

SPECIAL TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL SAFETY MEETING MINUTES

CITY OF DANBURY

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2013 AT 7:00 PM

Administrative Center – 63 Beaver Brook Road, Danbury, CT

Present: K. Thompson, Co-Chairperson; K. Molinaro, Co-Chairperson; E. Alberts, A. Fluskey-Lattin, G. Bocaccio, M. Schork, J. Carmen, J. Knapp, R. SanSeverino, C. Garnett, D. Moore, D. Wiedl, Members;

Mayor Mark Boughton (7:42 p.m.)

Dr. S. Pascarella, J. Martino, R. Jalbert, A. Mead, Danbury Public Schools

P. Estefan, Director of Civil Preparedness; Lt. J. Browne, Danbury Police Department

Absent: E. Daly, R. Pietrafesa

CALL TO ORDER

The Co-Chairperson, Kathy Molinaro, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

MISSION STATEMENT

K. Thompson read a draft of the Mission Statement. The goal is for the Task Force to present recommendations to the Board at their first meeting in April of 2013. She asked the members of the Task Force for their comments and suggestions about the Statement, and there being none, the following Mission Statement has been adopted:

The mission of the Special Task Force is to consult with local officials, community members, and School Safety industry experts to assess the District's existing Safety Plans, and to develop deliverable recommendations that may enhance those Safety Plans, with a deliberate focus on protection, prompt intervention, and prevention.

PRESENTATION OF CURRENT STATE OF BUILDING SECURITY AND STAFFING

J. Martino and R. Jalbert

K. Thompson turned the meeting over to J. Martino and R. Jalbert. J. Martino started by speaking about where Danbury was prior to December 14, 2012.

- Danbury currently has buzzing systems in every one of our schools, except for DHS;
- Danbury High School has two resource officers and two private duty policemen and six

safety advocates; Rogers Park Middle School and Broadview Middle School both have one resource officer and one safety advocate;

- Most of the schools have non-duplicating keys;
- We have sign-in procedures in our schools;
- Some of the schools have card access systems installed;
- We currently have surveillance cameras in many of our schools;
- All of our school personnel do wear ID badges.

R. Jalbert spoke about what we have done after December 14 and what we plan to do:

- We reviewed all of our existing facilities;
- We have reissued about 200 keys to insure that teachers have keys to their classrooms;
- We have had several work orders for repairing or replacing blinds, doors, door hardware, locks and windows to insure that they work properly;
- At King Street Primary, we ordered five sets of mullion strips, which is door hardware to secure double sets of doors;
- We have collaborated with the Danbury Police Department to insure that all two-way radios are functioning properly;
- We have been collaborating with the Fire Department to see if we can put in a gate to limit access to parts of the building, i.e., the gym wing at DHS;
- We are also in the process of adding a security fee for outside rentals so there will be security after hours when a function is taking place;
- We have ordered approximately 80 additional two-way radios;
- With lockdown drills, we have made a point of collaborating with the Danbury Police Department and the Danbury Fire Department; he thanks Lt. Browne for being a tremendous help and J. Russell from the Danbury Fire Department as well;
- We have had unarmed security guards put in place at the elementary schools until we can hire safety advocates;
- We have interviewed several candidates for safety advocates for the elementary schools;
- We have ordered a new ID printer to ensure that all staff wear IDs, which will make it a simpler process if they lose their existing ID; J. Martino showed the badge that the subs will be wearing and also the badge that visitors will be wearing.

R. Jalbert said that in addition to the above items, they have been doing a lot of investigation as to what steps should be taken, what are our weaknesses, and what can we use.

In that light, we have met with United Alarm and are looking at panic buttons, which are approximately \$100 each. We are considering installing two panic buttons at each of the elementary schools and a few more at some of the larger schools.

J. Martino mentioned that we have card access at a few of our schools, but there are still some schools that do not. It is estimated it would cost about \$2,000 per door, and an estimate to complete the job

would be approximately \$150,000. That would allow us to control access. J. Martino said it would also allow our Police Department, Fire Department, and whomever we chose to gain access without a key, which would allow them a quicker access into the building.

