

The following meeting was neither audio taped nor video recorded.

SPECIAL MEETING

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

TUESDAY, 30 JULY 2013, 10:00 O'CLOCK A.M.

DIGHTON REHOBOTH REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

The Board of Selectmen met with the Principal of Dighton Rehoboth Regional High School on Tuesday, 30 July 2013, in the Principal's office at the High School. Present were Chairman of the Selectmen Dean V. Cronin, and Selectman Patrick W. Menges, and Dighton Police Chief Robert L. MacDonald, and Principal Jacqueline Striano. Absent was Selectman Thomas Pires.

The primary purpose of the meeting was to discuss the creation, duties, and funding of a School Resource Officer (being a Dighton Police Officer specifically assigned to the High School) for the Dighton Rehoboth Regional High School.

Chief MacDonald said that the main reason we were here, was to discuss the creation and funding of an SRO position.

Selectman Cronin said that we may as well "cut to the chase, the funding for it." He noted that at present the planned funding for the position is \$34,000.00 per year, and he said that if the funding is as planned, the School Resource Officer cannot be full time for the entire school year.

Ms. Striano responded that the funds for the position were already encumbered. Would it be part time? She responded that she didn't know. She stated that the main emphasis of a School Resource Officer would be the safety and security of the building. She also asserted that D-R needed to do by way of security what other schools are doing.

Chairman of the Selectmen Cronin said that it made no sense to have it only part-time. He added sundry supportive remarks.

Chief MacDonald stated that in addition to the cost of the position, from September to June, the Town of Dighton would incur a cost of \$23,000.00 to put a reserve officer in the slot from which a full time permanent SRO was drawn for the High School. Chairman of the Selectmen Cronin added "plus \$38,000.00 more on top of that to bring the SRO up to full-time."

The Chief said that when the school is not in session, e.g. vacations, the full-time SRO officer would return to duty with the Dighton Police Department.

Chairman of the Selectmen Cronin stated that it would be a \$61,000.00 expense to the Town to have a police officer at the High School, hard to justify to a special town meeting. He noted that a previous intermunicipal (Dighton and Rehoboth) officials' meeting with the former

Superintendent and Principal at which an SRO position was discussed, had left the impression that “they weren’t ready at that time”.

Ms. Striano stated that she could not answer for what was or was not done prior to her becoming High School principal. Born in Connecticut, she formerly served in Rhode Island’s Foster/Gloucester school system. She stated that she “came up in the age of Columbine”. (A reference to the notorious Colorado tragedy in which students of Columbine High School were massacred.) She feels that the school administration needs to be proactive concerning security and safety. She said that she needs to be proactive everywhere, and asked the Selectmen “what do you need me to do for you?”

Selectman Cronin responded “We need to find \$23,000.00 (to put toward this position to make it full time).” He said that time is on our side to find money for the following (FY15) year. The Principal stated that “We sell our schools on: scores, safety, and what we do for our students.”

In answer to Principal Striano’s question “What do you want me to do?”, Chairman Cronin replied, “Pass it on to the School Committee if they can come up with any more to make it full time.”

Selectman Menges asked Principal Striano if she had seen the School Resource Officer position job descriptions suggested by the Dighton Police Department at an earlier meeting previously alluded to (see, ante.) He said that Example 3 of the SRO duties indicated a School Resource Officer with duties transcending mere physical security of the school building, providing a possible reason for more than part-time funding. The Principal responded that she has had professional relationships with School Resource Officers in her former positions. She was aware that it was important for students to know/respect/admire the School Police Officer more than the School Administrator.

Chief MacDonald said that full-time Police coverage at the ready at the High School would help to avoid having to strip the Town at large of coverage in the event of trouble at Dighton Rehoboth requiring a Police response. Chairman Cronin said that the Town could provide examples of SRO work in other towns. The Principal said that she was familiar with School Resource Officer position work.

