

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Pembina Hills School Division was held on September 8, 2021 at the Division's Regional Office. In attendance were Trustees Jennifer Tuininga, Kerry McElroy, Wendy Scinski, Jackie Comeau and Judy Lefebvre. Also in attendance were Superintendent Michael Borgfjord, Assistant Superintendent of Transition David Garbutt, Assistant Superintendent of Education Services Mark Thiesen, Secretary Treasurer Heather Nanninga and Executive Assistant Charlotte Watson.

Community members present were Philip Petkau, Sandra Fischbuck, Renda Zadinayski, Amy Hill-Eggl, Cassy Krikke, Vicki Dzivinski, Shawna Capiuk, and Barry Kerton.

Call to Order

Chair Tuininga called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Acknowledgment Statement

Chair Tuininga recited the acknowledgement statement from Administrative Procedure 60-20 Honoring First Nations, Métis and Inuit Culture.

Amendments to the Agenda

The following amendments were made to the Agenda.

1. **Add:** Action item 2 "Consideration of a Masking Requirement"
2. **Add:** Information item 9 "September 30 - National Day for Truth and Reconciliation"

8110/09/21 **Adopting the Agenda – September 8, 2021**

Moved by Trustee Lefebvre that the agenda be adopted as amended.

Carried

8111/09/21 **Adopting the Minutes – August 25, 2021**

Moved by Vice Chair Scinski that the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Pembina Hills School Division held on August 25, 2021 be adopted as circulated.

Carried

Barry Kerton left the meeting at 9:05 a.m.

Action Items

1. International Tours

8112/09/21 Moved by Trustee McElroy that the board suspend student international tours for the duration of the 2021-2022 school year. This suspension will be reviewed in the summer of 2022. Proposals for trips that could occur in the following school year (2022-2023) can be submitted for consideration of "Approval in Principle".

2. Consideration of a Masking Requirement

Given recent changing provincial guidelines surrounding the management and prevention of COVID-19, the Board considered whether or not to require students and staff to wear masks in schools.

Board Chair Tuininga made opening remarks as follows:

"The government announced unexpected temporary public health measures on Friday, September 3rd which resulted in this item being added to the agenda today. We recognize that there is a variety of opinions on these new measures, particularly around the provincial mask mandate. As Pembina Hills covers areas within nine

different municipalities our communities are diverse. As trustees we are not healthcare or medical experts, but in the absence of government leadership we have been given the following direction: 'School authorities continue to have the ability and corresponding accountability for any local measures that are put in place, such as physical distancing, cohorting and masking requirements that may exceed provincial guidance.'

Since the Friday announcement the division has tried to be as transparent as possible - messages were sent out and it was posted on the division website that the board would be considering a masking requirement at today's meeting. This in turn resulted in:

- 68 parents/community members who provided their input through written submissions (this number includes emails, Facebook messages and phone calls trustees received from individuals), there is some duplication of names between group and individual submissions
- One video was submitted which was put together by a group of parents and grandparents of a slideshow of their kids and some of their thoughts on this issue
- There was also a written submission on behalf of 48 parents and guardians, representing 26 families and 46 children attending Busby school.
- The vast majority of the 65 submissions were against mandating masks in schools.

Each written submission was sent to all of the trustees and both the retiring and new superintendent for them to review prior to the meeting. A document was created listing all of the submissions so that none were missed. All written submissions have been read. Due to the nature of the topic and the limitations on in person gatherings it was decided to both livestream and record this meeting to make it accessible to the public.

The board appreciates the input we have received and the varying views presented. However, we do want to address that emails containing threats or ultimatums are not helpful or useful to the discussion. In addition, to correct any misinformation, even when the government mandated masks for gr 4-12 students, kids were never required to wear a mask for 8hours or more continuously.

The board strives to make informed decisions that are in the best interest of students. Our goal is to have kids in school and learning with their teachers and support staff.

In preparation for this meeting trustees have reviewed the following information in addition to any other research they have done individually:

- The written submissions from parents and community members
- Data from senior administration including: our local vaccination rates and case numbers, the statement on masking from the Alberta Teachers Association and our local ATA President which are both in favour of masking, principals and senior administration feedback on the current measures in place within our schools, and feedback from Alberta Health Services
- Data and decisions from other school boards across the province on the health measures they have in place
- 'Back to school' and 'COVID-19' documents provided by Alberta Health, Alberta Education and the Alberta Government
- The Chief Medical Officer of Health Order 40-2021 signed September 3, 2021
- Government of Canada, Health Canada information

The board passed the following motion at a Special Board Meeting on August 19th which reads:

"Moved by Trustee Carson that no health measures which exceed provincial guidance be adopted for the 2021-2022 school year."

