

1 **MAPLE RUN UNIFIED BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

2 **September 16, 2020 6:00 Zoom Meeting**

3
4 **MINUTES**

5 **Present for a Quorum via Zoom:** Jeff Morrill, Alisha Sawyer, Grant Henderson, Steven LaRosa, Susan
6 Magnan, Joanna Jerose, Al Corey, Jack McCarthy, Nilda Gonnella-French,

7 **Unable to Attend:** Nina Hunsicker

8 **Administrators:** Kevin Dirth, Superintendent; Bill Kimball, Assistant Superintendent; Martha Gagner,
9 Business Manager; Andrea Racek, Special Education Director; Stephanie Ripley, Early Childhood Director;
10 Joan Cavallo, SACS Principal; Stacie Rouleau, SACS Assistant Principal; Leeann Wright, NCTC Director; Lisa
11 Durocher, NCTC Assistant Director; Alexis Hoyt, Student Support Director; Jason Therrien, SATEC
12 Assistant Principal; Angela Stebbins, SATEC Principal; Heather Fitzgibbons, BFA Assistant Principal; Sara
13 Kattam, BFA Assistant Principal; Martin Kattam, Director of Technology and Innovation; Brett Blanchard,
14 BFA Principal, Dr. Sean O’Dell, FCS Principal, Tim Viens, CP Director.

15 **Others** – Corinne, Ashlie Olio, Lt. Paul Talley, L Marlow, Jeff Moulton, Angie Sturm, Keith Jackson, James,
16 Steve Messier, Jaxon Larose, Matt Bloom, Erin Rocheleau, Bryan DesLauriers, Mary , Tanner McCuin,
17 Brendan Deso, Reier Erickson, Rebecca Chaplin, Corrine , Lorna Jerome, Kim Douglas, Bryan Dyke, Carl
18 Andrew Watkins, Sr., Claire Faynor, Liz Gamache, Meghan LaChance, Kate LaRose, Jimmy Matas, Leo
19 Chaplin, Kaki Hutchinson, Jennifer Williamson, Mary Pickener, Lauren Dees-Erickson, Sarah Auer,
20 Marianne Hunkin, Reese Kelly, Gillian , Sheriff Roger Langevin, Abby Lanfear, Amanda, Ashley, Courtney
21 Couture, Erika Hamlin, Grace Ripley, Jonathan Giroux, Katie Campbell, Kathy Ficken, Kristen Belrose,
22 Melissa McFadden, Mike Campbell, Overwatch, Peter DesLauriers, Shannon Trainer, Tim, Zach Scheffler

23 1. **Call to Order** – Jeff Morrill called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

24 2. **Agenda Review**

25 **Al Corey made a motion to approve the agenda; second by Jack McCarthy. The motion passed**
26 **unanimously.**

27 3. **Pledge of Allegiance**

28 4. **Visitors – Kate Larose** spoke and provided a written statement: Over the past several meetings
29 you have heard the following about SROs in schools: That leading human rights, educational
30 leadership, and coalitions of national, state, and local organizations are saying schools are no
31 place for police presence. That national, statewide, and regional data say—without question—
32 that police presence in schools cause harm to children, especially those from marginalized
33 demographics. What harm looks like for students in our district through news stories and first-
34 person accounts, and How—if funding were reallocated to programming that is evidence-based—
35 positive outcomes will result for our students.

36 And you’ve also already heard and will continue to hear the following from some members of the
37 public: That the world is a scary place and SROs prevent mass shootings. That police are needed
38 to train students how to interact properly with the police. That the only students who have issues
39 with SROs are those who weren’t properly raised by their parents to show respect to authority
40 figures. The former points are all based in evidence and data. The latter points are not. They are
41 merely public opinion. And here’s the thing about public opinion: it is most often dead wrong. If
42 elected officials had relied on public opinion instead of moral imperatives and data, we would still
43 have slavery and lynching laws. If those deciding had only considered public opinion, women
44 wouldn’t have the right to vote, schools would not be integrated, and there would not be
45 inclusion or mainstreaming in our schools for students in special education.

46 So you see, at this particular juncture in history, your responsibility as a school board member is
47 not to simply default to public opinion. That’s a coward’s way out. When it comes to matters of
48 equity and safety—particularly for students of color, those with disabilities, low incomes, and

49 LGBTQ+ students—public opinion has never initially been on their side. Rather, it only happens
50 over time by leaders who are willing to take a courageous and caring stand and do the right thing.
51 Because it is the right to do. I am asking each of you to do the courageous, caring, and right thing
52 by our students and take police out of our schools.

53 **Kaki Hutchinson** spoke, from transcript: Good evening. This khaki Hutchinson St. Albans city, last
54 time I spoke to you at your board meeting, I did not know that there had been the incident that
55 happened at BFA. I was totally appalled about what happened to a disabled person, thrown to
56 the ground in front of his peers, handcuffed, arrested. These are the not the kinds of things that
57 provide a safe learning environment. As a long time, director of guidance and counseling services
58 at BFA I had many, many experiences with students who are disengaged students who are
59 students of color, students who are disabled and they need, every student needs, special
60 supports. The amount of money that the district is spending on SROs is also appalling. That money
61 could be so much better used to support services, counseling. Home school coordinators (?) so
62 that every single student in every single school is very well known when something is going
63 wrong, they can have someone to talk to, and help them go through it. That would make a really
64 safe educational atmosphere for all students. So I would implore you, please listen to the people
65 who know and ask some of your students. Some of the disengaged students, if they find having
66 police officers in the school providing a safe atmosphere for them, not the majority of the
67 students mind; to put the students who are more at risk more disengaged.
68 They're the students that we really need to be thinking about. So thank you very much for your
69 time and I hope that you'll put some really good thought into this issue.

70 **Dr. Jennifer Williamson** spoke and provided a written statement: My name is Dr. Jennifer
71 Williamson and I am a primary care physician and my child attends SATEC. In medicine,
72 advancement and improvement in patient care happens when we practice evidence-based
73 medicine. This means that although we think something might be really helpful, after we've done
74 it enough times we can look back and see if it had a positive effect on the patient's health.
75 Educators and board members should be doing the same. Having a police officer on campus
76 sounds like a good idea to those who believe that the police protect and serve our community.
77 However, there is plenty of documented instances and research on statistics now to show that
78 the practice is giving us a false sense of security with detrimental effects on our kids mental and
79 physical wellbeing. We have examples in Vermont which show that cops in our schools,
80 monitoring our children's behavior and directing punishment is a bad idea. Maple Run even has
81 our own example of cops in schools gone wrong. My neighbors tell stories of numerous incidents
82 that did not rise to the level of requiring hush money and non-disclosure agreements, but still
83 resulted in children being terrorized. These cops have been presented by the school board as the
84 cream of the crop, but the crop has been fraught with truly awful behavior and we invited these
85 people into our schools. I want cops out of our schools because they cause damage to our
86 children's health and psyche that will cause lasting effects well into adulthood. Adverse Childhood
87 Events, or ACES are known to increase risk of both physical diseases such as cancer and heart
88 disease, as well as increase the risk of criminal behavior. If the board is interested in protecting
89 our children and keeping them safe and healthy, in providing a trauma free education so that we
90 can build a better Saint Albans, then they will agree with me that having police officers in the
91 school is detrimental.

92 I have looked at the research on the effects of having police officers in schools and the cons far
93 outweigh the false sense of security people feel when they act by fear rather than knowledge.
94 Cops are more likely to target Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, LGBTQIA, and kids
95 with disabilities far more than their white, abled and straight counterparts. It is unfair to ask
96 members of marginalized communities, who already are disadvantaged in our local environment
97 to continue to bear the brunt of terror.

98 There will be other people tonight saying that they love the SROs and the program makes them

99 feel safe. I believe they have had great experiences. However, if you abide by the Mission
100 Statement and Core Values you must make changes to the SRO program as it is today because in
101 its current state it is in violation of your guiding principles.

