

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Utilization Committee met in Special Session on Thursday, April 5, 2018 at 4:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, Connecticut.

Committee members present: Mr. Augur, Dr. Friedrich and Dr. Taylor
Committee members absent: Mrs. Boyle, Mr. Hicks and Mr. Yamartino
Other Board members present: Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore and Mrs. Petrella
Administration present: Mr. Sadinsky, Principal of Strong School

Mr. Augur called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

Mr. Augur noted that there will be an information session on approximately April 25, 2018.

Approval of Agenda

Dr. Friedrich made a motion to approve to the agenda, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve the agenda, as presented.

Dr. Taylor asked to add discussion about the utilization options, and particularly the flyer information, to the agenda and Mr. Augur suggested that be handled under Information Session.

Mrs. Geraci asked to move item 6, Safety/Security, in front of item 5. Dr. Friedrich and Dr. Taylor agreed.

In favor of approving the agenda, as amended: Mr. Augur, Dr. Friedrich and Dr. Taylor. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes - February 22, 2018 and March 6, 2018

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve to the minutes of February 22, 2018, as submitted.

In favor of approving the minutes of February 22, 2018, as submitted: Mr. Augur, Dr. Friedrich and Dr. Taylor. Motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve to the minutes of March 6, 2018, as submitted.

In favor of approving the minutes of March 6, 2018, as submitted: Mr. Augur, Dr. Friedrich and Dr. Taylor. Motion passed unanimously

Safety/Security

Mr. Augur suggested that the Committee's thoughts be captured on the white board and that they try to lay out near-, medium- and longer-term goals. Mrs. Neubig had provided some additional information for the Committee members and he also had some additional information about the window film.

Reviewing items that had already been discussed, Mr. Augur mentioned film, SRO, vestibules, cameras and signage. He noted that quotes are available for some things, but other things are just estimates or research still needs to be done. He also mentioned the fully bulletproof "teepees" which can be used during the school day, but it fits the entire classroom load. He has not researched the cost for these, but has heard they are around \$20,000.

Dr. Taylor asked to group the items into structural and personnel and it was agreed to categorize the items into bricks and mortar, physical and personnel. He also mentioned the armed security guards and other mental health services.

Mrs. Petrella mentioned metal detectors and Mrs. Geraci mentioned that the kiosks can also be utilized without the vestibules. Mr. Moore suggested fencing around playgrounds and Mrs. Geraci mentioned that Wallingford is hiring playground aides. Dr. Friedrich also mentioned hardening the interior doors. Mr. Moore also felt training is an issue. Mr. Augur also brought up training when a key member is not present.

Mr. Augur then began going through the list and assigning time frames and cost. Some signage is being done now and more will be done in the short term. Training is also starting now and will be ongoing in the short term. Some updates of cameras are being done now, but more may be needed. Dr. Friedrich reminded everyone that there is IT infrastructure that needs to support those cameras. There was some discussion about using Google to provide these types of things.

Mr. Augur spoke to someone in law enforcement and they commented about the window film preventing entry and that it buys time to get away from an aggressor. His priority would be about hardening the buildings first, with window film and doors.

Mrs. Petrella felt that some updates to the entryways were happening now, with the vestibules in the future. Mr. Moore reminded everyone that the vestibule construction would be eligible for State financing, if built to code. Dr. Friedrich stated that, once the budget is passed, he feels that the money should be spent on the film. Mr. Moore stated that that was based on this year's budget and diverting other capital projects. Mr. Augur suggested that they make two lists: one of what they could do and one of what they choose to do. Dr. Friedrich suggested that the film be a short-term item.

Mr. Augur stated that it came up at the Finance Committee to make sure that it is all thought through and decisions are fully informed.

Running through the list of what could be done, Mr. Augur felt that hardening the doors was a medium term project because the adjacent windows also need to be dealt with as well. Dr. Friedrich felt that it needed to be short term. Mr. Moore stated that you could begin studying what has to be done and get small things done in the short term. Dr. Friedrich also suggested looking at film on internal windows in the medium term. They then changed the term to "classroom hardening" rather than "door hardening." Mrs. Geraci also mentioned panic buttons as a possibility. Mr. Augur also stated that there will then need to be training on procedures of what happens once that door is shut.

