Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
Friday, 19 October 2018 09:00



Board discusses potential lockdowns, armed guards

Several projects regarding school safety were discussed during the superintendent report at the Oct. 16 Gallup-McKinley County Schools board meeting.

Tim Bond, assistant superintendent of support services, spoke about monthly meetings held with the district security team and members from organizations such as the county response team, the N.M. State Police and Navajo Nation Police among others.

Bond said the team is currently working on a memorandum of understanding with Red Rock Security & Patrol on the use of firearms and public announcement protocols.

“[The goal is] to make sure information gets where it needs to be,” he said.

Bond said in the case of a potentially dangerous incident such as a lockdown, the current system has students text their parents, who in turn contact the school. This system also includes the use of rally points, a place near each school building where students can exit safely and then be transported by bus if needed.

District 1 GMCS board member Kevin Mitchell said the notion of armed guards on school

campuses has not been well received by the public.

“[We provide] surveys and education to community on why we want to do this, [but we receive] big negative responses from them,” he said.

Mitchell said information is being provided to the public to explain the benefits of having armed guards.

Other members of the board were interested in seeing what feedback could be gathered.

“I want to see where we can go with it. [To] see what parents think about it,” District 3 board member Priscilla Manuelito said about the survey.

The second item for school safety was the implementation of Aiphone systems, which would provide cameras and door locks for school buildings across the district.

Bond said the Aiphone system would be implemented across the district in three phases.

The first phase was to inspect the current cameras and phones in each school, and ensure they are functioning properly. This step was completed by the time of the meeting.

The second phase was to install additional cameras and to upgrade the security systems in the central office. This step should have been completed by Oct. 12, Bond said.

The third phase was to add the Aiphone system to secondary schools, such as Lincoln Elementary School. Bond said this phase was around 60-percent complete by the time of the meeting, and the whole phase should be finished sometime in November.

Bond also discussed upgrades to the current school security systems. The upgrades included several examinations of the current systems.

Bond said five different teams worked through each building. The teams included school staff and eventually first responders for safety. These walkthroughs helped to identify the needs of the school.

Once those needs were identified, the district sent applications to the Public School Capital Outlay Council for capital funding. Bond said out of 288 applications from across the state, 223 applications were funded.

This number included 25 schools from GMCS, Bond said. The district then received close to $1 million from state funding, which was then used for equipment like new radios, fencing, door replacements, systems for site access control, more cameras and reinforced windows.

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