Principal Striano stated that security imperatives at the High School were being addressed. She stated that the school under her administration is already doing more community outreach, with a D-R blog on the internet instead of an on-line newsletter. It is her intention to make the school more secure by securing the parking lot, prohibiting unauthorized overnight parking in the parking lot, arrival procedures under which students will have known specific destinations and places to be, until they report to their first class. Chief MacDonald noted that there are many keys out to the High School, for the gymnasium, facility entrances, etc. The Principal responded that there had been changes already; a walk about with the Head Custodian resulted in a decision to change office locks so that the Principal will be able to open all doors in the school building, including doors to offices that were formerly accessible only to their respective staff member users. Unsupervised groups of students will no longer be allowed to

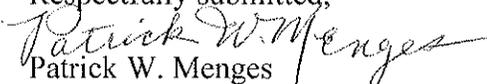
play basketball in the gymnasium after school in an unsecured facility, and “no parking overnight” signs will be displayed in the parking lots. Ms. Striano at this point stated that although her administration will be completely transparent at all times, she was uncomfortable with (Selectman Menges’) extensive note taking during this meeting. Selectman Menges said that the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law required that sufficient minutes be kept so that a reader of the minutes could determine the basis for decisions taken at the meeting, and that he would abide by that law. The Principal said that the relationship between her and the Selectmen needed to be based on trust, and she asked if the minutes would be posted on line. She was told that they would not. Selectman Menges said to Principal Striano, “I encourage you to have faith and not fear. Nothing good can be accomplished out of fear.” He attempted to explain that the minutes were non-threatening.

Selectman Cronin informed the Principal of an early morning alarm at the High School today (approximately two – three a.m.) which had resulted in all of Dighton’s fire apparatus and part of its police force responding to the High School, because there had been no response to the alarm from personnel on the school’s own call list. He said that this happens often. The Principal asked rhetorically, “Why aren’t I on top of that list?” She said that at a Staff Meeting on Thursday, these issues would be addressed. She then asked if the Selectmen had any other comments. Selectman Menges and Selectman Cronin then provided her with contact information for Reporter Jeffrey Wagner of the Taunton Gazette, and citizen Karen O’Connor of Dighton.com and the Dighton Cable Commission. He urged the Principal to consider before closing the gymnasium to informal groups of students playing basketball after school, where those children would then spend their afternoons. He urged the school to keep the gym open to respectful and obedient students, as good eyes and ears for the security of the building, and so that these children have a legitimate after school activity; and he commented that as a taxpayer he would support paying for adult supervision for the gym for that purpose if necessary. Selectman Menges also said that if the exterior landscaping of the school yard were improved, the appearance of the premises would itself command respect and deter wanton trespassing.

Ms. Striano stated that toward the end of August, there will be a Parents’ Inn, a time for interactions and walking and working with students. She invited Selectman Menges (probably the whole Board) to attend.

[Other discussion ensued, but the tenor of all remarks is distilled in the foregoing account.] It was agreed by consensus that the Principal would make known to the School Committee the need to find if possible additional funding to make the SRO position full-time. Cordial closing pleasantries were exchanged. By consensual disillusion, the meeting was virtually adjourned without day at 10:55 a.m..

Respectfully submitted,


Patrick W. Menges

Clerk of the Board of Selectmen

This packet contains numerous examples of what the duties and responsibilities of a School Resource Officer would be if desired and so instituted by the Dighton Rehoboth Regional School District and its Administrators for utilization in Dighton Schools. The following examples are by no means set in stone and could be amended, combined and re-drafted as needed. They are simple suggestions that have been borrowed from other school programs currently implementing a similar program for the benefit of students, faculty, parents and the community as a whole. In the event that the DRRSD, the Town of Dighton and the Dighton Police Department can come to an agreement on the use of an SRO, I believe that the following duties and responsibilities highlighted would be an excellent starting point in drafting a practical job description for the Officer filling the position. The Dighton Police Department is a proponent of said SRO program and looks forward to working closely with the DRRSD in developing a close working relationship built on professionalism, practicality and societal need.

