

Comments submitted via the Public Comment email address

Date Range: June 29 – July 7, 2020

Dear City Leaders,

It is disappointing enough that truth and integrity in too much of Lewiston's leadership has given way to pandering to those who scream the loudest, even what they are screaming is not based on what is actually happening "real-time, real-place, real-people" in Lewiston, Maine. No evidence whatsoever has been provided to illustrate the bitter accusations and so-called remedies for the fictional wrongdoing by Lewiston School Resource Officers. The students who will be hurt the most by SROs being removed from Lewiston's public schools are those who need to see and have access to a positive police presence during daily life. Many of them are students of color, which seems lost on those who are demanding their removal?...

It was interesting to listen to the public comments that were pre-orchestrated to support Majerus-Collins' proposal to remove SROs from LPS. Very few of the commenters calling for the removal of SROs were from Lewiston, and ONLY ONE referred to an actual SRO in an actual Lewiston school, and that one was positive. Isn't it about time that this deck-stacking--calling "allies" from far and wide to speak at Lewiston meetings about Lewiston affairs in an attempt to create the appearance of "public support" for given agenda items--be ended? Anecdotes, extended expositions and soliloquies from non-Lewiston residents and advocates with agendas about Lewiston affairs have not moved us any closer to improving life for the citizens of Lewiston. In fact, allowing Lewiston leadership to become a holding pen for those who wish to promote agendas--rather than represent the residents of their wards--is undermining the City at a time it can least withstand further damage.

Lewiston leadership is being used by those who see it as nothing more than a blank canvas to promote their own personal political and social agendas. This should have been painfully clear already, when Safiya Khalid's campaign, led by Kiernan Majerus-Collins, brutally bullied her opponent, longtime community member and tireless volunteer Ed Hill, in an attempt to intimidate him into withdrawing from the election. Allowing now-elected officials to get away with such extreme, egregious harm against a citizen has emboldened them to continue bulldozing their agenda across Lewiston no matter what they need to do to succeed. Lying is fine; accusing those who disagree with them of being "racists" is fine; blocking constituent comment on their political Fb pages is fine (Both Khalid and Majerus-Collins are doing this to their own constituents, but Mayor Cayer and the Lewiston administration have refused to require that the law is followed on their watch. Why, one has to wonder?...).

(For those of you who do not know about the attack on Ed Hill led by Majerus-Collins, you can learn (and listen to the recorded evidence) here: https://medium.com/@winterlotus/i-was-afraid-they-were-going-to-break-down-my-door-walter-hill-a26707d93520?source=friends_link&sk=93335c3ea2eb632c0b6a2060cd823a8a If you do not know what now-elected Lewiston leaders unleashed upon a man old enough to be their father, I encourage you to take this opportunity to face the truth. While nothing could be done "legally" to redress this unspeakable act of cruelty, a *lot* could have--and should have--been undertaken

on moral grounds by you leaders to censure this behavior by your colleagues and demand redress, but for some reason, it was not? The lack of integrity displayed by the Khalid campaign--and the subsequent lies to deflect attention from the truth--should have shown that these people care not about Lewiston and its wellbeing, but about holding positions of power in order to advance agendas rather than represent constituents--the people you all took solemn oaths to represent. Why is that not happening?)

The greatest irony at the school committee meeting where Majerus-Collins put his trendy anti-SRO proposal forth was that immediately before his agenda item, there was an equally long line of public commenters who spoke eloquently and passionately about the formative and fundamental impact their sports coaches had had on their lives. Person after person spoke about the crucial importance of having "other" positive, supportive adult presences in schools and described how their lives were positively shaped by relationships with those adults. SROs provide, among many other important things, exactly this: adult presence, support and accessibility that the most vulnerable and troubled kids might otherwise NOT HAVE in their lives. Removing SROs from LPS, in a misguided effort to be "on trend", will harm the very people who need and benefit from them the most. It is time to stop sacrificing truth and facts to harmful special interests in Lewiston.

Thank you for reading.

~Maura Murphy

Ward 1

I write this evening to voice my support of ALL of our school resource officers in all of our Lewiston schools. I believe they are an asset to our school communities, administration, staff, community as a whole, but most importantly our students.

