

Board Special Meeting

Oversight Work Session: Operations – Safety & Security; Work Session BTA V

March 18, 2021, 4:30-7:30 p.m.

Meeting held remotely



Minutes

Call to Order

Director Liza Rankin called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. Directors Zachary DeWolf, Chandra Hampson, Brandon Hersey, Lisa Rivera-Smith, and Liza Rankin participated with Microsoft Teams or by phone.

Oversight Work Session: Operations – Safety & Security

This work session was staffed by the Superintendent Denise Juneau, Chief Operations Officer Fred Podesta, Safety and Security Manager Michael Wells and Safety and Security Assistant Manager Benjamin Coulter.

Podesta gave some observations about the department, which runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year. It guards the welfare of 60,000 people and has an emphasis on relationships with students and staff. It also has been the most valuable players during the pandemic by helping feed students by identifying places to distribute meals at schools, directing traffic, developing maps and managing social distance guidance at meal sites. It continues to help with pandemic-related needs.

Wells introduced himself and shared that he has been with the district for 36 years, 32 of those years in various Security roles. Wells spoke of his strong support of the district, students, and families and the shared vision of his team to provide physical and emotionally safe and secure schools for all students, staff and visitors before introducing Coulter. Coulter, who has been with the district approximately nine years as a security specialist, emergency management specialist and now assistant manager, began the presentation, by covering the agenda and department functions.

Coulter said the department's goal of safe and secure schools is accomplished through emergency preparedness, addressing incidents, working with partners and maintaining a culturally diverse team. He said the department is a safety layer of response without involving law enforcement. Security is there to respond to serious incidents, such as assaults, fights, drugs, etc. Police only have to be called when there is a sexual assault of a youth or student and when there is a firearm. Security assists the school administration and build relationships with students and staff, Coulter said. It doesn't issue discipline.

Wells said the team is 44.4% African American, 3.7% American Indian or Alaskan, 16.6% Asian or Pacific Islander, 1.8% Hispanic Latino, 1.8% two or more race, and 24% Caucasian. Coulter covered the team's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats/risks (SWOT). He emphasized the dedicated team is in direct communication with Seattle police and fire to be informed about what is going on in the neighborhood, not to call them on students. He said the team doesn't have a sub-pool and finding training opportunities are tough. Coulter also said the diverse team has championed for equity issues for

years and advocated for marginalized youth. One example is the team's work with Special Education through training to de-escalate incidents involving Special Education students.

Wells and Coulter shared the department's accomplishments, which include updating intercom systems, increasing access control, improving emergency planning, providing non-violent Crisis Prevention Intervention Training (CPI) and being supportive during the pandemic response.

Coulter shared the roles of staff on the organization chart. He highlighted that the Security Operations Center are the people who work after hours. It's one person responding to all schools. Also, the at-risk specialist often subs instead of doing intervention work due to the shrinking department.

Hampson noticed the lack of subs and training and asked if those are connected to career opportunities. Coulter said opportunities include moving up to a division lead or an emergency specialist. Wednesday afternoon trainings are a struggle because staff are spread out and coming to the district office, but Coulter said staff is encouraged to use FEMA trainings online. However, Security would like to develop partnerships with other departments to make staff more well-rounded.

Hampson asked if staff are hourly or salary. Wells said there are 61 full-time positions that are salary.

Hampson asked about the security specialists' feelings on when a situation escalates because Security is called and shouldn't be. Hampson also asked what direction the group would like to head in relation to restorative justice and training. Coulter said that the team saw police in buildings as resources. Police were present for intervention purposes, and Security can do their jobs without them. He also said inappropriate calls have been a longstanding concern within the department, and there is a constant struggle for balance. As for restorative justice, Coulter said it's appreciated by team but must be real. One example he stated is the disparity of discipline.

Hersey said there is a need for restraint and isolation reform in our system. He said we need to protect buildings from outside threats and mediate internal events. Is there space for the department to do both? There is a need for protection, but is there need for armed police? Coulter said the goal's team is to do both of those things. The team has people who can do the work of de-escalation and restorative justice. However, their main CPI class is viewed as a restraint class. Also, the building culture can seep in on Security staff because building leaders don't get the same training. Wells said he has been doing de-escalation and restorative justice work for 32 years, and the work is being done now by staff.

