

TOWN OF OCEAN VIEW
DELAWARE

Oct 4, 2022

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Carol S. Houck, Town Manager 
Chief Kenneth McLaughlin

SUBJECT: Withdrawal of the Ocean View Police Department (OVPD) School Resource Officer (SRO) Program Proposal due to Indian River School District Contingency Requirement

BACKGROUND

As you are aware, the Ocean View Police Department prepared and presented a proposal for the development of an SRO program at Lord Baltimore Elementary School. The intent of the development of a formal SRO program was to increase engagement, education and safety at the school and included continued coordination with the IRDS Constable assigned to Lord Baltimore. This proposal was the basis for our engagement with the Indian River School District (IRSD). Mayor and Council authorized the Town Manager to enter into an agreement with IRSD at your meeting of Sept 13, 2022.

The Council approval to sign the agreement aligned with the proposal of the OVPD and was pending final approval of funding at the anticipated level of \$40,000 by the IRSD Board. On September 26, 2022, the IRSD Board approved funding the OVPD SRO at \$40,000. However, on September 29, 2022, we were made aware that the Boards approval was contingent upon the OVPD/SRO taking over Constable duties at the elementary school. Doing so was not contemplated by the OVPD proposal and negated the original intent of developing an SRO program at the school. The IRSD had also pulled the newly hired Constable from Lord Baltimore. At the time, the OVPD was under the impression they did so as a temporary measure due to staffing shortages.

On October 3, 2022, after consult with Mayor Reddington, Councilman Cobb and Chief McLaughlin I issued the attached two week notice of removal of our identified SRO from Lord Baltimore effective Oct 17, 2022. This was done in advance to your meeting to allow the district time to address its security staffing vacancy.

RECOMMENDATION

It is therefore recommended that Mayor and Council support the withdrawal of the OVPD SRO Proposal for IRSD/Lord Baltimore Elementary School, in association with their making the agreement contingent upon the OVPD/SRO taking over Constable duties and in doing so negating the intent of the OVPD proposal. Officer Bradshaw will return to normal duties effective October 17, 2022, and the OVPD sworn officer count will remain at 13.

SINCE 1889



TOWN OF OCEAN VIEW

201 Central Avenue – 2nd Floor
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302 539-9797 (office) • 302 537-5306 (fax)
www.oceanviewde.com

October 3, 2022

Dr. Jay Owens
Superintendent
Indian River School District (IRSD)
31 Hosier Street
Selbyville, DE 19975

RE: Two Week Notice of School Resource Officer (SRO) Departure as a Result of IRSD Decision to Eliminate Constable Position at Lord Baltimore Elementary School (Pending Town Council Direction Oct 11, 2022)

Dear Dr. Owens:

As you are aware, on September 29, 2022, the Town of Ocean View was made aware for the first time that the IRSD would be eliminating its Constable position from Lord Baltimore Elementary School in association with the Towns proposal to implement a School Resource Officer (SRO) Program at the school. When contacted about this new decision on Sept 30th, you advised me that this was not a vote of the Board but rather a decision made along the way to achieve a “win-win” by entering an Agreement with the Town for an SRO and to save money by eliminating the Constable. Unfortunately, the intent to do so was never disclosed in writing or otherwise to the Town during the time that we negotiated in good faith our proposal to increase safety and proactive programming at the school. Failure to maintain the Constable position at Lord Baltimore negates the proposed increased benefit of our SRO proposal/program. In fact, I am aware of no other SRO program that has given rise to the elimination of funding/plans to staff a Constable position. As shared, this information came as a complete surprise, especially since it was publicly noticed that you just hired a new Constable specifically for Lord Baltimore in September! Certainly it is clear to you and the Board that the two positions play distinct but supporting roles, with the Constable working for the District as a security staff member and the trained SRO serving as a contracted position, partially funded but maintaining employment with the Town, in our case, the Town of Ocean View Police Department.

For the reasons above and because there remains no Agreement in place for our SRO Program, as contemplated and supported by Mayor and Council (including IRSD maintaining a Constable at the school), this notice has become necessary. Notice is given, notwithstanding our proactive staffing of a trained SRO officer for the start of the school year, alongside your newly hired constable (which was very encouraging), while seemingly only awaiting the final “funding level” vote of your Board.

The Mayor and Council of the Town of Ocean View will discuss this matter again publicly at its meeting of Oct 11, 2022, with full detail related to our engagement, our proposal and the apparent decision of the IRSD to eliminate the Constable position. I will advise you of the outcome following the meeting. Please be aware however, that having engaged with you in regard to the Agreement, and never having been made aware of this new plan, I am not inclined to recommend we staff an

SRO without a commitment from IRSD to maintain the Constable position. As you are surely aware, maintaining a Constable position alongside an SRO is regular and customary at other IRSD schools.

