

**Northport-East Northport Union Free School District Board Workshop - Northport High School  
(Thursday, October 11, 2018)**

*Generated by Beth M Nystrom on Monday, October 15, 2018*

**Members present**

David Badanes, Victoria Buscareno, Lori McCue, Donna McNaughton, Allison C Noonan, Andrew Rapiejko, David Stein

**Members absent**

None

**Also present**

Mr. Robert Banzer, Superintendent of Schools

Ms. Irene McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources

Mr. Matthew Nelson, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, Technology and Assessment

Dr. Dana Boshnack, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning

Mr. Robert Howard, Assistant Superintendent for Business

**Panelists**

Inspector Michael Romagnoli, Suffolk County Police Department

Deputy Inspector Matthew McCormick, Suffolk County Police Department

Chief Bill Ricca, Northport Police Department

Sergeant Chris Hughes, Northport Police Department

Chief Raymond Mahdesian, Asharoken Police Department

Leonard Devlin, Security Consultants of Long Island

Michael McAlvin, Esq., Ingerman Smith LLP

John J. Peppard, NYSIR, Senior Vice President and NYSIR Program Manager

Frederick S. Black, NYSIR, Vice President and Director of Underwriting

Public Attendance: Approximately 60 people

**1. CALL TO ORDER** – President Rapiejko called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**2. IF NECESSARY, THE CHAIR MAY ENTERTAIN A MOTION TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION** - Note: It is anticipated that the Board will meet in public at 6:00 p.m. in the Faculty Dining Room at Northport High School to act upon a resolution, upon majority vote, to immediately convene into Executive Session to discuss matters pertaining to the employment history of a particular person.

Action: 2.01 Motion to convene into Executive Session to discuss matters pertaining to the employment history of a particular person.

Motion by David Stein, second by Lori McCue.

Final Resolution: Motion passes

Yes: David Badanes, Victoria Buscareno, Lori McCue, Donna McNaughton, Allison C Noonan, Andrew Rapiejko

At 7:06 p.m. the Board reconvened in public session in the Auditorium at Northport High School.

**3. Mr. Rapiejko led those present in the PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE;** and

**4. Pointed out the EMERGENCY EXITS**

## 5. BOARD WORKSHOP

Discussion: 5.01 Board Workshop on Districtwide Security

President Rapiejko stated that the workshop is being held for the Board to gather information and have questions answered in order to make an informed decision regarding districtwide security. After the incident that happened in Florida back in March, the Board received a great deal of communications from the community both for and against hiring armed security guards. Mr. Rapiejko stated that the Board will not be making a decision tonight. The other component is the social emotional/student support piece which the Board will discuss at a workshop tentatively scheduled for November 1<sup>st</sup>.

President Rapiejko introduced the guest panelists: Inspector Michael Romagnoli, Suffolk County Police Department, Homeland Security and Criminal Intelligence Bureau; Deputy Inspector Matthew McCormick, Suffolk County Police Department; Chief Bill Ricca, Northport Police Department; Sergeant Chris Hughes, Northport Police Department; Chief Raymond Mahdesian, Asharoken Police Department; Leonard Devlin, Security Consultants of Long Island, District Security Consultant; Michael McAlvin, Esq., Ingerman Smith LLP; John J. Peppard, NYSIR, Senior Vice President and NYSIR Program Manager; and Frederick S. Black, NYSIR, Vice President and Director of Underwriting.

Mr. Leonard Devlin reviewed the District's current security operations. The District has security coverage 24/7 365 days a year. Almost all of the guards are former law enforcement, NYPD, NYS Police, Corrections, Suffolk County Police Department. This year a guard was added to each elementary school, one guard added to the middle schools for a total of three, and four guards added to the high school for a total of 12. There is a greeter at each building throughout the District. The District currently has six security vehicles and will be adding another six. Structural changes include new security vestibules at Fifth Avenue Elementary School, Norwood Avenue Elementary School, East Northport Middle School, Dickinson Avenue Elementary School, Northport High School and Pulaski Road Elementary School. The construction of the vestibules in the remaining buildings will be scheduled according to the bond work. The visitor management system is being used at the high school, both middle schools, Norwood Avenue School, Fifth Avenue School and will be operating at the remaining schools within seven days. Mr. Devlin stated that the District is adding an additional 30 security cameras, with the total number of security cameras districtwide of approximately 400 within the next six months. A new burglar alarm system was installed districtwide. The card access system is being updated and should be completed within the year. The Rave safety app is active in Nassau County and is being rolled out in Suffolk County. Mr. Devlin stated that there are building level school safety teams and a districtwide safety team. The districtwide safety plan has been posted on the District's website and is shared annually with local and state law enforcement. The District works closely with the Suffolk County Police Department and the Northport Police Department. The Northport Police Department conducted an active shooter drill at Ocean Avenue Elementary School. The Greeters and Security staff receive training on Superintendent's Conference Day and throughout the year. Security guards are required to go through sixteen hours of training along with AED and CPR training. Twenty guards attended gang awareness training, fifteen guards attended crisis intervention training. Mr. Devlin stated that the security department works collaboratively and builds relationships with the Northport Police Department, Suffolk County Police Department 2<sup>nd</sup> Precinct, Asharoken Police Department, Suffolk County Sheriff's Department, New York State Police Department, Northport Fire Department, East Northport Fire Department and fire rescue emergency services.