Hersey asked if we could create a department where specialists from different disciplines are working together with someone's primary focus is restorative justice? He also asked what progress has been made for training during this remote work since it's been reported that staff is not current on training. Are there any recent pushes to make sure? Coulter said the department was overseen by Coordinated School Health and had individuals responsible for intervention and counseling. However, the perception was that it didn't look right coming out of Security, because it looked more like enforcement. Wells said the department had staff, but the position was vacated and not filled. SafePointe tracks team training.

Hersey wondered why the change since we were structured to have better collaboration. He hopes we can return to coordinated response and embrace zero violence toward kids from adults. Rivera-Smith asked if the department was working well before the split of Security and Coordinated Health. Coulter said the team still works with Coordinated Health even though they are not in the department.

Rivera-Smith said it would be great to explore more emphasis on health, safety, and restorative justice. She asked if we need to focus more on building leader training. Coulter said the presentation mentions their work to update a manual accessible to principals. He said some schools ask security specialists to do more, but it gets challenging when things escalate. Coulter gave an example of when a security specialist followed administration direction and trespassed a student but was overridden by the administration. It makes Security look bad because of inconsistent messaging.

Rivera-Smith said she heard the at-risk specialist doesn't do the work of their intended role. Coulter said this is because they don't have a sub pool, and the at-risk specialist fills an immediate need. Wells said budget cuts have led to this. Staff does whatever they can to help kids, but sometimes 609 involved because it goes beyond their duties. Rivera-Smith said what should they be doing? Wells said the position was developed to work with at-risk youths.

Coulter reviewed the department's goals and objectives. He said the principal survey is best indicator of how the team is doing. Coulter highlighted recent training on youth trafficking and said meaningful training needs documentation. He said the Key Performance Indicators already touched upon but noted that more staff are getting fingerprinting training.

Wells noted the 2020-21 budget increase for the department was due to adding staff for Lincoln High School and Mercer Middle School. Staff is spread thin in the central office. Coulter said the team doesn't want more calls to police and warned this could happen if we do away with specialists like Bellevue.

While reviewing the policies and procedures that guide the department's work, Coulter noted he is on the committee to rewrite Board Policy 3246 regarding restraint, isolation, and other uses of physical intervention. The department wants a de-escalation culture. Coulter highlighted that an external control, Washington Association of Sheriff & Police Chiefs (Rapid Responder) doesn't mean staff in schools.

Wells discussed the major outside service contracts with SafePointe, Rapid Responder and Silke Communications. He said there is no cellphone notification for SafePointe at this time. Rapid Responder gives them data on the neighborhood within a half mile radius.

Wells reviewed the key information technology systems, and then Coulter share next steps. Coulter stressed the re-establishing communication with Seattle Police and Seattle Fire is about dealing with change within the city's structure (911 and emergency management moved) to connect when there are emergencies. Also, Wells said he is working with Legal regarding confiscated property.

Rankin said the lack of sub pool is concerning and may have led to more police calls, but she is pleased the outdated Operations manual is being updated. She also is pleased to learn of the relationship building between Security and Special Education.

DeWolf said the sub pool is important to him and insuring all staff complete training. He asked if Wells and Coulter see incidents, such as Stevens in his district, is an issue of training or something else. As a de-escalation instructor, Coulter said if an incident went wrong, he looked at where it started. He said there is trouble with staff escalating, calling security, and then walking away. Wells said finding time to conduct training is difficult because there are only two opportunities a year. Coulter said supervisors need to be in the buildings to make sure things are going well, and they are not currently able to do that.

Hampson called this critical work and asked how data is tracked (calls made to police). She said the board would like to look at that data to help with talks going forward. She asked how race is reported on incidents filed. Coulter said the name and race automatically fills from PowerSchool data. Wells said sometimes particulars are not given, but they can work to extract that data with their analyst. Hampson said we need to know if security called more on black and brown students.

Hersey stepped away from the meeting, but he was expected to return for the 6 p.m. session.

Rivera-Smith said training starts with teachers and asked what training educators receive. Wells said it varies from building by building and differs by administration leaders.