Other mental health services would need to be studied and would be medium term. Playground aides would seem to be short term as would the SRO. Other armed presence seems to be problematic, but Dr. Taylor felt that would be medium term. Mrs. Petrella would like to go through and see what the more significant areas are before prioritizing the list first.

Dr. Taylor had suggested that the Committee think about some of the things that they would be trying to prevent or are of most concern. Mrs. Petrella felt that the main entryways and how to prevent access into the schools (both people who belong in the building and those who don't) are important. Mrs. Petrella felt that mental health is another whole category, but that falls more to the administration. Dr. Taylor disagreed and felt that this Committee could prioritize mental health as a high priority. Dr. Taylor felt that people within the schools having a gun is not as big an issue as people outside of the school bringing a weapon in. Mr. Augur reminded everyone that it may not be a problem here right now, but access to weapons is available. Again, protecting the playground was mentioned.

Mrs. Petrella felt that they could focus just on access, both weapons and people, and a lot of decisions can be made immediately. She believes that the bigger issues are the students that can easily get into the building with weapons or someone from the outside trying to gain access with weapons. Once entry is gained, there needs to be locks and procedures. She wasn't sure that window film would be a top priority and felt that accessways are more immediate.

Dr. Taylor added response if an event should happen. Mr. Augur also mentioned addressing elements of safety for students and employees in the full district, not just the high school. Mrs. Petrella does feel that the issues at the middle school and high school are different than at the elementary level. Mr. Moore suggested a subcategory for social media which is how threats have been discovered. Mrs. Geraci also felt that assessment of a threat is important and Dr. Friedrich added that threat identification is important as well.

Mr. Augur reminded the members that they will not be able to prevent all harm, but hope to create an environment in which no harm happens. Dr. Friedrich felt that improper and illegal entry of weapons is a key problem, whether by a person with access or an outsider. Mr. Augur suggested that that would mean that all students, every day, would have to go through a checkpoint and he didn't feel that was pragmatic. Dr. Taylor agreed that a metal protector would not prevent an active shooter from coming in. Dr. Friedrich stated that if there are metal detectors, there are also ways to confine people. The goal would be to have detection and containment. Dr. Friedrich felt that would make all of the schools look like prisons, but that would be what it takes to keep weapons out of the school. Mr. Augur agreed to label that a high priority and discussions of how to accomplish that will be later.

Dr. Friedrich didn't feel he knew enough about past school instances to make good decisions about what to do in the future. The goal would be to protect the children and to make the parents feel that their children are safe. Mr. Augur mentioned that just because an event hasn't happened doesn't mean they shouldn't be thinking about it.

Mrs. Petrella believes that underlying everything that has happened are mental health issues and that should be a high priority. She does not feel comfortable recommending what should be done as far as mental health, but that that should come from the administration. Dr. Friedrich commented that a large part of that climate is outside of school and on social media. Mr. Moore explained that the mental health

that they can deal with is within the school system. Dr. Friedrich mentioned bullying and Mrs. Petrella felt that the way the students reacted to the last incident at the school sent a message to all of the students. She also believes that having a policeman at the door of the school may deter someone from considering coming in. Mr. Augur emphasized the importance of keeping these issues front and center and felt that training would help with that. Dr. Taylor agreed that early recognition and prevention are key. He also believes that it's important to help students that are in need.

As far as response, Mrs. Petrella looks at what comes from within the school and feels that that is an administrative function. Dr. Taylor felt that the response also ties into whether the Board wants an SRO and armed guards. Dr. Friedrich felt that they were trivializing the SRO because the point of an SRO is not to have somebody carrying a gun, it's more to have someone with the authority of a policeman. The SRO also has a mental health function, stabilizes the social environment and makes students feel more secure. Dr. Taylor stated that he has not seen clear evidence that SROs provide significant mental health assistance to the school district and provide increased security. Dr. Friedrich pointed out that not all SROs are equal and it would need to be the right person. Mr. Augur reminded everyone that no one knows how someone will react when faced with an armed intruder. Mr. Moore stated that if someone is in the school with a gun, you would need people with a gun to come deal with it.