102 I call on board members: 1. to fight for our children in marginalized groups who need our
103 greatest protection 2. to insist that previous instances of bad behavior of cops be brought to light
104 so we can fully understand the depth of this rot 3. to stop covering up traumatic events
105 instigated by poorly trained police officers in charge of our children 4. to insist that police officers
106 not be involved in the monitoring of behavior or punishment of students 5. To listen to students
107 and parents who are having negative experiences and make appropriate changes so that these
108 events do not continue to happen 6. To immediately remove police officers who terrorize
109 children

110 **Mary Pickener** spoke and provided a written statement: School Resource Officers are law
111 enforcement officers, their job is to detain and arrest people who commit crime.
112 Our children make mistakes, they misbehave and have traumatic responses, perhaps a behavior
113 that in another situation would save their lives. Having SROs in school heighten the consequences
114 of the behaviors that lead to arrest. When our children are arrested, the likelihood of success in
115 education is significantly diminished. When our children are spoken to by SROs and other law
116 enforcement, arrests follow. What most people do not understand is, when our children are
117 arrested, the statements are never looked at again. There is no grand jury in the state of Vermont,
118 so there is no gate to prove preponderance of evidence, no time limit on the length of time a
119 court case can go on, at great stress and trauma, and financial hardship. Children and families
120 who experience our court system as the result of a school arrest never want to think or talk about
121 the horrifying experience., which is why you never hear about horror and terror our families
122 experience. This experience changes our children lives
123 forever. At the heart of every single school shooting, the shooter struggle with mental health
124 issues that were not addressed when they were in school. Every single one. SROs cannot and will
125 not provide the support needed. Social Workers can address the issues to support and heal our
126 students. Our schools' current rate of depression amongst high school students is 30%. That is an
127 alarming percent of students. Also, alarmin, is the number of students who plan and execute
128 suicide. Additionally, the rate of substance use has increased with our youth. Substance use is a
129 tool that youth use to deal with their struggles when our children don't have the skills to deal with
130 the issues presented to them.

131 Our SROs have historically shared private, confidential, and sealed information with the school
132 because that was the common practice. The information shared is consistently used to punish
133 children in a public manner through the publicly shaming our students and ostracizing our
134 students instead of helping our children heal. There is a reason why family court is a confidential.
135 When our SROs share this information with employees of the school.

136 Restorative practices are key to healing the rift in our school community. Having no arrests,
137 expulsion and suspensions and ask that we include all our children in education success not just
138 those who are not identified marginalized populations.

139 If we continue to arrest our children for behaviors that fall in the under normal adolescent
140 behavior, we are not supporting our students learning to find successful emotional maturity.
141 Investing in mental health services, reduces trauma, increases academic achievement, better
142 attendance, and better student engagement.

143 If SROs are a preventative program, why is our rate of crime continuing to increase? If this SROs
144 are preventative, why is the rate of substance use increasing? And this county has the highest rate
145 of children in foster care, for the last 20 years? There are ways to collect data in prevention to
146 prove success of programming.

147 **Lauren Dees-Erickson** from transcript: I live in St. Albans city, and I appreciate having a moment
148 to speak with all of you about this article. Moving to St. Albans I have seen a lot of kids that are in

149 need, some that are products of abusive situations and some that are products of poverty.
150 Many however just need a little extra support and guidance, the issues facing these children can
151 be dealt with through programs that make direct impact on their lives. The idea that we as I see it
152 are wasting at a minimum \$260,000 on SROs, in my opinion, is negligence. I'd also like to point
153 out that the real costs of SROs are much higher when an SRO assaults a student at BFA and that
154 student's family sue, the amount of money to settle that is much higher than the budget of
155 \$260,000. Looking outside of the monetary impact of allowing under trained individuals around
156 children. We also see instances where childish acts are criminalized. The assertion that because
157 some of your children have had amazing experiences does not and will never discount very real,
158 very public instances of harm that have been caused by having police in elementary and high
159 school buildings. Ultimately, I believe that money should be spent on children in schools,
160 developing plans and programs that support those children. I do not believe that police should be
161 in schools. I believe that you should deal with the root causes of children misbehaving and
162 provide them with the services that resolve those issues. The fact that my child has had good
163 experiences are irrelevant. Children need more, take those hundreds of thousands of dollars and
164 create programs that will have lasting effects on all.

165 **Bryan DesLauriers** spoke and provided a written statement: Good evening. My name is Bryan
166 DesLauriers and I am a lifelong resident of both Saint Albans City and Saint Albans Town and my
167 boys are current students at SACS. In my prior career, I taught middle school students in Fairfield
168 for five years and, more recently, I taught 7th and 8th graders for four years at SATEC.
169 Like many in our community who want a safer place for our children and all of our residents, I
170 have an interest in the issues surrounding having SROs in our schools. Partly because I am a
171 former educator, but mostly because I am a parent with school age children. In my years
172 associated with schools that had SROs, I had not seen a negative interaction, nor had I been
173 aware of one. However, hearing the voices of my fellow residents and hearing their pleas, I
174 started to question my assumptions. What I heard were stories of students who were terrified at
175 the sight of SROs and that ALL of the data pointed to SRO presence as purely negative.
176 However, as I have spent many hours reading, listening, and talking with others, I have some
177 thoughts. First of all, there are some studies and data that do point to an overall positive effect of
178 SROs in schools. While I can admit that there are likely some negative experiences that occur
179 when SROs are interacting with students, the vast majority of positive experiences and outcomes
180 remain undocumented and unreported.

181 In our Maple Run schools, it appears that there are a relatively small number of negative
182 interactions compared to the positive ones. Insofar as any of those could be the result of bad
183 policing, bad methods, or insufficient training, we need to continue to provide training to make
184 our SROs better. We can always be better, and we should always strive to be better.

185 What causes me the most concern is the thought that some students feel terrified at the sight of
186 SROs. This is a problem that needs a serious, meaningful, and long-term solution. Some have
187 suggested that we need to remove SROs from schools to resolve this. I would suggest that we
188 need to better understand why they feel terrified and find a way to lessen and remove that
189 anxiety. If we simply remove SROs, will they get better when they are adults?

190 A 2016 study published in the journal "Crime & Delinquency" found that "...students' feelings of
191 safety and positivity increased as they had more interactions with SROs, especially for students
192 who had multiple interactions with SROs..." This suggests that students need more positive
193 interactions with SROs, not zero interactions. In fact, having a thoughtful SRO program may be the
194 best opportunity for children with anxiety towards police to overcome those obstacles.

195 As I have thought about this issue, an image of a car with a broken headlight and a slow leaking
196 tire comes to mind. We cannot continue to drive the car without fixing the headlight and the tire.
197 That is potentially dangerous and doesn't make sense. Likewise, we shouldn't bring the car to the
198 salvage yard simply because of a headlight or a tire. The prudent answer is to fix the headlight and

199 replace the tire.

200 Let's use common sense. Keep and improve the SRO program. Review, evaluate, and adjust the
201 goals and methods. Find out how to fix any problems and make the program work for everyone.
202 Thank you for your time.

203 **Meghan LaChance** from transcript: Hi everyone. This is something new for me to address the
204 Board. I am a former educator, I worked at St Alban city school for a few years in my educational
205 career. I have had the first experience having an SRO and I have seen positive experiences. And I
206 challenge these anxieties the students have based on whether or not the parenting on that level
207 of which K was saying was poor parenting. I challenge that to the fact that maybe the lack of
208 knowledge or the lack of parenting experience within the household and whether or not they're
209 having these parents saying negative things as far as our police officers in general. In general that
210 law enforcement are a negative impact and if that's what's raising these anxieties in our children. I
211 would have to disagree with Kate's statement. Overall, I think that marginalized families aren't
212 necessarily poor parenting. It's probably a lack of knowledge and you're not going to only see
213 higher behaviors in those marginalized children. So, I'd like an update on that as far as
214 experiences and connections. I personally witnessed an SRO within our schools. I've seen them
215 play, make solid connections with seventh and eighth graders, that moved on outside of the
216 school community basketball. I know this seems like something that is a repetitive argument, but
217 for argument's sake, these connections are what's going to build our community and we are
218 looking for a more unified role of having our SROs in our school district and we want what's best
219 for our children. To continue to not limit the exposure of those positive circumstances of what
220 could be. I think that moving forward agreeing with Brian here, Brenda Lori stating that looking at
221 the program itself and getting that training, getting that extra help and growing that program,
222 exposing our children to positive effects of having an SRO within our school would only benefit as
223 a whole and keep our children and our communities safe. Thank you.

