

Parents ask how threat Monday at Laconia Middle School was handled

By RICK GREEN
LACONIA DAILY SUN

LACONIA — Parents attending a school safety summit Monday wanted to know why they didn't get earlier word about a potential threat at the

middle school.

Three patrol cars were in the school's parking lot at the start of the school day Monday, and it wasn't until later in the morning that an email went out saying school officials and police had investigated what turned out to be an unfounded threat.

Police Chief Matt Canfield explained that the threat was found not to be credible.

He said a boy made a comment related to a video game that was overheard and passed from one

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Hospital ending city ambulance agreement

By RICK GREEN
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LACONIA — LRGHealthcare has decided to end a longstanding agreement under which it financially supports ambulance services performed by the city fire department.

The decision potentially means new costs for the city as it assumes full financial responsibility for the services, including some labor expenses, starting July 1.

LRGHealthcare, which operates Lakes Region General Hospital and Franklin Regional Hospital,

has been working to cut spending amid revenue shortfalls.

LRGH's overall cost for the service is about \$1 million, including salaries for some of the firefighters staffing the ambulances. It is able to recover about \$800,000 of that amount through bills to those who use the service or to their health insurance providers.

That leaves about \$200,000 in uncompensated costs incurred by the health system, although the City Council raised ambulance fees over the summer, potentially lowering the uncompensated costs to about \$125,000 a year.

The arrangement between the city and LRGH has

been in place 20 years. The health system called it "non-traditional" in a statement yesterday.

"After more than a year of negotiations and various efforts to decrease the financial loss incurred by the hospital on the program, LRGHealthcare will transfer responsibility for the entire program back to the City on June 30, 2018," LRGH wrote. "This will result in a more traditional ambulance program such as those that exist in all other surrounding towns and municipalities."

Ownership of the three ambulances purchased by

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No snow day for voters

Jenevieve Marston walks out of the Gilmanton Town Hall yesterday morning, along with her children Riley (left) and Gabe, after casting her vote. She said she wouldn't have let the weather keep her from the town election. "I think it's very important that everyone gets their vote in today, snow day or no." Election results will appear in tomorrow's Sun. (Adam Drapcho/Laconia Daily Sun)

'Stone-faced'

Newfound School District residents fight \$700,000 addition to default budget; board silent on questions

By THOMAS P. CALDWELL
LACONIA DAILY SUN

BRISTOL — Selectmen and residents of the Newfound Area School District angrily took the School Board to task for placing \$712,300 in new capital expenditures into the default budget, prompting the superintendent to seek police assistance on Monday night.

Residents already upset at Chairman Jeff Levesque of Groton for his refusal to call a special meeting to address the complaint became angrier when they had to wait 45 minutes while the board conferred in nonpublic session.

During a subsequent public comment period, Groton Selectman John Rescigno asked for an explanation of the budget, but Levesque responded, "We're here to listen to you. It's time for you to express an opinion, not for us to answer questions."

Rescigno said that, after waiting 45 minutes, he was ready to continue waiting until the School Board provided the answers he sought.

Finally Levesque told him, "Your five minutes are

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Walkout over school shootings to become civics lesson at Inter-Lakes

By THOMAS P. CALDWELL
LACONIA DAILY SUN

MEREDITH — Inter-Lakes High School Principal Patti Murphy has outlined plans to elevate a planned student walkout today into a civics lesson.

In a reversal from the school district's original stance against the nationwide call for students to honor the memory of those who died in the Florida shootings, Murphy told members of the Inter-Lakes School Board on Monday that the administration has worked to find a way to take the observance

beyond the 17-minute courtyard event.

After an earlier walkout on Feb. 21, commemorating the one-week anniversary of the deaths at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland,

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person to another until it seemed like there could be a school threat. Finally, a mother heard about it, emailed the principal and authorities were notified.

Canfield said that even though police didn't think the threat was real, they wanted to talk to the boy, but couldn't locate him Sunday night, so officers were present at the school Monday morning to talk to him.

He didn't attend school Monday, but police found him later in the day and spoke to him.

Superintendent Dr. Brendan Minnihan said he thinks the situation was handled in the right way, including the manner in which parents were notified, but said this could be open to interpretation.

He also said the district's main concern is the safety of students, and that no threat is ignored.

"There was a threat mentioned at the middle school," Minnihan said. "We took that incredibly seriously."

"We got the police there. We got the word out to the families. We talked to the individual that was involved and we tried to use the tools and resources we have to assess."

"Sometimes kids say things that maybe when I was a child, and if anyone of you are my age, you could say really not smart things and no one believed that they would ever happen, but now we do and we have to take them seriously and we do take them seriously."

School access

One of a few dozen people in the audience for the

safety summit in the Laconia High School auditorium, was Joshua Brooks, who has a child in eighth grade and another in 11th grade. He is a physical therapist whose work frequently takes him to schools in the district.

He said it is easy for the public to get on school campuses, and this concerns him.

"I think it's very important that we talk about access because the access is the common denominator in all these shootings," Brooks said.

He said one of his friends, Major Libardo Eduardo Caraveo was killed in the Fort Hood shooting.

"I would be in favor of every dollar spent diminishing access to the schools," he said.

He said that when he goes to a school, he is dressed nicely and people often open the door for him out of common courtesy, not being mindful of security.

School officials at the meeting said recent grant money will be used for new locks and security cameras to make access points more secure.

Police response

Chief Canfield was asked about police training for active shooter situations in light of the report from the Parkland, Florida, school shooting that an officer present at the scene waited before entering the school.

Canfield said his officers train that the first police on the scene are the first to enter the school. They are not supposed to wait.

He said that in Laconia, patrol cars would quickly arrive at an active shooter scene, but if such an emergency were to take place at the high school, where there is a police officer assigned, he would be expected

to go into action even before anybody else arrived.

"We give them the training and equipment and they are expected to act," he said.

He was also asked about a proposal that has been aired nationally to allow some teachers to be armed.

Canfield said there are many questions about how this would work, since even trained, experienced officers are hard pressed to perform well in the face of gunfire. Other questions center on the potential for innocent loss of life, for ensuring weapons are secure at all times and for ensuring armed teachers do not get in the way of a police response.

One must be 21 to purchase a handgun, but only 18 to purchase a rifle. Canfield said he would favor a 21-year-old age requirement for rifles as well, but doesn't favor a ban on assault-style weapons.

Senior president

At the safety summit, Delia Cormier, president of the senior class at the high school, said students can also help prevent potential for problems by making sure other students feel included and not shunned.

Many school shooters have been alienated from their classmates and teachers.

"I can honestly say I can sit next to any kid in my grade and have a thorough conversation with them," Cormier said. "It's about how people are feeling on the inside."

"If the school shooter is a student, then they are already in the building. It's not going to be someone who is coming in, but that school shooter is going to show signs."

"Maybe, just maybe, if they had a friend, then that wouldn't happen."

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