

Somerville Public Schools

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Dear Somerville Community,

I am writing this morning to address some concerns that were raised through a parent Facebook group regarding the content from the minutes of the February 6th Board of Education meeting, which were just published as a result of being approved at the February 20th Board meeting. For those that have not read the minutes or were not present at the February 6th Board meeting, during the public comment portion of the Board meeting, the minutes report the following:

“Pat Frain, 201 Scobee Lane, Somerset stated a student told a teacher at Somerville High School that he cannot wait for a school shooting to happen here in Somerville. Mr. Frain also stated that he personally was told by a student that he had a gun and then flashed a gang sign at him. Mr. Frain stated that we are here for your neighbors and kids trying to keep them safe as possible and we are doing it without a contract.”

Unfortunately, the Facebook page only posted the minutes from the February 6th meeting and did not include the public statement I made at the February 20th Board meeting in response to Mr. Frain’s February 6th public comment, which was heard by meeting attendees and captured on film by Ville TV. My statement was as follows:

“During the public comment section of the February 6th Board meeting, I feel in light of recent events in Florida, I need to provide some clarification since the statements made by Mr. Frain were incomplete, misleading, and inflammatory.

A full investigation was completed at the time of the alleged incidents and the outcomes were shared with the reporting individuals.

For the first claim, it was alleged that the student in question was throwing gang signs. The truth was that the student was listening to music and making hand movements that mimicked the musical artist, which he voluntarily showed the assistant principal upon request.

For the second claim, which was also fully investigated, Mr. Frain reported that a student made a statement that, “He couldn't wait until a shooting occurred here.” The reality is that a group of students in the classroom had been talking

*about the recent shooting in Las Vegas and one student had said, "I hope that **never** happens here". As you can see, neither statement accurately reflected what really occurred.*

I ask that anyone that makes public statements, please provide an accurate and complete presentation of the information so as to not unnecessarily incite hysteria in the public, especially in light of the recent school shooting.

Due to the recent school shooting in Florida, we have received a few inquiries about our district's preparedness for such an event. For the safety and security of all students and staff, we cannot divulge the specifics of our preparedness plans. However, please know that the district works closely with the police department in developing, critiquing, and practicing the preparedness plans. When we conduct drills, law enforcement and the fire marshal are often present to provide feedback. We will continue to re-evaluate what is currently in place and determine what improvements can be made. In fact, today, all building principals, Mrs. McEntee, Dr. McDonald, and myself met with three (3) representatives from the police department to review the preparedness plan.

I have posted a letter on the district and school websites and my blog, which state the same things."

When a safety and security concern is presented to the high school administration, they immediately and fully investigate the claim and notify the Somerville Police Department, if warranted. Although Mr. Frain presented his statement during the public comment section of the February 6th Board meeting, a couple of important clarifying points were not included in his statement and need to be shared. First, the incidents did not happen right before the February 6th Board meeting. In fact, they had happened a number of weeks prior to the meeting. The reports were immediately and fully investigated. The reporting parties were notified of the outcomes of the investigations. Secondly, when Mr. Frain reported the gun and gang sign claim, he did so by casually telling Mr. Hade as he passed him in the hallway after the class period in question was concluded. Since he did not report it right when it allegedly occurred, one would believe that the claim was not of a serious nature. However, Mr. Hade took the claim seriously and immediately started the investigation only to find out that it was unfounded.

As a school district, we are sorry that some parents and community members were only made aware of one part of the incomplete, misleading, and inflammatory comment made by Mr. Frain. We are sorry that the comment made by Mr. Frain, without all of the facts, created an understandable heightened concern that has now substantially impacted the educational environment of our district. It is our hope that this letter serves to answer any questions and settles nerves that are now on edge unnecessarily.

Sincerely,

Dr. Timothy Teehan