224 **Angie Sturm** from transcript: Hi. Thank you for being here at the beginning of this school year and
225 hearing all of us. My fourth grader has attended SACS since kindergarten and to me, one of the
226 amazing aspects of his school experience has been a racially diverse classroom. What amazes me
227 is that I didn't expect diversity in his classroom, but I do see it as a fundamental part of my son's
228 education and life. So on day one of kindergarten I memorized the racial profile of the 15 kid
229 classroom with my heart brimming over. The classroom has an Asian American student, a
230 Mexican American Student, two kids with one white and black one black parent, one kid with an
231 all-black family, a student who used a leg brace and a wheelchair, some middle class white kids
232 and some poor white kids. Some families were younger. Some were older. And I'm encouraged by
233 the racial diversity in our community because diversity is one of the ingredients for a vibrant
234 equitable future for seeing all things in our region. With this in mind, I talked to people about
235 restructuring our local systems which have been not inclusive until recent history to include and
236 invite racially diverse participation and leadership. And I hear something repeated that causes me
237 to feel conflicted: what I hear is, well, there aren't really any people of color...{unrecognized}
238 And with my son's experience in mind I needed to ask him what he makes of this observation, this
239 omission of people. And so I asked him, "What do you think, then when people say there are not
240 any people of color and {sentiments}. He thought a minute. I could see the Gears Grinding. And he
241 said, well, Obi Wan Kenobi says, and I said, who? He said Obi Wan says that everything is a matter
242 of perspective. The right answer. The answer depends on how you look at it. So when I looked at
243 a police officer being at the elementary school last year for the first time. In my white body for my
244 white son. It didn't cause a huge ripple to pass through my body, although there's certainly a
245 formidable presence to a police officer that I respond to. But it didn't go off the charts for me.
246 But as I listen and as I read and as I hear, people of color, the very people of color I'm so glad that
247 exists inside of my son's learning environment are less safe with this police officer at school.
248 Statistically speaking, because of bias. This is just a systemic problem. Police officers are humans,

249 humans have bias. We can't remove it from any certain profession, so there's a problem that's
250 trying to be solved at my son's school and a medicine is being applied: the medicine is the police
251 officer. The problem is, there are side effects and the side effects are very unlikely to cause harm
252 to my little boy statistically. But the side effects are very likely to cause great harm to other
253 students in my son's school and these are students who have the hardest time. These are
254 students who have the darker skin. Please hear me as I hear other people informing us, people of
255 color informing us what it means to have a police officer present, it means something different for
256 everyone. It is all dependent upon your perspective, please. See our community changing with me
257 and invite welcome change to the systems that are needed to change to welcome people of color
258 to our community. Thank you.

259 **Sarah Auer** from transcript: Hi, my name is Sarah Auer. I'm a citizen of St Alban City and I'm here
260 to just voice on the fact that I believe SROs should be removed from our school, money that is
261 being used for SROs should be reallocated and devoted to other staff. Meaning from my personal
262 experience when I say in the time that my daughter has been attending school and elementary
263 school, she's had many, many positive interactions with staff. Staff members like nurses and
264 teachers and counselors and coaches. They have all helped in her development and education.
265 And these are just to name a few of the people in our schools that are have given my daughter
266 positive experience. Never once has she come home expressing a positive interaction with an
267 SRO. And she's excited to share all of her interactions with the adults at school, but not with an
268 SRO. However, it has been made public that there are students in our community that have been
269 negatively impacted by the presence of an SRO and that is who I am here in solidarity with.
270 Therefore, I would like to see taxpayers money being devoted to staff that can benefit all of our
271 students, police officers do not have a place in our schools, librarians do, teachers do, nurses do,
272 counselors do, coaches do. These other staff {are who we} should be funding and supporting.
273 Thank you.

274 **Bryan Dyke** from transcript: So just over the past few minutes and listening to some of the
275 speeches here and I've heard a lot of different things, some of which I don't agree with. I'm here
276 supporting SROs. I'd spent the past several days going over the data on SRO effectiveness and the
277 studies, from my experience, I have not found that it's a clear case that SROs are not effective. I
278 think there's a lot of evidence to suggest that they are. Certainly, it's a debatable subject as we
279 are all debating here today. One of the things that I think is important to understand is that, you
280 know, this isn't about peace of mind. We've seen these incidents before down in Fair Haven.
281 There was a legitimate threat to the school via an active shooter. It was not stopped by an SRO
282 but it was part of the equation. Yeah. An SRO is a is a part of a network, sometimes over the past
283 several years, there have been several SROs that have interdicted in mass shooting events in the
284 United States. These aren't make believe; these aren't fantasy. These are actual incidents where
285 SRO stopped mass shooters from killing children and killing our babies, and this is a real problem
286 in America right now. The crime in Vermont is generally gone down with respect to theft and
287 petty crime, but with other violent crime and some serious gun related crime, it's gone up. And
288 this is something that I'm very concerned about in our area, we've seen a lot of big city crime
289 coming up to St. Alban's, we've seen a lot of big city crime coming to the end. And I do not want
290 to invalidate other people's feelings about the sensitivity. We have to work with those and all
291 move together to find a path together, but I think we should continue to review the SROs. Just
292 like any position, we look at them. We offer them training, cutting edge training, sensitivity
293 training, diversity training. All the updated training that we can we continue to evaluate how
294 they're doing in schools. No other evaluation is really more of an example of what this community
295 thinks about SRO. We just put an SRO as our Sheriff, publicly elected, Roger Langevin who I saw
296 for years stand outside in front of that school and the interactions with him were very positive.
297 Officer Hansen was a female agent there for several years at SATEC. My kids had positive
298 interactions with these SROs. They spoke highly of these SROs. I know a lot of these SROs and

299 they're good people and they care about the kids and they want to work with us all to work
300 towards finding a path together. You know that's basically all I got. So thank you.
301 **Carl Watkins** from transcript: Hi I'm Carl Watkins, thank you for allowing me to speak I'm relatively
302 new to say now been city can. Can everyone hear me. Okay, perfect. I'm relatively new to say
303 open city. I wanted to speak in and supportive sorrows, but I wanted to go a little bit more in
304 depth. I've spoken with some people about the situations. And I just wanted to tell a little story I
305 heard that some of the positive experiences are discounted because the negatives negate the
306 positive, but when I was 11 months old. My father killed my mother. So, my grandmother
307 sheltered me, and I went to a private school from pre K until eighth grade and ninth grade. I went
308 to my first public school and that's when I experienced my first SRO and I actually I felt a lot safer. I
309 felt secure. I had a lot of issues with my comfortability and being able to attend to public school
310 after being in a private school for so long. I had great interactions with my SRO; ended up
311 becoming close acquaintances, I ended up joining the military through the guidance. With that
312 being said, I don't think that any of the positive experiences that exist should be negated, or that
313 the negatives override the positive. However, there are a couple things that I did look at and I do
314 find a little unsettling. I agree with the Bryan's that that the program should have some changes.
315 The fact that it costs as much as it does is a little unnerving for me. We didn't have our SRO in the
316 school 24/7 he came in, he went, I don't know his time schedule because I was a child myself. But
317 there's definitely a lot of changes that we could have. I don't like hearing that kids are terrified of
318 seeing an SRO in the school, but there's a lot of other issues that I think are behind why someone
319 would be terrified at seeing a police officer. I think those issues run deeper and that we should try
320 to address those issues at a deeper level as opposed to just removing SROs from the school. If
321 you're terrified of a police officer. You're going to run into a police officer at multiple times in your
322 life. Hopefully, positive experiences, but sometimes you might need them. You shouldn't have a
323 fear of them and removing them so that you don't see them won't get rid of that fear. I definitely
324 appreciate the service that they provide. And I wish I would have known a little bit more about the
325 issues because I'm just now hearing about the issues that happened with SROs in the past. So that
326 is something that we can get better with. Making sure that parents understand that there have
327 been issues with a certain program and letting the parents know even the new parents that hey,
328 these have been issues and we're evaluating this. One more point, I have noticed that there's a
329 larger drug problem here in the area then I've experienced before. And I think that plays a big part
330 of why I would like an SRO to stay because that's not something that I think should be around kids.
331 And if we have somebody to stand as that barrier. I think that means a lot. But that being said, we
332 should definitely listen to each other. I don't think it should be one solid get rid of them are one
333 side that let's just keep things the way they are. There should be a change, and we should work
334 together to find out what that change might be - if that means having a community board that
335 kind of oversees the structure of the program and how the program changes in the future. Then
336 let's do that. But otherwise, that's all I had. Thank you for your time.