A year or so ago, during my time on the school board, we had multiple conversations at multiple meetings about our SROs and how valued they are in our school community. We discussed how there is GREATER need for more SRO presence in our schools but just not adequate resources to dedicate to that line item in the budget. A video was compiled and viewed capturing all of the wonderful work they do everyday with glowing comments from students, staff and administrators. We recognized them and their efforts in a special presentation. It was clear the value they bring to our schools and this was spoken to by admin and staff and students that interact with them daily.

I am so disheartened, and very concerned, that one year later we are having conversations about their presence in our schools(as part of a bigger discussion about police in our communities altogether). What has changed in LEWISTON, MAINE that has changed the narrative so drastically? I ask you to think long and hard about this before rushing to make decisions that could have serious ramifications for the security and safety of our students and staff. As it relates to our Lewiston SROs, I ask you to support our SROs and the role they play in our schools. We know we have crime in our schools. We know we have drugs and alcohol in our schools. We know we have violence in our schools. We know violence committed against schools in America is a huge problem with our history of many mass shootings. Without SROs, who will safely and appropriately address these issues while assuring

the safety of our school communities? I think we all can agree that our admin and staff have enough on their plates right now.

I hope we can agree that our SROs in Lewiston are an asset to our school community and offer security, community building, education, safety, role modeling, mentoring, and unique, valuable resources. I urge you to recommend to the school committee keeping all SRO positions in our schools and the DARE program.

Fondly-

Renee Courtemanche

Ward One resident and parent of 2 children in LPS

Good afternoon,

I am writing to express my support of School Resource Officers for all of our Lewiston Schools. I am a grades 4-6 Special Education Teacher in a self-contained functional life skills program.

I have the benefit and privilege to teach my students for three years; building long lasting deep relationships with students and families.

During my years of teaching in Lewiston, I have seen multiple instances of the positive impact and effect on all students through the relationship and presence of our SRO. I have never witnessed or heard one negative reaction or comment from students or staff in regard to our SRO.

We have had Ken Strout working with us at Farwell for many years and I have seen first hand the positive impact he has had with my special needs students.

Jane

Jane Williams

Special Education Teacher

Farwell Elementary School

As a Head Custodian for the Lewiston School Department, I feel it would be in bad judgement to remove ANY SRO's from our schools. In doing would be in bad judgement, These kids see them quite often and thus is creating a friendship that can last a lifetime.

Sincerely,

Ross E. Gilchrist

Head Custodian

Geiger Elementary School

My name is Michael Lacombe and I am a retired police officer with Lewiston PD (1992-2017), and from 2010-2017 I was a School Resource Officer (SRO). I am also a lifelong resident of Lewiston and proud to say so. I am writing to you today out of great concern over the discussion of possibly eliminating the SRO position in Lewiston, which no doubt is fueled by the present divide in this country between the community and police, and in particular the Black Lives Matter movement.

Being an SRO in Lewiston was by far the most rewarding part of my career and was a position that I strived for since the date I was hired as a Police Officer. Working the road as a beat officer for the better part of my career, I quickly realized that I wasn't making as much of a difference in my community as I had hoped. It was a vicious cycle of dealing with the same group of individuals over and over again. It was really when I started noticing that I was dealing with the children of the same individual that I had dealt with over the years, that I truly realized that the only way to really make a difference was to influence a young person and help lead them on a different path. This is why I became an SRO.

Being an SRO is so much more than dealing with juvenile offenders and making arrests or summoning them. Though necessary at times, it was always a last resort. Being an effective SRO was more about building positive relationships with students, which was often the only positive experience with the Police that they had. It was also about being a role model, a counselor, an advisor, a mentor, a friend, a confidant and in many cases, the rare positive adult figure in their lives. These relationships were at the heart of what I did and other SRO's as well. These relationships are so vital to the community as a whole. I handled countless issues in school that would have likely boiled over into the streets and the community, and would have no doubt resulted in the juvenile getting into trouble with law enforcement, or worse, being arrested. I dealt with countless parents needing help and guidance in dealing with their child(ren) and provided them with the resources to do so effectively. Playing hoops and other sports with the students to show them that the police were not to be feared, but we were ordinary men and women who were there to help and protect them, and yes to have fun with them too. Not counting the fact that I was there to protect them and provide a safe school environment in which I was ready to lay down my life for any one of them if heaven forbid one of my schools was a victim of the horrible school shootings taking place across the country. These were MY kids!!!!

