

BERRIEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Regular Board Meeting Minutes
September 9, 2021

CHAIRMAN TO CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER:

Chairperson R. McKinley Elliott called the regular meeting to order at 9:00 A.M. at the Shadowland Pavilion in Silver Beach County Park, 101 Broad Street, St. Joseph, Michigan.

INVOCATION:

Chairperson R. McKinley Elliott gave the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

Commissioner Ezra Scott led us in the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America.

ROLL CALL:

The Chair instructed the Clerk to take a roll call with the following results:

12 PRESENT: Rayonte Bell, Jim Curran, Teri Sue Freehling, Robert Harrison, Jon Hinkelman, Michael Majerek, Don Meeks, Ezra Scott, David Vollrath, Julie Wuerfel, Mamie Yarbrough and R. McKinley Elliott.

0 ABSENT.

APPROVE MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 26, 2021 MEETING:

Commissioner Majerek moved and supported by Commissioner Vollrath, to approve the BOC regular meeting minutes of August 26, 2021. Motion carried and no nays.

COMMUNICATION(S):

County Clerk Sharon Tyler received and distributed to the Board of Commissioners (BOC) the following communication(s):

Packet #1

Emails received on August 26, 2021:

- Tom Stillman, Lakeside, MI, supports the linear park along Red Arrow Highway.
- Blayne and Molly Smith, Lincoln Charter Township, MI, supports universal masking in the schools.
- Angela Thompson, St. Joseph Charter Township, MI, supports universal mask mandates in schools.
- Marcy Hamilton, St. Joseph City, MI, supports mask mandate in schools.
- Nicole Saunders, New Buffalo, MI, supports mask mandate in schools.
- Mark Anderson, Lake Charter Township, MI, shared data regarding COVID-19.
- Katrina and Chris Washburn, St. Joseph, MI, advocate for parents' right to choose to mask or vaccinate their children.
- Jillian Crockett, St. Joseph, MI, strongly recommends mask mandate in schools.

Emails received on August 27, 2021:

- Erica Walsh, St. Joseph City, MI, supports mask mandate in schools.
- Aaron Lee, Coloma, MI, supports mask mandate in schools.
- Deb and Mark Pickens, Stevensville, MI, supports county-wide mask mandate.
- Leigh Schoettinger, St. Joseph, MI, supports mask mandate within the community.

Packet #2

Comment & Suggestion Form received on August 25, 2021:

- Denise Smith, Bridgman, MI, supports mask mandate in schools.

Resolution received on August 27, 2021:

- Grand Traverse County Board of Commissioners, in support of vaccine awareness and medical autonomy.

Emails received on August 29, 2021:

- Jill Underhill, Harbert, MI, supports mask requirement in K-12 schools.
- Kathy Randolph, Union Pier, MI, supports mask requirement in K-12 schools.

Emails received on August 30, 2021:

- Paula Tucek, Niles, MI, supports mask mandate in schools.
- Jessica Osei-Yeboah, Berrien Township, MI, supports mask mandate in schools.

Packet #3

Emails received on August 31, 2021:

- Newsletter from Kelly Stelter, Berrien County 4-H Program Coordinator, The Berrien County Spotlight, 4-H Family News – August/September 2021 issue.
- Ruth Crum, Niles, MI, advocates for parents' right to choose to mask or vaccinate their children.

Packet #4

Email received on August 28, 2021:

- Sarah Strait, St. Joseph, MI, supports mask mandate in schools.

Email received on August 29, 2021:

- Regan Keating, New Buffalo, MI, supports mask mandate in schools.

Email received on August 31, 2021:

- Mimi Bilbrey, New Buffalo, MI, supports mask mandate in schools.

Emails received on September 1, 2021:

- Shana Kirby, New Buffalo Township, MI, supports the Berrien County Health Department (BCHD) regarding COVID-19.
- Luke Whitman, Lake Charter Township, MI, urges the BOC to deny any mask mandates.
- Sarah Helms, Bridgman, MI, supports the BCHD in implementing a mask mandate.
- Cristi Balke, Royalton Township, MI, requesting you to rescind the BCHD order to mask students.
- Luke Whitman, Lake Charter Township, MI, opposes the BCHD making mandates.
- Sarah Strait, St. Joseph, MI, supports mask mandate in schools.
- Gaile Whitman, Chikaming Township, MI, opposes the masks in schools.
- Stacey Zabel, Coloma, MI, opposes the masks in schools.
- Angela Thompson, St. Joseph, MI, supports the BCHD in implementing a mask mandate.

