



Lynn Dambruch, M.Ed.  
Superintendent

## Homecoming Dance Investigation

Pilgrim High School held their Homecoming on November 6, 2021. The School Department was notified on Monday, November 8, 2021, by ABC6 that there was a video circulating, which was taken by the Warwick Beacon and then shared on Facebook (Beacon Video [Link](#)). The video shows a large crowd of students, faculty, and staff not complying with RIDOH, RIDE and district protocols and policies; specifically by being indoors and not wearing masks. The video also shows students being served food in a buffet line.

In the following days, several positive COVID cases came out of Pilgrim which prompted the RIDOH to become involved. Another video from Instagram (Instagram Video [Link](#)), taken by a student at the dance, shows the tent to be closed on 3 sides, students were crowded, no masks, and yelling/singing. As of today (December 8) the total tally is up to 75 cases, with 45 cases being tied directly to the dance by RIDOH. [REDACTED] was directed to report to the Gorton Administration Building on Monday, November 22, 2021, to discuss the alleged non-compliance issues at the dance.

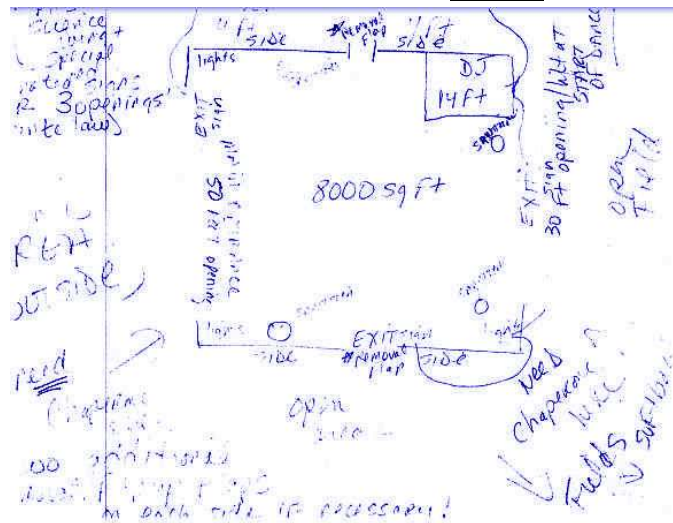
[REDACTED] attended the meeting with [REDACTED] Union President, Darlene Netcoh, and the WTU attorney, Mr. Chris Lambert. Also in attendance were Andrew Henneous, WSC attorney; Dr. Jeff Taylor, Director of Technology; Cathy Bonang, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent; William McCaffrey, Assistant Superintendent; Kimberly Ruggieri, Director of Human Resources and Lynn Dambruch, Superintendent. The union requested that the Administration state their case, they would then caucus and return with statements. The Warwick Beacon video was played as well as an Instagram video from inside the tent. Additionally, surveillance video from inside of the Gym Foyer was shown, which included a small clip of the total 3 hours and 37 minutes of footage of unmasked students indoors. Ms. Dambruch and Mr. Henneous discussed the exhibits that were distributed. Specifically discussed were non compliance of directives; the dance logistics; testing requirements; dancing directives; the tent requirements; and dancing protocols.

[REDACTED] was also interviewed on November 22, 2021, regarding the event, followed by [REDACTED] on November 23, 2021, and [REDACTED] on December 2, 2021. All testimony is being included in this report.

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Areas of concern that were identified:

1. Repeated written and verbal directives from Mr. McCaffrey and RIDOH/RIDE Playbook were not followed (Exhibit 1 & Exhibit 2).
2. Dance Logistics
  - a. Building Use Form stated inside was requested for bathroom use only, no food was indicated but an indoor buffet was seen in the Beacon video (Exhibit 3).
  - b. The plan submitted to RIDE (Exhibit 4) conflicted with actual events of the dance - stated it was an outdoor event with social distanced pods. Students were observed to be eating inside, no pods for dancing, or assigned seating per state requirements. Map of tent submitted by [REDACTED]:



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- c. Student attendance - Building Use Form stated 400 students, RIDE plan stated 300 students, yet ticket sales totaled 613. RIDE/RIDOH limit is 300 students with food served outside or 200 with food served indoors. Attendance numbers were verified by two witnesses.

## Pre-Event Planning: Capacity of Venues and Spaces

It is recommended schools utilize venues with **robust circulation and ventilation systems.**

Indoor capacity limits are not flexible at this time. Outdoor capacity may be expanded (please refer to general events guidance for DBR approval process). Schools looking to expand the capacity limits, must submit their plan for approval 30 days in advance to DBR at: [dbr.ri.gov/covid/plans/plans.php](http://dbr.ri.gov/covid/plans/plans.php).

