

TUMWATER PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
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CONVENE: 8:00 a.m.

PRESENT: Chair Leatta Dahlhoff and Councilmembers Peter Agabi and Angela Jefferson.

Staff: City Administrator John Doan, City Attorney Karen Kirkpatrick, Fire Chief Brian Hurley, Parks and Recreation Director Chuck Denney, Water Resources and Sustainability Director Dan Smith, Finance Director Troy Niemeyer, Assistant Fire Chief Shawn Crimmins, Police Commander Jay Mason, Communications Manager Ann Cook, Recreation Manager Todd Anderson, Police Lieutenant Jennifer Kolb, Police Administrative Manager Laura Wohl, Police Lieutenant Carolos Quiles, and Legal Assistant Sharleen Johansen.

Others: Carole Meyer, Interim Superintendent, Tumwater School District; Shawn Batstone, Assistant Superintendent, Tumwater School District; and Casey Taylor, Tumwater School District Board Member.

**APPROVAL OF
MINUTES:
SEPTEMBER 13,
2022:**

MOTION: Councilmember Jefferson moved, seconded by Chair Dahlhoff, to approve the September 13, 2022 minutes as published. A voice vote approved the motion.

**SCHOOL
RESOURCE
OFFICER (SRO)
ROLES &
RESPONSIBILITIES:**

Police Commander Mason introduced the briefing on the School Resource Officer (SRO) program and the partnership between the Tumwater Police Department and the Tumwater School District. He introduced Police Lieutenant Kolb and Shawn Batstone, Assistant Superintendent, Tumwater School District.

Police Commander Mason provided historical information on the SRO program. The program, established 10 years ago in the Tumwater School District, focuses on building positive relationships with students and staff with the primary goal of supporting students to remain in school. SROs operate under the state's Revised Code of Washington (RCW) statute with a focus on prevention of students entering the criminal justice system when possible and not imposing criminal sanctions in matters more appropriately handled within the education system. SROs are not involved in school discipline issues.

Police Lieutenant Kolb reviewed the functional operations of the SRO program. Tumwater Detectives Tyler Boling and Ross Rollman are assigned as Tumwater SROs serving over 6,300 students and 850 staff members in the Tumwater School District, as well as parents and visiting

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students from other school districts.

The purpose of the program is to foster positive interactions with students, faculty, and parents and supporting a safe and healthy environment to help students achieve success and graduate. SROs utilize the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) “Triad Model of SRO Responsibility” dividing SRO responsibilities into roles of an educator, informal counselor, and law enforcement officer.

Program goals are to ensure SROs are viewed as people rather than just officers in a uniform. SROs typically work in plainclothes and work in uniform occasionally to ensure student awareness of their presence on campus. SROs assist in de-escalating emotional and stressful incidents. SROs serve as point of contact for students and staff who may be victims in the juvenile justice system to help them navigate processes.

Police Lieutenant Kolb described many of the expectations of SROs to include collaboratively working with the school district, providing security at games and events, assisting staff in de-escalating situations, providing health and safety education at all levels, conducting criminal investigations, and working collaboratively with the community to solicit donations and rewards. SROs work closely with the Tumwater Parks and Recreation Department and attend Tumwater Youth Program (TYP) events.

During the 2021-2022 school year, the Legislature adopted new regulations to include a requirement for the school district and the police department to execute an agreement for SROs to provide security.

Shawn Batstone commented that throughout the course of his career, he has been involved with several SRO partnerships. The partnership with the Tumwater Police Department is one of the best partnerships he has experienced because of the collaborative relationship between the police department and the school district. All participants focus on a community-based model of policing fostering positive relationships.

Mr. Batstone shared examples of the activities involving SRO support. In June 2022, SROs provided support to 31 activities. In September 2022, 72 activities were reported involving SRO support. School district staff and SROs meet monthly to review data and identify any trends or patterns of activities and the location of those activities.

Chair Dahlhoff invited questions from the committee.

Councilmember Jefferson shared that she has met with parents who are experiencing trauma. The schools in Tumwater are experiencing a problem with harassment, assault, and bullying. She shared information

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from Tumwater residents and former Tumwater residents that could be contributing to the reason why the community of Tumwater has the highest level of youth suicide rates in Thurston County. Tumwater schools, administrators, principals, teachers, and educators have a role to play in helping to reduce student suicide rates.

Councilmember Jefferson shared several stories of students who have experienced incidents of name-calling, were verbally abused, were bullied, or were physically assaulted. Several of the parents withdrew their children from Tumwater schools because they feared for their child's life. She conveying support for the SRO program in schools for safety and violence prevention but questioned whether SROs are utilized for the right purpose and whether that support is adequate.

