

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Special Meeting

April 11, 2018

Called for 6:00 PM in the Dr. Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of addressing building safety and security in the Cambridge Public School District elementary, upper and high schools.

Members Present: Ms. Bowman, Ms. Dexter, Mr. Fantini, Ms. Kelly, Mr. Kimbrough, Ms. Nolan (ABSENT), and Mayor McGovern

Also Present: Dr. Salim, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Turk, Deputy Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Maloney, Chief Operating Officer

Vice Chair Kelly in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

After reading the call of the meeting, the Chair informed the assembly that Ms. Nolan will not be in attendance due to a scheduling conflict.

The Chair turned the meeting over to Dr. Salim. He spoke about the essential work CPS does with the Cambridge police, fire, health alliance and the Department of Human Services (DHS) as well as others in the community. He then turned the meeting over to Jim Maloney, Chief Operating Officer.

Mr. Maloney stated that we are extremely lucky to have these partners in our lives and they work with us day to day. He introduced Supt. Christine Elow, Deputy. Supt. Steve Ahern, Lieutenant Fred Cabral, and Mr. John Silva, Director of Safety and Security. Mr. Maloney stated that the school dept. and the police dept. are partners and that they have a lot of respect for each other. They are going to present a presentation tonight that is divided into sections. There have been many questions since the tragedy in Florida. In most cases, when there is an emergency, most likely the person to be there is an officer from the neighborhood. There are 4 major types of emergencies:

1. Evacuation
2. Secure and Hold
3. Shelter in Place
4. Lockdown

Mr. Maloney explained each one and admitted that they get used interchangeably at times by the staff. Mr. Maloney spoke about our facilities and infrastructure. We have many different types of buildings. They are alarmed during all off hours. There are card access only areas across the schools, we also have main entrance cameras. There have been many safety protocols and trainings for our staff and there is a lot more awareness and intervention in our schools than there was before Sandy Hook. Parents ask what safety measures are in place in the schools; this is a common question now; this question never used to come up in the years gone by. Our teachers are prepared for everything from a chemical spill in the classroom to an intruder in the building. We have 4 or 5 evacuation (fire) drills per year and we also have lockdown drills. All of our doors are numbered, to enable easy communication to the police and fire departments, in reference to which door is the appropriate door. We also have police in our buildings throughout the year.

Mr. Silva explained to all in attendance the process of a safety drill. He stated that the relationship between the police and the schools have coalesced to be the best team possible. They trust each other and they work together very well. They are expediting and making their responses even quicker. They have one of the fastest response times in the state. A typical lockdown procedure was created about 8 years ago. Some groups brought school psychologists in, and over the years they have become more accepting and they are typical now just like a fire drill. There have been no more calls from concerned parents about these drills. There have been 10 secure and hold situations. Typically the principal decides the day of the drill. They all assemble and talk about what will happen and divide the school up. The principal announces on the intercom that this is a lockdown drill; they then leave the office to monitor the situation. You would think it is a Sunday afternoon because the doors are locked and you don't hear a peep. The entire school participates in these lockdown drills. The team is looking to see if anyone can be seen. Then they get back together and debrief. If there is a door locked that is not working, it is put on a priority list to be fixed. If a class cannot hear the announcement, or a door will not lock, it gets fixed immediately. Every class has one staff member that wears a vest that helps the fire department and the police identify staff from ordinary citizens. Every room has a placard that says where every class went.

Deputy Superintendent Steve Ahern (night operations commander and tactical operations and inspector) spoke about his duties. He teaches active shooter training. The best practices and response procedures are based on a 5 phase approach: Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response and Recovery. He has to put a security detail at every event. He also plans the low frequency high risk events. He focuses on "the Gap", which is 6-12 minutes it takes law enforcement to respond to any school related threat. So, the focus on training is to close the gap down to be the closest to 6 minutes as possible. They need to get in, from the start of the crises, find the threat and neutralize it. This has to be done in 6-12 minutes. This is accomplished through training. After Sandy Hook, the Harvard consensus convened, with the result being that the police and fire department need to collaborate more to prevent disasters. In Columbine someone died after being in the classroom for 3 1/2 hours. The recovery process is for all citizens because the entire city will need to recover not just the one school.