I will open the discussion to trustees at this time, and remind our public members that this is a board and senior administration discussion and you are present in a viewing capacity."

Board members were invited to comment and provided commentary as follows:

- Vice Chair Scinski expressed her disappointment that provincial guidance hasn't been clearer.
- Trustee Comeau discussed the issue from both student and staff perspectives. Trustee Comeau expressed the opinion that masks are necessary within common areas.

8113/09/21 Moved by Trustee Comeau that Pembina Hills School Division implement making masks mandatory in common areas of schools.

- Trustee Lefebvre noted that once kids leave school, they'll be lumped together in their non-school communities. Trustee Lefebvre suggested that mandating masks would not be appropriate, but rather the decision should be left up to teachers and parents.
- Trustee McElroy made enquiries of Administration confirming current provincial requirements as well as regarding some recent sporting events.

Board Chair Tuininga passed the chair role to Vice Chair Scinski.

- Trustee Tuininga commented on her personal sense of responsibility regarding the safety of students and staff, and expressed her concerns regarding mixed messaging and low vaccination rates. Trustee Tuininga further expressed her opinion that masks should not be mandated in common areas, but that masking and vaccinations should be strongly encouraged.

Chair Scinski passed the chair role to Trustee Tuininga.

- Vice Chair Scinski made clear her opinion that it would not be ideal for the Board to revisit the decision of which health measures to put in place at every board meeting depending on which provincial guidelines are in place at any given time. Vice Chair Scinski expressed her support of the current motion 8093/08/21 which notes that no health measures which exceed provincial guidance be adopted for the 2021-2022 school year.
- Assistant Superintendent Thiesen clarified current AHS attendance monitoring protocols in place whereby whenever any school has an absenteeism rate greater than 10% (due to any outbreak, not only related to COVID), reporting to AHS is required.
- Trustee McElroy affirmed his support for board motion 8093/08/21 and again stressed the importance of personal and parental choice.
- Vice Chair Scinski noted that reliance must be placed on parents to take appropriate action with respect to their children, including keeping children at home when they're sick as well as reporting when they're sick.

Trustee Comeau withdrew motion 8113/09/21.

A break was called between 9:43 a.m. and 9:51 a.m.

Sandra Fischbuck, Renda Zadinayski, Amy Hill-Eggl, Cassy Krikke, Vicki Dzivinski, Shawna Capiuk left the meeting.

Information Items

1. [Citizenship Awards – Newspaper Ad](#)
2. [Exemplary Achievement Awards – Newspaper Ad](#)
3. [Administrative Procedure 20-15 School Councils \(replaced\)](#)
4. [Administrative Procedure 40-01 Program Assistant Code of Conduct \(removed – AP is redundant as it's replaced by AP 40-47 Employee Code of Conduct\)](#)
5. [Administrative Procedure 70-07 Buildings and Sites \(revised\)](#)
6. [Administrative Procedure 30-70 Disposition of School Equipment and Furniture \(reviewed\)](#)
7. [Appointment Letter for Michael Borgfjord](#)
8. [First Day Enrolment Counts](#)
9. September 30 - National Day for Truth and Reconciliation – Assistant Superintendent Thiesen noted that the federal statutory holiday was announced after the annual school year calendar was approved, and accordingly it will remain as an instructional day for Pembina Hills School Division in 2021.

A break was called between 10:22 a.m. and 10:33 a.m.

Land, Legal, Labour (In-Camera)

8114/09/21

10:34 a.m. Moved by Trustee Scinski that the meeting convene as an In-Camera Session to discuss land, labour, legal matters.

Carried

Alex Mottus, Director of Information Technology entered the meeting at 10:41 a.m.

Alex Mottus, Director of Information of Technology left the meeting at 11:12 a.m.

8115/09/21

11:39 a.m. Moved by Trustee Lefebvre that the meeting reconvene as a Regular Meeting.

Carried

8116/09/21

Moved by Trustee Scinski that the Board deny all requests stated in the [letter dated August 27, 2021 from the Deputy Minister of Education](#) relative to the Alberta Distance Learning Centre.

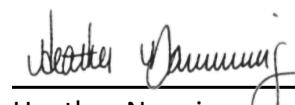
Carried

Adjournment

8117/09/21 Chair Tuininga declared the meeting adjourned at 11:40.


Jennifer Tuininga (Sep 23, 2021 22:01 MDT)

Jennifer Tuininga
Board Chair


Heather Nanninga
Secretary Treasurer