337 **Reier Erickson** I live in St. Albans City with two children in city school. First, I just want to start by
338 saying that the staff, administration, teachers, everyone at St Alban school made the last two
339 weeks, really great there. They've just really paid attention to everything; they've been really
340 doing a great job and making sure that every kid it was welcome. One thing I really appreciate
341 about Maple Run is they've been listening to the science and what it says about COVID 19 and in
342 that vein, I really want to encourage the school board to listen to the science and what it says
343 about Police in schools because the science is pretty solid. And what it says and what police in
344 schools do to the kids, it increases the school to prison pipeline. Absolutely. Absolutely. And it
345 does it even more so for kids who are dark, LGBTQ, and students with disabilities. Well, You've

346 heard it already and will continue to hear it later on, over and over and over again, my kid has had
347 great experience with police in schools, my kid loves it. Sure. And I'm sure that's absolutely true. I
348 have no doubt. No one is disputing the fact that there are many, many great police officers who
349 work hard to put a lot of work in the community. No one is disputing that, and I think these
350 officers have a place in the community. I'm not disputing that at all. What I am disputing is the
351 fact that we have untrained people dealing with kids; police are trained to arrest, to investigate
352 crimes. They're not trained to deal with children. My daughter's math teacher has a master's
353 degree, that's six years at least, of schooling. Police officers are designated to have about 21
354 hours of training in this country. This isn't the kind of thing we need in school. What we need in
355 schools are people who are trained to deal with students who have mental health issues, who
356 have depression, who just have a bad day, because even a bad day can send a kid off because we
357 have to remember here is we're dealing with children. And children do not act reasonably. They
358 just don't want; anyone have kids will tell you. Children don't act reasonably. They act like kids
359 and so kids throw temper tantrums; 17-year old's throw temper tantrums and the answer to a
360 seventeen-year-old throwing a temper tantrum is not to throw them to the ground, not to arrest
361 him. Not to call him a slur for disabled person, that's not the answer for disabled person or for a
362 child. The answer is to take that child and deal with them in the way we deal with children and
363 that's getting mental health counselors involved, that's calling the child's parents. This is what
364 we're dealing with. So as we go forward. I just really want to encourage the Maple Run School
365 District and the School Board here to do what they did with the COVID crisis, which is to listen to
366 what the experts say. Take that advice and use it going into the future to make sure our kids all of
367 our kids, not just the ones with good experiences, but all of our kids. The ones with bad
368 experiences. The ones with good experiences, the ones who don't have anything to say it all; are
369 all treated equally and with equity and what that means is examining the ways in which different
370 groups of people are subjugated and hurt and oppressed by the systems we have in place, and
371 this goes farther. Beyond Policing schools, it goes to the education level to having more teachers,
372 administrators of color to having guests in the school who can talk about things like equity; we
373 talked about things like race. We can talk about things like sexual identity, gender identity
374 disability. So I really want to encourage the School Board to not just deal with the police in our
375 schools which I absolutely think needs to be removed, but also deal with the equity issues we
376 have in our school system. Thank you.

377 **Marianne Hunkin** spoke and provided a written statement: I am here to express my deep concern
378 about educational dollars being used to fund SROs in our schools. A lot of people are saying that
379 we do not have issues with police in our schools in St. Albans, that these are problems elsewhere.
380 But we do have issues with SROs in Vermont. Vermont Legal Aid's 2015 report Kicked Out! Unfair
381 and Unequal Student Discipline in Vermont School details about the negative impact of SROs on
382 Vermont students of color, students with disabilities, LGBTQ youth, and indigenous youth as
383 detailed by Data shows that in Vermont:

384 Black and Native American students were two to three times more likely to be suspended than
385 white students. Students with disabilities were nearly three times more likely to be suspended
386 than students without disabilities. Over 500 Vermont students were referred to law enforcement
387 or experienced school-based arrests.

388 Clearly, in light of the Seven Days article written about the incident with David French, we know
389 that Maple Run is not exempt from these trends.

390 Repeatedly, we hear that some version of the "bad apple" theory as an answer to our questions.
391 When we fail to look at the police as an institution and a system, we are unable to truly address
392 the problem at the root. The institution of

393 policing, in schools and in the community, upholds imbalanced power structures and systems of
394 oppression. The problem with police should not be seen as situational or temporary but
395 embedded in the fabric of the police. I call on you to be critical about the police as an institution

396 and about their position in our schools.

397 There is a lot of anecdotal evidence being shared about the positive impact of SROs in the lives of
398 children. So let me share mine. In my experience as a teacher, children, especially high school-
399 aged children, who have had experiences with police end up pushed out of school and into the
400 criminal justice; this is known as the school to prison pipeline. In my experience many of these
401 students had disabilities. Statewide data supports these anecdotes: In Vermont, students with
402 disabilities are nearly three times more likely than their peers to be suspended. Among
403 incarcerated youth, 85 percent have learning and/or emotional disabilities, yet only 37 percent
404 receive special education in school. Most were either undiagnosed or not properly served in
405 school. For children with mental health, disabilities, and substance misuse disorder personally or
406 in their families there are other services that can meet those needs. The money we are spending
407 on SROs could be funneled into services such as restorative justice, special education, counseling,
408 etc. Please consider the local, state, and national data and reporting related to police in schools
409 and reconsider whether police have a place in our schools.

410 Thank you for your time, consideration, and the hard work you do on behalf of young people in
411 our community.

412 **Reese Kelly** from transcript: Hi everyone, I'm really appreciative that you have these open for
413 public comment. I'm really appreciative of all the work that you are doing right now, and
414 especially within this pandemic. I know that it is not easy and that this will likely be a late night for
415 everyone. I'm also grateful that this is something that's not up for Community vote that we're
416 really entrusting this decision to a group of administrators and board members who are really
417 informed, even by more information than any of us have, right, like there's insight that you have
418 to the school how it runs the data that you have within there. That we don't. I really, I trust that
419 you will be filtering our feedback through your really great professional experiential and
420 informative lenses. There are a couple things that I'm thinking of in this and I'll just state up front
421 that I think SROs should not be in the school district. 80% of schools in Vermont operate without
422 one. I do not think that we are such a unique school district in a way that we would need one that
423 others don't. But that's a question to be asked. And what I really wanted to do, because I think
424 people have made such critical and formed points against SROs, is to ask myself the question,
425 what is the positive or potential positive impact of SROs. And is that something that can be filled
426 through other means of for looking at other options. What I do know, or what I'm aware of is that
427 the impact, the positive impact of SROs is that they do increase for some students trust in police.
428 Right, and that they also serve as positive role models for some students. The question for me is
429 then what is the increase trust and police when it's done at the expense of some of our students
430 and the expensive educational dollars, right. So is that actually a positive outcome that we should
431 be spending educational dollars on, does it outweigh the risks of the negative impact on students.
432 And then I think the other one that has mentioned by many people. And I truly believe is that they
433 serve as positive role models for some students, I think. Professionals who are qualified to work
434 with youth and students who are not police officers can also serve as positive adult role models to
435 them. That do not come with the risks and detrimental impacts that police officers in schools do
436 and so I don't want to minimize that there are positive impacts, but I do not think that there is a
437 value added above and beyond what things are when we weigh them with the negative impacts.
438 I also think, and this is, you know, just going to come from me, but I really think that the question
439 that we're asking ourselves here as a community is are we valuing the perception of safety and
440 the perception of value added of SROs that is coming from white non-disabled students. Right.
441 Are we valuing their perception? Over the real negative impacts that's being reported by real
442 students in our community. And by national and state data for students of color, students with
443 disabilities, and our LGBT Q students. I do think that this is an issue of race, of sexuality, and of
444 ability. And that we are choosing with choosing our SROs, to value the perception of safety. The
445 perception. Of value added for our white non-disabled straight students and ignoring the

446 detrimental effects of SROs on students of color, on students with disabilities and on our LGBT Q
447 students. I think that is absolutely the question and I do think that your decision on whether or
448 not you keep a “*unrecognized*” going to reflect your value and your opinions and your beliefs in
449 regards to those communities within St. Albans, thank you.

