

Harford County Board of Education
Citizen Advisory Committee on Safety and Security

ANNUAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Submitted October 2006

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For Presentation and Discussion

October 2006

Board of Education Working Session

Background:

In December of 2005, the Superintendent of Harford County Public Schools recommended to the Harford County Board of Education the areas of study to be pursued by each of the five Citizen Advisory Committees appointed by the Board of Education.

In consistency with the Board approved timeline for operation of the board-sponsored Citizen Advisory Committees (CAC), a charge or area of study is provided to each board-sponsored CAC during a December Board meeting, with completion during the following calendar year. The CAC will report out on their findings in October 2006.

The current area of study assigned to the Safety and Security Committee is stated as follows:

Citizen Advisory Committee on Safety and Security

- Review the after school activity user group policy and agreement and make recommendations if needed.
- Determine if there is a need for the use of metal detectors within the public school system and if so, to what extent is it needed. This charge shall only consider the need of the schools and the community and not the fiduciary impact this may have upon the school system.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the security camera program and determine if the needs are being met and make recommendations if needed.

Report on Activities and Discussion:

During the past school year, the Citizens Advisory Committee on Safety and Security (herein referred to as “the Committee”) pursued the assigned charges and the following was accomplished:

Charge I.

Review the after school activity user group policy and agreement and make recommendations if needed.

A thorough review of the PROCEDURES FOR USE OF PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES BY OUTSIDE GROUPS, which can be found and downloaded from the HCPS web site, was conducted by the committee. This document, listing all rules and procedures, is given to all outside groups who request to use any Public School Facility and is to be adhered to by all user groups using the facilities. The document is attached and made part of this report.

It should be mentioned that members of the Safety and Security committee include individuals from Harford County Parks and Recreation, along with parents who participate in after hour sporting events at Harford County Public Schools and therefore have experience in after school events by outside user groups. After the committee reviewed the procedures for outside groups, the committee found that the document already addresses all areas of concern regarding Safety and Security of Harford County Public School facilities when used by outside groups, however, the procedures are not always being followed by the user groups.

The committee then set out to identify which procedures were not being followed by the user groups. This was done by meeting with members of the community who most

often use the facilities, including Parks and Recreation, private groups, coaches, and adult leaders of various organizations in Harford County. Committee members also visited Public School facilities while they were being used by outside groups to see firsthand if the policy was being followed.

The committee identified the following policy procedures which were at times not being followed:

VIII. SUPERVISION:

SUPERVISION & OBLIGATIONS OF USING GROUP

1. The group using the facility must accept the entire responsibility for providing personnel to monitor, supervise, and secure corridors and other areas of the facility in order to confine those in attendance only to the parts of the facility that are expressly approved for use.

IX. SAFETY AND SECURITY:

2. It is the responsibility of each user group to establish an on-site contact person (designee) during the entire course of each activity, who will be responsible to monitor the arrival and departure of its participants, ensure that the designated entrances to the facility are utilized, and to ensure that only those participating in the activity gain entrance to the facility.

3. Identification badges or “labels” shall be worn and properly displayed by the designee and *adults supervising* the activity. The information should include the name of the person and the name of the group or activity.

The committee realizes that most outside user groups are volunteers who devote much of their spare time supporting educational and athletic events in the community.

The committee also realizes that the Safety and Security of the events must be made a priority.

In light of the above findings, the Committee formulated a user checklist which highlights the procedures listed above and also procedures which the committee found

most important as they pertain to safety and security. This check list is attached and made part of this report. The checklist will be handed out with the user group applications and also be utilized by Harford County Public School personnel and user groups to assure compliance. Violations of policy by the user groups will result in progressive discipline leading to termination of use for constant violations.

Charge II.

Determine if there is a need for the use of metal detectors within the public school system and if so, to what extent is it needed. This charge shall only consider the need of the schools and the community and not the fiduciary impact this may have upon the school system.

After much discussion and review, the committee feels that permanent, fixed, metal detectors are not required at this time.

The committee is cognizant of the fact that weapons, including handguns, being brought into Public Schools are a reality that cannot be ignored.