	Through May 14	May 15 – June 3	June 4 Forward
Prom event with food served	100 Indoors 200 Outdoors	150 Indoors 250 Outdoors	200 Indoors 300 Outdoors
Prom or alternative event without food	250 Indoors 500 Outdoors	500 Indoors 1,000 Outdoors	500 Indoors 2,000 Outdoors

\*These numbers are based on the assumption that the percent of Rhode Islanders being vaccinated continues to increase.

\*These numbers include the total number of individuals in attendance. Regardless of capacity, dancing must follow catered events guidance. Proms with food must follow catered events capacity and proms without food or alternative spring events may follow Venues of Assembly capacity.

- d. Mask requirement - students were seen on surveillance cameras entering the gymnasium lobby in tight groups and unmasked.



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- e. Food was served indoors despite no documentation of food being served indoors on the Building Use Form or the RIDE plan. Servers were not masked. Students were not seated in pods while eating as directed in the Playbook.



## **Prom Day Management: Dining**

### **Requirements for Dining at Prom:**

- A licensed caterer must be always on site where meals are served.
- Table capacity must be aligned with Catered Events guidance.
- Tables must be at least 6 feet apart, from the center point of the body of each adjacent seated person.
- Assigned seating and seating plan are required.
- The meal must be individually served and cannot be a buffet or self-service type meal.



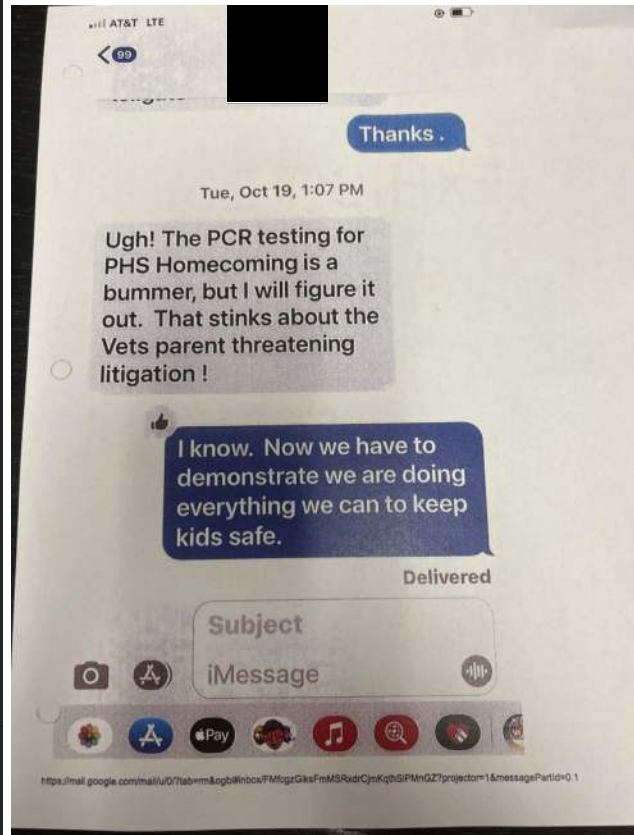
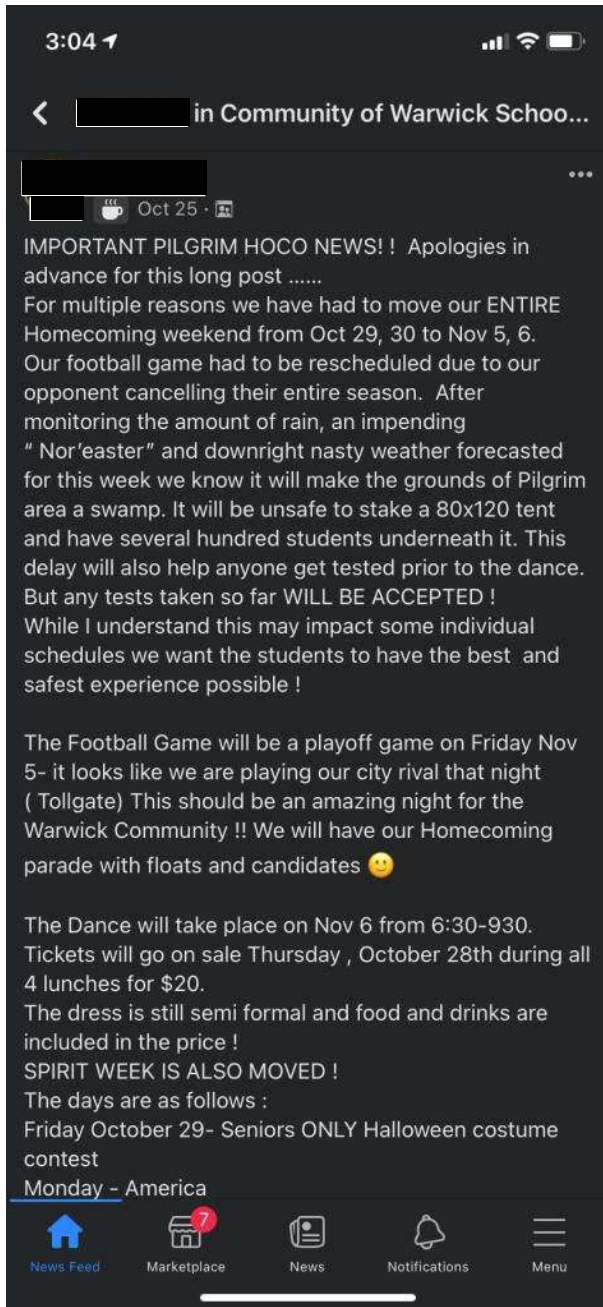
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- f. School Committee mask policy and the Governor's Executive Order were not followed inside the gymnasium lobby or inside the tent. Directives were given for students to be masked. Surveillance video shows the majority of students and chaperones in violation of these policies.