Finally, to avoid any further delay following Council's discussion, effective Monday, October 17, 2022, unless directed otherwise by Town Council, on October 11, we will resume our 20 plus years of previous supportive yet informal engagement with Lord Baltimore Elementary school, if available. Please take steps immediately to address the issue of staffing Lord Baltimore Elementary School with security personnel by October 17, 2022.

We wish you well in your efforts and decision making on behalf of the students, faculty and parents of Lord Baltimore and the larger Ocean View community. Please advise of any questions.

Sincerely,


Carol S. Houck
Town Manager

cc: Mayor and Council – Town of Ocean View
Chief Kenneth McLaughlin
Principal Webb

OVPD – Detail of Proposed Four Point Model of Engagement

The OVPD SRO program will use a four-part model, whereby the SRO enhances safety and security, enforces the law, teaches, and mentors.

Part –1

The SRO will assist the school administration in maintaining a safe and secure environment. The SRO will be responsible for leading and coordinating active threat response planning and training for local public safety agencies, school staff, students and parents. The SRO will work side-by-side with the constable to address security threats.

Part – 2

The SRO will be responsible for investigating violations of criminal law that occur on campus.

Part – 3

The SRO will provide education designed to promote responsible citizenship and give students a better understanding of how our legal system works. The SRO will use his experience to educate students on the role of police in our community. The SRO will also support school-wide efforts to educate students on the consequences of unacceptable behavior, both in the school and in the community. In addition, the SRO will work to educate students in crime prevention and personal safety. Finally, the SRO will conduct informational presentations to parent groups concerning emerging drug and safety trends that may affect their children.

Part – 4

The SRO will always interact with students as a positive role model and establish working relationships with at risk students.

Programs that the SRO will deliver include:

- The H.E.R.O. (Hide. Escape. Run. Overcome.) Program will consist of educators presenting the H.E.R.O. curriculum to students via five lesson plans, lasting approximately 30-45 minutes each in one week (HERO Week). The entire school will participate in a set of safe, scripted drills.
- Eddie the Eagle Firearm Safety Program. The program is a gun accident prevention program designed to help students and parents prevent gun-related accidents.
- Drug prevention programs for students and parents will be provided with support from the DEA Community Outreach Section.
- The SRO will partner with Safe Kids Delaware and the Division of Public Health to hold a bike safety rodeo. The goal of the rodeo will be to introduce and educate children to bike safety skills in a fun way.
- According to the American Heart Association, children as young as nine years old can learn and retain CPR training. The SRO will be responsible for coordinating CPR, AED, and Basic First Aid Training to all the-grade students at Lord Baltimore School.

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June 28, 2022

Dr. Jay Owens Ed. D.
Superintendent
Indian River School District
31 Hosier Street
Selbyville, DE 19975

RE: School Resource Officer (SRO) - Lord Baltimore Elementary School, Ocean View, DE

Dear Dr. Owens:

We are writing on behalf of the Town of Ocean View to ascertain the level of support the Indian River School District may afford our local elementary school and Town as associated with our interest to place a full time SRO at Lord Baltimore. The topic was discussed at a recent meeting of Mayor and Council, which has resulted in a show of support for the initiative from parents and school personnel.

As you are likely aware, the Ocean View Police Department has a long standing relationship with the local elementary school which benefits from a strong community policing focus. While both the school and our department deem the past partnership to have been of benefit, there is new interest to develop a more formal partnership with the Indian River School District to further enhance safety and increase collaboration between the department, the school administrators, teachers, parents, and students. This includes continued collaboration with the on-site Constable.

The prime goal of the Ocean View Police Department SRO would be to keep children safe. In addition, a secondary goal would be the development of a drug prevention and awareness program for students and parents of Lord Baltimore. We believe the local school and our community will benefit greatly from having an on-site, trained law enforcement officer that can assist with emergencies in a timely manner, while also fostering positive relationships with students. Ocean View Police Chief Kenneth McLaughlin supports the idea as does the balance of Council and our Town Manager Carol Houck.

We would like to meet with you and your team to discuss the process to place an Ocean View Police Department SRO at Lord Baltimore in time for the start of the new school year (September 2022). Once we hear from you, we will then be in the position to finalize a recommendation for

a vote, including all the details of the partnership with the Indian River School District.
Please advise how you wish to proceed or if you require additional information.

