

BOE Policy Committee Minutes
Wednesday, December 13, 2023, 9:00 – 10:30 am
Municipal Building, BOE Conference Room
3 Primrose St. Newtown, CT 06470

CALL TO ORDER Meeting was called to order at 9:00 am

IN ATTENDANCE Todd Higgins, Doria Linnetz, Chris Melillo, Mark Pompano, Sarah Connell,
1 public

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION None

APPROVE MINUTES Todd Higgins made a motion to approve the minutes of November 15, 2023. Doria Linnetz seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Policy 3160 – Budget Procedures and Line Item Transfers:

Mr. Higgins stated that this policy went to the Board for the first read at the December 5th meeting. He did not receive any feedback from the Board and does not have any concerns. Ms. Linnetz asked if the BOE's business manager reviewed this policy. Mr. Higgins said that they have. Ms. Linnetz did not have any other concerns.

This policy will be sent back to the Board for their second read at the December 19th meeting.

Policy 1700 – Possession of Firearms or Deadly Weapons

Mr. Higgins provided a background of this policy to Ms. Linnetz. He explained that this policy went through multiple revisions over the past few months. He stated that the BOE and Newtown Police created a MOU over the summer and this policy now aligns with the MOU. The MOU will allow off duty police officers to carry firearms on school property. Newtown's Director of Security, Mark Pompano, Mr. Higgins and Mr. Melillo provided input to create the proposed policy. Mr. Higgin's added that the Chief of Police will create an 'intake form' to provide confirmation that the officers are aware of the MOU.

Ms. Linnetz asked for Mr. Higgins to clarify some edits that were mentioned in the minutes from the previous meeting. Mr. Higgins stated that the changes were made and she is seeing a clean version in the policy packet.

MOTION: Mr. Higgins made a motion to send Policy 1700 – Possession of Firearms or Deadly Weapons to the Board for their first read at the December 19th meeting. Ms. Linnetz seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Higgins asked Mr. Pompano to talk briefly about his duties as Director of Security and daily security operations before discussing the proposed policies. Mr. Higgin's goal

Mr. Pompano provided a background on how he became Newtown's Director of Security in 2013. He stated that the acting Superintendent at the time created the District Safety and Security Committee and Mr. Pompano co-chaired the committee with the Teacher's Union President. Fast forward to present day, the committee is still intact and there are currently 19 security officers with 8 being armed. There is at least one armed security officer at each school. Mr. Pompano also created the Emergencies Operations Plan for the district.

Mr. Higgins asked Mr. Pompano to talk more about the District Safety and Security Committee and how that committee interacts with school based committees.

Mr. Pompano said that all of Newtown's schools have a school security committee and is in compliance with state guidelines. He believes that this committee usually meets once a year and forwards ideas to Mr. Pompano or to members on the DSSC (District Safety & Security Committee).

Ms. Linnetz asked if each school has their own plan and committee.

Mr. Pompano answered that they do because each school is unique.

Mr. Higgins asked if the school based plans were being reviewed annually.

Mr. Pompano believes that the principals are reviewing them.

Mr. Higgins asked about establishing incident command and if that is driven exclusively by the district plan or is it customized to individual schools.

Mr. Pompano answered that it is in both plans. He has presented at numerous A-Team meetings regarding incident command structure. He believes the planning is great but the execution could use some help.

Policy 6114 – Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness

Mr. Pompano noted that according to Newtown's current policy, Newtown is in full compliance.

Mr. Higgins noted that CABE provided some sample policies and asked if Mr. Pompano had a chance to review. Mr. Pompano thought the second recommended policy was acceptable.

Mr. Higgins asked if it would be beneficial to provide parents with a written summary of the emergency operation plans.

Mr. Pompano said that parents receive an email from their principal giving them notification that the school will be conducting drill week but it is not a summary of Newtown's EOP.

Ms. Linnetz suggests that the Superintendent sending broader information and then each school follow up with more specific information.

Mr. Higgins asked if each school/classroom has signage indicating how to handle each drill.

Mr. Pompano provided the committee with the signage.

Mr. Higgins suggested creating signage more student-friendly.

Mr. Pompano agrees and also suggests making a sign only for Principals.

Mr. Higgins believes that communicating with parents about what they can expect during an emergency will eliminate any chance of miscommunication when drills are happening.

Mr. Melillo stated that he sent Mr. Pompano EOP and messaging templates from Homeland Security that he believes Newtown should use in the future.

Mr. Pompano will continue to edit this policy and bring back to the committee in January.

Policy 6114.1 – Fire

Ms. Linnetz asked if anyone from Central Office observes the drills done at each school.

Mr. Pompano answered that he will try to go when he can but Newtown uses a system called “Navigate”. Mr. Pompano will set up each school’s drill schedule in Navigate at the beginning of the school year. The Fire Marshall and Police Dept. have access to this schedule.

Newtown goes above and beyond for their drills. Newtown has a “drill week” that is conducted during the first couple weeks of school.

Mr. Higgins asked if staff has enough practice with “real life scenario” drills.

Mr. Pompano believes everyone could use more practice.

Ms. Linnetz asked if Mr. Pompano plans drills that the schools are no aware of.

Mr. Pompano answered that they used to do drills like that before 2012; however, they no longer do surprise drills.

Mr. Pompano will continue to edit this policy and bring back to the committee in January.

Policy 6114.6- Emergency Closings

Mr. Pompano said that he does not handle Emergency Closings. Mr. Melillo stated that he follows a routine procedure when handling emergency closings.

The committee agreed that it may be beneficial to have a policy for the community to refer to.

Mr. Melillo will create a policy that outlines Newtown’s current practices.

Policy 6114.7 – Safe Schools

Mr. Higgins noted that there is language in Newtown’s current policy that requires the Board conduct an annual security assessment. He also noticed that it is also noted in the CABA sample policies. He asked Mr. Pompano if the Board has conducted those assessments.

Mr. Pompano designed an evaluation form and annually completes them and gives it to the Superintendent.

Ms. Linnetz asked Mr. Pompano to explain the most recent tabletop exercise.

Mr. Pompano explained the scenario and aside from audio issues, the exercise was beneficial. He believes that Newtown should conduct more exercises/drills that require an incident commander.

Mr. Pompano will continue to edit this policy and bring back to the committee in January.

Discuss Policy Committee Meeting Dates for 2024

The policy committee will now meet on Mondays to accommodate scheduling conflicts. Ms. Connell will send the schedule to the Town Clerk to post.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION None

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Linnetz made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Higgins seconded. Motion was unanimously approved. Meeting was adjourned at 10:37 am.