

SOMERSWORTH SCHOOL BOARD

January 26th 2017

City Hall Chambers

7:00pm

1. **CALL TO ORDER - ROLL CALL - PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Austin called the meeting to order at 7:00pm upon call of the roll the following members were present: Rivers, Hanlon, Joanne Pepin, Austin, Hiller and Bolduc. Absent: Brennan
2. **Comments by Visitors:** Austin stated that in order to assure that persons who wish to appear before the Board may be heard and, at the same time, it may conduct its meetings properly and efficiently, the Board adopts as policy the following procedures and rules pertaining to public participation at Board meetings. 1. The first 15 minutes will be set aside for citizens to address the Board. Any individual desiring to speak shall give his or her name, address, and the group, if any, that is represented. The presentation should be as brief as possible. He stated that speakers may offer comments on such school operations and programs as concern them. In public session, however, the Board will not hear personal complaints of school personnel nor complaints against any person connected with the school system. Other channels are provided for Board consideration and disposition of legitimate complaints involving individuals, which should be referred to the Superintendent for appropriate action. He stated that we will start with a comment by Principal Dana Hilliard and Superintendent Mosca. Dana Hilliard stated that on behalf of the Superintendent, Somersworth Police Department and I, I would like to thank all of the parents who directly reached out to us to express their concerns and offer their feedback, as well as their thanks for ensuring the positive outcome which occurred last Wednesday. He stated that since the incident, the Superintendent, Chief of Police, School Resource Officer and I, have and continue to review safety protocol and procedures, in addition to examining the details of that day. Upon review, we have found some areas which we can jointly improve upon, these include; If a situation, were to occur again (which we pray to God it does not) a joint statement would be drafted and released by the Police Department and SAU. He stated that hard and soft lockdown procedures were and continue to be review. The discussion has evolved from current active shooter situations, to examining non active shooter incidents. Both law enforcement and the SAU will continue to review active shooter incidents, and incidents involving non active shooters, to ensure safety of all of the students and staff. He stated that since last Thursday, the guidance department has and continues to attend to any and all of the student's needs. Guidance counselors have been walking through the classrooms, sitting in lunches, and reaching out to students who we are aware experience some level of anxiety. If parents still are aware of their child needing guidance services please contact the administration or guidance department directly. We realized that the student body should have been addressed on Thursday, but instead waited to create small lessons in advisory and a well thought out plan for proceeding week. He stated that the Middle School advisory program has developed and instructed a review of safety procedures with all students this week, some well thought out questions have been generated through those discussions. We will continue some of the lessons and conversations into the weeks that follow. Officer Campbell, Assistant Principal Devin McNelly and I will also be reviewing our school wide expectations of "Being Safe, Respectful, Responsible, and Cooperative" as it is related to this incident at this Friday's community day. A mid-year review of all of the expectations took place two weeks ago during community day. Supt. Mosca stated that we have received concerns regarding our statement that all students were safe, we understand that having a loaded gun in a school setting does create an immediate threat and danger, we apologize for that. Moving forward we, will again send out a joint press release in a timely manner, that includes both school and police. In closing we again will continue to examine and review all our school protocols and appreciate the communities support in keeping our schools safe. Chief Kretschmar stated that he would like to address the concerns about if the school should have search and searching individual students. He stated that it became clear pretty quick that this was an incident where a loaded gun was brought to school but there was no evidence indicating that anyone else was involved or any plan to threaten or brandish it in a threatening manner. He stated that he can't get into the evidence but rest

