



## Mask conversation turns heated at SK board meeting

BY HERB SWETT  
For the Keizertimes

“The real fight should be between COVID and us.”

So said Satya Chandragiri, a board member of Salem-Keizer School Public Schools, at a school board meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 10.

His comment came at the end of a series of audience comments about masks being required in schools. Heated arguments came from people on both sides of the issue.

The first speaker from the audience was Ronnie Daniels of Sheridan, who remarked that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) was “playing politics” with the pandemic, upsetting students and even leading to a few suicides.

“Give these kids a chance,” he said.

Of the succession of speakers who followed, about half contended that masks were hindering and even endangering some children, and that the across-the-board policy from Gov. Kate Brown for state employees, which was announced just days after the meeting, was unsuitable for schools.

Speakers on the other side of the issue, including leaders of the Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality, said reasons for requiring masks included emotional and social development.

One leader of that group, Annalivia Palazzo-Angullo, raised another point, that immigration officials had frightened away many Hispanic students by accessing student records without seeking permission from Superintendent Christy Perry or General Counsel Paul Dakopolos. She commended Perry and her team for persuading the board to adopt the policy of protecting students from “unreasonable searches and seizures.”

Several from the audience accused certain board members who opposed requiring masks for all students of being white supremacists. They saw the proposal for not requiring masks for all as unfair to minorities.

Some of the comments were so inflammatory that Osvaldo Avila, the board chair, told audience members to be respectful in their comments.

The period for audience comments ran so long that the board soon voted to postpone the other agenda matters besides routine ones to its Aug. 24 meeting, which normally would be only a work session.

The board also reappointed its legal counsel, the Salem law firm Garrett Hemann Robertson as counsel, to be represented by Paul Dakopolos or in his absence Rebekah Jacobson.

Grants accepted by the board were \$986,086 from the Oregon Department of Human Services for the Youth Transition Program, which helps students with disabilities; \$912,000 from the state Department of Environmental Quality to replace 20 school buses; \$539,122 from the Oregon Department of Education, in turn from federal Every Student Success Act funds; and \$364,116 from ODE for summer school programs for migrant students.

Personnel actions included the following from the McNary High School attendance area:

- Temporary full-time contracts: Rubi Hovenden, Kennedy Elementary School; Larry Keeker, McNary.

- First-year probation full-time: Lisa Best, Maggie Flood, Kennedy; Katherine Carlgren, Janet Killam, Haley Lehman, Kammie Rivera, Cummings Elementary School; Jamie Gilman, Whiteaker Middle School; Jonathan Cortez, Morgan McQuade, Ana Solorio Diaz, McNary.

- Resignations: Karen Biben, Whiteaker; Erin Crauder, Claggett Creek Middle School; Natalee Dagan-Rothstein, Stephanie Meeks, Gubser Elementary School.

The Board will hold its August work session at the new agriculture complex of Chemeketa Community College, 45th Avenue and Fire Protection Way on the Salem Campus.



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