

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
OCTOBER 4, 2021
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

A special meeting of the Board of Trustees of Mountain Home School District No. 193 was convened at 6:30 p.m., October 4, 2021, at the District Administration Office, 470 N 3rd East, Mountain Home, Idaho, in said district, pursuant to authority provided by Title 74, Chapter 2, Section 74-202(4)(c)(6)(b) – Open Meeting (Special Meeting), Idaho Code, and pursuant to affirmation by the Clerk that notice of the special meeting had been given to each trustee and posted public notice as required by law. A copy of the Notice of a Special Meeting of School Trustees so posted follows:

**NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MOUNTAIN HOME SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 193
Mountain Home, Elmore County, Idaho
FACE MASKS ARE ENCOURAGED**

Courtesy Livestream Board Meetings: Zoom/Livestreaming/recording board meetings is a courtesy to give the public an alternative means of attending a school board meeting; the board meeting would continue even if there is a failure of technology affecting the zoom meeting (<https://www.mtnhomesd.org/calendar.html>).

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83224174090?pwd=MndtRmY3S3pMYWN3SmdGencweVZ3UT09>

Meeting ID: 832 2417 4090

Passcode: 600068

Find your local number: <https://us06web.zoom.us/u/kcsu0t10Lu>

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a special meeting of the Board of Trustees of Mountain Home School District No. 193, will be held on Monday, October 4, 2021, at 6:30 p.m., located at District Administrative Office Boardroom, 470 N. 3rd East, Mountain Home, Idaho, in said District, during which the following business will be conducted:

- I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER (ACTION) – Chairman/Vice-Chairman**
- II. SELECTION OF ARCHITECT SERVICES (ACTION) – School Board of Trustees**

III. PUBLIC INPUT (COMMENTS – NO ACTION) –

*Public input may be provided to the Board by attending the board meeting in person, sign up on the Public Input Signup Sheet, and submit to the Board Chair or Board Clerk the Public Input Form located next to the signup sheet prior to the start of the board meeting. The form is also located on the School District Website (www.mtnhomesd.org). If called upon by the Board, the individual(s) will be allowed a maximum of three minutes to present his/her views. Please do not include the names of students or staff due to FERPA Laws and privacy protection. There will be no action taken at this time, but action on a problem area could be scheduled for a subsequent meeting of the Board. Safety and healthcare measures such as the wearing of face masks and social distancing will be followed during a CDC or State or School Board recognized pandemic. Those individuals refusing to follow the safety mitigations set in place will be asked to leave the building. **There will be no public input via zoom.** There is limited seating in the boardroom so patrons might have to sit in the foyer or the overflow room. If you have a complaint against personnel or students by name, you need to schedule an appointment with the Superintendent.*

*Those wishing to submit public input but do not plan to attend the board meeting may still provide input to the Board as long as the Public Input Form has been submitted **by noon the day of the board meeting**. All public input forms received will be forwarded to the Board of Trustees but might not be read aloud. Please do not include the names of students or staff due to FERPA Laws and privacy protection. There will be no action taken at this time. **There will be no public input via zoom.** If you have a complaint against personnel or students by name, you need to schedule an appointment with the Superintendent.*

- IV. REPORT & DETERMINATION OF THE 3-WEEK COVID19 MITIGATION STRATEGIES (POSSIBLE ACTION) – School Board of Trustee/James Gilbert**

- V. EXECUTIVE SESSION (POSSIBLE ACTION) – Student Matters**

Executive Session – Section 74-206(1)(b) – To consider the evaluation of public school students, Idaho Code.

- VI. ADJOURN (ACTION)**

This Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Mountain Home School District No. 193 is called pursuant to Title 74, Chapter 2, Section 74-202(4)(c)(6)(b) – Open Meeting (Special Meeting), Idaho Code.

Dated the 1st Day of October 2021.

