

# THE ABINGTON JOURNAL

## Lackawanna Trail School District takes steps to improve school safety

By Robert Tomkavage - [rtomkavage@timesleader.com](mailto:rtomkavage@timesleader.com)

Posted March 13, 2018

FACTORYVILLE — Lackawanna Trail Superintendent Matthew Rakauskas discussed ways the district is working to make its schools safer during a board of education meeting Monday night.

“We have really stepped up a lot of measures regarding school safety in the last month,” Rakauskas said. “Although nothing is perfect, I think we do really well and we have a great relationship with the local and state police.”

According to Rakauskas, the district ramped up its efforts to further improve the security of the high school and elementary center after the shooting in Parkland, Fla. Feb. 14.

“Right now, we have an armed person in both buildings for a limited time but we’re looking to increase that by potentially moving forward with a school resource officer in the near future,” he said. “We have a full surveillance system of 96 cameras that administrators monitor. The state and local people are being hooked into those, as well. Our administrators and head of maintenance have also been double checking entryways and doorways to make sure they are secure once school begins.”

Lockdown drills have recently been held in the high school and elementary center, and the second annual bus evacuation drill is scheduled for the week of March 26.

The district also plans to help its staff learn how to respond in emergency situations by participating in the Stop the Bleed program, a program,

“It deals with training teachers and people who work in the buildings, in the case that there is a tragedy in the school, so they can do a better job tourniqueting people, and literally stop the bleeding and save lives,” Rakauskas said.

Per Rakauskas, Tom Schofield, the district’s Maintenance 1 Supervisor and volunteer firefighter and EMT, along with Kathy Bommer, secretary of the Factoryville Fire Company, are coordinating a training session for about 30 employees on May 4.

District administrators have been contacted by Amerisite, a company based out of Massachusetts, regarding the possibility of the district leasing an area off Corby Road in Clinton Township near the high school for the construction of a 199-foot cell phone tower on the district’s property.

“The money we could generate from the cell phone tower could offset the cost of additional security measure,” Rakauskas said. “We’re about a month away from making a decision. There are some risks and benefits.”

Cathy Strauch from Lackawanna Trail Friends of Music addressed the board with concerns regarding cuts to the music program.

“I see the music department suffering,” Strauch said. “You have to do something to help Mr. Dikeman out, especially in the elementary school. The kids aren’t getting enough proper instruction. There is a difference in the way the seventh-grade class is now versus when my kids were here. They are not as far advanced as they should be. If you can’t get another full-time instructor, by all means look at the possibility of a part-time instructor to help tutor these kids. An hour a week is not enough for kids who are learning.”

Although Rakauskas recognized more could be accomplished with an additional teacher, he doesn’t believe the quality of instruction has been compromised.

“We had four teachers in the district for a number of years, but I don’t think it’s suffering,” Rakauskas said. “Three teachers can’t do as much as four but, in a school of about 1,000 students, I think we are very well staffed.

“I think suffering is a harsh word.”