

School Security and Standards Task Force
Physical Plant Subcommittee
Meeting Summary

Office of Representative Carol Sente
Laschen Community Center
294 Evergreen Drive
Vernon Hills, IL 60061

January 26, 2016
8:30 a.m.

David Henebry called the Subcommittee meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Members Present

Robert Bernat
David Henebry
Carol Sente (Rep.)

Members Absent

Pat Hartshorn
Steve Wilder

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Staff

Hannah Rosenthal

Members of the Public

Eric Guenther
Jon Guillaume
Kevin Myers
Jean Sophie
Chris Sorenson
Jim Woods

Welcome and Introductions

Physical Plant Subcommittee members and members of the public introduced themselves. Chris Sorenson of Sorenson, Wilder & Associates was sitting in for Subcommittee member Steve Wilder. Kevin Myers introduced himself as the Superintendent of Mundelein High School District 120. Eric Guenther introduced himself as the Director of Public Safety in Mundelein. Jean Sophie introduced herself as the Superintendent of Schools for Lake Bluff Elementary School District 65. Jon Guillaume introduced himself as Principal of Vernon Hills High School. Jim Woods introduced himself as Principal of FGM Architects.

Report on Review of FEMA 428

David Henebry said he read through FEMA 428 and spoke with other architects about it. It needs to go through several more revisions before it is ready to be adopted by the Physical Plant Subcommittee as a reference.

Review Updated Recommendations

Representative Carol Sente outlined the best practices and two recommended mandates included in the Task Force's Final Report to the Governor and General Assembly. The first recommended mandate was that the life of the Task Force be extended an additional year. The second recommendation was that one of the already mandated drills be an unannounced drill. The Task Force has a second report due to ISBE in July, which will include the physical plant recommendations. The recommendations will be for new and existing schools and may include a deadline for compliance. Mr. Henebry noted that the Physical Plant Subcommittee discussed requiring that school districts read the recommendations.

One of the public participants suggested that districts spend their money on making changes to the interior, not the exterior, of school buildings. Mr. Henebry shared recommendations from the Secret Service, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Defense that barriers be created to keep weapons from entering schools. He referenced attacks in Louisiana and Indiana that were averted.

Robert Bernat said that students and staff in schools do not know what they are supposed to be looking for. He shared his "See, Hear and Speak Up" memo and asked the public participants to share their feedback.

Chief Eric Guenther said that it would be helpful to coordinate interior doors so that there is consistency within schools. He asked if there is a way for schools to have only a main entrance and a secondary entrance. Mr. Guenther said that he does not want metal detectors in schools. Two-thirds of Chicago Public Schools have metal detectors.

Dr. Bernat explained that the weakest link in the chain is the school secretary. School secretaries operate the process but they do not receive the training and support that they need. He said that school visitor policies need to be posted. Jean Sophie said that many parents in her school district get angry if they are questioned. Visitor policies need to have board endorsement. Dr. Sophie expressed concern that schools have so many requirements. She suggested that schools only have one fire drill. If school districts are going to have to follow more mandates, they need to be freed of some of the existing mandates. Dr. Sophie said that there are parents in her district who will not take their children to school when there is a lockdown drill. If she is going to hold drills unannounced, she needs to be supported by the state. Her district works well with local law enforcement but many school districts do not have the same relationship. She noted that not all school districts agree about drills. Dr. Bernat said that the School District 112 Task Force recommended that schools use blue boxes to communicate with police more quickly. It took almost 10 minutes for police officers in Sandy Hook to arrive at the school. One of the superintendents said that many wealthy districts use a crisis app but a lot of districts cannot afford this. Another public participant noted that police cannot get in through the Knox boxes that fire departments use.

Dr. Sophie suggested a mandate that school districts work with police, as it is not a given in all districts. Dr. Bernat noted that Task Force members have had many discussions about mandates and they concluded that in this financial environment, they cannot mandate that districts spend money. Dr. Bernat believes that districts can be mandated to think about school security and he suggests that districts establish their own local task

forces. Dr. Sophie suggested mandating more requirements on the existing mandated meeting with law enforcement.

Mr. Henebry said he would like to establish a baseline expectation for physical security. Most of these recommendations will not have a big cost. Dr. Sophie asked if the Task Force could set up a committee specifically to look for money for school security improvements. The group discussed having different mandates for existing buildings and new buildings, and a list of recommendations for boards that are considering safety updates. The public participants said that if the deadline is too far down the road – like the current 2040 deadline – people will not take it seriously. Mr. Henebry was asked to tighten his date or to get rid of the deadline entirely. Dr. Sophie said that school districts are mandated to do things by several different agencies. She thinks that the agencies need to work together.

Dr. Bernat said that school districts need a compendium of best practices. Others noted that things are constantly changing so best practices change. Dr. Bernat explained that this is why Task Force members wanted the Task Force extended and this is why he would like it to become a permanent body. Representative Sente asked the public participants if they feel that, aside from the deadline, the physical plant recommendations are reasonable. One participant liked the recommendations and guidelines but said they cannot be mandated. Participants said they supported Recommendation 1.2 regarding classroom locks if the Task Force looks for a funding source. Participants noted that schools will get the biggest bang for their buck with door locks and that door locks are a better use of money than bollards and glazing. Mr. Henebry said that his intent is for the recommendations to go into the School Code. Participants also liked Recommendation 1.6. Regarding Recommendation 1.7, Mr. Henebry explained that districts are required to have life/safety reference plans. He believes that consistency is important but his recommendation for a color coding standard was not supported by a majority of the Task Force. Texas has a standard. Participants said that they do not want reference plans going to ISBE or to the Statewide Terrorism and Intelligence Center (STIC). They believe the plans need to go to the state and county levels. Representative Sente said that she likes colors and a common vocabulary. She asked if Mr. Henebry could make a sample plan.

The group discussed the importance of communication. One participant noted that schools with larger campuses need to think about communication between people inside and outside of the buildings, e.g. on sports fields. Participants recommended a focus on policy and training.

Representative Sente asked Mr. Henebry to define “renovation.” His note of 20,000 square feet in the recommendations is not included in the code. Mr. Henebry said he will pull the square footage regulation out. He noted that if districts have the bonding capacity to do life/ safety work, they have funding to make these changes. Mr. Henebry also said he will scrub the deadlines but he still wants benchmark dates. Representative Sente said she would like to see categories for new construction, renovations and existing schools. She said school districts should look toward what the Physical Plant Subcommittee would like mandated for all new schools; however, Subcommittee members understand the financial situation. Mr. Henebry said that his goal is that if a school is going to renovate, it should also correct its entrance. Dr. Bernat said that he does not think that the recommendations for a new school should be any different from the recommendations for a renovation, because they are all recommendations. Districts have a “moral liability, not a legal liability.”

Approval of Minutes from January 19, 2016 Subcommittee Call

Motion for approval of the minutes: Moved by Robert Bernat and seconded by Carol Sente. Voice vote. **Motion carried.**

Next Steps

The next Task Force meeting is scheduled for February 19. The next Physical Plant Subcommittee meeting will be held at Representative Sente's office on February 8 at 1:00 p.m. or later. Representative Sente will invite two other superintendents. Mr. Henebry asked if they can include representatives from a rural area. Dr. Bernat said he will invite representatives from the School District 112 Task Force.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:38 a.m.