Sharon M. Whitman

Sharon M. Whitman

Clerk, School District No. 193

Mountain Home, Elmore, Idaho

- I. **CALL MEETING TO ORDER** – Chairperson/Vice-chairperson. Chairman Abrego convened the special meeting of the Board of Trustees at 6:30 p.m.

Trustees Present: Chairman Abrego, Vice-Chair Binion, Trustee Donahue, and Trustee Monasterio, and Trustee Knox attended the start of the board meeting; thus, establishing a two-thirds majority of the board IAW Idaho Code, Section 74-202.

- II. **SELECTION OF ARCHITECT SERVICES (ACTION)** – School Board of Trustees. Superintendent Gilbert reported on the two architect companies and the result of the interviews. He had handed out and reviewed the rubric used to determine who best fit with Mountain Home and the school district. Chairman Abrego asked if there needed to be additional discussion and with no response, he then informed the Board that a rollcall would be used to determine which company wins the architectural services with the school district. The Chairman directed the Clerk to complete a rollcall vote.

Trustee Knox was in favor of using LKV Architect.

Trustee Monasterio was in favor of using LKV Architect.

Trustee Binion was in favor of using Design West.

Trustee Donahue was in favor of using Design West.

Chairman Abrego was in favor of using Design West.

There being a majority vote to use Design West, Chairman Abrego asked for a motion to approve the architectural services firm. Trustee Binion motioned to approve Design West Architects as the architectural firm for Mountain Home School District. Trustee Donahue seconded the motion. Motion approved.

- III. **PUBLIC INPUT (COMMENTS – NO ACTION)** – Chairman Abrego explained the rules for public input and informed the audience that those who signed up to give input will be given three minutes to speak, no staff or student names will be mentioned, and Chairman Abrego asked that everyone be respectful no matter if they agree with the person or not. He added there would be no outbursts or the person will be asked to leave the building; if the outbursts continue, the Board will stop the board meeting and resume at a later time. He then called the individuals up to the Dias to give their public input.

1. Elijah Nixon – said she was not there on behalf of teachers or the MHEA, but as a concerned citizen. She also stated that as a teacher, she didn't have any of her students get sick at the beginning of the school going when masks were optional, yet her twenty-three 1st graders had no issues with wearing a face mask during the data collection period. She said both those facts are true, and she could have used either example to push the narrative for one decision or another. She went on to explain that without the proper scientific or medical education and knowledge, opinions shouldn't matter because no one in this room has the education to make those scientific or medical decisions. The board is responsible to make sure they use all the knowledge and resources from qualified professionals to make the appropriate decisions, and follow the experts, follow the science.
2. Brad Bowen – he claimed there was quite a bit of public input against wearing mask and he then accused the board of ignoring his and others input and instead increased the mandate. He claimed even if the science showed that wearing a mask might wipe out COVID he believes the board decision was not right. He accused the board of assuming authority and government overreach that has been a cancer at every level of government for decades. He claimed the board is a government similar to city council with the chair being the mayor and the and the superintendent is the police chief. He continued to speak about his opinion, claims, and accusations. He wanted the Board to make the correct decisions based on what he believes is right.
3. Gina Shockey – read preselected sections of Idaho Code from State Superintendent Sherry Ybarra that addressed the ethics of professional educators and then began to say that educators are required to make an environment safe for students, educators must abide by all federal laws and local laws, and unethical conduct by educators is in violation of the ethics law, etc. She continued to read

preselected sections of Idaho Code addressing professional educators and insinuated unethical and unlawful behaviors of educators, implied physical and emotional abuse by educators, cruelty and child abuse by educators, etc. She then said informed consent is required for medical therapies and claimed it was illegal to mandate medical therapies without consent, she accused the board of promoting the idea that masks prevent disease and alluded to it being an illegal and deceptive practice, etc. She went on about civil rights, freedom of choice, and such.

