



January 2022

Dear Citizens of Mechanic Falls,

Last year in my Town Report, I said that “This has been a year like no other”. How could I have possibly known that this phrase would be repeated for a second year in a row. Our hopes were high that we would return to some level of normalcy this year, but it wasn’t meant to be. This last year has been far more complicated than even last year. Although we have our students back to five days-a-week, and most of our staff have been vaccinated, and many of our students are vaccinated, and recently our 5-11 year-old students have had access to a vaccine, we have faced a record number of Covid-19 positive cases this year.

RSU 16 has been following both DOE and CDC guidelines in order to keep our students safe and in the classroom five days a week. We have offered pool testing to our students and staff to keep a consistent pulse on our potential Covid-19 infection status throughout the district. Those who have chosen to participate are given an exemption from quarantine if they are determined to be a close contact to a positive case. Although pool testing has been criticized by some, the process has been successful and has allowed RSU 16 to keep its educational doors open for most of the school year so far. As more students and staff choose to access the vaccinations, pool testing and adhere to the Covid-19 safety protocols, the better chance we have at getting back to normal sooner rather than later.

This year has been very emotional and stressful for all of us. We try to apply the guidelines with fidelity, but some guidelines we follow are thought to defy logic. We agree, even for us, that some of the guidelines may not seem logical, but our professional responsibility is to still follow them because the CDC and DOE are the governing authorities. RSU 16 staff have done the very best they could under the ever shifting environment that is Covid-19. Our school nurses have been and will continue to be of particular importance for the remainder of this pandemic. They are not unsung heroes, they are simply heroes in my view and schools could not have remained open without them. If you have an opportunity to thank a school nurse, or any nurse for that matter, do so in the most kind, caring and compassionate show of gratitude you can muster. I know they deserve it, but they will truly appreciate it.

As we go into next year and look forward to the remainder of this school year, I hope that next year's Town Report can be more about education, learning and budgeting, and not Covid, Covid, Covid! Have a great new year.

Sincerely,

Kenneth J. Healey
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