assured that the safety of the students and staff was at the forefront of everything we do and we take it very serious and if for a second they thought there were other dangers once they secured the weapon they would have taken further steps but it never rose to that level. Austin stated that they will now open it to public comments but there will be no board comments and it won't be a question and answer with the board. Chris Rees stated that he has a 12 year old daughter and to him she is the most innocent person but he is realizing that there are things that he doesn't know about her, most recently about grades she lied to us and that was hard for us to handle. He stated that she is 12 and she knows the repercussions to come for what she does wrong and she lied to me and we raise her not to lie but she thought she would get in trouble. He stated that to hear you say that she was safe with a loaded gun because he said he wasn't going to use it is asinine. He stated that he is extremely concerned by the lack of response, it took four days for you to respond on the first email and each time in the response I hear the same theme that at no time was safety a concern and nobody was in immediate danger. He stated that it is extremely hard for you to sit here and believe that in your hearts that no one was ever in danger when my daughter's bag was not checked and not one of you knew if she had a relationship with that kid and none of you know if she was involved in this because you didn't check her bag. He stated that it is very scary to me that every day I allow my daughter to go to school and expect that she is going to be safe based on the decisions that you guys make. I am not asking or wanting this to be about someone's job it is about correcting what was wrong. He stated that this is the first time I have heard from you guys speaking that you are trying to address it which is great to hear and I appreciate that. Acknowledgement is what the parents are asking for, don't send us letter after letter telling us that our kids were never in danger that is an insult to us as parents. He stated that he is losing sleep over this and I hope that you acknowledge that you did something wrong and show some accountability that this was handled poorly and god forbid something like this doesn't happen again. He stated that the community would be involved and he would be involved to put something in place, I am not putting the burden just on the school we are all a part of this, our children are our future and if there is anything he can do to support the school, administration and police he would do that. He stated that most parents would do that as well. He stated that he would like to know if they have access or the right to know what our protocols are in these situations, when do we go into lockdown and what is the protocol for that. These are all questions that the parents are wondering about. Thank you for your time. Richard Brooks stated that topic of discussion seems to be the incident that happened last week. That incident was handled quickly, professionally and resulted in no injuries and now people are here demanding and asking that more be done. Why does anything more need to be done except for thanking all involved that handled the situation safely. He stated that this is all unfolding while the school board is starting their budget process and we already know that there isn't enough funds to cover all the costs needed and I am sure people have suggested installing metal detectors and that would require at least one person at each active entrance and the extra costs to pay each person Somersworth would then have the highest tax rate in that scenario. He stated that we could change nothing and the children would still attend the same safe schools they have been attending all along. He stated that any blame of the action of the 11 year old should be placed on the parents it is their job to teach their children basic communication, proper hygiene and so on before starting school. He stated that this would also include not taking something that is not yours and proper respect and safe handling of any gun they may own. He stated that if that gun came from somewhere other than the parents then it is quite clear that the child has not learned about stealing. He stated that children today are far more likely to be hit by a car on their way to school than to be shot by a gun in school. He stated but no outcry tonight about texting that often causes that and many parents still text behind the wheel while at a stop light until someday when they look up from a text and see a green light and instantly accelerate and fail to notice that someone's child hasn't finished crossing the street and still in front of the car. Parents please get your priorities straight and stop listening to the media's biased questioning of a safely handled situation. The local newspaper printed a long list of unanswered questions that only get answered when the police and school take the time to handle the situation just like they did

that day. Answers do not appear immediately in real life situations, this is not google. We need to consider the real problem that caused an 11 year old to take a simple tool without permission and should have known better in the first place if taught real discipline by their parents. Poor parenting is the real problem here. I would like to say thank you to all the teachers and city officials who dealt with the situation and continue to keep children safe here in Somersworth. Steve Potter stated that he can appreciate that it takes 2-3 hours to investigate this, asking the right questions, not knowing what a soft lockdown is versus a hard lockdown but would it have hurt to do a search of the entire school there are other things that could have happened. He stated that we talked about hard and soft lockdowns but what is the ultimate repercussions having a gun brought to school that is loaded. We heard that the guidance counselors are available but he doesn't know what the protocols are after the fact. What is the education for this particular child, is this child going to come back to the school and is that going to cause more psychological concerns for the students. How are we going to handle the repercussions of what happened from this incident and do we have something like that in place. He stated that if they are in place would it be wise to let us parents know so we can comment further on if we believe that is what should happen. He stated that as a community shouldn't we take steps to ensure that we regardless of the situation have the safest schools around. He stated that if it takes us going to the state then I say push it to the state, we need to have different repercussions for those who break the rules that is what we need to put our concentration on. He stated that we need to understand what made this individual do this act and provide help to that individual going forward. He stated that he is concerned with the future safety of the students if that student were to come back to that school. Ginny Hahn stated that she is a resident and teacher and she commends everyone on how they handled the situation. She stated that she is in charge of advisory and there have been a lot of great discussions that have come out of this and she would encourage anyone to ask their son or daughter on what is being talked about in advisory. She stated that we are going the extra yards and will continue. She stated that she would like to see us tackle other issues. She stated that it was a onetime incident that she hopes to never happen again but it was handled well. Anyone who has questions contact me about what we are doing, it is the staff and students doing the exercise together. Jeremy Lambert stated that we really need to take in how fortunate we are in this situation and it is an opportunity as a community and school to take the lessons learned and take a hard look minus the egos of what could be improved. He stated that typically in these situations you are learning over a body so we are lucky to have a wakeup call to do things better and understand how fortunate we were and be willing to talk about what could have been done better. Check your ego at the door and take a hard look to see what we can improve upon so it doesn't happen in Somersworth.