Proposed DRRSD-Dighton SRO Responsibilities/Duties

Dighton Police Department

- The three roles used to define what SROs do in the schools: law enforcement officer; law-related counselor; law-related education teacher;
- The close relationship SROs must create and maintain with principals; and that SROs must work closely with parents, students, and members of the community.

DUTIES OF THE SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS EXAMPLE ONE

1. To prevent juvenile delinquency through close contact with students and school personnel.
2. To establish liaison with school principals, faculty, and students.
3. To inform the students of their rights and responsibilities as lawful citizens.
4. To provide liaison between students and social agencies which provide needed services.
5. To act as a liaison resource to the principal(s) in investigating criminal law violations occurring in the school or on school property.
6. To assist administration and faculty in formulating educational programs.
7. To formulate educational crime prevention programs to reduce the opportunity for crimes against persons and property in the schools.
8. To participate in the Parent-Teacher-Student Association meetings as requested.
9. To participate in campus activities, student organizations, and athletic events when invited and feasible.
10. To be aware at all times of the responsibility to improve the image of the uniformed law enforcement officer in the eyes of the students and the community.

DUTIES OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS EXAMPLE TWO

1. To protect lives and property for the citizens and public school students.
2. To enforce Federal, State and Local criminal laws and ordinances, and to assist school officials with the enforcement of District Policies and Administrative Regulations regarding student conduct.
3. To investigate criminal activity committed on or adjacent to school property.
4. To counsel public school students in special situations, such as students suspected of engaging in criminal misconduct, when requested by the principal or the principal's designee or by the parents of the student.
5. To answer questions that students may have about criminal or juvenile law.
6. To assist other law enforcement officers with outside investigations concerning students attending the school(s) to which the SRO is assigned.

DUTIES OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS EXAMPLE THREE

1. Abide by school board policies and shall consult with and coordinate activities through the school principal but shall remain fully responsive to the chain of command of the law enforcement agency in all matters relating to employment and supervision.
2. Develop expertise in presenting various subjects; particularly in meeting federal and state mandates in all aspects of suggested education from law enforcement and shall provide these presentations at the request of the school personnel in accordance with the established curriculum.
3. Encourage individual and small group discussions about law enforcement related matters with students, faculty, and parents.
4. Refrain completely from functioning as a school disciplinarian. The School Resource Officer is not to be involved in the enforcement of disciplinary infractions that do not constitute violations of the law.
5. Attend meetings of parent and faculty groups to solicit their support and understanding of the School Resource Officer program and to promote awareness of law enforcement functions if and as needed.
6. Provide information and avenues and will be familiar with all community agencies which offer assistance to youths and their families such as mental health clinics, drug treatment centers, etc., and may make referrals when appropriate.
7. Confer with the principal to develop plans and strategies to prevent and/or minimize dangerous situations on or near the campus or involving students at school-related activities.
8. Perform duties as determined by the principal other than those regularly assigned to school personnel such as lunchroom or hall duty. (Nothing herein is intended to preclude the SRO from being available in areas where interaction with students is expected.)
9. Abide by school board policy and applicable law concerning interviews should it be necessary to conduct formal law enforcement interviews with students or staff on property or at school functions under the jurisdiction of the School Board.
10. Take law enforcement action as necessary and notify the principal of the school as soon as possible; whenever practicable, advise the principal before requesting additional enforcement assistance on campus and undertake all additional law enforcement responsibilities at the principal's direction.
11. Give assistance to officers in matters regarding the duties of SROs whenever necessary.
12. In order to assure the peaceful operation of school-related programs, SROs will, whenever possible, participate in or attend school functions.
13. Reaffirm their roles as law enforcement officers by wearing their uniforms, unless doing so would be inappropriate for scheduled school activities. (The uniform will also be worn at events where it will enhance the image of the officers and their ability to perform their duties.)
14. Coordinate with the principal and be responsible for law enforcement activity at extra-curricular events as determined by the principal.