Upon investigating the need for metal detectors, the committee became aware several factors. First, all Harford County Public High Schools have access to the hand held wand style metal detectors which can be used at the administrations discretion. Second, A School Resource Officer (SRO) is assigned to all Harford County Public Middle and High Schools. Third, SRO's are also assigned to all sporting events where the probability of disruptive behavior is high.

The committee also reviewed the statistics of all weapons seized from all Harford County Public Schools during the 2005-2006 school year. The statistics revealed that weapons seizures are down.

Further, the committee took into account the practical application of a fixed metal detector in school. The process of having all students go through a metal detector would cause long lines. If metal is detected, the question arises of who would perform a secondary search of the student, and who is trained and qualified to perform such a search.

Charge III.

Evaluate the effectiveness of the security camera program and determine if the needs are being met and make recommendations if needed.

The committee reviewed and evaluated the security camera program currently being utilized in many Harford County High and Middle Schools. In sum, the committee found this program to be an outstanding and very important asset to the safety and security of the Schools.

The cameras are a vital tool used by both School administrators and law enforcement to both detect criminal activity and prevent such activity. The committee reviewed numerous examples where the cameras were able to help solve everything from policy infractions to violations of criminal law. The cameras also assist administrators with outside security of the School buildings.

In other activities, the Committee continued reviewing the School Resource Officer (SRO) program. An SRO from one of the Harford County Public High Schools attends every meeting and reports on activities at their respective Middle and High Schools. One highlight is that gang activity has decreased. This was attributed to more intelligence sharing between law enforcement and School Administrators, the Harford County Public Schools dress code policy, and the support of the SRO program.

The committee also received a report concerning the pilot proxy reader program being conducted in several Schools. The proxy readers or card readers are for the exterior doors of the school building and can be programmed to terminate at certain times. This secures all exterior doors from outside intruders. The committee believes this is an outstanding addition to building security.

In additional security matters, visitor passes are now being programmed into a computer data base at each school. This helps identify the visitor and adds to the security of the building during the school day.

In review of the committees' activities over the past year, we have dedicated individuals who put forth many hours in pursuit of the committee's areas of study. Membership is still low however, and recruitment has not been successful.

Recommendations/Suggestions:

- 1) The Safety and Security Committee recommends The Board of Education consider adoption of the attached user group checklist to be used by all outside groups who apply for use of the school buildings

- 2) The Safety and Security Committee does not recommend the use of permanent, fixed metal detectors at this time for the reasons stated earlier in this report.
- 3) The Safety and Security Committee recommends the continuance and expansion of the School Resource Program. Over the next year, the committee would like to continue to evaluate the program and its successes within Harford County Public Schools. We believe this is an invaluable program and fully support its use in all schools within the County.
- 4) The Safety and Security Committee respectfully requests the Board allow us the opportunity to focus on increasing and maintaining membership to the Safety and Security Committee.
- 5) The Committee is in full support of the further implementation of video surveillance in each of the County Schools. We believe this is an excellent prevention measure to deter criminal activity and as a tool in the event of an emergency. The remote access provided to authorized personnel is priceless and we recommend the continued implementation of this program.

Future 2006-2007 Areas of Study

The Committee respectfully requests to pursue the following areas of study during the 2006-2007 School year:

- 1) The continued evaluation of the School Resource Program.
- 2) The opportunity to focus on increasing and maintaining membership to the Safety and Security Committee.

- 3) Review the proxy card pilot program which is now in three Harford County Public Schools.

The Citizen's Advisory Committee on Safety and Security would like to thank the Harford County Board of Education for allowing us the opportunity to present our views. These views are from professionals and parents of students in many of our public schools throughout Harford County. We would like to thank Mrs. Jacqueline C. Haas, Mr. Robert A. Benedetto, Sgt. Kevin Shrader and all of the past and current Committee members. We look forward to serving the Board of Education and the citizens of our county by providing the citizen's perspective and advice relating to the safety and security of all public schools in Harford County.

John E. Burton
Citizens Advisory Committee
For Safety and Security
Chairperson