Inspector Romagnoli stated that he reports directly to the Chief of the Suffolk County Police Department. He has been actively involved in active shooter training for quite some time, since Columbine. The Department of Homeland Security oversees the emergency services section and SWAT team, and active shooter training for patrol officers. The Criminal Intelligence section investigates criminal activity, especial school incidents. The department coordinates and trains with Suffolk County Fire and Emergency

Services. Inspector Romagnoli stated that there is a precinct School Resource Officer and a countywide School Resource Officer.

Deputy Inspector McCormick stated that the precinct has increased safety patrols this year with a Sergeant and two to three officers. The goal is to get officers into the schools three to four patrols each week to develop relationships with administration, staff, teachers, and get layout of schools. Deputy Inspector McCormick stated that the precinct currently has one school resource officer and are trying to get another one.

Chief Bill Ricca stated that the Northport Police Department participates in active shooter training and has conducted active shooter drills at Ocean Avenue Elementary School. Northport Police Department participates in all training. They get intel reports, weekly school intel reports and has access to Suffolk County Police Department computers with access to the schematics of any school. Chief Ricca stated that jurisdictional boundaries do not apply when there is an emergency and they have a great relationship with the Suffolk County Police Department.

Chief Ray Mahdesian stated that the Asharoken Police Department does not have any school within their jurisdiction but lies wholly within the Northport-East Northport School District. The Department would assist other agencies in the event of an emergency. The officers are trained by the Suffolk County Police Department and are trained in active shooter situations. They have a good relationship with the Northport Police Department and the Suffolk County Police Department.

Sergeant Chris Hughes stated that the Northport Police Department takes a serious tone to active shooter training. He has extensive training in active shooter drills including federal law enforcement training in Georgia. He worked on the active shooter drill at Ocean Avenue Elementary School and has knowledge of the layouts of the district buildings.

Michael McAlvin, Esq. stated that many districts are holding forums and giving careful consideration to the hiring of armed guards. His firm talks about the risk, philosophical needs, subcontracting and civil service side.

John Peppard stated that New York Schools Insurance Reciprocal (NYSIR) provides property and casualty insurance for 355 districts across New York State. The only cover school districts.

Fred Black stated that NYSIR provides liability insurance for the school district, employees, volunteers and members of the board of education regarding the operations and activities involved in their job function. NYSIR insures the building and contents. Mr. Black stated that coverage for an active shooter event would reside under general liability.

President Rapiejko opened the meeting to questions to the panel from Board Members.

Trustee McCue asked what the response time is in the event of an incident. Inspector Romagnoli stated three to five minutes. It would be a priority zero and the precinct would be responding in force. Other precincts would be notified, mutual aid response. Other agencies such as the New York State Police, Department of Environment Conservation and Sheriff's Office use the same frequency. Chief Ricca stated the response time would be two to three minutes to buildings within jurisdiction and three to five minutes to other buildings. It would be a priority zero with everyone coming in full force.

Trustee Noonan asked if district security is trained in de-escalation. Mr. Devlin stated that approximately 20 security personnel went to crisis intervention training and it is part of their training while on the force. Inspector McCormick stated that the school resource officers are highly trained and de-escalation is part of the training every police officer goes through at the academy.

Trustee Badanes asked how guards handle fight situations and if they would be handled differently if the district had an armed guard. Mr. Devlin stated that luckily there are not many situations of physical contact at the school. Mr. Devlin stated that if the district had armed guards they would be at curb level and they would only respond if there was an active shooter in the building.

