



**Cohasset Public Schools**  
143 Pond Street  
Cohasset, MA 02025  
*Continuing the Commitment to Excellence*  
**Cohasset School Committee Meeting**

**School Committee Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, October 6, 2021  
Cohasset Elder Affairs/Wilcutt Commons  
91 Sohier Street  
Cohasset, MA 02025  
Virtual Access Available - Cohasset 143TV/Zoom/Facebook

**In Attendance:** Craig MacLellan, Chairman  
Ashley Colleary  
Lydia St. Onge  
Lance Dial  
Paul Kearney

**Also, in Attendance:** Dr. Patrick Sullivan, Superintendent  
Dr. Leslie Scollins, Assistant Superintendent  
Susan Owen, Director of Finance & Operations  
Barbara Cerwonka, Director of Student Services  
Jenna Giglio, Student Advisory Representative  
Jake Squatrito, Student Advisory Representative  
Mercedes O'Neil, Student Advisory Representative

**Call to Order and Roll Call – Chairman** Craig MacLellan called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM. The meeting is, as always, being streamed live on Facebook and Cohasset 143TV.

**Roll Call: Ashley Colleary-Present, Lance Dial-Present, Paul Kearney- Present, Lydia St. Onge-Present, Craig MacLellan-Present.**

As noted at the last meeting, we are going to start implementing a rule surrounding the number of comments. This is not to restrain anyone. It is simply to try and make the length of these meetings a little bit more manageable, we will try it out and see how it works, and hopefully it does. Especially where the meetings are now in-person, we feel like people are able to come in-person and be heard in-person that also lends itself to a little bit more of an enhanced level of commentary and participation. That said, the rule that we are going to start implementing is that each household will have up to [3] comments per meeting. A comment obviously would be a statement or an inquiry relating to any one topic, a full thought and any follow up questions in response to any sort of answers in the school committee, or the superintendent's report. We will be trying to keep track of it as best as possible.

So that everyone knows this is our re-evaluation, 6-week re-evaluation on COVID safety measures that we have included in the school. Dr. Sullivan is going to give a full presentation on that. We are not going to be able to make any decisions about demasking at this point or any affirmative decisions, because we just don't have the information at hand because of the timelines that were set. Dr. Sullivan will go into more details about that so you will see where we are at. It will give everyone at least an idea of where the district may be heading. A more affirmative decision will be made at the next meeting which will be on October 20, 2021.

**Public Comment – None**



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**Superintendents Report** – Yesterday, attended the grand opening of the new METCO headquarters. The new home of METCO is in Nubian Square in Roxbury. Just being in the building gives a good glimpse of where the program is coming from and where it's going. Inside there is a mural made by students and then a timeline of the history of the METCO program, many dignitaries were present. Alisa Gittens-Carle did a beautiful job with the prayer, such a proud moment to see her deliver that. Ms. Milly Arbaje-Thomas spoke about what she's focusing on right now – the 3 Is - inspiring, working with intentionality, insist upon change. A challenge to our team – have a meeting in the conference room at the METCO Headquarters. The Committee has a brief discussion and agrees that a meeting should be at METCO headquarters during the school year.

This is national principals' month! October 2 was custodian appreciation day – Dr. Sullivan wants to publicly thank the custodial staff for all they do.

October is dyslexia awareness month- Dr. Scollins gives an update about what we're doing surrounding dyslexia. How are we screening? Process and protocol – staff had a 90-minute training on dyslexia and the screener. K-3 has had Foundations in place and we are working with TLA to make sure that all are trained and to expand the curriculum to 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade focusing on syllables and how to break them down. This Friday, TLA will be doing an all-day mini literacy institute as a kickoff for elementary school. iReady is the new system that has a dyslexia screener. Administrators and reading specialists will be attending a 2-day workshop about dyslexia in Boston at the end of November. Also looking at making sure we are streamlining the process of looking at children and we partner with the community to build something great.

Regarding the iReady email – leadership hears parental concerns that there hasn't been a proactive sharing of information. People in community are interpreting email as we are assessing your students and not sharing the information with you. How do we consistently give out information in a way that is helpful to families? We get the raw data and that doesn't mean anything to families and lay people, we need to learn how to report that out to families with data from iReady.