4. Paulette Fisher – spoke about her feelings regarding face masks. She claimed that children struggle because of the lack of freedom to breath, claimed it caused anxiety, claimed it caused mental issues, etc. She claimed that masks create fear and that it is outrages to require children to wear masks. Shae claimed that there is no documented, scientific proof that wearing a mask will stop the spread of viruses in children. She stated that it should be a parent’s choice. She claimed the mask mandate was a way of controlling children thus hindering the teaching of children. She accused teachers of using too much time to worry about face masks, fiddling with face masks, and such, and leaving no time to teach academics. She then went on about her claims and beliefs of government overreach, lack of parental rights, the lack of science to support mask, the CDC, and so on. She then showed a random video on her phone and claimed that this is what our teachers are teaching our children. (song about wearing facemasks). NOTE: Unverified video and not from the MHSD.
5. Kristin Riley – against masks, she claimed that many people she has spoken to told her that for the last three weeks of wearing the masks the kids have come home sick, kids come home with the flu, kids come home with strep, etc. She claimed her granddaughter, who never missed school in eight years, came home from school with strep and the only place she could have gotten strep was from school. It should be a parents choice. It’s not the Board’s responsibility to make medical decisions for children
6. Tye Riley – against masks, he claimed that his daughter, who has never been sick, but since wearing masks for three weeks came home with strep. He stated that if it wasn’t for the fact that his daughter played volleyball, masks are required, he would have kept her home the entire time. He claimed it was an abuse not to allow her to play sports because the Board required masks. He stated that he knew which trustees voted for masks and which ones didn’t. He then claimed that those who voted for masks didn’t have kids in school otherwise they don’t see the frustrations. He stated that the Board had no right at all to mask his kids. He said that a mandate was not a law.
7. Tyler Merryman – his claimed his hang up with masks is the hundreds of evidence and scientific studies prior to 2019 that mask worn by civilians does very little to prevent infections and the fact is that technically masks should be changed every time it is touched. He claimed nothing is demonstrated by our leaders, by our board, by teachers, etc., shows no benefits. The logic is if there is so much biomatter on these masks why aren’t we wearing biohazard suits. He asked the Board to please look at other data and other experts. He said the logic doesn’t make sense and we are scaring our kids.
8. Jay Mays – Colonel Mays, MHAFB School Liaison, said from the stand point of the COVID virus he will speak just from the base’s perspective – He claimed that prior to start of school, there were zero to a few cases, but after the start of school and no mask requirements, a surge started; it was to the point that the base felt compelled to come and talk to the Board. He stated that they had documented cases that reached between 70-100 cases, but four days after the mask mandate, the base had matriculated back to roughly under 10 cases. As part of his job, he speaks to doctors and scientists on a regular basis to keep our fighting force ready. He added that the base is 90% vaccinated, but the vaccination doesn’t prevent COVID, instead it helps preventing people ending up in the hospital. He said the base looks at the data and the data show that the county and state rates have increase.
9. Bethany Lockhart – teacher who moved to Idaho and the registered her kids into school. She said the CDC said that masks may stop the spread by 1.8% and feels masks should be optional. She claimed that her kids come home with headaches and sick since the mask mandate. She said as a teacher, she can’t tell what her students are saying or recognize if her students need help, not to mention the fact is that the masks are filthy. She pleaded for the Board allow her a choice and to have personal health freedoms and choices for her and her children.
10. Art Manchester – has three grandchildren in district and would like masks to be optional.

IV. **REPORT & DETERMINATION OF THE 3-WEEK COVID19 MITIGATION STRATEGIES (POSSIBLE ACTION)** – School Board of Trustee/James Gilbert. Superintendent Gilbert reviewed the data from the last 3 ½ weeks to determine the COVID transmissions rates. He added that he and the Board were aware that quarantine rates would go down due to minimizing quarantines during the 3.5 weeks.

