

**REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17**  
**BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**SPECIAL MEETING**  
**January 10, 2013**

*A special meeting of the Regional School District No. 17 Board of Education was held on January 10, 2013 in the Haddam-Killingworth Middle School Auditorium. Board of Education Chair, Karen Perry, called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.*

**Members Present:** *Joel D'Angelo, Sue Twachtman, Amy Jacques-Purdy, Jaime Lehane, Steven Banaletti, and Karen Perry*

**Members Absent:** *Chet Harris, Jonathan Wintsch, Susan Dean, Peggie Bushey and Becky Valenti*

**Also Present:** *Superintendent of Schools, Howard Thiery and Board Clerk Larissa Johnson*

**Visitors:** *Approximately 92*

**Call to Order/Opening of Meeting**

*Board of Education Chair, Karen Perry called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and moment of silence was observed in remembrance of the victims of the Sandy Hook School shooting on December 14, 2012.*

**School Security and Safety**

**A. Opening Statement**

*Board Chair Karen Perry gave an opening statement. The Board chair said that the Board called this special meeting to hear from the community about their ideas, thoughts and concerns regarding safety and mental health. She said that safety in our schools and community is paramount and that the community may have ideas that members of the Board or the administration might not. She also explained that the purpose of this meeting is for the community to share its ideas, but that the Board will not comment and respond. She further explained that ideas will be considered by the Board, law enforcement and the administration. She also mentioned that the lock down procedure has been modified and an appropriate safety web is in place. She also mentioned that members of the Board attended a statewide conference on security issue and that a multi-faceted group will be put together to discuss possible changes in security measures. She said that the process should wrap-up quickly and she stated that the Board has received numerous emails and phone calls from concerned members of the community. She thanked Howard Thiery for his leadership and thanked the staff teachers and administration as well.*

*Superintendent Howard Thiery thanked everyone for coming including State Troopers Connolly, Milardo and Ward. He spoke about the Newtown tragedy and said that the district is reviewing security procedures and systems and that student safety is very important and that he believes that the district has a strong start to the process but that the district can make improvements.*

**B. Public Input**

*Citizens of the Haddam-Killingworth Community addressed the Board and audience:*

*Craig Elkin of Haddam made the following suggestions:*

- 1) Three inch room numbers posted outside all classrooms, such as is done at Middletown High School.*
- 2) Create floor/building plans with room numbers to share with law enforcement.*
- 3) Offer weekend access to buildings for emergency services training so that law enforcement and emergency medical services can be familiar with the layout of the buildings.*
- 4) Place mirrors in the corners of the buildings so that people can see who is around the corner as they are approaching.*

*Kim Kelly of Haddam offered two concerns:*

- 1) Before school doors are open, such as at Burr Elementary School, thus she feels that it presents an opportunity for anyone could walk into the building.*
- 2) She also felt that the buzzer screening method at entry to the building during the school day could be improved—she feels people are permitted entry without thorough inquiry to their identity or purpose of entry.*
- 3) She has concerns about offering Window Walks on Education – that any member of the public could attend and pose a threat or harm.*

*John Kozak of Killingworth mentioned that on one occasion, his graduated daughter returned to the high school to visit friends one day, and though she was unable to enter through the main entrance, she was able to go around the building and enter through a different door that was unlocked, undermining the purpose of the locked front door and buzzer system. He suggested instead a double-door or vestibule system with a double buzzer, though he stated he was unsure of the cost of such a measure.*

*Michael Meliwoch of Killingworth also mentioned the buzzer system and felt that there was no screening prior to visitors receiving permission to enter. He said that he thought the idea of using double-doors or a vestibule was a good idea. He also suggested the following:*

- 1) When using an intercom system, visitors should have to state their name, purpose for their visit and a password.*
- 2) Placing armed officers in the schools, as a deterrent.*
- 3) Placing cameras in the school and/or parking lots to give personnel advanced notice as to who is approaching the school.*
- 4) Installing shatter-proof or bullet-proof doors and glass in the entry points.*

*Robert Spector of Higganum stated that he felt that parents in the community have fear and hope for Superintendent Thiery and the Board to help make us feel better. He suggested that the community and the District can't just look at Sandy Hook and prevent a similar event from occurring, that different things can happen. He suggested that changes we make should give police officers more time to respond to any incident. He suggested a system like a fire alarm, and that children seem well-prepared for lock-down. With a fire-alarm like system, there should be an ability for everyone to know about it as soon as you would with fire alarms. He also suggested having a police officer at every school. He believes one tact towards improving school safety and security is to look at how to get law enforcement to the scene as soon as possible.*

*Howard Thiery responded that prior to the incident at Sandy Hook, District 17 has taken an All-Hazards Approach to school safety and security, and that the district has plan to respond*

*to a variety of emergencies, and that there are procedures to evacuate or stay put and get immediate help.*

*Alexandra G. Torres of Killingworth suggested that the community and district look at mental health. She said that it is not enough to have just one psychologist in the school. She also said that she feels that children with mental health challenges are not receiving the therapy and help they are supposed to have and that a parent has to request help. She stated that districts should make the first step by notifying parents if a child needs special education and that mental health is very important.*

*John Shraub of Killingworth said that he felt that the District had a great response to the tragedy at Sandy Hook and that it was appropriate. He appreciated there being a police officer outside the school the next day. He also said that mental health is important, including prevention and reaction. He stated he thought having police in schools is perhaps budgetarily restrictive. He suggested that teachers should have guns, which might deter an assailant and allow teachers to defend themselves and their students.*

*Kelly Carone of Higganum said that as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker she would like to volunteer or create a coalition of volunteer professionals to be available as a resource, which might also alleviate budgetary issues. They can offer crisis management education and services to parents of children with disabilities, as well as counseling in response to crisis and traumatic things.*

