

Monument Academy School Board, July 15

Board rejects COVID testing; reverts to in-person only meetings

By Jackie Burhans

The newly seated Monument Academy (MA) school board met in person on July 15 and voted to reject an optional COVID-19 testing program and to hold future meetings in person only, no longer providing recordings to the public. The board also determined committee assignments and heard from the new MA Chief Operating Officer (COO) Merlin Holmes.

Board member Chris Dole attended online, and member Misty McCuen was absent. MA High School Principal Julie Seymour and board Vice President Megghan St. Aubyn recognized former board President Melanie Strop for her service.

COVID testing program rejected

In the June meeting, former Chief COO Herrera reported on a letter from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) about a free opt-in COVID testing program offered by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) to all K-12 schools. CDE said it was working on revising quarantine exemptions for schools who participate in the program or have high vaccination rates. See www.ocn.me/v21n7.htm#ma.

Board President Ryan Graham provided a synopsis of the letter and stated that MA will not support weekly testing even with the incentive of looser quarantine restrictions. He added that the state Board of Education had sent a letter to Gov. Polis saying that unrestricted in-person learning is best and that the state should trust local superintendents and school boards to determine what is best. He noted that the letter does not give MA free rein to do as it pleases.

Two regulations that impact MA come from the CDPHE Code of Regulations rule 1009-1. It must report cases and outbreaks, defined as five or more cases from separate households. Positive cases of COVID-19 will have to isolate, and close contacts will have to quarantine. Graham said MA's intent is to move forward with normal school operations and asked that parents monitor their child and keep them home if they are sick to avoid exacerbating the situation at hand.

Holmes added that MA hopes most students do in-house class instruction but there is an online option. MA will restrict option changes to a quarterly or semester basis to avoid creating an extra burden for teachers.

MA said it will not require vaccinated staff or visitors to

wear masks or provide proof of vaccination. MA will follow the quarantine rules expected to be updated sometime in August. It will not require sneeze guards or temperature scanning.

COO report

Holmes noted that he was meeting with Dr. K.C. Somers, superintendent of Lewis-Palmer School District 38, to continue to build that relationship. He reported that the administration was working on hiring teachers due to summer life changes for some staff. He worked with his administration team to brainstorm ideas, get up to speed, and discuss strengths and challenges for MA. He said that the architect



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