Dr. Sullivan noted that we are bringing in curriculum, training, have discussions to get the district to where we want it to be to create a system that provides the information. We just hired 2.5 specialists and a full-time reading specialist at the middle school which we've never had before.

Mr. MacLellan states that we have a new leadership team that is creating an ever-evolving student-centered approach.

### **Student Advisor Update -**

We have three student liaisons here in the room who are representing the superintendent school committee advisory council.

Mercedes O'Neil – Was also one of the student representatives of the steering committee for the Strategic Plan. She has been a member of the council since freshman year because she likes to talk to her peers and share their thoughts and concerns. Mercedes plays viola in a private orchestra and plays volleyball.

Jenna Giglio – This is her second year as a liaison. Jenna is a senior and this is her third year on the council. Jenna plays soccer and swims.



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Jake Squatrito – This is his second year as a liaison. Jake is a senior. Outside of school Jake likes to perform in theater. When he was a freshman, he was on student council and one of their responsibilities was going to meetings and talk about what they wanted in a superintendent and assistant superintendent. Jake loved that responsibility and loves being able to represent students at school.

**Gymnasium Usage** – Basketball boosters sent a letter expressing concerns about ability to use the gymnasium for basketball practice and games. Currently, gymnasiums are being used as eating spaces in order to stay close contact proof during meals. Kids are spaced at 6 feet in the gym and cafeteria.

There is health and social emotional value to having the youth basketball program. It is important that everything we do starts with safety. We have spacing needs in our cafeterias, and we are operating under what we believe is the safest way to prevent transmitting COVID and following regulations to avoid being a close contact who is mandated to quarantine out of school – 6 feet and facing the same way. Right now, at CMS and CHS we have 156 desks in our main gymnasium. There is 1/3 that is free. Each seat is assigned even though there is not a close contact issue it is important to know who is sitting near one another. We made the determination to have 2 lunches so that academic day flows better. There are 62 desks in the cafeteria and largest lunch is 197 or 198. That is a lot of breakdown and set up. At Deer Hill there are 66 desks and there is no place to store them. At Osgood there are 25 tables set up in one half of the gymnasium. The decision about desk spacing needs to be made from a safety perspective. From an operational standpoint it would be a significant challenge and we don't have the staff and they have to be put back specifically in the correct order. Currently fighting for this space are many school teams: girls and boys JV Basketball and varsity basketball, wrestling, plus Town Hoops. A change in working condition may be something we'd have to bargain with our custodial staff.

Alison Andrews, 171 Hull Street – You speak about the winter sports who will all be fighting for that space. What is the plan for that? We've always worked with those teams to coordinate practice on weekdays and weekends.

Dr. Sullivan – desks will be moved for sports practice.

In terms of gym usage, PE classes are being held outside for the most part. When it's not warm outside anymore, low impact activities in cafeteria and health alternative. At the HS they are using that third and using exercise room and circuit training and very artfully swapping off to use spaces.

Neil Andrews, 171 Hull Street – The rec and travel program start the first week in November and go through February. Every town on the south shore is being given gym time. In order to play in the league, we have to provide gym times. Wolf's Den is a dollar/ minute and have to drive to Pembroke to do that. Last year the whole south shore ran out of the wolf's den. That is the travel program and rec program. We have to figure something out. We have low numbers; we are at fifty percent from two years ago. AAU runs in the winter now and takes up gym space so they will fill up playtime at the wolf's den as well.

Because Cohasset is spacing at 6 feet, we have no in school generated quarantines. The state did not mandate that spacing, the school committee voted.

Paul Kearney suggested a solution of looking at Deer Hill only. Hire a moving company so that gym could be used for the weekends. On Sunday night they are moved back.

Lance Dial expresses a concern – if on Monday morning those desks aren't where they need to be that affects the entire school day.



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For other winter sports, will desks be moved? Dr. Sullivan needs to check in with Athletic Director Rotundi. He asks the Basketball Boosters representatives - What is the timeline? When do you need an answer?

