

Mt. View School District closer to guns on campuses

Controversial measure still brings questions

Kathy Hedberg/Lewiston Tribune

GRANGEVILLE - Mountain View School District inched closer Monday night toward adopting a policy that would allow school personnel to carry weapons on its campuses.

But approval of the controversial measure is by no means assured.

Board member Jeremy Harris of Grangeville said he would vote against it, as things now stand.

"I still have a lot of reservations on our policy," Harris said during a brief board meeting at the superintendent's office in Grangeville.

"I just simply don't agree with it."

Harris said he wants the board to move cautiously toward considering the policy and added there is a reason most Idaho school districts do not allow school personnel to carry weapons.

Garden Valley is the only one that has formally adopted such a policy, although other districts such as Salmon River, Cottonwood and Kamiah are considering it, board members said.

The school district encompasses six schools in Grangeville, Kooskia and Elk City. Board Chairman Mike Dominguez of Kooskia said one of the reasons for considering allowing staff members to carry weapons is because the district cannot afford school resource officers at all six schools, which would cost about \$300,000 a year.

With two of the five board members absent Monday, Harris, Dominguez and Casey Smith of Clearwater reviewed a few clarifications being proposed in the policy.

Dominguez said some questions have arisen regarding whether school personnel would be required to carry weapons and who would decide which staff members would be qualified for the task.

No staff members would be required to carry weapons, Dominguez said. And the ones who did must either keep it concealed or have it locked up.

The policy is intended to spell out the circumstances under which a weapon could be used in case of an emergency.

"They're not going to use it because some student got out of hand," Dominguez said.

The Idaho County Sheriff's Office would provide firearms training and determine which staff members met qualifications that would allow a firearm to be carried on school grounds.

Smith questioned whether there might be conflicts between the Sheriff's Office and the Grangeville Police Department over who has final authority.

Dominguez said the agencies, which apparently have had conflicts in the past, "are willing to work together for the betterment of the policy."

Board members also said that if and when a firearms policy is adopted and a security protocol developed that defines who is carrying weapons and other safety procedures, the public would not be informed about the details in order to protect students and staff members.

The board decided to hold another reading on the proposal in January. No date for adopting a gun policy has yet been set.

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