

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
NOVEMBER 10, 2010**

ATTENDANCE: Denise Taylor-Moye, Chair; Richard Bonney, M. Yvette Brantley (7:01 p.m.); Lydia Martinez (7:13 p.m.)

OTHERS: Melvin Wearing Sr., Bridgeport School Police and Security Director; Council Member Sue Brannelly, Maria Pereira, Bridgeport Board of Education Member; Mr. Masseraro, Bridgeport Public School Police and Security

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Taylor-Moye called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. Chairman Taylor-Moye introduced herself and requested the others to introduce themselves.

Informational Session with Melvin Wearing Sr., Director – School Police and Security, Bridgeport Board of Education regarding the role and practices of the BOE School Police and Security.

Mr. Wearing introduced himself and said that he was originally from New Haven and had been in the District for about 5 years. His department is responsible for 37 different facilities. He then gave a quick rundown on the number of staff in his department.

Mr. Wearing said that all the schools have doors that are locked during the school day. The high schools also have metal detectors that are used daily. Each school has its own evacuation plan. Regular emergency drills are held at each of the facilities.

All of the security guards have received training for their duties. Mr. Wearing said that he was working towards having a security supervisor and reminded everyone that each principal has autonomy in his or her building. However, the principals have not received training in security issues.

There are surveillance cameras in the buildings. Certain doors now have a swipe card system installed to allow teachers and staff access back into the building without leaving a door unlocked. All the students should be entering by the front door. If the student arrives late, he or she goes to the cafeteria and signs in before going to class. Hallway sweeps are now being done, where students who are lingering in the hallways are taken to the cafeteria before being returned to class.

The extracurricular activities, such as sports or adult education mean that the buildings are open later, which can put a strain on the security staff. The security officers have cell phones and Mr. Wearing receives and dispatches most of the calls.

When Mr. Wearing came to Bridgeport, during his first year, there were over 500 arrests. Last year, there were about 100 arrests and currently in this year, there have been about 60 arrests. While the officers try not to arrest students, when assaults take place, there is no choice.

Mr. Wearing spoke about the Juvenile Justice system and a recent meeting regarding gang activity that had taken place. Mr. Wearing said that by working with and establishing a relationship with the students, it is possible to explain to them that wearing gang colors is not acceptable. He mentioned that he has noticed an increase in girls fighting with one another.

Mr. Wearing said that there was a security camera grant that the District has applied for but did not receive. He plans to reapply next year.

Chairman Taylor-Moye asked about the procedure for searches, which Mr. Wearing reviewed with her. She also asked about the procedure for breaking up fights. Mr. Wearing said that the guards are very careful when this is done. It is important to break up the altercation so no one is injured, but it is also important not to abuse a student.

Chairman Taylor-Moye asked about drug use. Mr. Wearing said that there have been some arrests for drug use and reminded everyone that this was not just a gang issue, but also a mental health issue, social service issue, and family issue along with possibly an addiction issue.

Chairman Taylor-Moye asked about the difference between the special officers and the police officers. Mr. Wearing said that the special officers are trained by the Bridgeport Police Department and can arrest students, but they are District employees.

Chairman Taylor-Moye asked if the District was making progress in terms of reducing violence. Mr. Wearing said that it is important to have consequences for actions in the school. This includes daily attendance, proper school policies and parental support in enforcing the policies. There is a special PCA school for those students who cannot function in a regular classroom.

Council Member. Brantley joined the meeting at 7:01 p.m.

Chairman Taylor-Moye said that she was in agreement with Mr. Wearing's statements. Mr. Wearing said that his background in law enforcement helps but that the students need mentoring and funding for evening activities. Evening sports activities help keep some of

the students out of harm's way. The Police Department has stepped up to the plate with some of the mentoring. However, unless Community Policing becomes more common, it is harder to deal with the issues.

Council Member Bonney asked about the hallway sweeps. Mr. Wearing reviewed the process and said that the administrators decide the consequence for the student. In-school suspension is now possible. Mr. Wearing explained that once a student who is an ongoing problem is identified, that student could be sent to a special alternative school.

Chairman Taylor-Moye asked about the video camera footage. Mr. Wearing said that the camera stores the footage for about thirty days. Council Member Bonney asked if there is regular monitoring of the daily footage. Mr. Masseraro said that the footage in his building is reviewed daily.

Council Member Martinez joined the meeting at 7:13 p.m.

Mr. Wearing said that the camera is there as a witness, but the security guards should be preventing these incidents from happening. Council Member Bonney asked if the video was being used reactively. He was told that while the reviews were usually used reactively, there were proactive reviews also.

Council Member Bonney asked what happened after a student left the building and then re-entered the building. Mr. Wearing said that the policy is that the student goes through the metal detector. However, it is important to remember that if the student is returning to his school, once he clears the metal detector, it becomes an administrative issue.

Council Member Brannelly asked Mr. Wearing what he would like to have if he had an unlimited budget. He said that he would build Harding High School a new building. After that, he said that he would like to have more video equipment, more staff and equipment for some of the alternative schools to allow them to handle more students who need that setting. He said that he would like to see drug counselors, social workers and mental health workers available to the students.

Council Member Martinez asked why some of the services that the City already has available were not available to the students. Mr. Wearing said that the question would best be asked of the Assistant Superintendent.

ADJOURNMENT

- ** COUNCIL MEMBER BONNEY MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services