3. CONSENT CALENDAR:

3.1 Removal of items from the consent calendar: None

3.2 Approval of Consent Calendar: A motion made by Joanne Pepin seconded by Hanlon to approve the consent calendar as presented. VOTE: motion passed, unanimously. Approved were:

- January 10 2017- Minutes from Somersworth School Board Meeting
- January 12 2017- Minutes from the Somersworth School Board Budget Workshop
- Maple Wood News-February

4. **ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Supt. Mosca stated that she just wanted to remind everyone that we have entered second semester and we are moving right along.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS:

5.1 Building, Grounds & Transportation: None

Curriculum and Activities: None

Policy Committee: None

5.2 City Council Update: None

5.3 Student Representative Report-Isis Orchard: None

5.4 Superintendent Search Information Gathering from Public: Austin stated that at the SAU meeting

they talked about ways to gather information from the public. Hanlon stated that they discussed bringing it to the board to discuss as Somersworth versus the SAU board and what is the best option for us. He stated that what we are looking for in a Superintendent is different from Rollinsford so we need to characterize what our needs are. Hiller stated that we wanted to talk about how to involve the public in this decision so that they have a chance to say what they want. Hanlon stated that last time they put together a search committee and at the end they pulled in the public and had input. He stated that we will still do that but this is a new piece so we have a list to identify our needs so this is new from last time and we need to figure out how to get that list. He stated that we could have a workshop to discuss the needs of the district and what they would look for as characteristics of a new superintendent. Hiller stated that they tossed around ideas at the SAU meeting such as a survey. She stated that we could have a night where people come and speak and get ideas from the public. We could also have a teacher meeting where the same things happen. She stated that a survey would be information overload. She stated that if we had a night for people to come and say things that they think then it won't be so overloaded. She stated that if people care enough to what the new Superintendent should be then they will come out. Hanlon stated that we are under a time constraint so we need to get it on the calendar and schedule that. Joanne Pepin stated that she agrees and due to the time constraints plus the time on everyone out there that email would be her suggestion, to have people who have ideas to email any board member or contact the Superintendent or chair and have it digitally done at their convenience and then they don't have to come to a meeting. Hanlon stated that he is not opposed to it but to cut down on the data to sort through if we had a workshop discussion some people might change their minds after hearing other people talk and to see the discussion and then we could list things out. Hiller stated that she agrees with Matt that she would rather hear them because written things can be taken different ways but when you hear them you can see their face and body language. She stated that they can say what is most important and then they can take everything into consideration. She stated that she would suggest having it on the 9th. Austin stated that we have a three member consensus to have a community forum. Rivers stated that we may be underwhelmed by the turnout and he is basing that on what is going on in Dover they only had one person show up. He stated that he was part of the search committee last time and he was impressed by the turnout so it can go both ways. Hanlon stated that his feeling is that Rollinsford is doing one so he wants to afford the same opportunity here. Bolduc stated that picking a Superintendent is important and the more people involved the muddier it gets. He stated that he may offer some suggestions but good luck to the committee but don't spread too thin it is difficult to make a choice and something you can get into too deep. Austin stated that he would suggest that he will meet with the Superintendent to work on a date and get back to you. He stated that they may need to meet in a different venue so we aren't sitting up here and the community down there. Hiller stated that she feels it is cleaner this way so we can hear them speak. Austin stated that we will let people know as soon as possible about a plan. Bolduc stated that we have a black box theatre in the CTC so we should make use of something that we just got. Hiller stated that it should be televised.

6. ACTION ITEM

7. NEW BUSINESS

8. OLD BUSINESS

8.1 Vision 20/20 Committee: None

8.2 Budget: Austin stated that there is an update in the packet if anyone has any questions.

D'Agostino stated that she wanted to inform the board that a memo was sent to city council regarding requesting the release of funds that Rollinsford paid for debt for the high school.

