

## **Security Advisory Committee 8/6/18**

### **Meeting 1 Notes**

#### **Topic: Build A Shared Understanding of Best Practices in School Safety and Security**

#### **Review of School Safety Best Practices provided by Don Flynn, Covert Investigations Inc.**

Mr. Flynn reviewed the process behind the security assessment of the Syosset Central School District completed by Covert Investigations in 2015. This assessment took place over several months, both during and after school hours. The assessment employed an “all hazards approach” and evaluated all security-related issues (it was not limited to active shooter situations). The District was provided with a highly confidential report on various security-related issues. Covert Investigations has recently reviewed the District’s progress and is very happy with what has been planned, completed and implemented by the District since the initial assessment.

Mr. Flynn commented that the District has taken a multi-dimensional approach incorporating the three essential security disciplines:

- Highly trained staff (applies to ALL staff including teachers, food service workers, etc.)
- Updated, fluid and practiced plans
- Technology (used as a tool – not an end-all solution)

Mr. Flynn explained that the District is undertaking both overt and covert initiatives, and while the overt initiatives will be reviewed with the community, there are many covert initiatives underway for which details cannot be shared so as not to compromise the security plans. Lastly, Mr. Flynn emphasized the importance of the need for situational awareness. Every situation is different, and students and staff need to be prepared to react in an appropriate manner depending on the situation. He also stated the importance of finding a balance between security and maintaining a welcoming environment for students and parents.

#### **Review of Syosset’s Recent Progress by Ray Farrell, Director of Security**

After introducing himself and providing a summary of his law enforcement background, Mr. Farrell provided an update on the current security-related work being done by the District. His presentation can be found [here](#).

Following the presentations, community members worked in small groups to process the information presented and prepare questions for the security panel, which included Mr. Flynn, Mr. Farrell and Superintendent Dr. Tom Rogers. The questions posed to the panel and a summary of the answers provided are listed below.

#### **Community Member Questions:**

**Is there a way to engage people within the community with a law enforcement background, such as retired police officers and auxiliary police, to aid in patrolling the schools?**

Response by Mr. Flynn: While we are always looking for input from volunteers, it is not recommended to execute this in an official capacity. The District needs to vet the security team and be sure their training is up-to-date and maintained to the level the District requires.

**What is in place right now for students exhibiting mental distress? What happens if it is suspected a student may intend to do harm?**

Response by Dr. Rogers: There is a Positive Behavioral Intervention System in place which includes a threat assessment process. This process is being refined to become more methodical and driven by data. There is a physical presence in the buildings of mental health professionals for any situations that need to be addressed. The District understands there are often signals beforehand and the importance of discerning these signals, and this process is well underway.

Response by Mr. Flynn: During the security assessment process, he noted that the building staff is very proactive in addressing potential issues and contacting authorities. The principals err on the side of caution and are in close contact with the NCPD POP officers.

**What should parents' reaction be during lockdown and lockout situations?**

Response by Dr. Rogers: The last thing parents should do is come to the school. This could result in emergency vehicles being unable to access the buildings due to traffic congestion. The District has been consulting with Mr. Flynn and Mr. LaDuca (Syosset's liaison with the Department of Homeland Security) on using building modes to control space and people for various situations, not only worst-case scenarios. Some examples of these modes are *shelter-in-place*, *lockdown*, and *lockout*, for which the terminology is specified by the state. While the District does not have the flexibility to use our own terms for the different levels of building modes, we are working on succinct messages to convey what is happening to the community. For example, a message may include the term "as a precaution" to indicate there is no active threat. There is a need to be both clear and concise. The District is working on messaging at the present time to be sure the information can be conveyed accurately within the character limit of a text message.

**During recess at the elementary level, students exit the buildings. Is there a monitor or security guard at the door while the students are outside?**

Response by Mr. Farrell: With the start of the school year, every elementary school will have two guards. While one remains at the building entrance, the other is mobile. When students are at recess or outside for any other reason such as P.E., it is the job of the mobile guard to focus on the students who are outside.

**Could there be a monitoring or signaling system when people exit the building?**

Response by Mr. Flynn: The District is in the midst of a huge technology upgrade and the platform it is moving to has an analytical capability which will aid in monitoring several cameras at once. For example, if movement is detected it will highlight that camera for the human monitor.

Response by Dr. Rogers: The door ajar system being installed will result in two alarms, the first is an audible alarm at the door and the second is a centralized alarm for security staff. There has been a suggestion to install a card reader on the inside of the building so that staff must swipe their card to exit, which the District is looking into.

Comment by Mr. Flynn: When evaluating all the technology-related tools available, it is important to consider how they will operate on a day-to-day basis with hundreds of students, such as when students leave the building for physical education classes.

**A concern was stated related to the map of the schools to be posted for wayfinding purposes for first responders.**

Response by Mr. Farrell: The map will not be posted at the immediate entrance. It will be in a location where first responders know to look.