Next was Superintendent of Operations, Christine Elow, who spoke about the partnership. They focus on the preventative part. They discuss and exchange information on biases and strategies of getting information to teachers about domestic disputes that at times can be indicators or warnings of issues that can arise. She has Mr. Maloney on speed dial. They all have gone through the drills and are sure they know all of the definitions. The Safety Net Collaborative has a mission to foster a great relationship and prevention that will identify families that may need support. If something happens, we need to be familiar with the students that are high risk. Do they have access to guns? They pay attention to social media and there is neighborhood policing. Youth Resource Officers (YRO) are coaches, they teach about bullying, they work during the summer and they take the time to get to know students well and build important relationships.

Mr. Maloney stated that this would be a good time to transition to Dr. Turk.

Dr. Turk stated that each member of the team spoke that we take care of each other. It is important that we all understand the steps that are taken. We teach our kids what to do in a fire or how to call 911. We teach them what to do in a bullying situation on the playground. We need to also stay ahead of all critical events. These types of interventions and supports are in place across the city. She started with speaking about prevention. The schools have full time psychologist and guidance counselors. Within all of the schools, there are counselors and social workers, psychologists, guidance counselors and deans. In each case, each group is designed based on a specific need that a teacher is seeing that needs to be addressed by a specific child or a whole classroom. There is usually a pyramid with the work done around the social emotional learning. That structure lends itself to many different areas in the realm of what we are talking about today. In the same spirit that we teach them math, we need to teach them cues to pick up on how to be a good member of the community, not just academics. There are rare instances that need mediation and conferencing; everyone has the first dose of support. If more is needed, they get it. We do not keep the supports in isolation. We are striving to have a school district where we understand and know that young people make mistakes and their mistakes cannot be their destiny. We have to support them, help them acknowledge what is unhealthy for them, that there are consequences and let them realize they have support to repair it and become successful members of

society. The Cambridge Health Alliance and Youth and Family Supports needs to be involved in the reparative and restorative justice piece along with Ms. Chandra Banks as the conflict mediator. She repairs relationships with other students. Dr. Turk mentioned the Riverside Family Services, the Cambridge Health Alliance, the Lead Teacher for Social Emotional Learning, the Welcoming Schools Coordinator, Program Leader for Health Education, as a team of district leaders working across the district training teachers.

Ms. Kelly asked Mr. Maloney to speak about the trauma response team. He responded that this team meets regularly to exchange possible solutions when they get word of a problem. Ten years ago, if they got this type of information, they had no specific place to go; now they meet with the crisis network on a quarterly basis. When a shooting happens, he feels comfortable that there are partners he can reach out to that are on point, he does not feel alone. Some school buildings are older; the main office may not be the main entry. Principals are waiting for cameras to be installed. Each school has its own way of operating. One of the issues that they have is not profiling a student with emotional issues. They need to continue to go forward and communicate with the public and students and families. Rosalie Rippey and Joanne Johnson were recognized as the Family Coordinator and Operations Assistant, respectively. It was brought up that all competency and disability issues need to be monitored. There is an impact on students as they are huddled behind a desk in a dark classroom that was just singing a song about how wonderful the world is.

Lieutenant Fred Cabral began speaking about the bi monthly meetings that they have, every other Monday, with many other partners. They used to have them both at the Police Dept. now they have them at the high school. They stay on top of any potential problems that we may be having. When there are problems, they all mobilize and go to a school for additional resources at all schools. Youth Resource Officers (YROs) are in every school building while the other operations units are working on various situations.

Vice Chair Kelly thanked them all for coming and stated that she appreciates how well everyone is working together. She opened the floor for questions.

Mayor McGovern stated every time there is a tragedy; we have to re-focus and wonder what we should do. The truth is still that a school is still the safest place for a child to be. We are not trying to create a panic culture, but we have to be vigilant about prevention. Having a police presence in CPS works well and we intend to keep this presence in all schools. He does not want to underestimate the focus we put on counseling, family support and mental health treatment. We have amazing after school and summer programs and we want our schools to remain secure and safe in the summertime. Remembering Florida, there were 39 calls to the police about the shooter before he entered a school and killed 17 innocent people. Mayor McGovern spoke about the 17 Resource Officers, wondering if we should we be splitting officers between schools. There was a response from an officer stating they try to use as much continuity as possible. They may revamp their programs next fall; it is all done around staffing. The Mayor pointed out the fact that some officers are assigned to two schools, but they are at opposite ends of the city. He also asked what we should do about side doors being propped open.

Mr. Maloney answered that we cannot alarm the side doors, because they will be disarmed after going off too many times. It is about vigilance. When a staff member props a door open, they put their co workers in danger.

The Mayor asked how many of our staff are trained in CPR.