450 **Steve Messier** spoke and provided a written statement: Thank you. My name is Steve Messier and
451 my wife Katie and I live in Saint Albans Town with our three school-aged children. I appreciate the
452 board's willingness to provide so many of us an opportunity to participate in this way on such an
453 important topic. Given the volume of participants this evening, I will cut right to the point and try
454 to be brief in offering my perspective. I am speaking tonight as a parent of three young children
455 but also as an educator who has worked closely with disaffected and troubled youth over the
456 course of the last 17 years. I have worked hand in hand with law enforcement officers within a
457 school setting and can speak in detail about the value that they provide. Over these last few
458 months our country and our community has faced an incredibly challenging set of circumstances.
459 Our schools and our children have gone through difficulties that no one could have ever imagined
460 at this time a year ago. Contrary to some of what has been offered here by other community
461 members, I believe that the idea of removing School Resource Officers in Maple Run would
462 exacerbate some of these challenges in way that will have dire consequences in both the short
463 and long term. In a broad sense, I think that much of what has been stated here in opposition to
464 our SROs is based on a completely inaccurate and uninformed view of what the day to day
465 interactions and responsibilities of an SRO consist of. It is steeped in a deep and often times
466 incoherent disdain for law enforcement on the whole, and disrespects the brave and selfless acts
467 of police officers who, as some people here seem to strangely forget, are also members of our
468 community. I refuse to accept the narrative that policing as a system is broken. These officers are
469 our neighbors and they have friends and members of their own families in our schools every day.
470 To think that these folks have anything but the safety, respect, and education of our children at
471 the core of their mission is an absurd argument that is completely detached from reality. These
472 officers care about our community because they are our community. The vocal minority that has
473 expressed their opposition to school resource officers, or police officers in general during these
474 past few months, do not represent the will, desire, and intention of the greater Saint Albans
475 community. I sincerely hope that we do not allow the negative perspectives offered tonight to be
476 accepted as the reality of what is actually taking place in our schools on an overwhelmingly large
477 percentage of the time. The interactions that our SROs have with faculty, staff, and students each
478 and every day make our schools a better place to be. They build bridges in a way that traditional
479 community-focused policing efforts were designed to do and that which I hope we can return to
480 as a society. They put not just a face to law enforcement, but more importantly foster a
481 relationship with those they protect and serve. The work that our school resource officers do
482 cannot always be measured. When studies and research are presented, perhaps even by some
483 here this evening, it lacks the depth and awareness of how to view these complex issues in ways
484 that cannot be quantified. We cannot measure the quality of the relationships that the officers
485 have with students and staff. We cannot provide data points to the countless interventions that
486 take place prior to an incident occurring that would have otherwise ended in tragedy. We cannot
487 place a value on the sense of belonging that a majority of our students, our staff, and our families
488 feel due in part to the work that these officers are doing in our school buildings. Some of what
489 had been referenced here also speaks to their desire to re-allocate SRO budget funds to mental
490 health support and programming. These two things are not mutually exclusive. I'm not sure that
491 anyone who has spent time in a public school within in the last twenty years would disagree with
492 our need to provide these very necessary and beneficial services, but they should be offered in
493 conjunction and in concert with a wide-variety of similarly focused programs that include School-
494 Resource Officers. Restorative justice opportunities, social-emotional learning initiatives, suicide
495 prevention programming, and school resource officers should all be a part of the fabric of a 21st

496 century school. Lastly, I would like to bring to light the many life-saving actions that SROs provide.
497 While some will argue that there is no evidence that speaks to the effectiveness of armed officers
498 in preventing a school shooting tragedy, the sad reality is that we will never truly know or be able
499 to quantify the number of lives that are saved each year due to a SROs early intervention in
500 matters of targeted acts of violence, domestic and child abuse situations, and suicide. These are
501 difficult topics to discuss and undoubtedly make some feel uncomfortable, but we must face
502 these issues head on if we hope to address them in meaningful ways. The types of issues that our
503 students and staff are often faced with do not turn to a tragedy often thanks to the positive
504 relationships that SROs form within our schools. Plain and simple, SROs have and will continue to
505 save lives if provided an opportunity to do so. I hope and pray that they are never faced with the
506 ultimate threat of a mass act of violence or even a violent incident of domestic violence that spills
507 onto our school grounds, but I would much rather have a law enforcement officer there ready to
508 respond in a moment's notice than to not have one at all. Our kids and our staff deserve nothing
509 less. As those entrusted with the healthy and socially adaptive development of the next
510 generation of Saint Albans residents, we have an obligation to always strive for continuous
511 improvement and discover ways that we can learn from past mistakes in order to get better. We
512 have an obligation to grow from the challenges we have faced as a community and demonstrate a
513 resilience in continuing to model the values we hope to instill in our children by being better
514 ourselves. We do this by not tearing down institutions or programs that have value, even if they
515 are flawed at times, but by lifting each other up and ensuring that what we leave for our kids is
516 better than the way in which we found it. I have faith that our school district will continue this
517 important work and resolve to make our schools the best possible places that they can be. As
518 someone who has been lucky enough to see the incredible work that our SROs and law
519 enforcement officers provide for our schools and our communities everyday, I would welcome
520 the opportunity to partner with school leaders, first responders, and other members of our great
521 community to move forward in a way that best meets our needs. I appreciate your time and hope
522 that we can continue to support the work of School Resource Officers in Maple Run. Thank you.

523 **Jimmy Matas** Well, Steve, seems like he's reading off my sheet here so I second everything Steve
524 said, so I'll shoot from the hip a little bit making short and sweet. Thank you for letting everybody
525 on. I have to say that I'm a little disappointed in some of the community members that I've seen
526 here tonight addressing this issue. And I'm just curious as to why. Why are we attacking the SROs?
527 Why are we attacking the police department? It really makes no sense to me why we're doing
528 that. There are other ways to do it. Like, everybody is saying there's other ways to do it. We can
529 add to it. I don't understand the terrorizing children. The scaring the traumatized children of SROs
530 in schools. I don't see it. My wife's a teacher. I coach wrestling. I communicate and I'm with a lot of
531 children from ages kindergarten, all the way up to grade 12, from different schools throughout
532 Vermont. And I hear nothing but positive feedback on a consistent basis with SROs consistently
533 across the board, some of the women in beginning mentioned a lot of issues and complaints. I
534 don't know where they're at, where are they, I don't know, let's show a little bit more facts. With
535 that being said, there's always going to be issues. We all have issues with employees that work.
536 We all have people that we send packing and fire and let go. There's going to be issues. I graduate
537 in 1991 at a Central High School in Illinois, and we had SROs and it was never an issue. And they
538 come and go and do we need training. I don't know who we are, to tell the police here in town
539 that they need better training. I don't know who anybody is that says that they need better
540 training. They're trained. They got a badge and they're already a trained. Okay. So statistically, we
541 need to look at it, but we need to look at it right here, the ones that were schooling here. Not
542 across the country, not playing follow the leader with other cities other states. I think that's what
543 Vermont does a lot and I think you guys need to use the common sense factor. Keep this program,

544 cut it short. Let's keep this program going and maybe add to it within the school system. And keep
545 these essentials there and as Steve said it best. Our kids and staff deserve nothing less. Nothing
546 less, right. My daughter and my son, went to SATEC. And now one's in Essex high school and they
547 have nothing but good things to say, as well as their friends, all my wrestling students for the past
548 nine years have grown up through the systems and love every minute of it. And I never heard
549 anything negative. And I talked to a lot of kids, a lot of interactions, and my wife is a school
550 teacher here in district too, so on closing, stay with it, common sense. Keep it thank you for your
551 time.

552 **Leo Chaplin** from transcript: my name is Leo Chaplin, me and my wife live in St. Albans Town. We
553 have five kids four which go to SATEC and I just want to use an example of my child because I keep
554 hearing people saying that kids with disabilities are fearful of these SROs. We had a child in eighth
555 grade who's diagnosed with autism and without the SRO, I don't think she can go to school. And
556 what I mean by that is that he's so scared of mass shootings because of the last couple years of
557 what there has been that the only thing that keeps him level headed enough to go to school is the
558 SRO. Last year and the year before that it was nothing but tears and emotions because he was
559 scared of that. And this is the child with disability who looked to the SROs for some sort of stability
560 and safety while going to school. So, well, I'm not trying to invalidate what some of these people
561 are saying; what I'm trying to understand is how - the smaller amount of people who have
562 negative perceptions of these SRO, is how do we decide that their perception of them is what we
563 need to go by and we don't need to go by anyone else's families and it's not okay to discredit our
564 positive interactions with these SROs because someone had a negative one. And to put that in
565 perspective. Let's do it on like a child. The child basis, two years ago, my child was bullied, to the
566 point where he was terrorized, we're going to school because of how he felt he was emotional.
567 Every day he went to school with something else. And we went back and forth with the school
568 about it. And it was the same child who constantly terrorized my son and you know he's, he has
569 his disability. And at that point, we didn't just, the school didn't just take the child or the school.
570 The school worked with the child to find alternatives. So, we're yes, you're able to find one case in
571 Franklin County where officer did say too much and acted in a way that he shouldn't have acted.
572 You're taking that one person. And yes, I'm going to use the statement that that lady said is a
573 terrible one, have one bad apple and taking that and using that as a broad stroke for everybody.
574 And I don't feel that that's right. And Roger, this SRO that was at Town school, the repore that he
575 built with my child who's on the autism spectrum, to the point where my child would seek him out
576 in a grocery store just to say hi to him because he had that comfort level with him. And then for
577 you guys to say that that's a detriment to their child is having that officer in high school when I
578 could watch my child, he doesn't trust people, walk up to that person, that individual in a store
579 and seek him out, even though he's a police officer. I think that it's just asinine. I think that all
580 these people that are complaining that \$260,000 of tax dollars for these people. I think you're
581 putting a price on safety for your child. And then that lady who said there's no proof that SRO stop
582 mass shootings, please. All you have to do is look it up. If you look for the facts that you want,
583 you're only going to find the facts that you want. I think people need to start opening their brain a
584 little bit and seeking facts from both sides. And I'm not saying that, I'm not saying there's not bad
585 but I'm also saying that there's good and I think that if you pay \$260,000 for an SRO program and
586 it stops one shooting in Franklin County or in the Maple Run School District, then how can you say
587 that that's too expensive because I know that \$260,000 is nothing if you're putting a price on one
588 of my children and I think that it's just uneducated for people to make those statements. In that
589 sense, I believe that make modifications to it. There should be room for both, there should be

