

1 **Southwest Vermont Regional Technical School District (SVRTSD)**  
2 **RGB Education/Facilities Committee Meeting Minutes: Wednesday, September 21, 2022,**  
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4 **RGB members present: Education/Facilities Committee:** M. Cutler, J. Kelly, J. MacDonald, C. Putney,  
5 TJ Williams and board member, L. Johnson; SW Tech represented by Supt./Dir. M. Lawler and Asst Dir.  
6 M. Honsinger  
7

8 Recorder: Sandra Redding, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent  
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10 Meeting was opened by Chair TJ Williams at 10:25AM who asked for public comments/concerns.  
11 Hearing none, he invited Supt. Lawler to address the committee concerning the school safety/security  
12 position he has proposed. Lawler thanked the committee for the opportunity to have a deeper discussion  
13 concerning this issue. He shared these comments:

- 14 • We have had a School Resource Officer who was a Bennington Police officer for the past 8-9  
15 years, except for the pandemic years, of course
- 16 • Could be a different officer each time here in the building for a 4 hour tour, usually mornings
- 17 • Office spent time visiting classes, walking hallways especially during passing times, checking  
18 stairwells and bathrooms, covering perimeter and outdoor exits and parking area;
- 19 • Interaction with students was ongoing and casual to permit trust and growth of relationships
- 20 • Most problems handled in-house with teacher assistance and intervention
- 21 • Teachers/admins knew assistance was readily available, now, not so much as the BPD does not  
22 have sufficient staff to provide us with the coverage we were used to
- 23 • We are pro-active as much as we can possibly be given that we do not know day to day what  
24 may have occurred in a student's life overnight
- 25 • We have funds available
- 26 • Not having someone readily available could be an issue as things do get hectic in a hurry
- 27 • Looking for unarmed, non-uniformed staff to plug a hole in our usual security needs

28 Asst Director, Meg Honsinger, shared an incident from this very week. The details shared demonstrated  
29 how an incident occurred, what transpired, how it was handled but deteriorated over the weekend, time  
30 spent with family and student, what we needed to do to for that student/family and the solution we  
31 provided to keep all parties safe and secure. That was just ONE incident of the several that occur each  
32 day. Most are pretty simple, but some need a great deal of time and attention. Honsinger noted that our  
33 students interact very well with the officers on duty and enjoy Gracie, our Bennington police dog. They, as  
34 well as all of us here, are always working to improve student morale and situations.  
35

36 Comments/concerns from board members:

- 37 • Having person assigned as a SRO or other named position makes sense; avoids trouble, gathers  
38 information, makes connections
- 39 • As we have a joint campus with MAU, don't we share/have access to the security people over  
40 there? (Actually, no, security services are NOT included in the allocation agreement, so there is  
41 NO formal agreement to access assistance, just a shared verbal agreement.) We are fortunate  
42 that they respond to our situations in a timely manner, but they are pushed to their limits as well.
- 43 • Students need to be taught life time strategies by our teachers to help them in the workplace.  
44 Teachers should be trained how to assist in this area. We need to provide "something different."  
45 for our students.
- 46 • We need to understand a teacher's work load and figure out a way to ask for additional help in  
47 these areas without over-taxing them. Teachers work very hard to maintain order, teach their  
48 curriculum and address student needs everyday.
- 49 • Do we have specific policies that deal with disciplinary problems Yes, but that procedure takes  
50 time and most of these circumstances need immediate responses/solutions
- 51 • Maybe we need a school clinician, not an SRO. Kids are very needy these days after all the  
52 pandemic issues and community problems we see now. We try to create a place of calm and  
53 harmony at least for a little while during the day for our students.
- 54 • Not enough personnel at BPD, so we need to shift our thinking concerning security/safety person  
55 • Learn more about psyche aide; provide more training for our personnel

- 1 • Student resources needed to deal with societal/community behavior/issues; administration can
- 2 help build relationships and recognize social issues
- 3 • Social and Emotional Learning provides a common language for faculty/staff to use
- 4 • School has become a “need fulfiller” for some students
- 5 • Policies in this area need to be reviewed and updated to reflect present day social issues
- 6 • More specific data needed to fully understand what issues are happening in our schools. The
- 7 community deserves to be made aware of this as well.
- 8 • Not in favor of uniformed personnel for security; some were ok with a uniformed person
- 9 • Having students get used to a welcoming presence is a good step towards building positive
- 10 relationships
- 11 • Staff in hallways more useful/positive than police officers
- 12 • Police officers more knowledgeable concerning security and legalities
- 13 • People with military/law enforcement backgrounds respond to anything labeled “security” in very
- 14 specific ways

15 Supt. Lawler inquired if he had asked for a school clinician instead of a safety/security person, would that  
16 have been better received? Some felt the word, “security” triggered a specific response. Perhaps, more  
17 mental health training could be useful so that all personnel could be more in-tune with present day issues.  
18 It was noted that perhaps minorities and the disabled were most often suspended. We may need more  
19 student services and more training for faculty/staff in the areas of mental health and social learning. Work  
20 hard at keeping students in school as much as possible, not suspending or expelling. But, all  
21 experiences are situational and cannot be pre-judged.

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23 The committee requested that Supt. Lawler re-tool the position and return to the board with some relative  
24 local data concerning present day issues occurring on the school campus. The vote was unanimous to  
25 discuss/present this issue to the full board at the next meeting, Monday, October 17, 2022.

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27 Meeting adjourned at 11:27AM

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