

Schools to get buzzer locks, security cameras

Written by STEVE OSTERMANN
Wednesday, 10 July 2013 17:59

Board agrees to spend \$28,500 for building upgrades designed to enhance safety of students, staff members

Launching a new effort to upgrade school security, the Grafton School Board on Monday agreed to have buzzer-lock systems and security cameras installed at the main entrances to district buildings.

The board concurred with Supt. Mel Lightner's recommendation to include at least \$28,500 in the 2013-14 budget for the upgrades, which will cost \$4,500 for each of the five schools and \$6,000 for the district offices.

"This is a front-line approach," Lightner told the board. "We have to take this to the first level. This is a definitely a priority, in my mind."

Like school districts throughout the country, Grafton began exploring ways to make facilities more secure following a Dec. 14, 2012, school shooting in Sandy Hook, Conn., that killed 26 students and staff members.

Board member agreed to expedite the search with the hope of tightening security in buildings before the start of the 2013-14 school year.

Lightner and other school officials, including District Network Administrator Pete Boehlke, recently met with Engineered Security Solutions to discuss options.

In a report to the board, Boehlke said the \$28,500 system would allow office staff to view and talk with visitors through an intercom before using a buzzer to open the door.

A more elaborate system, Boehlke said, could add a key-fob control to the buzzer option to lock and unlock doors as needed, including at scheduled times. That system would cost \$84,000 for all buildings.

Currently, Grafton High School is the only district building that has security cameras.

The district has taken other steps to enhance security, including locking all school doors except for one main entrance that leads directly to or passes by main offices. In addition, the district has a longtime protocol for emergencies, including a lockdown in case of intruders, and regularly holds safety drills.

In a facilities study completed for the district this spring, Plunkett-Raysich Architects incorporated security cameras and buzzer-lock systems into design plans for each building.

Lightner said he, Boehlke, Director of Facilities Jamie Scofield and other school officials will continue to explore options that are practical and cost-effective.

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“This is just a snapshot,” Lightner said of the report. “We will have a safety committee continue to review what we steps we can take.”