Councilmember Jefferson asked a series of questions with responses (italicized) by Mr. Batstone:

- Are our schools relying on SROs to enforce discipline and is there a clear defined policy when SROs should be called? *Policy 4311 is the most recent policy for the Tumwater School District on school safety and security services within the Community Relations Series of the district's policies. Part of the question pertains to the circumstances under which teachers and school administrators may ask for SROs to intervene because the primary purpose of the policy is to ensure SROs are resources for support when needed. Specific language enables teachers and staff to seek support from SROs to intervene with a student only when there are problems involving incidents of law enforcement, criminal activity, or other threats to safety and health. Principals have received some support in terms of identifying those types of situations because of the importance of adhering to the law preventing SROs from overseeing school discipline. For incidents involving harassment, intimidation, and bullying, the first layer is assisting principals in understanding the law surrounding harassment, intimidation, and bullying to enable them to respond appropriately to whatever incident is occurring in the schools. However, SROs would not intervene during that initial response unless there was an immediate threat to safety and health to the school, school system, or the district.*
- If a special needs child is in distress, are SROs contacted if the student is acting out? *The responsibility is by the school principal along with a case manager. For any student that might have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) where there would be some reason to respond to a behavioral incident, response would be between the case manager, the principal, and the special education team based on the level of the incident. However, it is not always possible to understand or assume when the level of*

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escalation could occur that might threaten health and safety. The first interaction is typically by the IEP team with the principal and case manager.

- Studies show marginalized students are suspended, arrested, and criminalized at disturbingly high rates. Based on the SRO data shared with the committee, are marginalized students suspended and arrested at higher rates, and is it possible to break down the data? *Yes, it is possible to identify data by demographic. Mr. Batstone offered to examine September data and identify gender, race, and ethnicity to ensure schools are not disproportionately intervening. He offered to provide the committee with a summary of gender, race, ethnicity, and the background of students involved in activities. He added that a disability status is considered as an underserved population as well.*
- Are teachers and school administrators trained on when to call the SRO? It is important everyone has clarity on the role of SROs. *Mr. Batstone agreed on the importance of clarity. He offered to check-in with school principals to confirm whether such protocol has been taught. At the beginning of each school year, staff members engage in positive intervention and support training. It is important to review all types of classroom response, response for office referral, and response for SRO assistance. He plans to follow-up on the explicit teaching component.*

Ms. Meyer added that the district has adopted a policy on the district's mental health and well-being of staff, as well as considering the social and emotional learning for all students. The district is also organizing new critical incident response guidelines and a team to address incidents surrounding suicide. She conveyed appreciation to Councilmember Jefferson for her participation in the district's equity group.

Councilmember Agabi asked whether notes entered by the district/school on a student's record prompt automatic notification to the parents. He cited an incident involving one of his children and discovering notes entered about his child on incidents of non-significance when he recently visited the school on another matter. Ms. Meyer advised that she would follow-up with the school to learn more about the issue. Parents should always be notified of any issue that results in a note in the school system.

Mr. Batstone added that the practice of positive behavior intervention support is to use a flowchart for discipline, which includes classroom-managed behaviors and office managed behaviors. For example, classrooms have a tiered approach to response. Teachers address the response within the classroom. A second incident might result in a different response by the teacher. When negative behavior occurs multiple times, the parent should be receiving some communication that there is a behavior that is being addressed in the classroom. However, the first

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incident corrected by the teacher within the classroom would not be reported. Parents can request notification of any type of response. Most classroom-managed behaviors are not reported as the teacher addresses those behaviors. Teachers are asked to track incident data within the classroom to distinguish between classroom and office behaviors. He would need to review the notation because it may only require a notation in data to track patterns in the classroom that could be corrected through professional training.

Councilmember Agabi requested information from the district concerning discipline notations and notification to parents of students attending Bush Middle School. Mr. Batstone affirmed he would follow-up with Councilmember Agabi.

Police Commander Mason reported he met with Councilmember Jefferson to discuss her concerns. He acknowledged the concerns and pain expressed by parents. The issues are complex, may involve schools, other people, and other factors outside the school. He indicated a desire to review a specific incident further as well as meeting with parents.

MOTION:

Councilmember Jefferson moved, seconded by Councilmember Agabi, not to forward the Interlocal Agreement between the City of Tumwater and the Tumwater School District for the School Resource Officer program (2023-2025) to the City Council pending further discussion and potential changes by the Public Health and Safety Committee. A voice vote approved the motion unanimously.

Councilmember Jefferson recommended the interlocal agreement should include information on when SROs are contacted. For example, SROs are not contacted for Level 1 disruptive student conduct as those incidents are handled by the school. However, Levels 2 and 3 involving criminal conduct should be included, as well as a requirement that staff and administrators should be trained to identify situations when an SRO should be contacted to intervene.

