

Board Notes

1/14/2025

A special meeting of the School Board was held Tuesday, January 14, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the New Prairie High School in the Auditorium with Mr. Phil King, Mr. Jason DeMeyer, Mrs. Jill Smith, Mr. Rich Gadacz and Mr. Rich Shail present. Dr. Paul White, Superintendent, was also present.

Mr. Phil King, Board President, reviewed guidelines for speaking on the topic of the Let's Talk Session.

There was a motion by Mr. DeMeyer, seconded by Mrs. Smith to adopt the Agenda. The motion was approved 5-0

Dr. White reviewed and highlighted the NPUSC Safety Committee's Summary of Recommendations which had been emailed numerous times to the community.

The committee met in response to Fall 2024 survey data from NPUSC teaching staff and parents/guardians expressing interest in weapon detection systems to be implemented at entry points in NPUSC schools. The survey data was collected after a rumor threat situation at New Prairie Middle School earlier in the semester.

The committee reviewed research and articles presenting both pros and cons of weapon detection system implementation prior to meeting. Committee members were divided into four sub-groups over three meetings. The sub-groups studied: the impact on detection systems on the school environment, a logistics implementation plan for secondary schools, a logistics implementation plan for elementary schools, and other safety measures to be considered. The sub-groups worked through their findings and presented their conclusions to the full committee.

The safety committee members agreed unanimously on December 11th to recommend against implementing weapon detection systems at any level of NPUSC. A variety of factors led to this recommendation, with the major themes listed below:

- Actual threats or rumors of threats to NPUSC schools occur very rarely. The rumor situation in September 2024 with New Prairie Middle School is not representative of a consistent historical problem for our school community
- A review of historical data about school shootings reveal these events are most often carried out by former students or community members AFTER a school day begins. Focus should continue to be placed on securing the school after the school day starts
- Weapon Detection Systems require not only significant initial financial investment, but considerable daily logistics support from staff and administration to manage effectively. Significant concern emerged related to how realistic it would be for NPUSC administration to effectively manage the systems daily
- Studies have revealed that Weapon Detection Systems, while they have improved with new technologies, are not 100% perfect and can miss the very items they are designed to detect. The challenges with implementation, noted below, do not justify implementing something that provides debatable guaranteed safety
- The logistics challenges around daily implementation were significant and beyond what was initially thought for realistic daily use. Issues related to student entry points, impact on school start times and transportation, who will and will not be required to pass through the system, ongoing costs of additional security staff, how to secure

other points of entry where systems are not located, and how to avoid unsafe student lines outdoors prior to entry were some of the logistical challenges that when really studied, were complicated and disruptive enough to lead committee members to ask, "does this implementation justify this much disruption for debatable increases in safety?"

- It was clear additional staff would be necessary to observe and implement weapon detection systems throughout a school day. It was determined these resources would be better spent on other safety measures
- A collection of other safety measures was identified that could be implemented with funds that would have gone to startup costs for detection systems. The committee is recommending:
 - ❖ additional radios for NPUSC staff, safety film on exterior windows near points of entry
 - ❖ additional locking options for classroom doors
 - ❖ one Weapon Detection System set available in NPUSC for the infrequent situations of concerning threats to safety or for major public community events
 - ❖ increase security or School Resource Officers when possible,
 - ❖ put more interior doors in schools on remote systems for increased interior lockdown
 - ❖ invest in conflict resolution training for students and staff/add social workers when possible, enhance internal camera systems, safety apps for staff tied to 911

Dr. White explained that this recommendation was not arrived at lightly, but with considerable thought and time spent in a process of study and discussion. Multiple committee members that were originally in favor of the approach changed their views after studying logistics challenges that would be involved. Dr. White highlighted themes of the committees' work including logistical challenges with detection systems and other safety measures the committee is recommending be pursued.

Dr. White concluded by thanking the committee members for their time and involvement.

Following the public input portion of the Let's Talk Session Board President Mr. Phil King entertained a motion to officially approve the recommendation of the Safety Committee to seek other avenues to secure NPUSC schools through other means of safety initiatives, other than Weapon Detection Devices. The motion was made by Mr. Gadacz, seconded by Mr. Shail and approved 5-0.

Mr. King stated the next regular Board meeting will be Monday, January 27, 2025 at New Prairie United School Corporation Central Office in the Board Room at 6:00 pm CST.

Mr. King asked if the Board had any further business. There was no further business from the Board. Mr. King adjourned the meeting.

The community can watch a recording of the full meeting at the School Board's YouTube Channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/@NPUSCBoardMeetings>.