Dr. Taylor felt they should break it out for the Board about whether there should be armed people in the schools or not. He feels it is a philosophical issue and should be an up or down vote. Dr. Friedrich felt that there were two issues: an SRO and armed guards in the schools. Dr. Taylor felt that the primary function of an SRO was to combat an active shooter response, acknowledging that the SRO does have other functions.

Mr. Moore felt that the Board should meet with an SRO to get more information. Dr. Friedrich felt that the decision to have an SRO far preceded the Board's concern about security though it had been voted down. Mrs. Petrella has seen SROs more as teachers in school districts than armed guards. The students react totally different to police officers than they do to teachers. Mr. Augur felt that people, other than law enforcement officers, could address those other things. Mrs. Petrella felt that it sets a whole different tone to have a policeman present.

Mrs. Petrella felt that all of the entries need to be as protected as possible as well as the windows and training for staff and kids. She would want at an SRO at the high school and unarmed perimeter security people at all of the schools. Dr. Friedrich would not exclude an SRO because he carries a gun and he resists Mr. Augur putting armed as the first decision. Mr. Augur reminded everyone that the SRO was voted down in 2015 and was not in this year's original budget proposal. It was only put on the table in the wake of the Parkland shooting and he believes that was an opportunistic maneuver. Dr. Friedrich felt it is a function of the Board to revisit bad decisions and the Board had failed to identify to Dr. Veronesi that that was a priority.

Talking about Newtown in particular, Mrs. Petrella felt that would be addressed by shoring up the access points and the person may have reconsidered if they had seen a security guard in uniform. Mr. Moore explained that his niece had two kids in Sandy Hook during the shooting, one hid in a closet and a teacher locked the door to prevent the intruder from coming in the room for the other one. The first responder to the intruder was the principal who ran out of her office and got killed. Mr. Moore felt that if someone is going to deal with an intruder, they should be able to do so and he would favor an SRO in that case. He agreed that they cannot be everywhere and there is no way to prevent every single thing from happening.

He felt that more lives would have been saved in Newtown if there had been a different person in the principal's office. Mr. Augur summarized that that sounds like armed at all schools and not one SRO at the high school. Mr. Moore agreed, but felt that it also becomes an issue of afford ability.

Mrs. Petrella also commented they had received quite a bit of feedback from elementary parents that do not want an armed presence at the elementary schools, but she didn't think the middle school and high school parents would feel that way.

Mr. Augur gave a scenario of an incident at Brewster and how the SRO would respond from the high school and/or the resident state trooper from Durham or Middle field and felt that the response time wouldn't be great. Mrs. Petrella felt that the security person around the building might have picked something up before it happened.

Mr. Augur felt that the goal should be to show the full Board what they are wrestling with and ask for more input. Mrs. Petrella felt that they needed to look at the recommendations that Dr. Veronesi has received from professionals and put more priority on them. Again, Mr. Augur reiterated that the gentleman he spoke with in law enforcement would not put emphasis on an SRO, but would harden the buildings. Dr. Friedrich would like to hear the information directly from the experts.

Everyone generally agreed that window film is a knee-jerk reaction and they haven't heard of many instances of someone shooting out the windows to gain access to the building. They felt that it was a very expensive option. Mr. Augur also wondered how long the window film lasts and stated that \$140,000 per year for an SRO is also very expensive. He summarized that 10 years of an SRO would be \$1.4 million where 10 years of window film would be \$225,000.

Information Session

Mr. Augur stated that the information session will be held on approximately April 25th. Mr. Moore stated that the survey will have gone out, but no general response to that. Dr. Taylor reminded everyone that their motion was to have the survey out by April 13th and he felt that some responses will have come back by that time. The question would be if two weeks was enough time for people to respond. Mr. Moore reminded them that school vacation falls within that time frame. Dr. Taylor felt it was important not to draw any incorrect conclusions.