Trustee Buscareno asked how security is stationed throughout the buildings and if the SCPD goes through the schools. Mr. Devlin stated that the security guard hours vary, the shifts vary, and they are stationed inside and outside the buildings at strategic locations. Inspector Romagnoli stated that part of the normal routine of the patrol cars is to drive through the school parking lots and park.

Trustee McNaughton asked if there is an incident where everyone responds in force, who is in charge. Inspector Romagnoli stated that the first arriving officer announces they are going into the building. It is a unified command. The fire department is on a different frequency. Chief Ricca stated that the Northport Police Department has communication directly with the fire chief. Mr. Devlin added that they have direct communication with the FRES, fire rescue emergency services.

Vice President Stein asked how many officers will be brought to the buildings to meet with the security team and understand the layouts of each building so each responding officer has knowledge of the buildings. Inspector Romagnoli stated that the precinct has approximately 225-250 officers and that it would not be possible for all officers to come in and know the buildings but the local sector officers could be involved. Inspector McCormick stated that officer involvement in the schools has increased and they have more familiarity with the buildings than they used to.

President Rapiejko asked if the District made the decision to have armed guards, would the approach be different in responding to incidents at the school. Inspector Romagnoli stated that the District having an armed guard would be another piece of information and would make officers more aware that there is a weapon on site, but the response would not be different.

Trustee McCue stated that currently by law schools are gun free zones. Mr. McAlvin stated that it is a violation of federal law to possess or discharge a gun on school property with the exception of an individual directly employed by the school district or contracted with by the school district. Mr. Peppard stated that if the district would contract with a security company for armed guards it would have no effect on the district's policy. The entity would have to provide insurance. Mr. Black stated that an intentional act exclusion would apply and if there was a premium change they would have to file the rate with New York State.

Trustee Noonan asked how many bilingual guards the district has. Mr. Devlin stated that throughout the district there are five. Inspector McCormick stated there are ten bilingual officers assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> precinct and they also have access to language interpreter at their fingertips.

Trustee Badanes asked how long it would take a security guard to walk from one end of the campus to the other. Mr. Devlin said approximately 30 seconds at the high school.

Trustee Badanes asked if an armed guard did not secure their weapon and another person got a hold of it what is the liability. Mr. McAlvin stated that any time the doors are open the district is subject to liability and that best practice protocols should be in place.

Trustee Buscareno asked if the Suffolk County Police Department has come out with a statement on whether to have armed guards. Inspector Romagnoli stated that it is a local decision and consideration should be given to training standards, weapons, ammunition, holsters, etc.

Trustee McNaughton asked about student and staff entry points and ID tags. Mr. Devlin stated that all students and staff are using ID tags and the schools have a single point of entry with the exception of the high school where there are four entry points.

Vice President Stein asked if Suffolk County has performed any scale drills in any of the school buildings. Inspector Romagnoli stated that they have drilled in other school district but not in Northport. They do a quarterly drill. Walking through buildings would be done at a local level. Rapid deployment drill done under the guidance of emergency services section and a full scale exercise in the county is done annually. Vice President Stein asked if there has been any effort to do a tactical entry drill. Chief Ricca stated that they have talked about doing a multiagency drill involving personnel from Northport and East Northport and it is in the works.

President Rapiejko asked if there is the potential of getting a school resource officer assigned to each in the future and if there is the ability for a district to perhaps pay for an officer or at least part of the costs. Inspector Romagnoli stated that it is something that is being discussed.

Trustee Badanes stated that he believes most districts have decided not to hire armed guards and asked if NYSIR or Ingerman Smith have any recommendations. Both said they do not have recommendations. Mr. Badanes asked if the district decided not to hire armed guards and an active shooter incident happens does the district have additional liability. Mr. Black stated that NYSIR would cover the claims.

Vice President Stein asked if the district had a police radio and if the district hired guards would they be retired police officers. Mr. Devlin stated that the security department has communications through FRES, red phone and Rave app and that currently the security guards hired are required to have at least 16 hour certification.

President Rapiejko opened the meeting to questions to the panel from the community.

Insurance: How many schools you insure have decided to hire armed guards? Do not have answer.

Security: If new security guards are hired where would they be placed? Would not specify where they would be placed, would be on perimeter, not in school buildings.

Security: In addition to current security enhancements, is there a recommendation for additional enhancements? There is always room for improvements.

