

### Esko masks ...

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Parents in the audience, many who have consistently advocated against the mask mandate, whispered about “just not testing” their child so that they did not threaten the removal of the mandatory masks if their child were to become sick before that time.

Fischer initially recommended that the board leave the Covid-19 protocols as they have been, saying the district has been doing a good job of keeping cases at a low and steady level in comparison with nearby districts. Some board members said that continuing to push off changing protocols was not beneficial to students or their parents.

“I truly look forward to

letting the parents decide, because the data is just not there that the way our kids wear masks is effective,” said board member Leona Johnson.

Board chairman Jerry Frederick made sure parents knew that masks will never be “banned” from the school and that they are still encouraging students to wear them. The district will continue to use strict sanitizing practices, offer Covid tests to students, and encourage vaccinations. KN95 masks have been ordered to be available for students to use.

Frederick and Fischer will continue to have administrative power when it comes to Covid-19 protocols, so if there is a spike in cases they will be able to reinstate mandatory masking without calling a special school board

meeting.

Fischer will use the district’s messaging system to inform parents about any change in policy and let parents know when the mandate expires. These guidelines were passed through a motion made by board member Steve McConnell, seconded by Leona Johnson, with Maggie Sunnarborg joining them in voting “yes.” Frederick and Todd Rengo voted “no.” Board member Jeff Salo was not present for the second meeting in a row.

In other business, the board discussed the ongoing process of exploring the potential for solar panels to be installed in the district. Fischer and Frederick attended meetings this month to discuss options with Minnesota Power. The plan they are currently working on includes panels

with a 15-year warranty that would pay for themselves in 10 years or sooner.

The district is still in the initial stages of applying for a grant that would offer them the funds to go forward with the project, so it is unclear what the next step will look like. If the district is approved for the grant, it is not until then that they would find out how much money they have been offered by the state. If they are approved for the grant but feel like the numbers do not make sense for the district, there is no commitment to the project and no money spent, except for staff time.

The board voted to move the next monthly school board meeting to 6:30 p.m. Feb. 7.

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