

Board of Education Special Meeting

March 12, 2018 6:00 PM

PPMS Library

1. Call to Order

Sean Nugent; Board Chair, called the informal meeting to order at 6pm. He stated that due to the informal nature of the meeting, a quorum was not necessary. Other members present: Cindy Luty, Tom Turner, Dan Harris and Deborah Burke-Grabarek. Charles Raymond and Tom Gauthier were not in attendance. Also present: Dr. Seitsinger; Superintendent, and Gloria Homiski; Recording Secretary.

2. Community Comment

Sean Nugent stated that Dr. Seitsinger met with staff, parents, other Superintendents and Resident Troopers since the school shooting in Florida which took place on 2-14-18. He collected many observations and suggestions. Dr. Seitsinger reported his findings to the BOE in an Executive Session meeting on March 5, 2018.

Dr. Seitsinger said the district's job is to provide a warm, safe and welcoming learning environment for all students and staff members.

Community Members addressed the Board:

Mike Clancy: He thanked the Board for taking this topic seriously and for allowing for open communication. He hopes that now that Preston has two resident troopers, one will remain on the day shift, to always be available to the schools during the school year.

Andy Depta: He made several suggestions:

1. The schools should have a panic button that dispatches to Town Hall and/or police barracks.
2. Currently drop off and pick up are at different school entrances. The national recommendation is that ONE entrance be used at all times.
3. Parents should monitor what is in their own student's backpacks. Any non-student entering the buildings with a backpack or satchel must be searched.

John Homiski: We must minimize what could happen. What security information can be shared with the community? Will the community be told how safety measures are being implemented? What is currently being done to prevent anyone from carrying a gun into the school buildings?

Andy Depta: What are we doing to ensure safety at school bus stops?

Jan Clancy: As prior Board Chair she knows that \$250,000 was spent on security measures. She believes that sharing some of this information with the community may help parents feel more protected.

Mike Clancy: The President is talking about teachers having guns in their classrooms. He believes educators are here to educate.

John Homiski: Schools can't continue to be "soft targets." Signs all say schools are gun free zones - maybe it would be a deterrent if schools were not gun free zones.

Melissa Lennon: Sandy Hook opened our eyes to how vulnerable schools actually are. She does not want to see knee jerk reactions. Volunteers need background checks. Schools must look at all their procedures. We can reduce risk by practicing procedures, evacuations etc.

John Homiski: He agrees with enforcing and practicing procedures but said that the procedures need to be different for each school due to students' ages.

Cathleen Capunitan: As a teacher at PVMS she is concerned with sporting and after school events. Someone could enter the school at such times and plant something for future use.

Nancy Mattern: Also a teacher at PVMS - she shared a story about a Norwich School. At drop off, bus drivers noticed a suspicious man in a car in the school parking lot. They kept the kids on the buses and contacted the school who then contacted the police. The police found out that the man in question was actually there to meet someone who worked in the school, but they did work with the school to put a safety procedure in place for the future.

Mike Clancy: He asked if teachers and administration wait outside as kids are picked up and dropped off. Dr. Seitsinger said that such procedures are in place and that the district has implemented many security means since 2012. That being said, the district is always working to maximize fidelity.

John Homiski: Does the expense of all safety and security measures come out of the BOE budget? Sean Nugent said that such expenses are covered by the BOE, the Town, and various Grants. Ultimately school safety remains to be the responsibility of the Board.

Melissa Lennon: Her main concern is pick up and drop off. Those procedures need to be looked at a little more closely.

3. Adjournment

Sean Nugent adjourned the meeting at 6:30PM. He stated that all comments would be seriously considered. The Board will meet again in Executive Session and determine what information can be shared with the community. He stated that community members can reach out to either he or Dr. Seitsinger with other concerns or comments.

Dr. Seitsinger said that most of tonight's comments reinforced those previously shared, while others expressed new ideas that will be incorporated into our planning.