Packet #5

Emails received on September 2, 2021:

- Sarah Helms, Bridgman, MI, supports universal mask mandate for PreK-12.
- Shane Peters, Bridgman Public Schools Superintendent, response to Sarah Helms.
- Bobby Testini, St. Joseph Charter Township, MI, does not agree with the BCHD order.
- Angela and Justin Bell, Eau Claire, MI, does not agree with a mask mandate.

Packet #6

Emails received on September 1, 2021:

- Jason Whitman, Lake Charter Township, MI, requesting the BOC to deny the BCHD's request to mandate masks in schools.
- Lindsey and Patrick Kennedy, New Buffalo, MI, does not support the school mask mandate.
- Jennifer Mayo Fujawa, Stevensville, MI, opposes the BCHD's school mask mandate.
- Mary Balke, South Haven, MI, would like the BOC to rescind the mask mandate.

Email received on September 2, 2021:

- Augusta Schmidt, St. Joseph Charter Township, MI, supports a mask optional mandate in schools.

Emails received on September 3, 2021:

- Allen Ales, Lake Charter Township, MI, opposes the September 1, 2021 mask order.
- Leigh Schoettinger, St. Joseph, MI, supports the BCHD's school mask mandate.

Emails received on September 4, 2021:

- Kim Fenech, Buchanan, MI, has questions for the BCHD, to better understand the need for the orders.
- Lisa Nelson, Chikaming Township, MI, supports the BOC to reverse the BCHD's school mandates, and supports parental rights and choice for each child.
- Brandon Nelson, Sawyer, MI, supports the BOC to reverse the BCHD's school mandates and supports parental rights and choice for each child.
- Kaitlin Thumm, Watervliet, MI, supports the parental right to choose to wear a mask at school.
- Debra Stevens, Bridgman, MI, suggests all schools to provide N95 masks for all students, teachers, staff and visitors.
- Morgan Holgate, Bridgman, MI, supports the BOC to reverse the BCHD's school mandates, and supports parental rights and choice for each child.
- Jessica Belmontes, Bridgman, MI, supports the BOC to reverse the BCHD's school mandates, and supports parental rights and choice for each child.

Comment & Suggestion Form received on September 6, 2021:

- Lois Goldrick, St. Joseph, MI, supports all mask requirements including all places of education, private or public.

Emails received on September 6, 2021:

- Amanda Cogland, St. Joseph, MI, suggests all schools to provide N95 masks for all students, teachers, staff and visitors.
- Candice Elders, St. Joseph, MI, supports mandated masks in schools.

Packet #7

Individual emails received from Patricia Ruhl, Berrien Springs, MI, on September 1, 2021:

- Link: "CDC seems to have covered up data showing masking kids in schools is pointless."
- Article: "A group of parents sent their kids' face masks to a lab for analysis."
- Article: "Facemasks in the COVID-19 era: A health hypothesis."
- Article: "New Stanford NIH study proves masks are worthless against COVID."
- Article: "Masks didn't slow COVID spread: new study."
- Article: "Masks9"
- Article: "COVID-19 hospital admissions fall for 1st time in weeks across U.S.: HHS."

Packet #8

Email received from Patricia Ruhl, Berrien Springs, MI, on September 2, 2021 with several links regarding COVID-19.

Individual emails received from Patricia Ruhl, Berrien Springs, MI, on September 3, 2021:

- Link: "The Downsides of Masking Young Students Are Real."
- Link: "Dr. Christina Parks' testimony for Michigan H.B. 4471 on August 19, 2021."

Individual emails received from Patricia Ruhl, Berrien Springs, MI, on September 5, 2021:

- Link: "Vaccine mandates."
- Link: "Part 2: Dr. Robert Malone on Ivermectin, escape mutants, and the faulty logic of vaccine mandates."

Email received by Patricia Ruhl, Berrien Springs, MI, on September 6, 2021:

- Link: "Kids and COVID: Data does not support health officials' fixation with Coronavirus."