9. MAYOR FORUM DATES:

- March 18 2017- At Large

10. FUTURE MEETING DATES/SUGGESTED AGENDA ITEMS:

- January 26 2017- Somersworth School Board Budget Workshop

- **February 2 2017- Somersworth School Board Budget Workshop**
- **February 7 2017- Somersworth School Board Budget Presentation and Public Hearing followed by School Board Meeting**
- **February 20 2017- Somersworth School Board Meeting**

Joanne Pepin stated that we are down two members and Sean was the assistant chair and Kelly has been absent for work and if by chance Don is not here she would like to see on the agenda an item where we nominate a vice chair to take Sean's place. Hiller stated that she seconds that.

11. CLOSING COMMENTS

11.1 Visitors: None

11.2 Board Members: Hanlon commended the administration and the resource officer with the job that they did. He stated that this is a split second decision that they are making and fortunately for us it turned out very well. He stated that he doesn't want to start having administration second guessing themselves when they get into situations like this. He stated that he thanks god that they made decisions the way that they did that day. He stated that hindsight is 20/20 and they need to look at things, there is always room for improvement and he is glad that they acknowledged that. He stated that this was not an active shooter but they have had training in that and he is sure it would have kicked in and we will continue to train like that. Supt. Mosca stated that they did a training last April during the in service day with the entire staff and in December with the new staff. Joanne Pepin stated that she agreed with every person that spoke tonight and having worked in the high school and been a parent she would concur with each of you. At the same time she is glad to see the administration and police admit that it didn't go perfect but there isn't a single person that can say that they could have done a better job in that instance. She stated that you follow what you are trained to do and hope that you don't make mistakes and that you learn from them. She stated that one thing that is overlooked is the students themselves. She stated that they hear all the time hear something say something and we had students who did that and we have to make sure we tell the students that came forward that they are not snitches and if you see something say something and look what was prevented. She stated that she doesn't know the details it is all confidential like it should be but she hopes the parents are proud of the kids who came forward, they are little heroes and she commends those students. Rivers stated that he appreciates the comments and he understands the different perspectives and there is an emotional side. He stated that there are lessons learned going forward. He stated that there was an incident in Rockingham County in April 2014 and they did have a focus group on that subject so it might be useful to check in with them on what they came up with. Hiller stated that she commends the administration, police and school resource officer but she had a question on if the school went on lockdown at all. She stated that she hopes that until they knew for sure that other people aren't involved that the school should have gone on lockdown. She stated that she respects our police chief and realizes that he can recognize that this wasn't turning into an active shooter situation. She stated that she commends the follow up activities with the students in advisory she was impressed with what is being done. She stated that there is a difference between telling and tattling and she praised the students for coming forward and hopes that they are getting attention for doing the right thing. She stated that someone mentioned that they sent emails and it took four days to hear back and part of it is that we need to get information in order to respond. She stated that she agrees that it could have been better communication with the parents. Bolduc stated that he agrees with what everyone said. He stated that it is easy to say what you would do when you are not there, he thanked the administration and the chief and his staff they do a great job. He stated that the incident was handled well and he understands the concerns. He stated that the students who spoke up that takes a lot of courage so thank you to them. He stated that hopefully it is all confidential but if you see something say something. He stated that you need to remember that we don't know what comes through those

doors in the morning and we don't know what came tonight until something happens or speaks up and it is not an easy thing to talk about. He stated that we have two open seats here and it is a good way to get started, we need you and some fresh ideas. Austin thanked the public who came tonight, your input and opinions are all valuable and we appreciate your time and for you to come. He stated that he would remind people that there may be aspects of this incident that may not become public due to restrictions and laws and may prohibit us from disclosing that information so if you are looking for that you may be disappointed. He stated that there was a lot of talk about facts on social media even before the initial press release and social media is not the best source of factual information you need to rely on official statements and if you need more information speak to these officials and don't taut social media as fact when you don't know if it is fact. He stated that there is always room to improve on anything and it is being reviewed and making changes where they need to be made and it was an opportunity to learn. He thanked everyone for coming and if there is more information made available they will do that.

12. NON-PUBLIC: None

13. ADJOURNMENT: A motion made by Hanlon seconded by Hiller to adjourn. VOTE: motion passed, unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.

Katie Krauss
Board Secretary

Pending Board Approval