Kate Rennie, 9 Forest Notch – concerned about limiting rec basketball for her kids, twin 3<sup>rd</sup> graders want to be in the program and having sports options for girls is important. Can HS students move desks for volunteer hours?

Courtney Ness, 210 Lamberts Lane – are there parents or kids who could break down and set up daily? Childhood diabetes is on the rise and we need to offer opportunities from movement.

We have 0 in school close contacts. Test and stay is ONLY for intramural close contacts. We have spaced people out so that we are close contact proof.

Jack Silvia, 40 Fair Oaks Lane- Can we use ESSER III Funds? ESSER III funding can't apply to it.

Ashley Colleary – how many gym spaces do you need? The desks are going to be moved for games, can time be tacked on to those clear gym times. Games are on weekends, and practices are on weekdays. Can we work a system around practices to get Rec and Town Basketball what they need?

Town Basketball is comfortable working youth basketball around CHS team practices.

Chris Kennedy, 31 LedgeWood Drive – At Deer Hill can half of the desks be moved from the gym to the cafeteria to open up one gym?

Lance Dial – What is your baseline need? We can look at that and see how it overlaps with our winter sports.

Meaghan Barry, 11 Tad Lane – If DESE is not requiring us to space is there some kind of metric or benchmark to say when we stop spacing at 6 feet.

Bill Rennie, 9 Forest Notch – 4 kids in the system, one daughter was on Neil's team, twins who played in Rec program which operates out of Osgood and Deer Hill. Just learned about this when try outs were moved outside. Weekend Rec program starts in December. Parents can help, there can be something creative that can be a solution.

Andrew Simms, 9 Hemlock Way – What is the anticipated practice schedule for HS basketball – days, times and location.

**Review of Efficacy of District Wide Safety Measures** – Main Objectives 1. Keep students, families, and staff safe. 2. Provide the best educational and social – emotional environment and offerings we can. 3. REMAIN IN AN IN-PERSON TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.

Reviewing all operational procedures after six weeks is paramount to determine their efficacy.

Dr. Sullivan used Mr. Polastri's chart that shows how COVID has hit Cohasset. Started tracking IN SCHOOL numbers in September 2020: 84 COVID cases - none transmitted in school.

Vaccination Rates – MIIS system – Estimates rates as of 10/4/2021

Cohasset Middle School: 49.3%

38% of sixth graders will be eligible for vaccination, based on birth dates, by January 1 (all will be eligible is 5-12 year olds are permitted to be vaccinated).

Cohasset High School: 84.35%

These percentages do not include staff.

Building rate is calculated as a combination of staff and student.

Town of Cohasset 83% fully vaccinated

All schools are required to meet in person 5 days a week.



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We have provided in person and school and asynchronous learning as requested during quarantine. Inside of 6 feet you are a close contact, but you only need to quarantine if you are inside of three feet.

Mask mandate extended for all until November 1. Schools who attest to 80% threshold will be able to make a local decision to remove mask mandate in that building. Those who remain unvaccinated will be required to remain masked.

Currently all students and staff are wearing masks. We do not have an exemption right now. It is not known yet how sharing a building will be treated by the state.

On busses all must be masked.

Test and Stay – individuals who are quarantine close contacts can wear masks and take rapid tests each morning and remain in school. This only applies to those who have been a close contact in school. Those who have been deemed a close contact outside of school, do not qualify for the test and stay program.

Tests are accessible to people in Cohasset, though they are becoming harder to come by as people test more.

Pool testing now called routine COVID safety checks - groups are tested as a pool and if a pool is positive then individuals are tested. Don't want to encourage those who are sick to come into school. CIC is currently backlogged – we would need to work with them.

#### Close Contact Tracing and Quarantining (Operational Review)

To date we have no quarantines created in our schools.