590 room to get these children. I feel like they're terrorized, helping there should be room to be able
591 to grow the SRO program to where it's compatible with everybody. And I don't think that you just
592 abolish it, or you just get rid of it and like I know it's 2020 and the hot topic is to eliminate police.
593 We don't trust police and I think that if your kids go home and your parents talking about how bad
594 the police are, or police are killing people randomly, or police are doing this, then they're going to
595 be fearful for them. If your child goes home at night and he's watching the news were police killed
596 somebody and they say every cop chose this person that's this color, or this and then they go to
597 school and see a cop. Yeah, it's gonna be terrorizing, but if it's taught at home, you can't put that
598 at the fault of the police department. Thank you.

599 **Zach Scheffler:** from transcript: I just simply wanted to drop in and first thank all of you for your
600 time and your effort and your willingness to meet on this and hear our voices. I think that's really
601 important. I live in St Alban city and I simply want to say that you've been presented with a variety
602 of opinions tonight. I would say that one side has clear data, state and local data, that show that
603 real harm has been done to students with disabilities, to students of color. And that perceptions
604 the police are problematic. When leveraged over the safety of our kids and the wellbeing of our
605 kids. I really think that we're discussing a budget issue. And it's easy to think about this in terms of
606 dollars and cents. But I really just want to stress and impart to you that this is not just a budget.
607 This is a moral issue here. We can choose between our students or the police. We can choose
608 between the perceptions of some students over others. And we can choose to leverage positive
609 experiences over the real pain that has been caused. But I don't think that you want to do that. I
610 think you want to do what's in the best interest of children and that involves using money wisely
611 using public money wisely to get resources to students that need it so that in a preventative way.
612 And reactionary way we can provide support for students who are in danger of becoming
613 disengaged or acting out violently in a way that doesn't put them on a path to prison problems
614 later in life and simply repeating the cycle of abuse that we all see I think we can make that
615 decision here, but I know that you're going to consult with intelligent people experts to fully
616 explore this and make your decision. I will be watching that decision. And I know that others will,
617 too, but above everything else. I just want to appreciate you all taking the time to listen and and
618 to hear us. Have a good night. And thanks again.

619 **Liz Gamache:** from transcript: Good evening and thank you for creating the time and the space for
620 this important community conversation. This is indeed democracy in action. I come to this
621 conversation as a community member and I also am a parent of two students who went K through
622 12 through Maple Run. In addition to that, over the last 20 years as I've lived in St. Albans I have
623 had the experience of being the founding director of the St. Albans restorative justice center. And
624 from that, I also led to an experience where I was a City Hall administrator as City Manager and
625 responsible for oversight of City Public Safety functions, including policing. When I initially became
626 involved in St. Albans with these issues, it was at a time where we were seeing dramatic increases
627 in crime rates that were concerning to us, and I believe that it is important to find space for both
628 restorative justice within the community and important roles for police as well. This evening when
629 I come to this conversation, I want to share with you that I've really been working hard to listen
630 hard and I'm learning a lot as I hear different perspectives. I appreciate the recent dialogue and
631 discussion about the SRO concerns, and it has caused me to see the perspective of other
632 community members who do not share the generally positive experience that I have had with
633 SROs. I appreciate learning more and hearing more from people with different lived experiences.
634 Recent news events that have come out about the treatment of one particular student by an SRO

635 is an example of something that leads me to feel very concerned about the program and that it is
636 time for reflection. So, as I see it, there are a few different options to consider. One, continue the
637 SRO program as it is, and I am not in favor of that. Two we could just continue the SRO program
638 altogether, three, we can take an approach where we look at our overall approach to student
639 safety, teacher safety, staff safety in our schools by reexamining the role and the relationship of
640 SROs, and the police. To schools to also look at the rules of restorative justice practices,
641 practitioners, mental health providers, and how they can have an impact within our district. I look
642 at it as a portfolio approach. I'm not sure what the right ratios are yet within that portfolio, but I
643 believe that there are many elements that will help lead us to greater safety within our schools. As
644 a parent of students over the last several years, I've seen several things that concern me related to
645 suicide, mental health issues of students, substance abuse disorder, students with disabilities, and
646 increasingly as I hear from more members of the community, I'm also getting a clear
647 understanding of some of the justice issues that are faced by our students that areBi, LGBT Q or
648 have disabilities. So, I'm asking you, as a board, to explore what I mentioned is option number
649 three. And also explore that against option number two, the discontinuous of the program if
650 school safety is our top priority. How can we allocate taxpayer dollars to ensure strong outcomes?
651 By taking an open-minded approach that considers evidence that includes data and anecdotal
652 experiences from the voices that represent the diversity of the student body families, teachers
653 and community members at large. I asked you to consider how school safety policies and practices
654 contribute to the overall public safety of our community at large and this must include the
655 experience of minority community members and groups that have been marginalized. I'm asking
656 you to please ensure that these voices are heard and to work to understand how systemic racism
657 and bias are fairly contributing to negative consequences within our community. I hope this won't
658 be a siloed conversation between education administrators and inner elected school board reps
659 and I say this because I think the best results may come from a coordinated conversation with
660 your municipal counterparts; members of Select board, city councils and municipal administrators
661 and I pose a question to you: are we shifting education dollars to bolster a municipal police
662 budget? If the answer is yes, let's be clear about it. It may or may not be okay. But let's determine
663 if this reproach leads to greater public safety in our community, or let's explore if funds could be
664 used differently. As I watched the conversations that arose unfold on meetings and on social
665 media, I've been a bit concerned about a knee jerk defensive reaction. One that doesn't allow time
666 or space to consider the different options like so many political issues today, it starts to appear
667 that the only decision is a binary one either have SROs, or we don't have SROs. And it's dividing
668 community members. I see this as an opportunity for improved outcomes. If we take a look at the
669 SRO PR in the broader context of school and public safety and an honest and fair manner. And I'm
670 learning more every day about the lived experiences of bi community members, LGBT community
671 members, and community members with disabilities. Many of what I'm learning is about things
672 that I have previously failed to see. I want to live in a community that welcomes diversity and
673 works hard to provide equity and access to all of our students and all of our community members.
674 And so while these discussions are unfolding at school board meetings and other places, I know
675 that they're difficult and uncomfortable, but they are indeed democracy in action. And I thank you
676 for allowing the time, space and respect for these discussions and differing viewpoints to take
677 place. Thank you.

678 **Rebecca Chaplin:** from transcript: Thank you for letting me take a few minutes of your time
679 tonight and I, my choice to be on the call today was just to listen. Until I sat with my son a little
680 while ago. When I shared with him that I was on a meeting where people were sharing

681 their experiences and thoughts about having SRO officers in the school and not in the school his
682 immediate response is, what if something happens.

