



Wenatchee School District Special Meeting Listening Board Forum On School Safety

Minutes of March 05, 2018
WHS – 7-8 PM

Board Members

Michele Sandberg, President
Sarah Knox, Vice President & DLT Board Representative
Sunny Hemphill, Board Legislative Representative
Laura R. Jaecks
Walter Newman

Staff Present

Brian Flonex, Superintendent
Cabinet

Board Special Forum 7:00 p.m.

President, Michele Sandberg, opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

President Sandberg thanked everyone for attending and gave the ground rules for the open board listening forum.

- Listening forum only for the board to hear from the public
- No comments or answers from the board
- 3-minute limit on public comments
- Fill out public comment sheet and turn into board
- Will continue until everyone has been heard

Citizen's Comments Summaries

- 1) **Cameron de Mestre:** Mr. de Mestre was hoping to get some questions answered. His questions are around the question of what measures have been taken for safety in all grade levels at the district like drills for administration, teachers and students. What measures have been taken in the classroom? He thanked the board for allowing this open forum. (Questions will be addressed at a later time after the board meets with administrators and the safety director.)
- 2) **Sandra Lancaster:** Ms. Lancaster has worked for 20 years at the district. She is a gun owner and hunter but not in favor of guns in the classroom or in the teachers' hands, that will not make school safer in her opinion. Also more secure doors will not change things because the doors are open in the morning when everyone is arriving and afternoon when the students are leaving.
- 3) **Mike Magnotti:** Mr. Magnotti thanked the board for allowing him to return to the board with his concerns about school safety. He feels that we need to do something now. The gun and person who will do the next school shooting is out there now, so we must do something now. He feels armed guards and metal detectors is an immediate solution, not necessarily long term, but could help now. It's easier to get into schools than Costco; he encouraged the school district to do something now, action now.
- 4) **Adam McDonald:** Mr. McDonald is a teacher at WSD. He is not in favor of arming teachers in the classroom. He gave many statistics of guns being accidentally shot, or misused in other ways, getting into the wrong hands for various reasons. The possibilities of the teacher being mistaken for the shooter by others, also a possibility. He feels guns belong in the professionals' hands, not in teachers' hands and in the classroom. He said a pistol is no match for an automatic weapon anyway, there needs to be other deterrents. He feels it is not fair to expect teachers to play Rambo while teaching Renaissance.
- 5) **Carrie McCarthy:** She did not realize it was a citizen comment only forum. She is a proactive mom, five children in the district. She shared an email about her mother's district, with the board. They use a system called "Forced Dynamics". They have trained their teachers to fight back, not with guns but with anything they can that is around them, bats, etc. Drills to play games, "who can build the best barrier for the door" game. What is our district going to do to be pro-active in this fight?
- 6) **Jeanne Poirier:** Ms. Poirier thanked the board for having the forum. She likes what Eastmont is doing by inviting law enforcement into the schools for breakfast and lunch, a drop-in policy. Maybe we need to start non-violent training on how to deal with conflict. More guns in non-enforcement officers' hands is not a way to go. She agrees with the teacher who just spoke.
- 7) **Lorna Rose-Hahn:** Her oldest is starting kindergarten in the fall; she is very passionate about this issue. She feels metal detectors will not stop an active shooter, they will not stop to be patted-down and go through a metal detector. Her choice is to use that money for keypad entry at all schools. Also use that money for bulletproof glass and more SRO's in the district.
- 8) **Mark Green:** He has two children who graduated from WSD; wife who worked for 11 years at district and one of his children is a teacher for WSD. He pointed out that our culture has changed from what it was when he was growing up, the breakdown of the family unit, single parents, values have changed, our children need help. The children's issues are unbelievable and the teachers have to deal with those everyday. He understands that the teachers don't want to deal with guns in the classroom. Maybe a gun locked in a safe for an administrator would be an idea. What he would like to see is, armed guards at every school. He would like to see the district become pro-active by having armed guards (retired law enforcement officers or veterans) with a weapon that can stop a shooter at every school. There have been 200 shootings, we can't ignore the facts, and we need to be prepared. He would like to see some of the 120 M dollars spent on a new school building on school safety in the building.