Individual emails received by Patricia Ruhl, Berrien Springs, MI, on September 7, 2021:

- Link: "Origin of the virus."
- Link: "You should be in jail, you created the virus" Rand Paul unleashes on Dr. Fauci in congress."
- Link: "Exposed! FDA, CDC & who is hiding this from you?"

Email received from Ruth Crum, Niles, MI, on September 6, 2021, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandates.

Additional Emails

Email received from Patricia Ruhl, Berrien Springs, MI on September 7, 2021, on a link: "Newly Released Documents Detail US-Funded Coronavirus Research at Wuhan Institute of Virology: Report."

Email received from Sarah Strait, St. Joseph, MI on September 8, 2021, on local parents in support of science, masking, Berrien County Health Department and school boards.

Email received from Kristen Robinson, St. Joseph Charter Township, MI on September 8, 2021, supporting the BCHD and their mask mandate.

The communications were made available for the Public to view.

REQUISITION REVIEW:

Executive Administrative Assistant Annette Christie presented the requisitions to the Board for their review.

PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING RESOLUTIONS - Public comments at this portion of the meeting must be related to resolutions listed on today's agenda only. Those speaking during public comments may do so no longer than two minutes and shall identify themselves by name and city, township, or village. (Article III, 3.9B-C): None.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

Commissioner Scott moved and supported by Commissioner Freehling, to include Added Resolution #C2109311 to the Consent Calendar, and to approve today's Consent Calendar as presented:

<u>Resolutions #</u>	<u>Description</u>
F2109046	Weekly Bills
B2109093	Weekly Requisitions
F2109125	Road Payables
C2109311	Interim Building & Grounds Superintendent Department Head

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call the roll with the following results:

12 YEAS: Curran, Freehling, Harrison, Hinkelman, Majerek, Meeks, Scott, Vollrath, Wuerfel, Yarbrough, Bell and Elliott.

Motion carried, no nays.

ADDED RESOLUTION(S):

Resolution #C2109311 - Interim Building & Grounds Superintendent Department Head was moved to the Consent Calendar.

COMMISSIONER REPORT(S):

The Commissioners presented their outside Commissioners' Reports. Commissioner Scott stated he plans to introduce a resolution next week rescinding support for the BCHD's COVID-19 response.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS - Those speaking during public comments may do so no longer than two minutes and shall identify themselves by name and city, township, or village. (Article III, 3.9B-C):

Chairperson Elliott stated the state statute does not give the BOC any legal power to change the BCHD's order. Chairperson Elliott spoke about the BCHD.

- Rhonda Yerington, Bainbridge Township, opposes the mask order in schools.
- Melissa Barker, Lake Charter Township, opposes face masks.
- Jim Oselka, City of New Buffalo, face masks and vaccine should be a choice. Commends Commissioner Scott for planning to rescind the resolution supporting the BCHD.
- Raymond Stanton, Stevensville/Lincoln Charter Township, gave a summary and studies regarding mask health issues.
- Michael Hoyh, City of Benton Harbor, spoke about Benton Harbor Strong Community Action.