Response by Mr. Flynn: The wayfinding map is a recommendation from the Nassau Homeland security.

**What would it take for the District to place an armed guard or a police officer at each school? Was Don Flynn involved in Massapequa's decision to hire armed guards?**

Response by Mr. Flynn: Covert Investigations is working with the Massapequa School District. This is a decision that must be made by the Board of Education, Administration and community. It is by no means simple to implement and there many issues to be addressed. Employing armed security is a major change and it should only be considered after very thorough investigation and conversation as to whether the District should pursue it. He has been involved in accidental shooting situations and just because someone has a license to carry a firearm does not mean they necessarily should.

Response by Dr. Rogers: In other parts of the state, police agencies have been hiring police officers to be stationed at the school buildings as school resource officers. At this time, the NCPD has not said this is something they intend to move forward with. There is a significant distinction between an active-duty police officer and a guard stationed at a school. There is a significant difference in training between guards with a carry permit and active duty police officers.

Comment by Mr. Flynn: In the State of NY, to carry an armed guard license you must qualify once per year. Being a retired police officer alone does not qualify someone. A different set of qualifications are needed.

Comment by Mr. Farrell: Training for active shooter response must be done constantly. It's a skill that needs to be maintained and there is a need to know and understand all updated protocols.

**Are the security cameras monitored 24/7 and are they motion-sensored?**

Response by Mr. Farrell: Right now, they are monitored during school hours and the after-school security shifts. After-hours, Mr. Farrell and Mr. Hamilton (Executive Director of Operations) intermittently check the cameras. In the future the plan is to have a command center where the cameras will be monitored 24/7.

Comment by Dr. Rogers: At one time Nassau BOCES had a 24-hour monitoring service offered to multiple districts in order to accomplish this objective in a cost-effective manner. The service was discontinued.

**Are random bag checks planned for students entering school?**

Response by Dr. Rogers: Currently, there is no plan for random bag checks.

**Is the expectation for the outdoor bathroom facility that it will be used only for after-school events? And if it will be used during school hours, how will it be monitored for safety?**

Response by Dr. Rogers: The procedures regarding the bathroom facility have not yet been finalized as the facility is more than a year from completion. The level of traffic will need to be determined and if there is a need for overflow. If so, the new weight room facility may have to be used in conjunction with the outdoor facility. There will be the ability to isolate the weight room from the rest of the building. It will need to be determined if it is necessary to have the outdoor bathroom facility open during school hours for physical education classes. The goal is to use the facility to keep the high school closed in the afterschool hours.

**On evenings with a large number of visitors attending events at the school, are the same visitor protocols followed as during the school day? How will the crowd be managed in relation to visitor protocols? Will PTA volunteers for the events have special badges so they are not delayed by lines?**

Response by Dr. Rogers: We recognize it is not realistic to have everyone go through the visitor management system for a concert at the high school that hundreds of people will attend. Therefore, after-school activities may be treated differently regarding visitor management than during school hours. The District has plans to segregate the athletic wing and the auditorium from the remainder of the building during events, which would provide an alternate measure of security. The District has been discussing expedited PTA access to the buildings but hasn't arrived at a decision at this time.

**Have any studies been done on how many drills need to be executed at certain ages to be sure children understand the protocols?**

Response Mr. Flynn: Rather than put a number on the drills done, it is more effective to rely on feedback from the crisis team as to students' proficiency at following protocols. The State requires a certain number of drills, but the District can do more and think outside the box to ensure the students know what to do and are comfortable with the protocols.

Response by Dr. Rogers: The District will do more drills during inconvenient times of day and when students are not in their regular classrooms. This will require teachers and students to exhibit situational awareness and be able to follow protocols in a variety of settings.

**Has there been a conversation about metal detectors?**

Response by Dr. Rogers: At the June meeting, the Board of Education asked the administration to research the implementation of metal detectors. Research is being done on both the physical logistics of adding metal detectors to the school buildings as well as logistics of students entering the building. The District is working with its architects to determine if it is possible to design floor plans that fit the number of metal detectors needed for the size of the high school. This exercise has proven challenging: after two iterations, we have not yet arrived at an acceptable layout. The second issue is that students enter and exit through multiple entrances of the building many times during the day.

Response by Mr. Flynn: There are multiple times of day that students move in and out of the building, such as for PE and recess. Students would have to go through the metal detectors multiple times of day to execute this process effectively and it would be a massive undertaking.

At the end of the meeting, several residents approached Mr. Flynn to ask him to clarify his firm's position on armed security. Mr. Flynn indicated that they give all their clients identical advice on this topic, which is as follows:

- \* the decision to arm security rests with the Board and community, he does not advocate for or against it;
- \* armed security is very difficult to implement properly and introduces a different set of risks; and
- \* if a district independently decides to pursue armed security, he will offer his expertise to assist them in implementing their choice.