- 9) **Rachael Pashkowski:** Opposed to guns in schools, she thinks school architecture should be looked at. Metal detectors may not be the answer, logistics to do that everyday, would be overwhelming, taking manpower and money. School should be welcoming. What causes school dissatisfaction and school violence? Are we teaching good problem-solving resolution, good conflict resolution, and restorative justice, instead of punitive justice. While we look at physical constructs we also need to look at systemic constructs and how they are affecting our children. She thanked the board.
- 10) **Chris Danko:** Senior at WHS, he would like the district to be pro-active rather than reactive. Look at our district policies that should have been instituted 18 years ago after the Columbine shooting. Quoted FDR's 1941 state of union address on freedoms, which included freedom from fear. He feels armed guards and a police presence would encourage fear in our schools. Guards and police officers were "intimidating and scary" when on campus after a graffiti threat was found last week... this contributes to the culture of fear. Metal detectors and armed guards only discourages someone to enter the school with guns but does not address the tendencies that have brought on the destructive behavior. Violence is the symptom of mental illness and we are treating the symptom not the issue that causes the violence. He suggested hiring more adolescence psychologists to provide more than just armed security. They can help before physical intervention is necessary. Help with the overall mental wellbeing of the entire student community with higher grades; higher test scores, and overall healthier students. Healthier community members, let's strive for that over armed security. "*We can not fight fear by bowing to fear, we can only fight fear with courage.*" He thanked the board.
- 11) **Teresa Zepeda:** Ms. Zepeda thanked the board for allowing everyone to speak about this serious subject. She agrees with the student who just spoke, she takes her hat off to him. She asked the board to start a program to educate parents. We need more programs to teach about love and how important family is and to care for your children. There are a lot of single parents who need help and helping to teach those parents how to care for their children would help in so many ways. "*Fight violence with love not with guns*". (Ramon Rivera translated.)
- 12) **Marty Ford:** Teaches for the afterschool program, 50-100 students. She asked, "What is going to happen for our afterschool children?" They also need to be kept safe. She is not in favor of arming the teachers, but does not want the district to forget about the safety of our afterschool students.
- 13) **Anna Riggan:** Ms. Riggan has 4 children in the school district. She pointed out that the clock is ticking and we need to do something to protect our children. We all love our children and teachers. In a practical way of thinking she feels the way to start is by getting metal detectors at our doors. It may not be the only solution but she believes that we could harness the help of the community to help the district raise funds for what we need because everyone feels safety is the most important issue. A chunk of metal coming through a metal detector can be stopped and would be a good deterrent. As far as getting students through a metal detector everyday, all we need to do is look at the airports after 9-11, millions of people do that at airports everyday and we are safe now. If its worth it then everyone will want to do it, let's keep that metal from coming through the front door.
- 14) **Mike Bangs:** He wanted to ask the audience, "Who wants to see armed guards on campus?", "How many don't want them?" (Divided results 50/50). He is in favor of providing counseling and therapy for our children. He is concerned about students suffering from PTSD if there are armed guards at every door. Any radical moves made by the district for security should be reviewed every 6-months. We can't protect every aspect from every societal issue.
- 15) **David Belmont:** WHS Alumni and veteran and currently a software engineer. The phrases he heard tonight has been, "fear", "I don't know" and "What if". At WHS chemistry was a favorite of his, he learned about scientific research. He does this everyday in his job, whether it's something he wants or likes to do, he still does it. He feels much more comfortable in making an informed decision. After making that decision, what is the most important thing? I have to look at whatever I implemented, and ask if it worked. If it didn't work then I have to admit that I made a mistake and try again. Its most important people do not let fear drive them and their decisions. The people he has talked with know very little about firearms, self-defense, never trained with them. Hard to have a discussion with someone who is not on the same playing field of knowledge. Someone he admired very much while he was in the military told him something that he feels is very important in this situation, it is: "Fear is only the enemy if you allow it to consume you." He thanked the board.
- 16) **Adriana Farnsworth:** She has been in the area for 27 years. She has an idea that she feels will help keep our children safe. If we do nothing, do we have to wait until it happens here? She has a German Sheppard and knows they are very helpful in "sniffing out" many things, which includes metal and drugs. If we put a dog at every door we can then work on finding the funds for the metal detectors. We can train the dogs to watch the doors. This is the idea that she has been sharing with principals. It won't fix the whole problem but it could deter the person trying to bring something into the school until a better solution is found.
- 17) **Aaron MacKenzie:** He is a counselor in WSD and has four children in WSD. He feels that safety is so important and is passionate about this issue. Not in favor of guns in the schools or with the staff. The schools are changing, childhood-adverse experiences is so high, with abuse, basic needs not being met, divorced parents, parents with drug additions, parents incarcerated, and mental health problems. Their mental and physical health puts their survival at risk. So scary for us at schools, we are doing the best we can to meet those preventative measures for children and the best we can to meet the social, emotional learning needs of our children, with counselors, school psychologists, and behavior specialists. We are doing the best we can by looking at how we are learning and interacting with people and making connections. Looking at how we have compassion for one another. Moving towards managing attitudes and how to talk things out when angry, have restorative justice and the conversation on how to deal with it without going online and becoming addicted to online chaos. Learning problem solving skills and managing emotions, maybe they have never been taught, reaching out to parents to learn these skills also. There are other ways that we could bring mental health agencies into the mix to help support these children. In his opinion there just aren't enough people to meet all the needs of these students, hundreds of teachers who are trying to manage classrooms with behavior problems disrupting the learning experience. His plea is to arm them with more social emotional support for our children.
- 18) **Pam Berry:** She thanked the board for the forum and she appreciates the opportunity to participate. She agreed with the majority of what she has heard tonight. She does not support arming our teachers, the vast majority of teachers have their hands full managing the classroom and teaching our children. She is in favor of armed security on the campus right now to keep our children and teachers safe. Our society is what it is now and we must face that and that is why she is also in favor of metal detectors, as sad as that is. She doesn't agree with the concern of PTSD. There are armed security guards for children in many districts, they have functioned without problems. Toppenish is a district that provides armed security in a way that it is not