R. Jalbert said we have several schools with an Assa secured key system. We still have six schools that do not have that system, and we would like to work on having the remaining schools set up.

Also there are twelve or thirteen schools that do not have classroom security locks. That is a double locking door where you can lock the door from the inside. They cost \$500 per cylinder and to complete the job would cost approximately \$300,000.

We are also looking into additional video surveillance cameras. Each camera would be \$600 to \$800 dollars in addition to a fee of \$3,000 for each DVR.

We have also investigated vandal-proof glass and the approximate cost for that is \$12.50 per square foot. A typical set of entrance doors would cost about \$1,500.

We are also looking into modifications of vestibules, almost forcing the visitors to go to the Main Office so they cannot gain access to various parts of the school.

K. Thompson said that a lot of what is being identified is obvious. She asked how the Task Force can assess what would be a good value to invest in and how they would go about picking and choosing among the options that will be effective and efficient. R. Jalbert said in addition to all of the above, he and J. Martino have been working with P. Estefan to have a security consultant come in for a professional assessment. In 2006, The City had an outside consultant come in, and a lot has been done since that time, so we are not starting from scratch. J. Martino reports that Marsh and Kroll partnered with the original plan, and Marsh's portion has been sold off, but Kroll is still in existence. P. Estefan, J. Martino and R. Jalbert had a conference call with them, and the plan is currently at their facility for review. J. Martino said the goal is to do a re-assessment on it and obtain a price. The cost from Kroll, if we were starting from nothing, would be approximately \$275,000. P. Estefan recommends having Kroll back to do the re-assessment. He also said that in the past six or seven years, technology has changed, and it will enable us to take the new technology and put it into play, so when we spend the money, we will have a product that is new and expandable. K. Molinaro asked how long the process would take. J. Martino said the from-scratch review was about three months, and since some of that work has already been done, hopefully it will be a much tighter timeframe.

K. Thompson said the next step is to determine whether we can come to an agreement with the consultant on the cost and timeframe. P. Estefan said the consultant was going to revise his cost estimate and get back to us. P. Estefan reported that in 2006 when the work was completed, he and others provided training with the principals and senior staff of each school. His recommendation would be that we do this training so everyone knows how all the new equipment will work.

J. Martino reported that all the schools conduct lockdown drills, and it is verified with central office. They are done every other month and the fire drills are performed every month.

REVIEW OF BUILDING SAFETY PLANS AND POLICE DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS - G. Bocaccio and M. Schork

K. Thompson introduced G. Bocaccio, principal of DHS, and M. Schork, principal of South Street School to talk about administrative reaction and person response and drills and how we respond to it. They have canvassed the folks in the administrators' union and have looked at the police department school safety procedures, and they are here to talk to us about that.

M. Schork said they had an opportunity to speak to their colleagues and have received feedback with regard to recommendations and projections. One of the issues was the need for constant communication. Also, they want to revisit what they did in 2006 and create a level of uniformity with the plans with regard to substitute teachers, teachers that travel between buildings, people that may be administrators, but not building administrators, having knowledge of procedural steps that are site specific.