Dr. Turk stated that they are required to have at least three teachers trained in CPR that also know how to use the AED machine. There is at least one person from each school trained each year.

Mr. Kimbrough asked in the context of mass shootings and the prison population being mostly men; are there any training programs for our young boys on the challenges of thinking differently about masculinity.

Superintendent Salim stated that the social workers have different lunch meetings to address the types of issues he speaks of at different forums and affinity groups. The staff from the social/emotional workers and the adjustment counselors do the mediation and restorative justice work.

Emily Dexter asked are YRO armed? If they are in two buildings, her question is logistical - is one during the day and then the other at night?

It was answered that yes YRO are armed police officers. They try to go back and forth during the day in both schools.

Emily asked what is being done about the specific training for a mental health crisis.

Every member of the CSU is mental health aid certified and NASRO (National Association of School Resource Officers) certified. You have to interview with all of the partners in the collaborative. They are looking for officers with that particular skill set. CIT (Crisis Intervention Training) for using de-escalation tactics for people in trouble.

Superintendent Elow explained that the entire police department is being trained in Trauma Informed Training and the different biases trainings. They are concentrating on dignity across the board. The officers have also completed the cultural competency 7 week training. There are only so many spaces inside the class, but how do you identify people regardless of race, but refugee trauma.

Vice Chair Kelly stated that she wants to hear more about the social workers in the CPD.

Superintendent Elow responded they have integrated into their law enforcement personnel non sworn personnel that are social workers and school psychologists and they are trying to move toward arrest as the last response. If a family doesn't trust the police, maybe they will trust a social worker. They are working towards a proactive instead of reactive approach to responses to trauma.

Vice Chair Kelly indicated that she is impressed with the resources at the Cambridge Police and School Departments. She appreciates all of the collaboration work. She thanked police department for taking the time to come and speak with the school department.

Mr. Fantini wanted to know if we have a security review from an outside entity.

Mr. Maloney informed the assembly there are no outside consultants needed. They have the resources with the fire and police departments along with Mr. Silva. There is an active shooter drill for our administrators as well. He does not recommend we hire an outside consultant to review our work.

Mr. Silva stated a big part of his job is researching and networking. He is always checking for updates and improvements to submit to the Fire Dept. NICHE identified Cambridge as the #1 safest school district in MA.

Mr. Fantini says one armed officer in all schools is good. Some school systems in MA don't allow parents in the schools during the day, is that an exposure?

Mr. Maloney answered that we work to know people, and some parents are not allowed on the grounds. This is a balance; we don't want to go overboard in one direction or the other. Everyone has to get a badge from security to get into a building. They are not going to say everything is foolproof.

Mr. Fantini commented that some schools make people show their license when he enters other districts.

Mr. Silva responded that this issue is on his desk right now. He is comparing it to what the police system's data looks like. We would want to see if anyone entering our schools is on the sex offender registry. The license is stored in the data, we can go back and review who was in the building on what day and at what time, but no one said we are doing it.

Mr. Fantini wanted to know if we are we affiliated with Harvard and MIT police departments.

Part of the collaboration that the police have with Harvard and MIT is that they attend the same in service trainings with our staff each year.

Ms. Bowman thanked them for the work they are doing. She complimented a YRO officer story in the Boston Globe that featured the Cambridge Police Dept. in a positive way. She suggested that there needs to be a resolution from the School Committee on teachers and guns. She is the Chair of the Communications Sub-Committee and wants to continue conversations about the different threats we have with digital space (Facebook and Zuckerberg). This meeting is focused on physical space; she wants to focus on digital space and citizenship.

Emily Dexter stated that she would like to let the public that may be watching know that anytime anything of concern happens involving our schools, Mr. Maloney informs the Committee Members immediately. There is a complete description of what happened and how it was resolved.

Mayor McGovern commented and stated that his son is very sensitive to noise; the teachers are very tuned in to calm the anxiety of children during the drills. He asked Mr. Maloney what if all of these plans do not work? Have you thought about installing bullet proof glass to the doors of the classrooms?

Mr. Maloney answered that school safety is an evolving field; there has been a lot of discussion about safety when building new schools. One problem we face is that bullet proof glass is too expensive. The likelihood of it happening was measured against costs so decisions were made for us not do it. When they hired the architect for the Tobin building, there will be security consultants and there will be revisions to what was originally planned. So much time is spent on what side of the door the lock on and on doors that open in instead of out.

Mr. Fantini moved, seconded by Ms. Bowman, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Dosha Beard
Executive Secretary to the School Committee