683 And as you heard my husband share a little bit about him a little bit ago. I'm not going to go into
684 that, but as a parent that was really, really sad to hear. So, I have lived and worked in this
685 community, most of my life. The last 12 years have been an early educator, I have worked as a
686 behavioral interventionist for children with autism spectrum disorder. And the last five years, I
687 have been a social worker embedded at Northwestern and pediatrics and most recently in the OB
688 GYN office. It's a lot of thoughts and feelings come up when I hear this topic, you know, I
689 definitely don't want to challenge, you know, the data that has been presented today. I think that
690 there's a lot that we can do in our community around supporting our SRO officers and trainings
691 and I know that our local law enforcement, including The Vermont State Police and the ST Alban
692 City Police Department have partnered with {agencies} to increase their mental health first aid
693 and the way in which they respond to our community. And I think that there's a lot of opportunity
694 in that and supporting them in how they approach our students as well. Being a parent of five
695 children, four which go to SATEC, you know, we encounter a lot of people every day and some of
696 those individuals are SRO officers. I will say come from a diverse family. So when I hear people
697 talk about some of those minorities, we are some of those minorities, I have two children who are
698 adopted, who have lived experience of comma one of my children is biracial, I have a child with
699 autism. So I understand the concern for these children with health needs and those safer cities,
700 but I don't think that that has to be an excuse. I think it's taking their experiences and listening to
701 them and sharing, you know, sharing with the community and, talk to the children and see what
702 was see what people were thinking about SRO officers. When I was a social worker embedded in
703 pediatrics, I encountered a lot of individuals who were middle schoolers and high schoolers.
704 Those who identified as LGBT Q and I did a lot of education in our community around suicidality,
705 and one of the things that we know is LGBT Q youth report having at least one accepting adult are
706 40% less likely to report a suicide attempt in the past year. And I can share from my experience in
707 providing counseling support, some of these individuals, that one identify person in their life is
708 our SRO officer. And I never met Kevin O'Leary from MVU but working in the pediatrics office as a
709 therapist there I encountered many students who had and they would
710 talk about him, they would talk about their experience with him. The faculty mentored them and
711 provided guidance and he was there safe person. And so, I think that, yes, that is important, but I
712 think also that anecdotal reports of what students in our community are sharing are just as
713 important, and I think that there are positives. And I think that that is just as important that we
714 can't mitigate the effects that people's lives are being saved for the choices that they are making
715 or the shifts in their lives, have to do with not only their counselors and their principles and their
716 teachers but potentially the SRO officers as well. You know, in the school community is that
717 partnership and that's a partnership, I believe with teachers, Administration, with counselors, but
718 also with the SRO officers. I think it's about building relationships, building before asking the
719 questions and providing feedback. I don't think anyone has wants to create tragedy in our
720 community or want to impact on a child's life in any negative way. But it's about having the
721 conversations and I agree with a lot of what I heard tonight and Steve mMessier. I think you took
722 all of the words out of my mouth tonight. That I was that I was going to talk about. But I think if
723 nothing more about education and it's about training and I don't think it has to be black or white,
724 or all or nothing. I think that there is a way to support our SRO officers around the concerns that
725 we have. Potentially about maybe the impact that they are having in the school, but I think we
726 also have to listen to our students, you know, I heard a lot about anxiety and I wonder how much
727 of this anxiety is truly around an SRO officer being in the school and not really triggered or driven
728 by something else. And so I just think that those are all of the pieces you know that I'm hoping
729 that the school board are listening to outside of just the data. And I hope that you guys continue
730 to ask questions of the community. I think that this is an important conversation and I don't think

731 it should end tonight. So thank you for, for your time.

732 **Claire Faylor** from transcript: Hi, I, I was hesitant to speak up tonight, everybody because I'm
733 relatively new to the community and I typically feel a little out of my depth when it comes to stuff
734 like this. I'm kind of a younger individual and fresh out of college myself but I did feel kind of
735 inspired to speak up and listening to everybody's conversation and dialogue that we're having
736 today and for those who don't know me, I'm a staff member of Maple Run and I work in the
737 elementary kind of age group and I just wanted to say that I feel I can offer a unique perspective,
738 just due to my age and due to the fact that I'm not a local to the area. I actually have grown up in
739 the area of Southbury Connecticut, which is not probably a name that any of you will know but
740 one name that you might know would be a Sandy Hook and New Town. And that actually was the
741 neighboring town to where I grew up. And so, in 2012 when the shooting happened, I was in high
742 school not but 10 minutes away. From the incident that was occurring, and I do genuinely feel and
743 I, to this day still remember the feeling of what it was like to be on a full lockdown and kind of not
744 having the answers and not having the ability to do anything about it. At that time I was only a
745 freshman in high school, but it's something that still to this day sticks with me and I would just like
746 to say that there wasn't an SRO in that school at the time and there was not enough to police
747 presence, but from hearing a lot of the testimonies from those officers that did go into that
748 situation. It's really heartbreaking that a situation that most other people would run away from
749 And alternatively to that, as I mentioned, I'm a staff member in the elementary kind of education
750 group and I personally have had many experiences with I won't say many, but I've had
751 experiences with areas which I've been more than thankful that they've been present in the
752 school to offer assistance that I either myself was not trained in offering or that nobody else
753 around me was, and I think something that we haven't really discussed today is the what ifs
754 situations. And we talked a little bit about school shootings or mass shootings, but we haven't
755 talked so much about when there is just blatant violence in schools and who can really be trained
756 to address those situations. And again, speaking from experience, I was trying to deal with a
757 handful of situations and those around me were not qualified and the only person who at that
758 point could step in wasn't available. And the SRO at the time handled it with grace and was
759 absolutely able to mitigate the situation, move it forward and nobody was hurt. Nobody was
760 further negatively impacted. And in fact this individual truly deescalate the situation in a very
761 powerful way that sticks with me as I move forward and so again, I'll keep it kind of short and
762 sweet and to the point. Because I'm loving the dialogue that we're having. And I'm just so thankful
763 to work in a community where everyone advocates so strongly for how they feel for not only their
764 families, but for their community as a whole. But I did just want to add my little two cents in a
765 situation, my thought. So I think we should be addressing the issue of how staff members feel
766 about this too. And we're touching on a little bit as staff member, speak up in this situation, but
767 I did like the idea of what Sarah mentioned how it's not really a black or white issue when it
768 shouldn't be. It's a very, very great issue and It's one that needs to be studied more. They were
769 having a dialogue, but that anecdotal evidence is really important for negative or positive for
770 better for worse.

771 **Brendan Deso** from transcript: Hello everybody. I want to just get right to the point. I graduated
772 from BFA and spent kindergarten through third grade at City School. That portion of my life was a
773 pretty rough upbringing, then, with the help with the Department of Children and Families, I was
774 able to move in with my grandparents and have a pretty privileged upbringing, for the rest of my
775 life and childhood. And I spent the rest of my Elementary time and middle school at Town school.
776 I was actually one of Brian DesLaurier's eighth grade math students and you know I owe a lot of
777 where I am and who I am to good people like Angela Stebbins, my principal. You know, it takes a
778 village to really raise a well-rounded student that's ready to go out into the world. And I gotta tell
779 you that \$260,000 is a lot of money, but we're in a district that spend \$60 million annually. This is
780 less than half of a percent of what we spend on a yearly basis. So, it's really, as a district, it's not a

781 money thing, it's whether or not we actually want it in our schools. My perspective as a former
782 student is that due to the, you know, the more rough part of my upbringing, I was conditioned to
783 not see police as my friend, to be honest with you. And until I got really well hooked up with a
784 Jason Wetherbee and then Paul Tally I didn't have that very, very good of an outlook on police. It
785 was a source of anxiety. When I first got my license on the road, you know, what if they pulled me
786 over if I do something wrong. And it took that as our program to give me the skill to be able to
787 communicate with officers and, you know, and I owe the fact that public school system gave me
788 all the tools I have today. And due to that I was able to help my community and negotiate a
789 contract for policing services for three to five years for the sheriff's department, you know, and
790 without good administrators and programs like SROs I don't think I would have gotten to that
791 point. But I will say that it was really disheartening to read what happened in the paper. One of
792 our municipalities had to issue a settlement. A really unfortunate happening. I think the school
793 district did too. So we can you hear from folks tonight. It's disheartening to hear that their
794 children and themselves are not having very good interactions with the program. So we have to
795 take that into account. I also will say, as somebody who graduated less than 10 years ago going to
796 schools in the 21st century is a scary proposition. Some days. You know, I didn't grow up 10
797 minutes away from New Town, Connecticut, but it was a prevalent thought in your mind every
798 day when you go to school, somebody's going to come in and shoot the place up, you know, we
799 talked about it, like it can't happen here. But we also pass the almost \$6 million bond to connect
800 our campus at BFA we know it's an issue. So my suggestion to the Maple Run Board is that you
801 review data and work with experts make a series of reforms to the program. As fit that you keep it
802 in place. This is a hot button to it's not going to go away anytime soon, and the community is
803 divided on it. So, I would also suggest that you make it a site item on your ballot in March and that
804 you take it out of the budget. I would hate to see this conversation turned into a referendum on
805 our school budget. With that said, or our sheriff and former SRO Roger Langevin has his hand up.
806 Thank you, Mr. Chair. Have a good night, everybody.

