

Trail shares security concerns

C.J. MARSHALL / Published: March 14, 2018

Those attending Lackawanna Trail's school board meeting Monday were provided an update concerning security within the district.

In his report, Superintendent Matt Rakauskas said that there is an armed person who patrols school property.

(That is law enforcement liaison Daralynn Carr who is also a Wyoming County Juvenile Probation Officer.)

One possibility, Rakauskas said, would be the hiring of a designated school resource officer to provide additional security.

"Student safety is our number one priority," Rakauskas said.

Later, during public comments, Chelsey Gumble of Nicholson asked the superintendent if he could provide further information about the security measures implemented over the past month at Trail.

Rakauskas explained that students and teachers have been participating in safety drills. More police - at the local and state levels - have been patrolling the schools, he said. The district's full security system - which includes 96 cameras - can now be accessed by the state police.

Although the district is continuing its efforts to increase security, following the shooting in Florida, the superintendent assured that the Trail schools are safe and secure.

Kasey Chermak of Dalton asked about how the district would respond to a student who made threats.

Rakauskas replied that if the threat is made on school property, the district will definitely take action. If a student were to pull a gun or knife, he said, that student would face expulsion. But he cautioned that students cannot be expelled based on rumors or innuendo.

As an example, a student who accidentally brought a knife to school, then turns it into the office after realizing he had it would not face expulsion, Rakauskas said.

"We view that as a different situation, compared to a student with a knife who made a real threat with it," he said.

High school Principal Mark Murphy reported that the administration is 'leaning' toward June 12 for the graduation date. Murphy explained he has spoken to members of the senior class, and gave two different options for different days. A straw poll he conducted indicated a preference for June 12, he said, but the final decision will rest with the administration.

Rakauskas said that school board member Adrian Bianchi, who is an emergency medical technician with the Factoryville and Justus fire companies, will hold a 'stop the bleeding' workshop for Trail staff members on May 4. The workshop will teach participants how to administer first aid and apply tourniquets to bleed victims.

Rakauskas informed the board the district is negotiating with Amerisite to have a cellular telephone tower constructed on school property. The property is three acres of land off Corby Road near the softball field.

Once constructed, a cellular service such as Sprint would lease the 199-foot tower and the district would share in the proceeds. It would also provide a considerable improvement to the cell service in the area.

Murphy reported that a blood drive sponsored by the National Honor Society for students and teachers that had to be postponed due to bad weather has now been scheduled for March 29 in the high school gymnasium.

Murphy said that parents of students also can donate blood during the drive, but they should first contact him to make an appointment.

Business manager Keith Glynn reported that things are looking good for the proposed budget for the 2018-19 school year. He said that the district would be able to put together a balanced budget within a 3.1 index ceiling imposed by the state.

In other business, the board:

*Approved two Network Cabling Projects to K.I.T. Communication. The district will pay 40 percent of \$20,999 to rewire the internet system at the elementary school, and 40 percent of \$41,703 to have the same service performed at the high school. The rest of the money will be financed through E-Rate. The rewiring will provide faster internet and better Wi-Fi service at the two buildings for both teachers and students.

*Approve a request from Kevin Dikeman to take student Alaina Jones to the All-State Wind Ensemble at the PMEA All State Conference Competition in Lancaster on April 18-20.

*Approved Mary Belle Gilroy's art trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Guggenheim Museum in New York City on April 27.

*Approved a senior class trip to Kalahari Waterpark Resort on May 7-8, returning to school on May 9, at no cost to the district.

*Approved the hiring of Robert Houser for the full-time Maintenance II evening position at the probationary rate of \$15.20 per hour.

*Voted seven to one to hire Harry Powell as the athletic director for the 2018-19 school year, at an annual rate of \$16,000.

*Appointed Lauren Hales to the special education long term substitute position for the first day of the first quarter of 2017-18.

*Voted seven to one to approve Timothy Ronchi as the assistant football coach for the 2018-19 school year at a stipend of \$5,600.

*Approved Ben Simmons, Lori Swanchak, and Scot Wasilchak as volunteer assistant coaches for the track and field program for the 2018-19 season.

*Approved the resignation of Karen Brown from her high school assistant cafeteria manager position.

*Approved the resignation of Rebecca Aten from her para-professional position, effective April 1.

*Approved the retirement request of elementary center teacher Patricia Carpenter at the end of the school year.