Mr. Moore explained that the survey needs to go to print by next Friday in order to get it out by the 13th. He felt that the survey may not be great, but it will do enough. The question is will it do enough by April 25th so that it would be part of what is shared that night. Dr. Taylor felt it might not be and it can be presented at a later Board meeting.

Mrs. Petrella would like to know if the person filling out the survey has children in the schools or not and which school(s) they attend. She stated that she is not in favor of eighth grade at the high school, but also felt that it sounds like a HOT school needs a preK-4 or preK-5 configuration. She is now thinking that Option A is maybe not what the future programming requires.

Mr. Augur felt that the full number of options could be described at the information session and how the committee got that down to the three. Dr. Taylor would be more in favor of entertaining an additional option of keeping eighth grade out of the high school, but providing a preK-5 environment. Mr. Moore

felt it would work to say “other” and people could write in their option and it was generally agreed to do that.

Mrs. Petrella also felt that a school can have classes that loop and don’t loop, whether it is a HOT school or not. She does feel that integration can still happen without looping and the other programs can still exist.

As for the actual information session, Mr. Moore felt that some pictures should be shown and the many options should be reviewed. Mr. Moore suggested Mr. Augur and Dr. Taylor do a PowerPoint presentation, but Dr. Friedrich suggested posters instead of a slide show. Mr. Augur thought there should be introductory comments, but then stations for the public to review.

Mrs. Petrella suggested showing each option and including what the schools are and the cost on the posters. Dr. Friedrich felt that the PowerPoint could review the main issues and the Board members could be at the various stations to answer questions. Mr. Augur felt it was important to show what was considered in the past, including the \$32 million project.

Mr. Augur suggested that the first 30 minutes of the information session will be for the public to review the posters, followed by a 15-minute PowerPoint presentation. Dr. Taylor suggested manning the poster stations after the PowerPoint to allow for any additional questions. It was also agreed to have the architects attend to answer any detailed questions. Dr. Friedrich also concluded that it has become clear that the results of the survey will not be part of this information session. Mr. Augur will also verify that a note encouraging people to wait until after the information session to fill out their survey is included on the survey.

It was agreed to set the time for the information session to begin at 7:00 PM, with the PowerPoint presentation being at 7:30 PM.

Public Comment

Maya Liss, from Durham, felt that the community didn’t understand how much it would cost to keep John Lyman School open and that should be included on a poster. She also felt that the Strong gym might not be the right place and they could hold off a week or two to have the appropriate location. Mrs. Liss also believes it would be beneficial to look for a third option and also believes that eighth grade at the high school is not going to fly. She suggested swapping the schools that the contemporary and integrated day programs are located at and wondered if a K-5 ID program could fit at Brewster and a K-5 contemporary program at Memorial. She also stated that she is very comfortable with her kids being in portables if that would allow for a K-5 or preK-5 configuration. As for security, Mrs. Liss thinks that armed guards are a terrible idea and she would not be comfortable with her children going to school with people with guns, especially if they are not police officers. She feels that the District does a great job keeping her children safe and doesn’t really see a need for the District to spend a lot more on security measures. She would be more comfortable spending money on social workers or school psychologists.

John Giammatteo, from Middlefield, has two kids at Lyman and asked how it was decided to implement changes in 2020. He felt that the eighth grade crunch would be less if the District waited until 2021-2022. He asked what the rush is all of a sudden. As a Middlefield resident, he would not be comfortable with the Town buying John Lyman School with a bad roof and a bad boiler. As for the information session, he

thought it might make sense to ask people to wait until after the session to reply to the survey. He also liked the idea of knowing where the responses come from, but did not want to bias the information as to integrated day and contemporary. In terms of security, he is shocked that the Board has not heard from experts yet. Very few of the options are standalone. He would also look to outside sources, such as Middlesex Hospital, to see how they handle these issues.

Kim Johansen has children in the high school, elementary school and preschool. She feels that the film would be an added protective for the entire school body. She does feel that if the front doors are reinforced, an intruder will find a second option. She does not believe that armed guards belong in the buildings. Sandy Hook had the buzzer system installed and the shooting still happened. Mrs. Johansen is a social worker and the child of a state trooper. She feels that an SRO is about their relationship with the children. She did feel that the last security guard at the high school had no relationship with the youth.

