



**CHIPPEWA FALLS
AREA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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Board of Education

February 8, 2024

Dave Czech
Board President

General Distribution

Sharon McIlquham
Board Vice President

RE: Security Concerns

Sherry Jasper
Board Clerk

Denise Fehr
Board Treasurer

To whom it may concern:

Steven Olson
Board Member

The Board and District have been receiving many phone calls and emails regarding an incident that occurred in October, 2023. Given that The Board is the community's link to what's going on in their schools, I thought it was important to release some information on what the Board is doing on this issue.

Peggy McKillip
Board Member

David Martineau
Board Member

The Board as a whole operates in a relatively slow fashion. We cannot discuss issues with other Board members nor make any decisions except with a formal vote and a meeting properly noticed on our agenda.

I have taken the first step to address this situation in an open and public forum. At our next School Board meeting, this will be on the agenda. We will listen to the comments from the public. We will have the Board's attorney present to tell us, and the public, what information we can and what we cannot legally release. We will review what was done in this incident and we will review procedures going forward. I fully expect this Board to formally go on the record either fully supporting the actions taken to date by the District or, if we believe something was not done according to our procedures, to formally state as a whole why we feel that way and take appropriate actions. Finally, we can also look at changing the procedures so long as we remain compliant with all of our requirements.

However, this meeting will not take place until February 27th. I understand the communities need for information now.

This is where I must specifically inform you that I am speaking as the President of the Board, but only as a member of the Board and what comes next has to be only my opinion.

I have listened to the podcasts and other news shows reporting on this incident. I fully understand what is being alleged and why. After listening to these reports, I understand why we are getting calls and emails and what the concern is.

First, it is being portrayed that the reason this incident is being treated differently is because of a political conspiracy to follow a certain narrative. Two other incidents are being used to compare in an attempt to prove this agenda. From that, a conclusion is reached that students were put in danger to forward a political narrative. I don't think it is our place to pre-judge anything. We will get as much facts out as we are allowed at the Board meeting. From what I have seen I don't believe this to be a possibility, but I can understand the outrage if it were true. I will go on record saying that if a political agenda of the administration or any individual actors put our kids in danger, we will take action. But I will also go on record stating that, from his first day here, Jeff Holmes has been nothing but a blessing for this District and does not deserve the emails he has been getting.

Second, it is important to understand the purpose for this communication to the parents. In neither of the two examples given nor the October case would the purpose of the letters be to provide student safety. It is possible that a present threat could require communication for safety reasons but that was not the case in any of these three examples. The purpose of these letters after the fact would solely be to relieve panic and assure parents that they have nothing to worry about. In the incident where the school was locked down, obviously the parents and students were aware the school was locked down and would have been calling non-stop to find out why and whether things were now safe. A letter had to go out. In this particular incident the facts and proof appear to show the opposite. No parents called or emailed. No students relayed to their parents that an incident occurred at school. There was no panic to reassure. In fact, it is true that the public did not become aware of this incident until an anonymous source leaked it to the media months later. And again, this is what prompted the letters from administration to come out now. Not because of safety, but because of the need to assure the public.

The final component of this requires me to relay one important law. Neither the Board nor the District is allowed to relay to the public student attendance. However, that is obviously what the public wants to know. Was this student back in our schools posing a danger to our kids? Here is what I can say as a parent of children who attended the district, as the School Board President, and a member of the community without revealing student attendance. I read every word of the redacted police report that was published. It is my personal opinion that if that student was allowed be in our schools after the information came out to the district and law enforcement, our students would have been in danger. If our students were in danger the District would have an obligation to immediately notify parents that there was a danger posed to their kids. The district did not notify the parents, and yet I can affirmatively state that I do not believe our kids were put in danger. You will have to read between the lines but as I understand it spelling it out any further would be a violation.

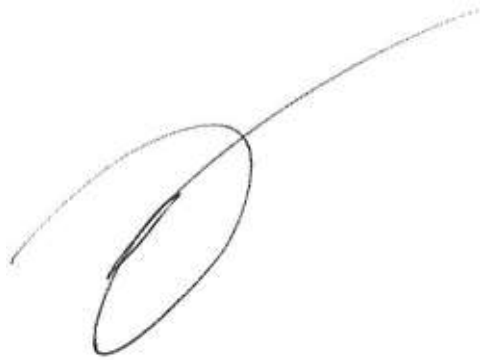
Do not be confused by what I am saying. This is a very real example of a situation that could have been very deadly if not caught. What I have seen to date is that a credible threat was caught by the school and referred to police. Police took over and at that point there was no further threat to relay. The administration made a judgment call to not install panic and fear where there was none prior. This Judgment call must have included a component that the threat was no longer imminent. Further, keep in mind that the facts as alleged could not have been relayed by the Superintendent as they have been now. The police report was not his to write, nor determine what information to redact. He would have had to send a letter out simply stating that a credible threat was made, thwarted, and referred to police. He would not have been able to tell the public who the student was nor whether they were currently attending school. Would this have caused more panic or

less? This is the decision the Board is being asked to second guess.

Having said that, our policies are created by being voted on by the Board, as representatives of the people. We are going to have an open session to listen to the public, state what we can on the record, and determine going forward how we want our administration to handle these things. It is my hope that the end result is the Board will vote to back what the administration did in this case. But this will only be done if the Board becomes fully confident that no child was ever placed in danger by an act of omission of this administration, that I can assure you.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'D' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that extends to the right.

David P. Czech
Board President