Superintendent Gilbert reported the data. He reported on the data and informed the Board that ADA did increase from 86% in week three (no masks) to 90% in week 7 (with masks); total student quarantines for week 1-3 (no masks) was 462 and it improved the last 3.5 weeks (with masks) to 280; student positive cases went from 107 cases in weeks 1-3 (no masks) down to 69 in the last 3.5 weeks (with masks); staff positive cases during week 1-3 (no masks) was 107 and declined to 69 in the last 3.5 weeks (with masks); staff quarantines went from 10 in weeks 1-3 (no masks) down to 2 the last 3.5 weeks (with masks); as of October 4, there were 11 active student cases, active cases meaning the student is no longer quarantined at home and has been cleared of quarantining and return to school.

Superintendent Gilbert reported on the Weekly School Category, as reported by CDH, cases per 100,000 for Elmore County: August 20 - 265; August 27 - 334; September 2 - 567; September 10 - 577; September 17 - 726; September 24 - 890; October 1 - 872. The CDH has Elmore and the school district in the "Red" category.

Superintendent Gilbert informed the Board that a survey was sent to parents and staff regarding the wearing of face masks. He reported that 54% of our parents voted yes to wearing face masks and 46% of our parents voted no to wearing face masks. He also reported that 55% of our staff voted yes to wearing face masks and 45% voted no.

The Board thoroughly discussed the data as it related to wearing masks; many of the numbers were from HMS; they were informed that MHHS had 30 cases the first three weeks of school and only 21 the last three weeks, MHJH had 30 cases the first three weeks and only 16 the last three weeks, and HMS only had 19 cases the last three weeks; discussed how the CDH website numbers are different than what they report to school districts; the questionable reports coming from the CDH. Chairman Abrego claimed that there was something wrong with our case reporting, either the kids came to HMS sick or what he heard was it was from football, but the contact tracing must be wrong. Trustee Donahue said she is truly not seeing that the numbers are that different, it is still pretty much 50/50; she didn't see what she thought she would see. Discussion continued regarding that the transmission numbers are increasing in the town and county, but the numbers in the schools is dropping. Superintendent Gilbert said the goal was not to eliminate COVID, but how to best keep the schools open. Superintendent Gilbert said with 11 active cases in school is as good as it was last year, which shows that what we did was working; there have been almost no exposures from school, all the exposures came from home. Discussion continued including community numbers continue to rise; parents are sending their kids to school sick; disagreement with the numbers and strategy. Trustee Monasterio wants to keep the mask requirement unless convinced otherwise. Chairman Abrego stated that he didn't know how many kids have died in Elmore, nor does he want to know, and hopefully none. Trustee Donahue said that we have things in place for emergencies whether it is in one school or one classroom, but we have it in place, so could we have something else in place for outbreaks. Trustee Knox said the numbers depend on the teacher and how many students he/she sent to the office and it is not the same across the board, it is very subjective, and the numbers have gone down but not drastically, and she feels it should be a choice. Chairman Abrego said there is no face mask requirements in any of the businesses or stores or places where kids go. Trustee Donahue said that as a Board, they have done the best they could to try to keep the schools open and last year was not a good year with remote learning, grades dropped, kids didn't go to school, kids couldn't make it on their own, so mask or no mask, vaccine or no vaccine, our goal is not to go back to remote learning. We need to keep flexible and try new things.

Trustee Binion said we've been accused of government overreach and not doing our job and we don't have the authority, etc. He then explained that in 1777, George Washington created the first mass mandate precedent by ordering all military persons be inoculate against smallpox, thus creating the precedence that has authorized mandates for public health ever since. He then discussed comments made by Dr. Fauci under one administration and Dr. Fauci's comments under the current administration. Trustee Binion then addressed the accusations made by some parents of the Board muzzling students by informing them of the Webster's Dictionary meaning between muzzling and masking. He continued to read some publications verifying the benefits of wearing face masks and the contradiction's made on social media. Trustee Binion concluded by agreeing that other options need to be considered.

