

Published May 16th, 2018

City and schools work together for student safety on campus

By Pippa Fisher

The city and school boards continue to work hard collaboratively to ensure student safety, particularly with regard to school site security.

At the April 30 joint meeting of the Lafayette city council and school board City Manager Steve Falk and Lafayette School District Superintendent Rachel Zinn presented a brief update on steps that have been and are currently being taken to improve emergency plans, particularly in the case of an active shooter on campus.

Falk explained that amid concerns over increased school shootings both he and the superintendents of both the Acalanes Union High School and the Lafayette school districts have been working hard over the past six years in collaboration with former Police Chief Eric Christensen.

During this time, Falk explained, Christensen had supervised emergency drills and active shooter training sessions for teachers in all schools.

Zinn said that with school security very much on their mind, Christensen was working on written, comprehensive, aligned plans which were almost complete when he left Lafayette but on which he is continuing to work together with new Police Chief Ben Alldritt. Zinn said she is looking forward to seeing the completed plans very soon.

In addition Christensen had done a safety audit of all campuses with homeland security, reported Zinn. She said that during the comprehensive audit they walked through all the campuses and identified anything that needed beefing up in terms of security. Information from the audit is also expected very soon.

Zinn said that the schools themselves also continually address school and student safety, holding regular drills and that as part of the Measure C bond work, schools are also looking to do things that increase school safety such as having blinds that can be pulled down in case of an incident, double locks, and "panic bar" hardware which allows a door to be immediately locked. She said they are upgrading and updating all their alarm systems.

Zinn gave credit to Christensen and Police Officer Larry Seliga, who have worked with the schools on both security and traffic safety near campuses, referring to them as "great partners."

Vice Mayor Cam Burks also commented on the terrific work done by Falk and Christensen, which he said had to be "the number one focus" and that there has to be seamless collaboration as city and school board work together.

Burks said later that the joint school board and city council meeting had been profoundly encouraging. "I will continue to support closer engagement, both at the council and board level and between our respective staffs," said Burks.

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