- Robyn Graffenius, Lincoln Charter Township, spoke about her concerns on COVID-19, opposes Courtney Davis and the BCHD's mask order in schools. Proud of the Lakeshore superintendent stating that he would not mandate masks at school.
- Tiffany Ott, City of Bridgman, spoke about COVID-19 and the schools discriminating students in school regarding COVID-19.
- Chris Leach, Benton Charter Township, spoke about Courtney Davis, the COVID-19 prevention funding for schools, BCHD and the Revised School Code Act 451.
- Brandon Cerecke, Lincoln Charter Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools and may take legal action.
- Robert Donarski, Lincoln Charter Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Victory Woodall, Benton Charter Township and Van Buren County, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools and introduced Richard McCoy.
- Richard McCoy, Lincoln Charter Township, spoke about the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Renee Donarski, Lincoln Charter Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Trisha Kovac, City of St. Joseph, supports the BCHD's mask mandate in schools.
- Tara Scharich, Coloma, spoke about making pro-active healthy choices regarding COVID-19 and everyone getting along together.
- Luke Andresen, St. Joseph Charter Township, spoke about the Revised School Code Act 451 and that Courtney Davis is breaking the law. He stated the BCHD's order is segregating people.
- Jennifer MayoFujawa, Lincoln Charter Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Michelle Cavanaugh, City of St. Joseph, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Lindsey Kennedy, New Buffalo Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools and how it has affected her children.
- Jeremy Prong, Benton Charter Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Rose Strother, New Buffalo, supports firing Courtney Davis, opposes BCHD's mask mandate order in schools and thanked Commissioner Scott for planning to rescind the resolution supporting the BCHD.
- Zach Lecher, Village of Stevensville, spoke about Courtney Davis, opposes BCHD's mask mandate order in schools and thanked Commissioner Scott for planning to rescind the resolution supporting the BCHD.
- Andrew Glisson, Lincoln Charter Township, wants the BOC to continue to support the BCHD.
- Aimee Foster, Lincoln Charter Township, stated the mask mandate is unconstitutional, an abuse of power by Courtney Davis and to fire her.
- Eric Lester, St. Joseph Charter Township, read a resolution by the Berrien County Democratic Party supporting the BCHD's order.
- Mike Gillette, St. Joseph, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Tony Anderson, St. Joseph Charter Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Jaime Hall, Royalton Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools and spoke about COVID-19.
- Jaden Bell, Eau Claire, opposed to wearing a face mask in school and will not wear a mask.
- Penny Strouts, Lincoln Charter Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Angela Bell, Eau Claire, spoke about how to wear a face mask properly and Courtney Davis not wearing a mask at work.
- Cindi Belcher, Lincoln Charter Township, began reading a statement regarding COVID-19 and is opposed to the BCHD's decision (handout).
- Mark Durocher, St. Joseph Charter Township, finished reading the statement regarding COVID-19 and is opposed to the BCHD (handout).
- Christopher Pfahler, City of St. Joseph, spoke about his concerns about dividing the public.
- Diane Meyer, City of Bridgman, spoke about her concerns regarding COVID-19.
- Valerie Gehrke, St. Joseph Charter Township, spoke about her concerns regarding COVID-19 and against the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Renee Peddie, Royalton Township, spoke about the number of shootings in schools, the global death rate and is opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Krystal McCully, City of Niles, spoke about the national walk out in schools tomorrow, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools and the right to choose.
- Vedette Cordes, City of St. Joseph, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Stephanie Mead, Three Oaks Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Tammy Karmik, Baroda Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.

- Matt Belcher, Lincoln Charter Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Janet Blazen, St. Joseph Charter Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Cody Railsback, City of Bridgman, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools. He spoke about changing the law and removing Courtney Davis.
- Jenna Donarski, Lincoln Charter Township, a high school student opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Chris Peddie, Royalton Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Deb Frank, Hagar Township, spoke about recalling the Hagar Township Board regarding the dog issue and what the public can do to change actions.
- Diana Selir, New Buffalo Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Brandon Karl, Bertrand Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Vikki Wade, City of St. Joseph, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Angie Himes, Baroda Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Afton Fox, City of Bridgman, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Deb Frank, Hagar Township, spoke about not needing a degree and is opposed to the mask mandate order.
- Laraine Fox, Royalton Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Nicole Railsback, City of Bridgman, spoke about freedom to choose to wear a mask.
- Emily Helms, City of St. Joseph, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Nicole Jackson, St. Joseph Charter Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Rachel Scholten, Lincoln Charter Township, spoke about COVID-19 and is opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Jennifer Lloyd, Benton Charter Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Angela Bell, Eau Claire, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Anna Light-Silcox, St. Joseph Charter Township, supports the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Lori Nitz, Baroda Township, spoke about her family and opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Mr. Everett, St. Joseph Charter Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Sylvia Milnickel, Watervliet Charter Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Pam Hoover, Stevensville/Lincoln Charter Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools.
- Karen Garlanger, St. Joseph Charter Township, opposed to the BCHD's mask mandate order in schools and there is a need to change the law.

OTHER BUSINESS:

The BOC thanked everyone for attending today and voicing their concerns. Several Commissioners supported allowing the elected school boards to decide what is best for their schools and treating people with respect. Each Commissioner shared their thoughts. Commissioner Wuerfel is asking for a resolution of no confidence.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/REMINDERS:

Chairperson Elliott announced the following:

- Berrien County Broadband Internet Taskforce meeting today at 12:30 P.M.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 12:22 A.M.

R. McKinley Elliott, Chairperson

Sharon J. Tyler, County Clerk

Minutes are to be approved at the next BOC meeting.