Police: What is the current police presence at Northport High School? It is as needed, no stationary presence. There is one school resource office in the 2<sup>nd</sup> precinct who is responsible for all schools. The SRO does a lot of education and responds to schools when asked to. Countywide the SRO is not assigned to specific buildings.

Police: What training do the police officers received in terms of responding to active school threats? It is built into the academy curriculum, in-service personnel two day training, classroom training and hands on, LSU training.

Police: In event the district does hire armed guards, what type of integrated training will take place? Right now there are no protocols, will work with school district on how to identify them. The challenge is that uniforms and equipment are not standard. Protocol is that a uniformed officer responding to a call is in charge, they have a duty to act, a charge to act, and are legally required to act.

Police: What is your opinion on possible accidental shootings that could occur? Northport trains twice a year and are trained in active shooter annually.

Police: Does police department have information regarding if school shooting are carried out by students or prior students? Average age is 15-19 in school shootings, average age in public shootings is 27-25.

Security: How would armed guards protect playgrounds, afterschool and evening activities? I would recommend armed guards when school is in session, would not recommend having them after 3 p.m.

Security: What would the cost for armed guards be? Approximately \$208,200, would have to hire an additional three guards to cover breaks for \$180,000.

Security: Has it been difficult to get qualified police officers in security? Yes, it has been somewhat of a challenge.

Security: Who will determine when an armed guard will shoot? As per Inspector Romagnoli, as a civilian an armed security guard does not have to respond but the district would adhere to rules and procedures similar to the Suffolk County Police Department regarding weapons, ammunition, holsters and training.

Police: What does data show regarding armed vs. not arming guards? Do not have statistics.

Security: Is there potential conflict of interest in terms of any local community person with background in security to be employed by the school district? Employees would be vetted through civil service and policies. Bidding would go to lowest responsible bidder.

Police: In terms of getting layouts of schools, would it be beneficial to have a bag, such as a go bag which each schools has? Northport Police Department does have copies of emergency preparedness plans which have building layouts.

Insurance: Are there limits of liability protection? Limits of liability exceed the largest lawsuit paid on liability side since 1989.

Security: Who receives notification on red phone capabilities? It goes directly to the supervisor, bypasses 911 operator. It is a dedicated line implemented to speed up the process.

Security: How are 400 cameras in schools monitored? They are monitored in the overnight hours and somewhat during the day, not 24/7.

Security: Who will determine the competency of someone to carry a weapon? Will work with Board and District to create policy and protocol to get most qualified retired office possible.

Attorney: How would you advise the District or Board Members on responses to parents who lost a child to an active shooter in one of our schools?

Security: How often should each campus be assessed and security recommendations made? It is done constantly and recommendations are made to the administration. We are working with the Suffolk County Police Department and the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office on assessments.

Security/Police: How would police department members and Mr. Devlin indicate to unarmed security guards what their response should be? Recommendation would be to keep armed guard outside of building and unarmed response to nonviolent incidents. Would work with local police department to create protocol.

Police: Describe current shift changes in schools. Currently they are doing a pilot program in another precinct where shift changes are occurring at the schools.

Police: Describe charge in rescue task force. Training comes from academy. Initiate triage and extraction, provide guidance under supervisor as well as fire officer, EMS, under unified command.

Police: With a number of buildings in system, how long would it take to find building plans? Almost instantaneously.

Security: If district decided to hire armed guards what challenges would that present in protocols added to communication system? Would get guidance through local police department.

Security: Is there another type of device you would recommend such as a laser? No

Security: How will we protect children if active shooter comes during recess or when high school students are leaving for lunch? We are constantly doing active shooter drills and will look to do one at the most inopportune time, perform with staff and security personnel to improve response time.

Police: Are there any studies or data for or against armed guards? No, not aware of.

President Rapiejko thanked the guests for providing information and answering questions from the Board and community. On November 1<sup>st</sup> the social emotional/student support component will be discussed. At the November 8<sup>th</sup> Board of Education meeting the board will discuss whether they have enough information to make a decision. The public will have an opportunity to ask questions and make comments at that meeting.

**6. ADJOURNMENT** - Board policy requires adjournment by 10:30 pm, unless meeting is extended by vote.

Action: 6.01 Adjournment

Recommendation to adjourn the meeting

Motion by Allison C Noonan, second by Donna McNaughton.

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Victoria Buscareno, David Badanes, Lori McCue, Donna McNaughton, Allison C Noonan, Andrew Rapiejko, David Stein

At 9:53 p.m., the Chair declared the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth M. Nystrom  
District Clerk