

**EAST STROUDSBURG AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION
POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING
JULY 19, 2021
CARL T. SECOR ADMINISTRATION CENTER & VIA ZOOM—4:30 P.M.
MINUTES**

- I. Meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Debbie Kulick.
- II. **Policy Committee Members Present were:** George Andrews, Debbie Kulick, Wayne Rohner and Richard Schlameuss (virtually).
- III. **Board Members Present were:** None
- IV. **School Personnel Present were:** Brian Baddick, Brian Borosh, Eric Forsyth (virtually), Frederick Mill, Dr. William Vitulli, Debra Wisotsky and Stephen Zall
- V. **Members of the Public Present were:** None
- VI. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

ACTION BY THE COMMITTEE: Motion was made by George Andrews to approve this agenda for July 19, 2021 (page 1), with members of the Committee reserving the right to add to the agenda and take further action as the Committee deems appropriate. Motion was seconded by Wayne Rohner and carried unanimously, 4-0.

VII. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

ACTION BY THE COMMITTEE: Motion was made by George Andrews to approve the minutes for for June 21, 2021 (pages 1-3). Motion was seconded by Wayne Rohner and carried unanimously 4-0.

Included in the packet for your review is the PSBA Policy News Network Newsletter Volume III - 2021. This issue of the Policy News Network addresses updates to policies related to threat assessment requirements, as well as updates regarding Act 57 requiring background investigations for school security personnel.

Ms. Kulick noted that the policies on the agenda seem to all be wrapped around safety. She asked Chief Mill to give a brief overview as to the changes. Chief Mill stated that there are new state mandates with regard to school safety and security and should the committee have any specific questions on these policies, he would be happy to explain them further. Mr. Andrews asked whether the district was going to have a threat assessment team or individuals with assigned duties. Chief Mill shared that, as per the State's request, there will be one team of at least five or six individuals at each school that will include principal, school police officer, nurse, counselor and security officer. We originally talked about having one team district-wide but what would happen is they would be stretching all over to each school. They don't know the kids in the school. So we decided to go with one team per school. What it comes down to is we will investigate a situation, pretty much what we do know, the biggest change is the Threat Assessment Team (TAT) will review incidents that occur and divert this person to the Act 71 suicide person, to the SAP team, or to outside agencies if needed. The team will then follow that up by checking on individuals compared to before where we would say the incident is done and that's it. Mr. Andrews asked isn't the SAP team already doing this. Chief Mill stated it is similar; the TAT is a step higher and overarching. Say for instance, if they see an issue or a problem with a particular person, what they do is they get the team together to see what is going on. SAP teams can't get into the same information that TAT can. The TAT can get into

personal information, outside information and so forth to determine which way we want to go with the student. Mr. Andrews asked isn't that a violation of their individual rights? Chief Mill replied, not when it is a danger to the school. I don't know if that is ever going to have to occur, this is something that the State has said we can do. It is not something we were going to do. Most of the time we can get into the school records and see their grades; however, if we would have to speak with a psychiatrist, they are bound that if it is a danger to someone else or the school district, they are compelled to give some information. Chief said a good example of what the TAT will do is the TAT will refer the student to the psychiatrist to say we are having an issue with this young man or young lady and we need your help. SAP helps with homework issues; this is just another layer. When you go through the training it is a better way. A lot of time, what will happen is the student gets in trouble and gets suspended or expelled for a time of say, two weeks. The TAT, when the student comes back, has to have a reentry plan to keep this individual on the straight and narrow. It's actually a pretty good concept. We assign one person to follow up with this individual, two weeks down the road, hey John how are you doing, how's things going, has there been any problems. The TAT will check with the teachers. It is designed to keep the threat down, follow up and keep on top of everything. It's a nice concept with a lot of work. Ms. Kulick said it's almost like contact tracing, making sure you follow up down the line. Ms. Kulick agreed a lot of kids fall through the cracks along the way, this is to help prevent that.

IV. POLICIES FOR DISCUSSION:

Policies presented by administration-

- a. Policy 218.1 Weapons—Ms. Kulick read through the policy revisions with the committee. Mr. Andrews asked for what is considered a “replica”. Chief Mill stated it could be a pellet gun or rubber/toy gun. Mr. Andrews asked what if a student is carrying it for a play? Chief Mill replied, as long as we determine it is a part of school-sponsored event, it will be deemed okay. Language was added that the administration, Safety & Security Coordinator and TAT shall be immediately informed of a student in possession of a weapon. The policy also clarifies language on searches. Chief Mill stated the administrator or designee, not school police, are authorized to search a student under reasonable suspicion, while school police need probable cause. Language was added that weapons under the control of law enforcement acting in official capacity are permitted. Chief Mill explained the reason why this was added was because in the past, we had a Monroe County Sheriff show up at graduation and the honors celebration in full uniform with his weapon. Chief Mill had to inform him that he could not bring his weapon in as he was not acting in his official capacity but rather as a parent of a graduate. We have had sheriffs from New Jersey go to football games with their weapon on. We don't know if that person is there for whatever reason, we would rather they do not come in with a weapon unless they are in official capacity. How do I know that that person is not disgruntled over something? We are permitted by state law to say whether they come in with a weapon or not. Probation officers come in with their weapons, that is different, but not just when attending an event as a spectator.
- b. Policy 218.2 Terroristic Threats—Terroristic threat/acts was changed to just terroristic threat. Chief Mill explained a threat such as “I am going to hurt you” vs. the act, is me actually doing it. So we want to stop the threat before it occurs. We added Safety & Security Coordinator and the TAT shall be immediately informed of a student making a terroristic threat. One additional change will be made to change local law enforcement to “the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction”. Chief stated, we have an MOU with all the schools. We will assess the situation and whether school police can handle it or if we choose to farm it out to state or local police. Mr. Andrews asked shouldn't an administrative hearing be convened before the Superintendent and the Board? In the past, we usually have a panel of two or three Board members and Chris Brown involved in the hearing. Dr. Vitulli explained that this is the administrative hearing at the school level and not the pre-expulsion hearing. The committee had no other concerns with the policy as written.