Lieutenant Kolb referred to the school district policy referenced in the interlocal agreement as the policy covers response by SROs. Councilmember Jefferson responded that the policies are too vague and her recommendation is to define policies clearly within the interlocal agreement.

Police Commander Mason advised that he would coordinate with Mr. Batstone to address the requests.

Following further clarification as to appropriate provisions to include within the interlocal agreement, Chair Dahlhoff recommended the school district policies should address training of school district staff and

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administers on the ability to identify situations requiring assistance by SROs. Councilmember Jefferson supported the suggestion.

Police Commander Mason added that the department's policy dictates that SROs do not participate in discipline. Additionally, SROs are prohibited from participating in school discipline based on state law as codified in RCW 28A.320.124 prohibiting SROs from becoming involved in formal school discipline situations that are the responsibility of the school administrators.

Councilmember Jefferson questioned whether school administrators and teachers are aware of state law because data reflects SROs are being contacted excessively.

Councilmember Agabi offered that Section VII within the former interlocal agreement was much more comprehensive than the new version concerning the process for filing complaints. Police Commander Mason explained that the section pertains to complaints against SROs. It is likely some language was excluded because of recent changes codified by the Legislature in 2021 overseeing SRO operations.

City Attorney Kirkpatrick acknowledged that some provisions for complaints and the complaint process were reconfigured within the agreement.

For ease of comparison between the old versus new agreement, Chair Dahlhoff recommended staff provide a redlined version to assist in deciphering new language or additions.

Councilmember Agabi said the interlocal agreement should include some language from the former agreement because the current draft does not identify how the SRO interacts with the schools/administrators.

Police Commander Mason affirmed a review by staff of the requests to draft some changes for further review.

City Administrator Doan commented on the challenges of interlocal agreements because agreements reference other documents, such as district policies, RCWs, and City policies. The downside of including references is the difficulty in keeping pace with changes in policies or RCWs.

Chair Dahlhoff offered several comments and questions surrounding the importance of ensuring the Council is better informed about the SRO program, responsibilities, and duties. She questioned the role of SRO/law enforcement intervention during an incident involving youth experiencing mental health issues because police officers have often shared the challenges with responding to incidents involving mental health within the

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community. She asked SRO skill sets to respond to mental health incidents when police officers on patrol experience challenges in responding to people experiencing mental health issues.

Police Lieutenant Kolb explained that SRO response to students experiencing a mental health crisis is only prompted when there is a threat or safety issue that requires an additional level of security. SROs do not respond to incidents involving students experiencing a mental health crisis. However, SROs have formed relationships with students and often follow-up with students who may have experienced a crisis.

Chair Dahlhoff inquired about the possibility of receiving quarterly updates on the tracking of data by the Tumwater School District. Police Commander Mason offered to follow-up with the school district for quarterly updates.

Police Lieutenant Kolb reported that she, School Resource Officers Rollman and Boling, and Mr. Batstone meeting monthly to review data.

Chair Dahlhoff commented on the importance of considering the experiences of parents and others and the process of reporting or not reporting. She suggested convening a conversation on the process for reporting to ensure members in the community feel safe to report information. The Council is receiving information from the community that has not been reported. It would be important to identify disconnects because people continue to have the experience of being disconnected. She suggested revising the interlocal government to ensure provisions are gender neutral.

Chair Dahlhoff added that the Olympia School District recently eliminated its SRO program. She asked whether staff from the Tumwater Police Department discussed with the Olympia Police Department any outcomes arising from the withdrawal of SROs in schools. Police Commander Mason advised that the SROs were removed at the request of the Olympia School District.

Chair Dahlhoff cited the number of recent school shootings across the county. She asked about the role of SROs in terms of completing security assessments of schools and whether security aspects should be highlighted more than other activities performed by SROs. Police Commander Mason replied that the issues are numerous and the discussions encompass many issues in terms of school security, number of SROs, and SRO duties. At the beginning of the school year, SROs participate in training with staff. The department's patrol division conducts training annually and reviews different scenarios regularly. School security is not the sole responsibility of SROs. The department collaborates with the school district to provide a safe environment for students and staff. The effort is multifaceted as the

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district is responsible for oversight of school security.

Chair Dahlhoff said she would submit a variety of comments and questions that might be applicable to changes to the interlocal agreement. She is also interested in the organizational chart of the Tumwater Police Department and the possibility of including a new branch of community outreach and community wellness and transferring the SRO program to the new branch rather than existing within the detective unit.

**ADDITIONAL
ITEMS:**

There were no additional items.

ADJOURNMENT:

With there being no further business, Chair Dahlhoff adjourned the meeting at 9:29 a.m.

Prepared by Valerie L. Gow, Recording Secretary/President
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