Superintendent Gilbert explained to the Board that staff are tired of all of this, they didn't go into education to be pseudo-medical people and our secondary administrators are exhausted from contact tracing and not being able to do what they want and need to do. He then said that there has to be some

sort of balance between doing the maximum we can and doing nothing. What is the Board bound to do? Is the Board going to do nothing, eliminate contact tracing, eliminate quarantines, and is that the right thing to do? As a parent, I feel that I have the right to know if my kids have been exposed and as a parent, it is my responsibility to the community to monitor my kids for symptoms. He added that we cannot continue like the first three weeks because our staff do not have the time. If the Board chooses to loosen up on some things, the district will need to hire some people to do the contact tracing and that is if we can even find people who want to do that so we can free up our principals to do what they are supposed to do in the buildings and with staff. Another thing is what will the Board do in case of an outbreak? The Board has the ability to close schools and what impact does that have on students and parents. Again, there needs to be a balance for the 695 parents who want the face mask mandate to stay in place and the 604 that don't want any mandates. The Board needs to be prepared to close schools if they decide to eliminate the mask mandate. He suggested that if masks become optional, contact tracing and some quarantines must be in place.

A lengthy discussion continued including there are two sides to every story; parents are sort of split down the middle; no matter the source, people will always find information that fits their narrative that is the opposite of the opposite side; they questioned the integrity of parents and the fact that many parents send their kids to school sick no matter what even though we have asked parents numerous times to keep sick kids home; discussed the possibility of closing an entire school or classroom should the numbers increase and all of the students would be sent home to quarantine; discussed the possibility of closing classes and sending all the kids from that class home to quarantine; lack of reputability of the CDH; make face masks optional but continue the contact tracing; discussed identifying kids who are exposed and require them to wear a mask for five days and then test negative or they will quarantine at home for ten-days unless they have a negative test result within five days; discussed how would teachers know which kids are supposed to wear masks, etc.

Trustee Binion motioned to make face masks optional and continue the contact tracing; no quarantines unless family is exposed; students who are exposed to COVID must wear face masks for five-days and test negative or if the parent or student refuses to wear a mask the student is must quarantine for five days and test negative of COVID or quarantine for ten days if they refuse a COVID test, and allow the district to hire additional persons to complete the contact tracing. Chairman Abrego seconded the motion. He then asked all in favor vote aye and all those not in favor vote nay; Trustee Monasterio voted nay. With a majority vote, the motion passed.

V. **EXECUTIVE SESSION (POSSIBLE ACTION) – Student Matters**

Executive Session – Section 74-206(1)(b) – To consider the evaluation of public school students, Idaho Code.

Chairman Abrego called for a motion for the purpose of allowing the board to enter into executive session. Trustee Binion motioned to enter into executive session in accordance with Idaho Code to discuss student matters, received a second from Trustee Donahue, the following resolution was presented:

RESOLUTION TO ADJOURN INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION

BE IT SO RESOLVED That the Board of Trustees of School District No. 193 recess from an open meeting into the following executive session(s) pursuant to Idaho Code, Section 74-206(1)(b) – To consider the evaluation of public-school students, Idaho Code.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That following the executive session, the Board of Trustees will convene into public session for further business or adjournment of the meeting.

Chairman Abrego directed Clerk Whitman to do a roll call vote. Vote being had on the above and foregoing resolution, and the same having been counted and found to be as follows:

NAME OF TRUSTEES

Trustee Knox Aye
Trustee Monasterio Aye
Trustee Binion Aye
Trustee Donahue..... Aye

Chairman Abrego Aye

And no less than two-thirds (2/3) of the membership in favor thereof, the Chairman declared said resolution adopted and the board recessed into executive session at 7:55 p.m.

Others present: The attending board members, Superintendent Gilbert, and Clerk Whitman.

Following a full and complete discussion of student matters, the Board reconvened into open session at 8:10 p.m. No motion needed.

- VI. **ADJOURNMENT** – All business of the Board having been completed, Chairman Abrego called for a motion to adjourn. A motion from Trustee Binion to adjourn was seconded by Trustee Donahue. Motion granted. Meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Chairman Abrego

Clerk Whitman