807
808 **Sheriff Roger Langevin** from transcript: I'd love to chime in, you know, I'm going to echo. A lot of
809 what Steve Messier said, and some of the others. I had the privilege of being an SRO at SATEC for
810 four years. And I was also an SRO in high school for three years when I was with this Vermont
811 State Police. I often refer to the program as the best job that I have the law enforcement.
812 And it's because it is a preventative program. You create a lot of relationships; you seek out as an
813 SRO those individuals who are most at risk. And you work hard to build that relationship with
814 them, you'll get them, you find out what the hurdles are, what their stresses are in life and you
815 help them work through that. There was nothing more rewarding than that. Hearing some of the
816 comments. of individuals who say that the police are scary. The police are you know, detract from
817 the school. I find that very demeaning to the program. The program is such a great program being
818 preventative, I can't imagine a school today without it. If an officer was really involved and what is
819 compassionate about the program, they'll lay their life down for anyone who needs it there.
820 There is no question. You know, our SROs go to the basic SRO school, they go to the advanced
821 SRO school, we have sent them to the lead, which is law enforcement against drugs and the
822 teaching classes. They are involved. And I know that they share my belief on this program. It's a
823 wonderful program. I've gotten calls and them out of SATEC for a year and a half. I've gotten calls
824 this month, actually, to speak to a couple of kids whose parents said, Hey, I'm having some issues
825 with my 12 or 13 year old, would you come stop by and talk to them. I've always made time for
826 that. I never let a kid go by. If I see them in Walmart or I see them at a grocery store without
827 saying hi to them. I mean, I often don't even see the parents. I just see the little kid because
828 it means as much to me as their former SRO as it does to them to have a police officer
829 acknowledge them. I was fortunate to work at SATEC Angela and Jason, who are very supportive.
830 It was a collaboration, a true collaboration. So much so that when I got out in the summertime. I

831 created a free ice cream card that mimicked the PBS program that SATEC was doing. I saw the
 832 benefit of it. I saw how kids were involved and engaged with it. And this was a way that I saw that
 833 I could get the citizens police department engaged and getting out of their cruisers. Talking with
 834 young kids if they're doing something nice that they're doing. It's their mowing the lawn at their
 835 parents house. If they're crossing the crosswalk. If they're wearing a helmet when they're riding
 836 their bikes, get out, talk to that juvenile give them a coffee or an ice cream card and tell them
 837 everything they're doing right. You know we often just deal with kids when they're doing
 838 something wrong, but the program is so proactive if it's done correctly. You know, we all make
 839 mistakes. You know, but down the road if kids speak about me and say, hey, in my high school or
 840 my grade school I had an SRO. I don't care if they know my name or not. I just want them to know
 841 that I was there for them. I listened to them and and we've helped families and we really have. I
 842 know because I still get calls from from families today. So the program is as well worth what it's
 843 being paid. An alumna with one story that I got recently, last summer, I got a call from citizens
 844 police department asking if I would assist them with an incident and individual has barricaded
 845 himself in his house. He was being very destructive youth, 17 years old, mom had left the house
 846 because of his destructive behavior and he told citizens PD. I want to talk to officer, Roger, the
 847 sheriff. When I went up there within minutes, I was in the house. I walked the individual out,
 848 there was no other incident with that. And that was all stemming from creating a relationship
 849 with the individual. Those things just going to last a lifetime and it benefits us the police
 850 department, it benefits the school and benefits the community at large. St. Albans police officers,
 851 when I was the SRO, would say Jason I see these kids on the side of the road when they see the
 852 black and white car. Goodbye. They're all waiting and they're looking and it's like, oh, you know,
 853 an officer, Roger. What they're seeing that positive interaction. And that's what it's all about
 854 police aren't scary and should not be looked at as being scary. You know, and if that's the case,
 855 you need to approach your SRO and figure out a way in which to have that as our overcome those
 856 issues. Again, it's a collaboration with the community with the school and with the police
 857 department and getting the right person at that position will pay huge dividends down the road.
 858 Thank you.

859 **5. Consent Agenda –**

- 860 A. Approval of Minutes September 2, 2020
- 861 B. Grants

862 The consent agenda was adopted.

863 **6. Old Business**

- 864 A. School Resource Officers – Jeff Morrill opened that we should have a discussion on how
 865 and why the District uses SROs in the buildings. Nilda Gonnella-French asked if it would be
 866 productive for the Board to create a study committee. There would need to be discussion
 867 about who the key stakeholders would be, how the committee would work, the mission
 868 of the committee, and timeline. We should get both the data and anecdotal information.
 869 Joanna Jerose agrees with forming a study committee, she liked Liz Gamache's comment
 870 that it could be a portfolio approach and we would decide the percentages. Al Corey
 871 thinks it is a good idea. Start with a small committee of the Board to set the parameters
 872 and guidelines. Alisha Sawyer agrees with Al Corey and Nilda Gonnella-French. Jack
 873 McCarthy thanked Nilda Gonnella-French for the leadership and the other Board
 874 members for very good suggestions and he would like to be involved. Steve LaRose
 875 thanked the community for coming out tonight to share their thoughts. He agrees with
 876 the committee and thinks we may need a facilitator. Jeff Morrill feels we need the charge,
 877 committee make up, and whether we need a facilitator. Grant Henderson likes the idea
 878 but doesn't want the Board to be micro-managing and wonders if the administration
 879 should be asked first. We will also need a framework for a decision-making process. Susan
 880 Casavant Magnan stated it is very important that the people appointed to the committee

881 need to be open-minded and willing to listen and learn and not be set on an outcome.
 882 She really likes the idea. Nilda Gonnella-French wondered if the Board would be part of
 883 the committee if they would ultimately be taking the information to make a decision. Jeff
 884 Morrill said that they probably should not be but could attend. Susan Magnan said that
 885 we need to look at evidence. At the next meeting, we will discuss the committee makeup,
 886 the committee charge, a facilitator and timeline and decision-making framework.

- 887 B. *Employment Update – This item will go to Executive Session under 1 V.S.A. § 313 (a) 3 -
 888 the employment or evaluation of an employee.

889 **7. New Business**

- 890 A. School Opening – Kevin Dirth reported that opening went as well as he could have hoped.
 891 There was excitement by all involved. There were some hiccups around release time,
 892 buses, etc. Classes look a little different with the spacing. Masks are not the problem that
 893 we anticipated. It has been a good start. Many fewer students on the buses than in the
 894 past. While we had anticipated students being able to move from hybrid to virtual, there
 895 have been some hiccups due to numbers. Those are being worked out. NCTC would love
 896 to have all the students in at once. Adult ed is up and running as well. Bill Kimball said that
 897 the Principals are doing a lot of heavy lifting. Brett Blanchard added that the staff and
 898 teachers are really doing that heavy lifting and deserve accolades. Angela Stebbins said
 899 that seeing the students in person was the highlight. She agreed with Brett Blanchard that
 900 staff and teachers are really stepping up. Joan Cavallo reported that mornings are all
 901 hands-on deck. SACS parents have been phenomenal which makes it all possible. We are
 902 working on documentation on what to do if we do get a case.
- 903 B. Estimated COVID19 Expenses – Martha Gagner shared estimated COVID 19 costs. She
 904 discussed the different funding sources that may cover some of the costs. The anticipated
 905 costs are \$1.3 million directly related to COVID. The largest cost is supplies which includes
 906 PPE, extra supplies because of no sharing, cleaning supplies, etc. Technology is the
 907 second highest cost. The frustration is that we do not have answers to what will be
 908 covered.
- 909 C. Banking Resolution - Administration is seeking a motion to authorize the Business
 910 Manager to add Brett Blanchard to the BFA Student Activities checking account as a
 911 signatory. There will be a document that all Board members will need to sign. Brienne
 912 King from the business office will coordinate that.

913 **Al Corey made a motion to authorize the Business Manager to add Brett Blanchard to the BFA Student**
 914 **Activities Account as a signatory; second by Steve LaRosa. The motion passed unanimously.**

915 **8. Other Business**

- 916 A. Warrants

917 **Al Corey made a motion to approve the warrants, acknowledging that passage of this motion will act**
 918 **as individual Board Member authorization of their signature on these warrants; second by Jack**
 919 **McCarthy. The motion passed unanimously.**

- 920 D. Superintendent's Report – Kevin Dirth had nothing more.

- 921 E. Board Announcements

922 **8. Agenda Items for Future Meeting –**

923 **9. Potential Executive Session**

924 **Entered Executive Session to discuss the employment or evaluation of an employee under V.S.A. 313**
 925 **(a) 3, inviting Kevin Dirth, at 8:27 p.m.**

926

927

928 Exited Executive Session at 8:59 p.m.

929

930 **10. Adjourn 9:00 p.m.**

931
932 Respectfully submitted,
933 Brenda Comstock
934