

# Townshend School Board

## Special Meeting

October 4, 2007 7PM

Townshend Elementary School

**Attendance: Kathy Hege, David Dezendorf, Glen Beattie, Al Claussen III, Townshend School Board; Deborah Leggott, Townshend Principal; Megan Richardson, Barbara Bedortha, Kris Jerz, Townshend Teachers; Rick Hege, Beth Cutts, Paul Jerz, Deidre Beattie, Heidi Russ (7:02PM), Toni Dezendorf (7:02PM), Terri Walton (7:09PM).**

**1. Call to Order:** Kathy called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

**2. Townshend Elementary School Building Security Procedure:**

- A. Kathy reminded everyone of the prior meeting (November 3<sup>d</sup>, 2006) where the school security had been discussing the plan listed as #2(locking the 2<sup>nd</sup> door into the school). We did have a recommendation following a January 2007 lock-down where the Vermont State Police recommended locking the front door.
- B. Beth asked if the Board was deciding between plan 1 or plan 2. Kathy replied we are deciding between plan 1, plan 2, or Plan zero.
- C. Paul asked for an explanation of how the plans would work and about the buzzer on the interior door. Kathy explained the administrative assistant would be able to buzz an appropriate person into the school after they checked in.
- D. Deidre asked what would happen if no one is in the front office. Would she have to wait if she stopped in to take a student an appointment? Beth asked if she'd have to plan ahead. Heidi stated some parents are calling ahead to warn her of their arriving to pickup students. Deborah said they are working to figure out the way to ensure the front hall is manned.
- E. The staff agreed the reality is the outside door being locked would not shut off the front office from the rest of the school.
  - I. If the door is locked, then the front door would not be available to be opened for ventilation.
- F. Paul thought plan 1 would help keep the school more secure, which agrees with the Vermont State police recommendation.
- G. Rick asked why is this being considered. Deborah stated lock-down drills are mandated by law, much like fire drills are required. Every month either a fire drill or a lock-down drill is required. Various schools in the district are making different decisions regarding lock down. The critique done in January showed Townshend is doing a good job, but the state police say the school needs more security.
- H. Each of the schools are doing security differently, and inconsistent information is received depending on who at the schools is asked. Some of the schools don't allow parents to enter the school or classrooms.
- I. Deidre said we should spend more money for vigilance during the student recess time.
  - I. Heidi asked for the front door to be unlocked when students are outside.
  - II. Toni asked who would be watching the building to make sure the building is not occupied when the students are outside.
  - III. Deidre relayed that the common is a public space and cannot be secured for only student use.
- J. Glen asked everyone to answer what would they do if someone deranged was holding a weapon to a student. Everyone needs to think of this realistically. Terri stated vigilance is more important than locking the building. If we can make sure a continued presence at the front then we'd be more secure than relying on a locked door.
- K. Deborah stated the lock-down drill is working quickly. Barbara said the younger students are being shown the lock down as a way to protect for dangerous weather.

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- L.** Rick mentioned his feeling that the VT State police are feeding a frenzy that does not need to happen. In a school and community this size, we have more to fear from people that are known than from a stranger off the street. We need to be vigilant to the situations. The open door atmosphere helps keep the school be seen as friendly to the community. We need to build our precautions based on the risk. We're more at risk putting the students in the car than walking into the school.
- I.** Terri felt more emphasis should be put on awareness of danger from the common or students walking home after school than locking down the building.
  - II.** Toni said we need to have more awareness of who is entering the building than in securing the door. More time needs to be spent on helping the students be aware of their surroundings when outside the building.
- M.** Heidi stated when Deborah is out of the building, we don't have front office coverage. She asked for a procedure that would allow the door to be locked when front coverage is not available.
- I.** Terri asked if it would be possible to have volunteers or responsible students to respond to people entering the building. Kris asked if we could send the parents times when the front office coverage is needed to enlist volunteers.
  - II.** Deborah said the legalities have changed, making it difficult to let a student take the level of responsibility needed to secure the front of the building. The students are also having to learn more in the same time, they need to spend their time in the classroom.
- N.** Kathy reminded everyone that we run the risk of having a student on the porch at the wrong time if the door is locked.
- O.** Megan stated she liked having parents allowed into the building, but she's responsible for the security of the students in her class.
- P.** Glen asked if staggered breaks could be taken to make sure someone is covering the front office.
- I.** Kris said if a teacher is covering the office, fewer teachers would be available to watch the students during recess. Also, no one is trained to disarm individuals and a locked front door would gain time for the teachers to lock down the school.
  - II.** Rick asked if a front door bell could be installed that could be heard throughout the building, but to have a tone different from any other alarm used at the school.
  - III.** Several people explained that when the students are on recess, the front office staff are having lunch. Following recess, the front office staff monitor the student lunch, while the teachers who were monitoring recess also have lunch.
  - IV.** Terri asked if it would be possible to combine the front door bell, parental volunteers to monitor the front office, and notifying the community when the door would be locked.
- Q.** Al asked for a straw pole to see where everyone stood.
- I.** Plan zero would be to do nothing. No one wanted this option.
  - II.** Plan 1, lock the front door. one person wanted this option.
  - III.** Plan 1A, lock the front door when front office is not covered, have a door bell for use, use parental volunteers, notify the community when the door would be locked. the majority wanted this option.
  - IV.** Plan 2, lock the interior doors, but keep the front door unlocked.
  - V.** Paul thought if plan 1A can be made to work, it would be safe.
  - VI.** Beth picked plan 1 knowing even though it's recommended, she'd be locked outside fussing at herself.
  - VII.** Many people felt the need to have parental involvement to help with the security of the school.
  - VIII.** Terri asked for parents to be called if a large block of time the office would not be covered.
- R.** Glen asked if the volunteers would be required to have a background check as they might need to assist a child. Several individuals pointed out they already have had background checks, as they also function as substitute teachers. The group decided the parent volunteers would on occasion need to interact in an unsupervised manner with the students.
- S.** Kathy said the board would take this information back to the October 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. She asked the parents who want to volunteer to monitor the front office to please let the school know. Toni said we're just trying to make the school better than it is now.
- T.** Barbara said the teachers are monitoring quite a few students during guided recess, but if a parent wanted

to monitor recess, she would be willing to help provide office coverage.

U. Beth asked if the only recommendation received from the lock-down drill was locking the front door?

Kathy said several small recommendations were made. The State police were very happy with the lock-down and just had only small recommendations to improve procedures.

V. Glen mentioned the school isn't locked unless all of the doors and windows are locked.

**3. Adjourn:** Glen made the Motion to adjourn. The motion carries and the meeting adjourned at 7:56PM.

Sincerely,

David Dezendorf, Vice-Chair.