threatening or intimidating to students, we can take their lead. But she is somewhat concerned about the new proposed design of WHS, she would like the plans looked at by security and safety people, it is too open, not enough spaces for students to go for cover. She thanked the board again for allowing her to share.

- 19) **Suellen Harris:** A substitute teacher, in her 70's and would not like to be responsible for a gun in the classroom. She grew up in the 50's when we were afraid of the Russian planes coming with bombs, so she does remember fear. We were trained to take cover from those bombs, then became the flower children of the 60's and marched for peace and love. She doesn't want to see our children in an armed camp (school). She is in favor of more counselors and we do have to look at the research before any decisions are made. She feels WSD has done something right, by communicating with our students and listening to them and getting help for them, WSD has been focusing on building relationships with students and relating to them. Right away, let our legislators know how we feel, our children don't need to get hands on guns, background checks more stringent. Thank you and we would like to have more town halls.
- 20) **Heather Glickfeld:** WHS alumni and she teaches at St. Paul's, 4 year olds. School safety is a big concern, what about all the daycares in our community, as a community we need to protect our early learners also. She came across ideas that we may be interested in. "Children's Place" bulletproof space; can be used as a quiet reading area in the classroom, plus a safe place for students to hide. An Indiana school, safest school in US, has cameras all over the school and it is connected to the police department, it is live and monitored. Cameras show where the intruder is and hidden smoke bombs in the ceiling can be dropped that will deter the intruder and disorient the intruder. She recommends that the district look into these ideas to help keep our children safe.
- 21) **Manuel Valencia:** He represents U.N.A. neighborhood association of S. Wenatchee, he thanked the board for the opportunity. He is concerned about safety in schools in the S. Wenatchee area. The chief of police has met with them. Whatever happened in Florida can happen in Wenatchee and we want to take care of our schools first. Metal detectors are expensive so maybe K-Nine dogs are an idea to help control the doors. He has been talking to principals about doors in the schools. We want to do the best as a movement to protect our schools. He wanted to thank the support of the safety committee. The students' lives are more important than a metal detector.

- PSA: March 24th a community gathering and parade at Memorial Park – details at *March for Our Lives*, to honor students at Parkland Schools, National Movement.
- 21 speakers
- 4 teachers spoke
- 1 student spoke
- Over 200 in attendance

President Sandberg thanked everyone in attendance and encouraged individuals to send emails to the board if they have anything else to add to the meeting tonight.

MEETING ADJOURNED: President Sandberg adjourned the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

President

Superintendent

Date