Very Sincerely,

Mayor John Reddington

John Reddington

Councilman Stephen Cobb (District 1)

Stephen Cobb

Cc: Councilman Maly (Mayor Pro-Tem; District 3)
Councilman Walsh (District 4)
Councilwoman Twardzik (District 2)
OV Police Chief Kenneth McLaughlin
OV Town Manager Carol Houck
LB Principal Pam Webb
IRSD Security Lead Preston Lewis

https://www.coastalpoint.com/news/education/school-safety-is-top-priority-for-irsd-schools/article_b9a406aa-351d-11ed-b129-0f20582ccbc7.html

School safety is top priority for IRSD schools

By Mike Smith | Staff Reporter
Sep 15, 2022

The Indian River School District had incredible foresight, by all accounts, to launch a constable and school resource officer program in 2013, almost 10 years ago. Now, the constable program is being expanded and new school resource officers are being sworn in. And the Town of Ocean View is holding a town council vote this week to act on Police Chief Ken McLaughlin's recommendation to make the school resource officer position permanent and full-time.

The Indian River School District Board of Education is also considering that request to ensure continuity of an active-duty police officer for the local elementary school.

Preston A. Lewis is the administrator of student services within the IRSD system and is in charge of safety and discipline.

"I try to preach to our constables, when we have training, that you must be alert every day. We could have a 'bad day' every or any day of the week."



Constable Doug Messeck is the new constable at Lord Baltimore Elementary School.

Coastal Point • Mike Smith

The district is not immune to at least the threat of violence.

"We have had no major issues," said Lewis of school violence. "We had a series of bomb threats early in my tenure, and we have had to do new approaches to school reunification during emergencies. It all went well."

Constable Doug Messeck spent 31 years as natural-resources police officer before his retirement and, after a two-month summer break, was back on the job this week, now as a new constable at Lord Baltimore Elementary School in Ocean View. He was seen patrolling the perimeter of the elementary school twice on his first week as constable.

"My son is a teacher, and he attended IRSD schools and Indian River, and I also have an eighth-grader in Millsboro Elementary," said Messeck. So he takes his job very personally.

Messeck said he has known McLaughlin for more than 30 years, since 1990, when they were finishing the police academy together. It was an easy conversation to bring Messeck aboard.

"It's a shame we have to be here. But I am very happy to support this community working with staff and these students," said Messeck. "These are new times, and I'm here to keep everyone safe for our schools."

Messeck added that McLaughlin had temporarily assigned Ocean View Sgt. Rhys Bradshaw as resource officer at Lord Baltimore, pending the council decision to make a permanent school resource officer available.

"We are their friends, and we provide counsel for these kids," said Messeck. "I have already identified those kids who are a little bit afraid of their first week of school, and [have been] trying to reassure them."

Messeck agreed that the job requires patience and said a retired law-enforcement officer is the perfect model for the constable position.

"We have all of the vinegar out of our systems already."

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The IRSD board is now talking about a second reading of current school policy on the use of force by these officers.

“Current policy is that deadly force may be used in active-shooter situations,” said Lewis. “Deadly force is available to uniformed officers where there is risk of serious injury.”

“The current safety policy review is to make sure everyone understands: ‘What are the restrictions and what can they do?’ ‘When can they exhibit a gun?’ This is a policy that was adopted a long time ago — back in 2013 — and while we were ahead of the schedule, we want to be sure we are current.”

“We review the safety policy every three years,” said Lewis. “We reach out to legal, in case we might have missed something. We want to be in line with legal and guidelines in the state of Delaware. This time around, there are only some minor revisions and editorial changes.”

Parents interested in the constable and gun-safety policy may look on the IRSD website for more information.

“You have to stop the threat to the kids,” said Lewis. “That has been in our training since day one. I am retired law-enforcement, and I understand you must go to and disable the threat.”

“It used to be you would contain and wait for a SWAT team,” said Lewis. “If you have an immediate threat, you need to go to that threat. They would be our first-responders.”

As for personnel, Lewis indicated that IRSD is staying with the retired-officer formula for human resources.

"We are filling the constable slots now," he said. "We are looking to add some substitutes, if there are law-enforcement people interested."

"I am working hard on filling these roles," said Lewis. "Chief McLaughlin is asking to have IRSD fund a school resource officer to be at Lord Baltimore, and that is still in conversation. It would be one of his officers."

Lewis said he was with the Delaware State Police for 22 years.

"I retired 2012, and I got the position of administrator of school services here at IRSD. In 2013, in talking with IRSD and the Board of Education, we wanted to add another layer of protection, and the constable program was started."

"Our constables all have at least 20 years of a successful law-enforcement career, and we have been very fortunate to employ many great officers," said Lewis. "These kids love their constables."

That love is something Constable Messeck is experiencing in his first week.

"I am always out there checking with our officers — it is my main focus," added Lewis. "I oversee school discipline within IRSD. I see how these guys react to the constables," and it keeps the peace, he said.



MORE INFORMATION



OVPD's Bradshaw becomes LB resource officer