either way, a majority of the parents want mask optional at over 60%, and how many of those would choose to find another school that is mask optional.

Jackie Perez, a Children's Circle 2's teacher, shared that it has taken a couple months for the 2-year-olds to keep their masks on all day, a lot of the kids are having speech delays and additional anxiety, for mask optional, there is a difference in kids without masks, the kids have lost a part of who they are, with masks it is hard to emphasis what they are saying and sharing emotions, move forward without masks and help kids needing help.

There were no other members of the public wishing to comment.

Commissioner discussion continued including continued consistency following state guidelines, what metric is the indicator of change when the rates are already so low, dynamic staff in Lisa and the team during the pandemic leading to comfort with their recommendations but would, in this case, lean toward following advice from the medical field and the state with more medical expertise, always followed the school district when not following DCFS, comfort level in staying with DCFS even if the guidance reverts back, aligned with teachers, favoring compliance with DCFS, IDPH, and CDC who oversee these larger issues, complicated, staff are exhausted, and follow the groups that have more knowledge.

Chair Brooks, following community input and committee discussion, directed staff to continue following CDC and governor mandates as was approved at the beginning of the pandemic.

Presentation on Watts Renovation Final Design: Executive Director Sheppard indicated we received a PARC grant for the Watts Recreational Center renovation project. She introduced Matthew Duggan and Ania Szulc of Wight and Company who presented the final Watts renovation design including site plan and elevations, changes and additions to the building designed to solve issues, create a better user experience, and be more visually appealing.

Commissioners made comments, suggestions, and staff responded to their questions including the design's beauty, re-orientating the front desk and office space, bathrooms are staying in the same place with a better design, hope to fund the outside fireplace within budget, the spectator/player boxes would be donor items, the indoor TV would be used for hockey games, special events, trivia nights, likes the multi-use feel, fireplace, and two level counter in the lobby, the graphic wall is not locked in, looking for something meaningful, make sure it has all genders and both hockey and ice skating, make sure there are enough garbage cans, put benches anywhere they fit, likes the open concept storage as the cubbies get really dirty and are hard to keep clean, the

open space under the benches will fit hockey bags nicely, players get fully dressing in their hockey gear in the lower level locker rooms and then come upstairs, and all floors, stairs, and new elevator are all skate blade safe.

Executive Director Sheppard indicated that Chris Leiner is coming back to review the final design as well as Bobby, Adam, Bill, and Matt to make sure nothing is missing or incorrect. Staff meet weekly with Wight & Company and WB Olson.

Other Business: Other business was moved up in the agenda to the beginning of the meeting.

Adjourn: Commissioner Schneider moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:43pm. Commissioner Boron seconded the motion. Roll call vote taken:

AYES: Boron, Schneider, Spain, Brooks
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Covey

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa M. Sheppard
Secretary