Elaine Diaz agreed with Mrs. Johansen and felt that having someone in the building that isn't armed is a huge benefit because they can build relationships. Mrs. Diaz has watched YouTube videos of kids being trained to address an aggressor and she felt that was very important.

Sarah Jane Daley, from Durham, felt that \$400,000 for safety is a lot. She works in mental health and deals with the risk of violence every day. She asked the committee to think about what they can control and what they can't control. She stressed that you need to think about means restriction, film being one of those. It will buy time to reduce the means of harm. She also stated that she works in collaboration with armed professionals and the relationships are what is the most important. She felt there are more cost-effective ways to develop a relationship than having a gun in their hands. She felt that they should be working to create love, nurturing and relationships. Regarding the survey and information session, Mrs. Daley has also noted cognitive biases and wondered if the survey has been reviewed with regard to that. She also does not believe everyone is educated enough about all of the options and felt that maybe the survey should be held off until after the information session. Mrs. Daley then asked what would happen to the relationships that are built when the SRO actually uses his weapon.

Rick Lanning apologized for his comments and explained that he is a little aggravated with the entire situation. He mentioned that he researched and found that the only time windows were shot out was in the Columbine shooting. He does believe in the film on the windows to buy additional time. He also believes that social media should not be limited to the kids at all. He also believes that every threat should be handled the same way. He feels that outside security at Memorial and Brewster is a joke. He finds kids having recess in the parking lots, blocked by a few cones. At Brewster, they are out on the corner of the playground with just a couple of teachers. He believes that mental health can be handled with relationships, but once the threat is present, an armed guard is the only thing that will stop it. In response to the question about what would happen if the SRO pulled his weapon, Mr. Lanning hoped that the kids would be thankful that they are alive. He agrees that police officers command 100 percent more respect than an armed guard. Mr. Lanning would also like to know why it would take two months to implement security guards.

Krista Lobo, from Durham, has children at Memorial and Lyman. She reported that a friend works at Assa Abloy and she stated that school doors can cost an average of \$500 to \$1,000 per door. Reps from Assa Abloy would be willing to come assess the schools and give a quote for the doors and other security issues. She, too, feels it would be wise to gather more information from experts in the field. Mrs. Lobo stated that she went to a high school with approximately 900 students and they had an SRO. He was in

school every day and knew every student by first name. She had no idea if he was armed or not, but he had the relationships and respect of almost every single student and parents. She also stated that her brother is a police officer and has had special training on intruders in schools. Mrs. Lobo felt that times have changed since the SRO was voted down in 2015. As for the information session, she agreed that the information about John Lyman should be broken down and costs should be shown.

Melissa Booth, from Durham, felt that whatever is implemented as far as safety, it should be done across the board. She felt that putting an SRO in one building would be prioritizing those students over the other students. She stated that there are 531 students in the high school now, but there will only be 409 students in six years. She feels that \$140,000 is a lot of money to spend on one thing and it will be hard to get rid of once it's here. She does not want guns in the schools, but would like to see the film and vestibules done, but acknowledges it would be a lot of money. She also mentioned that people aren't happy that there are no details about how the \$400,000 for security will be spent and thought that they may vote down the budget. She also mentioned that there is a \$25,000 social worker being added to the high school next year. In terms of the info session, Mrs. Booth thought that some survey responses may be submitted before all of the information is provided. Mrs. Booth looked at some old utilization studies and thought that Memorial can hold about 400 students and felt that the contemporary program could fit at Memorial and integrated could move to Brewster. She also thought it might work to put the preschool at the high school and offer hands-on training to the high school students. She commented that there is so much room at the high school that is not being utilized. Her husband also asked her to bring up non-classroom space as well. She also asked what would happen if the Board decides on a plan and then it doesn't pass referendum.

Another member of the public stated that her school has daycare and it works really well.

Adjournment

Dr. Taylor made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to adjourn the meeting.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mr. Augur, Dr. Friedrich and Dr. Taylor. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:08 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First