*Derrick Phelps of Killingworth stated that he felt that the Haddam-Killingworth Middle School is exceptional and that in the days that followed Sandy Hook, he was pleased with the efforts of the Superintendent and Administration. He made the following suggestions:*

- 1) Installation of Panic Buttons, which allows the ability for quick response effectively and not unreasonably expensive.*
- 2) He stated he is against teachers/educators carrying a weapon because in high-stress situations, most hit the target only two out of ten times.*
- 3) Community service officers, uniformed armed officers, or if state troopers were around in the schools more often so that students can get to know the officers better. The presence of officers at the school might slow down any possible assailants.*

*Max Joyner of Killingworth made the following suggestions:*

- 1) Review policy and procedures with entry, utilizing parent IDs and a more effective notification system.*
- 2) Have an emergency response plan in place at all schools and with staff and practice consistently.*
- 3) Evaluation of each classroom for safe zones, some classrooms have advantageous hiding places, such as closets that others don't.*
- 4) Provide a floor or building plan of each school to police and he also liked the idea of placing large room numbers outside of each classroom.*
- 5) Place Panic Buttons that link to Emergency Medical Services and possibly place them in classrooms or provide a communication system.*
- 6) He also suggested the vestibule entry system.*
- 7) Place a Guard House at school entrances with swing arms.*
- 8) Install a sophisticated camera system, such as a loss-prevention system with manned viewing rooms.*

- 9) *Employ an 8-10 person supervised security team, which could include retired police officers.*
- 10) *Start a School Resource Program so that students can meet law enforcement officers and build relationships and trust with them.*

*He also added that he does not support the idea of arming teachers. As a police sergeant, he said it took him 16 years to be proficient and comfortable with his weapon in an active-shooter situation. To a lot of teachers a firearm is new, and they might not be able to use it effectively, especially in an emergency situation, even with training.*

*Mark Lundgren of Haddam said that he thinks that Newtown and Haddam are similar, and that it's possible that an event of that nature could take place here. He mentioned that Chet Crocco, the student Board representative said he took an informal survey of his fellow students and that they still feel safe at school following Sandy Hook. He wants to keep our students feeling safe. He also said that he is very pleased with the group of people who now sit on the Board. He is also hoping that the Board will offer another gathering further down the road to continue the discussion on school safety.*

*Michael Meliwoch of Killingworth addressed the Board again. He clarified that his suggestion that teachers be armed not be an employment requirement but that qualified teachers who may already have gun permits be allowed to carry in school. He wanted to clarify that he meant teachers should be allowed, not forced.*

*Desiree McRae of Killingworth commended the Board for its response to Sandy Hook. She stated that she feels that these mass shootings taking place across our country as an epidemic due to the glamorization of violence in video games and television. She believes that the district should take a holistic approach and form a coalition wherein we hold one another accountable.*

*Ben Carvalho of Haddam suggested the district look at special education and mental health. He said that people in the community are great. However, as kids get older they can tell you which of their peers they are afraid of. He suggested armed guards in schools to improve response time and slow down an assailant.*

*William Jewett of Higganum suggested that there be resident trooper posts at each of the elementary schools, not just the high school. He also suggested privatized armed security. He also mentioned that because the elementary schools are comprised predominantly of female teachers and staff that the district should consider having more males at each school.*

*Nathan Heath of Killingworth also said that the response to Sandy Hook was great from the district. He pointed out that since the responders to any emergency carry firearms that it might make sense to allow some teachers who are willing to carry concealed weapons. He suggests that if some teachers carried concealed weapons, an assailant would not know who had a gun, which might be a deterrent. He also said that he felt that the schools were very good about handling bullying but that the district should also look at bullying on the buses.*

*David Cipriano of Killingworth said that he cannot say enough about what the school system has done. He also suggested placing an armed guard at the entry of each school. He said that he believes that cowards know that no one is there, but an armed presence is a deterrent.*

*He also suggested that the school use a key card system and keep the doors locked. He thanked the Board for offering the meeting for the community to attend.*

*Walter Bragoni of Higganum stated that he doesn't want schools to be like a prison cell. He wants kids to have some freedom and that kids need to learn how to be out in the world too. He also said that parents need to participate as well.*

*Michael Goodwin of Killingworth said that unfortunately we see evil in the world from time-to-time. He said that when crazy events happen, there tends to be a knee-jerk reaction. But things do need to adapt. One example he gave is how airplane pilots now carry weapons. He also gave an example of the Superintendent in El Paso, Texas where there are twenty-six schools in that school district and some teachers volunteer to carry concealed weapons and that no one knows which teachers carry. He says that the El Paso school district has had no crime since 2007. Mr. Goodwin suggested that the district should poll teacher anonymously to see if there is any interest in teachers carrying a weapon.*

*Superintendent Thiery responded that Connecticut is a gun-free school state, and only sworn law-enforcement officers can carry guns on school grounds. This matter would have to be further addressed at the state level. He also said that he will be attending a Legislative Breakfast on school security, and that he liked the School Resource Officer program because it's a form of community policing – not just having armed officers in the schools but also for students and community members to build relationships with law enforcement.*

### **C. Closing Statement**

*Superintendent Howard Thiery and Board Chair Karen Perry thanked everyone for coming. The Board Chair also thanked members of law enforcement for being here this evening and said she appreciated the new ideas that were presented.*

### **Adjournment**

*Board Chair Karen Perry called for the meeting to adjourn at 8:29 PM.*

*Respectfully submitted,*



Larissa B. Johnson  
Board Clerk

Approval: *Susan Dean* Date: *2/5/2013*  
Susan Dean, Secretary