K. Thompson asked if the feedback has been good among the administrators with regard to having the security guards and safety advocates in the buildings. G. Bocaccio said he is aware that some are concerned about the training these individuals have or do not have. He said they constantly talk about consistency of language. When it comes down to lockdown drills, consistency of procedural things because there are so many people that do float across many different schools, and then there are some recommendations that are site specific, regarding panic buttons, glass doors, locks, etc. R. SanSeverino said that his observation is that the security guard that is at the school seems distracted, and he feels much safer when he sees the police. A. Fluskey-Lattin asked for clarification in the definition of safety advocate and security guard. Safety advocates and security guards do not carry weapons. K. Thompson said the intent is to phase out the private security guards and put in safety advocates. J. Martino said they are in the process of interviewing people and that some of the applicants are retired police with extensive backgrounds. J. Knapp asked if there is a timeframe as to when we will be moving away from the security guards and going forward with safety advocates. Dr. Pascarella replied by saying that the applicants are screened and they have to be trained. We have interviewed 15 and three have been accepted, and we have three or four more that should accept. A. Fluskey-Lattin asked if the issue of having a safety guard and armed police in our elementary schools be addressed and a recommendation be made to the Board of Education. She feels this is a major concern among parents. K. Thompson said that the Institute of Justice in 2011 put out a paper on whether or not armed officers in schools is a good idea. She feels that the Task Force might not be able to make a recommendation one way or another. The Board will have to decide how they want to resolve it. Her goal for this Task Force is to try to pool the resources together and identify what the resources are and who we can talk to and have the Board ultimately make that kind of choice.

Mayor Boughton said there are three camps, the pros, the cons, and is it even possible. He said the reality is the amount of manpower it would require, forgetting about costs, with the current system set up by the State of Connecticut, would not be possible. The State would have to make some drastic changes in the certification and training processes. The Mayor said he is working on some CCM recommendations that will be presented to the legislature next month. One of them is that we create a State clearinghouse for school security so we will have a place to go to find out what the best practice is, where is the research on this, how has it been determined, what have they done in other states. Mayor Boughton said that 90% of the school districts in the State have some form of safety advocate. We are going to ask the legislature to create an academy where these individuals will go. They will all be trained the same way in the State, from emergency management to first aid to police protocol procedures to lockdown procedures and school procedures. The Mayor said that Danbury will ask for a significant amount of funding that will be retroactive to December 14, so that all the money we spent and will spend will be reimbursed. Also we will push for more mental health support in the schools where hopefully we will be able to intervene before it gets to a crisis mode.

Mayor Boughton said he has received a lot of positive feedback about the safety advocates at the elementary schools. He has also received positive feedback on the police visibility at the schools. The Mayor said he wants to put money into mental health at the schools and also through the youth bureau or service in each community. The theory is that if the assailant does not attend school, he would usually end up at a youth service agency, and the people at the agency might take a deeper look at the individual. M. Schork said that one of the recommendations that the elementary principals has is additional staffing of psychologists and social workers. K. Thompson said another thing that is happening is that we have community health center models in some of our schools that is meant to provide some services for kids and families, so the hope is if we can get some of those models up and running, they will reach out to people who might not be in the schools. She asks if it would be helpful to have people from the PPS staff here at the next meeting to see where we are in terms of staffing. G. Bocaccio suggested having S. Atanasoff who might give some good perspective as to what the needs are, current concerns, what current staffing is, etc. Mayor Boughton said the sooner we can get this information to the legislators, the better. R. SanSeverino asked if there have been any assessments on private armed security. He also asked about the ramifications for insurance. J. Martino said he received estimates for armed private duty guards and the cost is approximately \$65 per hour. He said the liability does go up immensely. Mayor Boughton gave an overview on what it takes to be a trained police officer in terms of the steps that are necessary to get to the point where the officer is allowed to carry a gun. M. Schork shared with Mayor Boughton that every police officer that has entered her school has been stellar.

The Task Force is looking to make its recommendations to the Board at its April 10 meeting. A decision should be made soon as to whether we will hire Knoll. K. Molinaro asked what would happen if Knoll could not help us. Mayor Boughton said he does not think we will have any clarity from the State on where it is going on security until the end of the session, which could be May or early June, and while he understands we want to have this report, we might have to go back to the Board and do a partial report. J. Martino said it is his hope to get back to the Task Force with a

breakdown per building of the perimeter issues, and we are very close to that right now. C. Garrett said it is important to report back to the community to let them know that discussions are going on and things are happening.

The next meeting of the Task Force will be Thursday, February 21 at 7 p.m. at King Street Primary.

The meeting adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Kathleen M. Molinaro, Co-Chairperson