9/8 – 9/17 – Osgood 1, DH 1, CMS 0, CHS 1

9/20 – 9/24 – Osgood 4, DH 0, CMS 0, CHS 1

9/27 – 10/1 – Osgood 1, DH 0, CMS 0, CHS 1

10/4 – 10/6 – Osgood 3, DH 2, CMS 0, CHS 1

Transportation – masks are being worn at all times by drivers and students, windows are open, seats do not need to be assigned

Cleaning protocols

Sharing of materials minimized

Allowing field trips

Allowing approved visitors – visitors asked to fill out an attestation

Personal Protective Equipment – masks and hand sanitizer available at all classrooms

Nurse's office has separate waiting rooms

Music – spacing when playing and singing, outdoor when possible

Barrier available for teachers

Monitoring heat index

Tents and outdoor learning

Recess – unmasked

Motion to go to community voices first by Ashley Colleary, seconded by Paul Kearney. All – Aye

Ray Molnar, 334 Forest Avenue – 83% of eligible community members in Cohasset, test and stay only applies to quarantine close contacts, CIC has a backlog – have we signed up for them to do testing? When would backlogs be cleared up?

Screening testing is happening in some nearby districts. We have inquired and have not signed up? Encouraged to get on the list. We can always back out later.



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April Silvia, 40 Fair Oaks Lane – Regarding the 80% vaccination rate as the dangling carrot to remove masks, do we have the data as to how many vaccinated vs. unvaccinated have tested positive for COVID in Cohasset? This should be very important information for the school to seek out seeing. It is suggested she read out to the Dept. of Public Health for that Data.

Jenna Cunningham, 40 Hill Street – Vaccinated individuals are the ones getting COVID.

The 80% is the jurisdiction of DESE and not this school committee.

Kristen Quinn, 217 Sohier Street – Vaccination keeps being brought up as the main factor. Spacing and masking is a DESE requirement. If we hit 80% vaccination, we have the decision to make the masks optional for that building.

We are supposed to attest by October 15<sup>th</sup> if a building is at 80%.

What is in our control is attesting to 80%.

Ray Molnar, 334 Forest Avenue – At 80% the state is no longer requiring masking.

Jenna Cunningham from 15 Hill Street states the point is why should I believe that vaccinating my child gets them out of masks? Superintendent Patrick Sullivan comments right now, the only reason to believe that is that DESE has stated that in a building in which 80% of people are vaccinated, removal of masks may be considered. There's a lot of conjecture there because your child may be in that building that's never going to hit that 80%. There's no reason to believe that's changed. The board of health and the school committee determine that the lifting of the masks if we hit the 80% in a building. That is all we know and outside of that, it will be total conjecture.

Diane O'Leary from 20 Woods Way comments relating to outdoor play at the elementary schools. One leftover policy was that classes are segregated into assigned locations on the playground, the blacktop field playground. At the Osgood School this only seems to have stopped this past week upon my direct outreach asking the principal why this COVID practice was continuing this was concerning. Mrs. O'Leary and she hopes we keep a critical eye towards lingering policies such as the increased restrictions on allowable snack items. Just to be clear, there is no policy on that. The allowable snack has nothing to do with COVID, it's just something that we have determined was a productive and safe policy for kids. Dr. Scollins comments to Ms. O'Leary's concerns, our decisions about things during COVID have allowed us to think differently about how we do things and that was one of them. It's not a COVID policy. That is something the nurses felt it's a safer process for students. Dr. Sullivan appreciates Ms. O'Leary's comment.

Courtney Ness from 210 Lamberts Lane states as much as we are all looking for a solution, she is looking for a safe solution. Less than 100 African Americans and 100 Asians were evaluated in the 12 to 15-year-old trial. There are 4,888 reported adverse events for doses one and two, 113 are categorized as severe in the 12 to 15-year-old population. Placebo arm was 98.5% effective. As parents, we deserve less pressure to vaccinate our children. The safety is number one for this community, then we need to all protect our children. Lance Dial – we have no purview over the 80%

Molly Erqhart, 203 Fair Oaks Lane – Is there a plan in place to test students who exhibit mild symptoms. At this point we do not have any plan to test mildly symptomatic kids.

Courtney Ness – provided a link to the trial she cited



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Ashley Colleary – thanks Dr. Sullivan for the presentation and is grateful that we are quarantine close contact proof.