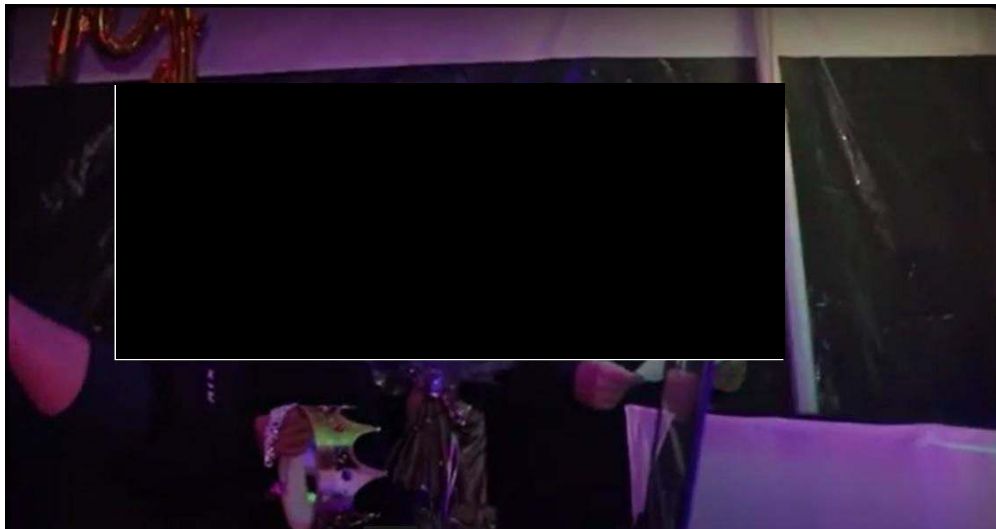
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3. PCR requirements - Mr. McCaffrey gave a directive that PCR tests were a requirement 72 hours in advance. There was a post on Facebook stating that “any tests taken so far would be accepted”. (Exhibit 2)



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4. 80' x 100' Ballroom Tent - A directive was given for 2 sides to be up to allow for ventilation (Exhibit 2). Those interviewed and pictures taken at the event indicated that 3 sides were down at all times. The shortest side had a 10'-12' opening against the Pilgrim building. No cross ventilation was possible. Video evidence shows [REDACTED] standing in front of the far side of the tent with the DJ. When interviewed, [REDACTED] stated that the side behind the DJ was open. All others interviewed confirmed that the second side was never open. The picture below shows the side of the tent behind the DJ. It is my finding that although an "outdoor" tent was used, the sides being down and the lack of ventilation created the environment equivalent of an indoor event. It was no longer considered "outdoors".



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5. Dancing - Playbook (Exhibit 1) and directives from Mr. McCaffrey stated that students were to be masked while dancing and to remain in pods. ██████ stated in ██████ RIDE plan (Exhibit 4) “Students will socialize in pods and can only closely interact with those in their pods”. Video evidence shows no pods, masks, or social distancing.



It is our findings that Pilgrim High School hosted a dance that did not meet any of the policies, protocols, directives, etc. issued from the School Department, State, etc. These policies, protocols and directives were provided to ██████ and ██████ in advance of Homecoming planning and were, in many cases, re-iterated multiple times as documented. They were clear and unambiguous. It is further our finding that this action has caused a number of consequences including:

- 1100+ students missed seven days of in-person instruction due to the inability to contact trace the event since protocols were not followed.
- Approximately 45 positive student cases and 6 positive staff member cases have been tied to the dance by RIDOH.
- Special Education students will be entitled to compensatory time that could not be provided virtually.
- Several RIDOH representatives dedicated hours of their time to manage an unnecessary situation, including special mitigation meetings with both the school's and district's administration. They also had to hold a testing event at Pilgrim High School.
- Central Administration was required to dedicate countless hours to address the events related to this Homecoming and this diverted time away from educating students and administering the District.
- Local and national news outlets from across the country picked up the story, bringing negative publicity to the District and the City.





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- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]