

BOE Policy Committee Minutes
Friday, January 12, 2024
Municipal Building, BOE Conference Room
3 Primrose St. Newtown, CT 06470

CALL TO ORDER Meeting was called to order at 2:00 pm

IN ATTENDANCE Todd Higgins, Doria Linnetz, Chris Melillo, Mark Pompano, Anne Uberti, Sarah Connell, 1 public

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION None

APPROVE MINUTES Todd Higgins made a motion to approve the minutes of November 15, 2023. Doria pointed out that there were two errors in the minutes. On page 3, it says “Ms. Linnetz asked Mr. Pompano if he plans drills that the schools are no aware of”. It should say “not aware of”. On Page 2, “Mr. Higgin’s goal” should be deleted. Motion passes unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Policy 1700 – Possession of Firearms or Deadly Weapons

Mr. Higgin’s reported that a BOE member suggested including “electronic weapons” in the policy. We reached out to legal counsel and their recommendation is to track the statutory language and prohibitions. Conn. Gen. Stat. Sec. 53a-217b definitions do not include tasers and similar electronic devices. Mr. Higgins agrees with the recommendation from legal counsel. Ms. Linnetz and Mr. Pompano agreed as well.

This policy will be sent back to the BOE for their second read and possible approval.

Policy 6114 - Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness

Mr. Pompano made the initial edits to this policy and sent it to Mr. Higgins for his review. Mr. Higgins also made revisions and his edited document was distributed before this meeting.

Mr. Higgins believes that the biggest takeaway from this policy is that it is about emergencies and preparedness. It is also about crisis management. This policy also covers the creation and operation of the District Safety and Security Committee and School-based Safety and Security Committees.

Mr. Higgins’ goal was to contain all the language that is driving emergency and disaster preparations in one policy.

Mr. Pompano reviewed Mr. Higgins revisions and had no issues.

Ms. Linnetz asked if this policy was a CABE suggested policy. Mr. Pompano said it was. Newtown’s current policy is very different.

Ms. Linnetz asked if Mr. Higgins is suggesting not keeping Policy 6114.7 because it can be covered in Policy 6114. Mr. Higgins responded that he does not have a reason to not keep the policy, however he also does not have the subject matter knowledge to know how to improve it. He tried to include language re: emergency preparedness from Policy 6114.7 into Policy 6114.

Ms. Linnetz viewed Policy 6114 as the umbrella of these security policies. She sees the policies as connected but different.

Ms. Linnetz asked Mr. Pompano if the District completes annual assessments. Mr. Pompano answered that the District completes one yearly.

Mr. Higgins asked if he thought a Security Audit from an outside party would be beneficial. Mr. Pompano does but it is expensive. The last audit was done in 2013. Mr. Melillo agrees it would be positive for the District. Mrs. Uberti agreed and asked what the assessments would focus on. Mr. Pompano said it would consist of meetings with staff, Administration, surveys, training, procedures and practices and communications.

Mr. Higgins asked Mr. Pompano the cost of this audit. Mr. Pompano believes it would be close to \$200,000 for all seven schools.

Mr. Pompano will create language that references an independent audit and send it to Mr. Higgins.

Mr. Higgins will take all of the input from this meeting and work at editing this policy again. He asked the committee to send him an email if they have any input before the next meeting.

This policy will be brought back to the next policy meeting (January 22).

Policy 6114.7 - Safe Schools

This policy refers to multiple committees within the policy. It references the School Security and Safety Committee in the 3rd paragraph and also refers to an "Advisory Committee". Mr. Higgins believes this is a drafting error and believes it came directly from CABE because Newtown does not have an "Advisory Committee" but it is most likely referencing the SSSC.

Mrs. Uberti stated that the School Safety and Security Committee does not handle the issues (especially student conduct and discipline) listed in the fourth paragraph.

Mr. Higgins asked Mrs. Uberti if this committee was evaluating how the policies are working. She answered that the committee's purpose is to discuss security and safety issues in their building and then bring it to the attention of the Administration.

Ms. Linnetz asked if every school has procedures to deal with these situations but it is not the SSSC to review them. Mrs. Uberti said that they would be the committee that reviews the policies and procedures but how it actually managed is not the committee's role.

Mr. Melillo is concerned about the bullet list and does not feel like it is accurate in today's climate. He asked the committee if we needed to keep it in the policy. Mr. Higgins said that the committee needs to figure out the purpose of this policy.

Mrs. Uberti suggested including language that states each school will maintain its own safety and security committee, which is required by law. Mr. Higgins stated that he included that language in the red lined version of Policy 6114. Mr. Higgins is unclear about what to do with the additional scope in Policy 6114.7 that is not emergency and disaster.

Ms. Linnetz asked the committee why CABE separated the policies.

Mrs. Uberti reminded the committee that this policy is not required and having a SSSC is law. Mr. Higgins isn't ready to form an opinion on if the District needs this policy. He believes that if the District keeps it, it will need to be completely rewritten.

Mr. Higgins asked the committee how they felt about the bullet list in the fourth paragraph. Are they broad enough? Ms. Linnetz asked if the list came from statute. Mrs. Uberti believes that everything on the list is valid to include.

Mr. Higgins spoke about language in this policy referencing reporting and information flow to the Board.

Ms. Linnetz asked if the committees were reporting to Mr. Pompano. Mrs. Uberti said that when she was on the committee, they would send the reports to Mr. Pompano.

Mr. Higgins believes that the Superintendent should update the Board after each District Security and Safety Committee meeting. The committee agreed. Some information may need to be given in an executive session.

Mr. Melillo wonders where the list in the fourth paragraph came from and would be interested in reaching out to CABA regarding it. Mr. Higgins said he would be fine with reaching out to CABA or legal counsel for the rationale of the list.

Mr. Higgins will take all of the input from this meeting and work at editing this policy. He asked the committee to send him an email if they have any input before the next meeting. Mr. Higgins will also get feedback from the DSSC.

Ms. Linnetz also recommends sending this policy to the principals for their feedback.

Policy 6114.1 - Fire / Drills

Mr. Pompano made edits to this policy for the committee to review.

Ms. Linnetz asked Mr. Pompano if he annually reports to the Department Emergency Services on the Board's behalf. Mr. Pompano said that the District has a program called NaviGate that logs all of the drills in the District. Mr. Pompano sends that information annually.

Mrs. Uberti believes that Mr. Pompano's edits are straightforward.

Mr. Higgins suggests tying this more tightly to the EOP and Individual School Safety Plans.

Mrs. Uberti recommends adding "In compliance with each school's EOP" to the language in this policy.

The committee suggests including reference to the ERT (Emergency Response Team).

Mr. Pompano will make additional edits to this policy and send to Mr. Higgins for review.

Policy 6114.6 - Emergency Closings

Mr. Melillo made edits to this policy for the committee to review.

Ms. Linnetz questioned if the Principals contacted the staff for emergency closings. The committee agreed that The Superintendent would notify all impacted school community members which includes staff.

Ms. Linnetz also reminded the committee that an emergency closing may not be weather related. It was agreed to add "As appropriate" in paragraph 3 after Director of Facilities.

Ms. Connell will make the approved edits and add to the 6000 series queue for BOE first read.

Discussion on Policy 0200, Policy 6141.51/52 and Policy 6172.5 were postponed to a future meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION None

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Linnetz made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Higgins seconded. Motion was unanimously approved. Meeting was adjourned at 3:45 pm.