Lance Dial – Is school proceeding well, are children able to learn and socialize. Dr. Sullivan is seeing happy kids who are able to engage with their teachers. He feels good about the fact that we've been able to keep our kids in school and provide them with high quality education. We are using outdoor spaces better than we ever have. Kids are interacting at recess. There is a lot more normal energy.

Teachers are wondering when we'll be able to get our kids into a closer set up but agree that they want to keep the kids in school. It's not perfect.

It does have a very different feel from last year. Teachers are closely monitoring progress kids are making. Students are themselves as engaged learners.

Lance also appreciate the extra mile that staff are going.

Paul Kearney – echoes Lance and thanks to Sue Owen and her staff and teachers. As much as we'd love to open everything up, right now we are keeping kids safe and in school.

Lydia St. Onge – thanks to all and do not hesitate to reach out to your child's teacher to discuss and issues and to help with what can make their day be the best day it can be.

Craig MacLellan – we do want to return to normal and we understand that it's not perfect. Craig wants to revisit the gymnasium conversation. Adversarial relationship has developed and he feels that he may have sparked that conflict in the first place. There may be a solution. We are doing the best we can to make sure the children of our district are having the best experience they can. If it's for the kids we're for it if it makes sense and it doesn't upset the operations of the district.

**Motion to extend mask policy instated in September to November 3, the first meeting after the November 1 deadline by Lance Dial, seconded Lydia St. Onge**

**Aye – Lance Dial, Ashley Colleary, Paul Kearney, Lydia St. Onge**

**Nay – Craig MacLellan**

#### **School Committee Comments and Communication**

- No updates for School Facilities Committee, they will meet later this month
- Policy – committee has revised wellness policy and will be ready to review at our 10/20 meeting
- Communications – discussed website progress and consulted with Lisa Radden
- Capital – good news – we will be doing a walk through with a school facilities committee members - SFC has made two sub committees – present issues and future issues
- Open House – MS/ HS – impressive – some water stations are not done (2 are being worked on), some teachers mentioned that they do not have a voicemail, teachers can helpdesk and get phones fixed immediately. Call front office. PA system at CMS and CHS were hard to hear. Volume needs to be adjusted. It felt like an hour is not enough – bargaining issue.
- CMS, Principal John Mills, hosted a middle school cross country meet with Weymouth and Randolph.
- MASC conference is on the Cape in November – Commissioner Riley is the keynote speaker.
- Wellness Committee is collecting members hopefully from each school. They have received a grant from the state and are in the second year and looking to get school provided for kids after school. Next meeting in November.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

**Motion to approve Minutes from September 22 Meeting by Paul Kearney, seconded by Ashley Colleary.**

**All – Aye**



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**Topics Not Reasonable Anticipated within 48 hours of meeting**

A gift from Awesome Blossom that will support all school musical and growth of after school music programs. \$2000.00

**Motion to approve gift by Lance Dial, Second by Paul Kearney**  
**All – aye**

**Motion to adjourn by Ashley Colleary, seconded by Lance Dial**  
**All – aye**

**Meeting adjourned at 8:50**

**Documents used at meeting:**

- METCO grand opening images - Dr. Sullivan
- Image of the gymnasiums usage during lunch sessions in our district - Dr. Sullivan
- Image of spacing of furniture in classroom, gymnasium-lunch sessions, outside sessions - Dr. Sullivan
- Review of Fall School Safety Measures and Operational Considerations - Dr. Sullivan
- Vaccination Rates
- In-Person Learning (Guidance & Operational Review)
- Masks/Face Coverings/Vaccination Attestation
- Masks/Face Coverings (Operational Review)
- Close-Contact Tracing and Quarantining (Guidance & Operational Review)
- Test and Stay
- Pool Testing (Routine COVID Safety Checks)
- Distancing (Guidance & Operational Review)
- Ventilation, Hand Hygiene, Staying Home When Sick (Guidance)
- Transportation (Guidance)
- Cleaning Protocols (Guidance & Operational Review)
- Gift donation from Awesome Blossom