DeWolf asked if there is an opportunity to bring educators or SEA (union) into a thoughtful conversation or discuss expectations? Coulter said he and Wells are looking at opportunities within their control, such as updating the manual, plugging their team in with family support workers, and hearing the training that teachers receive. Podesta added this would be a natural outgrowth of the team discussion on Policy 3246 and related discussions on discipline. Security is party of interdepartmental team, which leads to the broader discussion about the organizational model. All school staff need to part of this, Podesta said. Rankin said that is the hope with Policy 3246. She is looking for thoughtful engagement around the procedures and policy, so that student discipline and response to escalation is consistent and centered on student need and not punitive.

This meeting recessed at 5:59 p.m. This meeting reconvened at 6:05 p.m. with Director Rankin returning at 6:08 p.m.

Work Session: BTA V

Director DeWolf called the meeting back to order at 6:07 p.m. Directors Hampson, Rankin, and Rivera-Smith were present.

This work session was staffed by Superintendent Juneau, Chief Operations Officer Fred Podesta, Chief of Public Affairs Carri Campbell, K-12 Planning Manager Becky Asencio, and Executive Director of Technology Carlos del Valle.

Mr. Podesta introduced the staff presentation with an overview of the content and goals for the meeting. He highlighted that Ms. Campbell would present the communications plan for the levies and request feedback from the Board.

Ms. Campbell reminded the Board of the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) Election Rules and how that restricts what and how the district can communicate about the levies. She highlighted that Schools First does campaign for the levies on students' behalf. She conveyed that the district plans to bring two levies to the ballot in February 2022 – Educational Programs and Operations (EP&O) and Building Technology and Academics/Athletics (BTA). She addressed the need for and challenges facing levies during the pandemic.

Ms. Campbell outlined the two phases of communications leading up to the levy vote. She presented details on the types of information and methods used in each phase. She mapped out the timelines and action items for both phases.

Directors conveyed the content and focus they wished for the communications. Their comments elevated a desire to center on data about student outcomes to complement qualitative data. Directors identified a need to educate the public about what the levies fund, which other sources do not cover. Directors also recommended demonstrating how the levies benefit the broader community.

Director Hersey rejoined the meeting during this discussion at 6:22 p.m.

Director Rivera-Smith asked if PDC Election Rules limit directors' communication about the levies. Ms Campbell committed to bringing this question to Chief Legal Counsel Greg Narver and replying with the answer.

Ms. Asencio presented a proposal for ranking potential levy projects that was similar that used for the Building Excellence (BEX) V levy. She highlighted that equity would remain as the overarching principle for scoring projects. She clarified that in some cases a Board Guiding Principle was translated into a score where in other cases it would provide guidance into how a project was designed and constructed. Ms. Asencio presented the scoring tools for each of the Board Guiding Principles for the BTA V levy.

Ms. Asencio confirmed for the Board that all of the district's buildings are ranked in the Building Condition Assessment but only the buildings in the greatest need will be presented for consideration in the levy. She highlighted that the BTA V levy will include more systems projects than large construction projects.

President Hampson addressed Ms. Campbell with a recommendation to inform the public about the district's sustainability related resolutions and the good work on those efforts.

Directors and staff discussed how to include projects that contribute positively to their immediate neighborhoods and represent respect for students, through architectural details and "curb appeal." Director DeWolf highlighted the need to renovate Memorial Stadium, as an example.

Mr. del Valle referred to the Board Guiding Principle on technology and outlined how it was operationalized in three categories of projects for the levy. He conveyed the selection priorities for the technology projects in these categories. He described an engagement plan to validate the technology needs in the district, which would inform the list of projects for the levy.

Directors and staff discussed students' and families' need for computer literacy training, including the basics of how to use a computer. Mr. del Valle elevated his department's need for clarity on how the district wants to use technology, in order to best support students in achieving those goals. He clarified for the directors that levy funds must focus on students and can't include family engagement. He highlighted the efforts of the department's Digital Manager working with families.

Directors and staff addressed digital citizenship and online privacy. Director DeWolf requested a Friday Memo to Board on this topic from Mr. del Valle.

Mr. Podesta concluded the staff presentation by thanking the directors for their feedback on the community engagement plan.

Adjourn

This meeting adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

This meeting was held remotely per the Governor's proclamation allowing public agencies to conduct meetings subject to the Open Public Meetings Act remotely to curtail the spread of COVID-19. Public access was provided remotely online and by teleconference.

Minutes submitted by:

The Office of Chief Operations Officer Fred Podesta.