- c. Policy 236.1 Threat Assessment—New Policy. Ms. Kulick inquired whether this policy is based on the new legislation. Chief added that the TAT was put into place to take care of situations before they start. If a student is having an issue in the school, we will put the team together to discuss the individual and what is going on to try to get them the help that they need such as intervention with Act 71 or maybe SAP teams or counseling and so forth. It is a preventative measure. Ms. Kulick asked if the annual report to the Board would be at the end of the school year. Chief replied, yes. A good example is when I give you the Safe2Say configurations, for instance 102 Safe2Say calls, it is almost the same as a lot of these calls might go to the TAT. For example, if we get a Safe2Say about a threat of a student suicide that might occur at home, I will report it to the State Police and 911 Center who will then go out to the home and check that the student is okay. The next day, the TAT will get together and put the student on the Act 71 pathway to get the student the counseling they need. Ms. Kulick commented that this is good because we will actually follow through.
- d. Policy 247 Hazing—When a student’s behavior indicates a threat to the safety of the student and others, we added language that district staff shall report the student to the TAT. There were no other concerns with this policy as written.
- e. Policy 249 Bullying/Cyberbullying—The same paragraph has been added here along with some additional reference numbers. There were no other concerns with this policy as written.
- f. Policy 805 Emergency Preparedness and Response—The only revision in Policy 805 is the reference to new policy 236.1. There were no other concerns with this policy as written.
- g. Policy 805.2 School Security Personnel—Chief Mill shared the major change here is, we now must do a law enforcement background check for applicants for a school security or a school police position. It tightens it up a bit. School security do not have the same powers as school police and this is because some school districts have school security that are armed. In my opinion, that is not the way to go, so that is why this language is in there. If we go on, school security and school police will serve on the TAT, it talks about TAT information, talks about the training school security personnel will get on situational awareness, trauma-informed, behavioral health, suicide and bullying prevention awareness. The background checks are good because they allow all law enforcement agencies to put all the information about an officer into a central database. For instance, if Fred Mill gets fired from Bethlehem PD, and he is not a good officer, it will be put in the registry. If someone were to apply for a position here, it will say this guy is not someone you really want. Mr. Andrews asked can we get into that system. As Chief, I will be able to get into the database, so if there are any red flags, I am not going to hire the person. This is an excellent thing as it will put to rest some of the officers who shouldn’t be police officers. This is no different from teachers, that if they get fired in PA, they can go to Maryland to get a job. Mr. Andrews asked, so is it a national database? Chief Mill stated yes, it is going to be. Ms. Kulick stated this is because of all those incidences happening across the nation. Chief Mill added the district shall make reports about the hiring and separation and shall maintain all records as required for a law enforcement agency in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. The reason why an officer separated will be recorded, on bad terms or good, and if someone were to call me from a police department, which they will have to now, they are going to ask and I will have to tell them. Before, if you called a police department, they could say I have no comment or I can’t tell you, that won’t happen anymore, which is a good thing because it makes it safer. Mr. Andrews stated it protects us too that we get honest information vs. “I can’t comment”.
- h. Policy 907 School Visitors—A definition for “visitors” was added. Mr. Andrews asked, where does the School Board fit in? Chief Mill replied Board members are considered visitors. When I go to a different school district, I am considered a visitor and when I recently went to Wallenpaupack SD, I did not carry my weapon as I was not there on official business, so I produced an ID upon entry. Mr. Rohner agreed stating we have the same access as a visitor.

Ms. Kulick noted that photo id's are scanned, recorded and maintained in the district's database. Mr. Forsyth shared, just so the school board understands, the reason that they are declared visitors is strictly because there is no requirement in PA that School Board members have all of the necessary background checks to be treated otherwise. Chief Mill noted, just so you know, the scan does not check criminal history, it checks the sexual offender registry, so unless you were on that registry, it would not give anything. Ms. Kulick added this is certainly good in a school setting.

Public Participation: None

VIII. ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS

ACTION BY THE COMMITTEE: Motion was made by George Andrews to authorize and direct the administration to post the following item(s) with noted revisions for PUBLIC REVIEW during the month of July and subsequent Board action in August: Policies 218.1, 218.2, 236.1, 247, 249, 805, 805.2, and 907. Motion was seconded by Richard Schlameuss and carried unanimously, 4-0.

IX. **ADJOURNMENT:** 5:04 p.m.

ACTION BY THE COMMITTEE: Motion to adjourn was made by Rich Schlameuss. Motion was seconded by George Andrews and carried unanimously, 4-0.

Next meeting: August 16, 2021 at 4:30 p.m. in the Carl T. Secor Administration Board Room & via Zoom.

Respectively submitted by,
Debra Wisotsky