It is my opinion that with the present divide between community and police being felt throughout the country, which is being heavily fueled by the media, that the SRO's are needed now more than ever in the schools. The positive influence that these officers give is invaluable in healing the wounds that exist. I passionately ask that you reconsider removing the SRO position, and in fact, I ask that you support and back the SRO's and show that we, as a community, truly appreciate and value the time, selfless effort, heart and dedication that they give to make Lewiston a better place to live.

Sincerely,

Michael Lacombe

Lewiston Resident and Retired Lewiston Police Officer

We are proud parents of a student at Connors Elementary School and we would like to express our support for Lewiston's SROs. In a time where active shooters are way too common, we feel that the SROs play a vital role in protecting our children. We have seen the positive interaction between the children and the SROs. We believe that this positive interaction is important especially in a time where so many negative images are being shown. We want our children to feel comfortable talking to a police officer if they need to. We also support additional police training to make sure minority children are not unfairly targeted because of racial bias. Our daughter very much enjoys seeing the SROs at Connors Elementary School and feels much safer with them there. We as parents also feel much safer with them there. Please keep our SROs!

Sincerely,

Christina and Robert Edwards

Good evening, my name is Nick Knowlton, I reside at 148 Pinewoods Rd. I am a lifelong resident of Lewiston, grew up attending the Lewiston schools. I was educated by Lewiston teachers and supported by SRO's and DARE officers in our schools.

Today, my wife Brie and I have two children, Evan and Natalee who are both attending Lewiston High School this coming fall.

Upon learning about Mr. Collins proposal to eliminate SRO's from Schools we became very concerned. Concerned about the message we are sending to children that all police are bad when we know that is not the case. I'm concerned that we going to undo some 40 years of Lewiston Police and our SRO's have working with students in our school system. I'm concerned that we are going to cause unnecessary fear and anxiety in our children and teachers without the presence of an SRO. Removing SRO's in our schools is NOT the answer to concerns over police brutality or reform.

Just last year the school committee, parents, teachers and students celebrated our SRO and DARE program for an entire committee meeting. There were many stories shared and those officers were rightfully celebrated as a positive impact in our community. These are good people doing great things for our children.

Many of our administrators including Mr. Finn and Mr. Langlois have spoke in support of keeping SRO's and that they DO NOT SUPPORT this proposal. I encourage our city council members to also speak out in support of our SRO's and urge our school committee members to vote down this proposal.

Thank you for your time.

Nick & Brie Knowlton
Lewiston, ME

Greetings,

Let me start by saying I never thought I would feel the need to write this email.

For background, my husband and I both work full time in the community. We have five sons ages 1 to 15. Four of which attend LPS at the high school and elementary school level.

To be clear, I reject the current proposal as-written to reduce the SRO's in the district and remove the D.A.R.E. program.

How quickly we forget about mass-shootings in schools across the nation when another national movement comes to the forefront. I have not forgotten about the lives lost during those tragedies. Sure, we will hope Lewiston never has to face the same devastation. Some may even say "that won't happen here." We cannot turn a blind eye to this. I fear the phrase "hind-sight is always 20/20"

As a Lewiston parent and community member I want to feel that my children are safe while at school. If there is a life-threatening emergency I certainly would hope an SRO was on-site. Don't we always hear that every second counts?

Finally, I recognize our teachers are burdened with a heavy load already. They do not need to worry that they should need to rise to the occasion of handling a situation because LPD couldn't respond quicker.

Since I recognize that there is always an opportunity to compromise, I will share what I could stand behind as a proposal:

Most Important:

- Retain the existing four SRO officers
- Remove language of an SRO prohibited of having a permanent presence at any LPS elementary school. (This is a pointless addition. If the goal is to create a good relationship between LPS, LPD and the larger community then we shouldn't be so explicit in our desire to keep them apart.)
- Create a new Restorative Justice Coordinator position (Do we even know what job functions and hours are needed for this position? As an alternative, is it possible an existing SRO could assume this role?)

Optional:

- D.A.R.E. program to remain as-is. (I believe it is a positive space for children to connect with LPD. Two of my boys have completed this program and the biggest take-away was that they built good relationships with their D.A.R.E. officer. They left feeling positive about law enforcement)

I urge all of you not to rush to make decisions as part of a political agenda. My expectation from the school committee is that they will pause for thoroughness.

Sincerely,
Jenny Graves

The following has been sent to the school committee and superintendent on 7/3/2020

I received a message today stating that the Lewiston School Committee may be considering removing Resource Officers from our schools. I would like to state that this has me very concerned. My child currently attends Connor Elementary. Last year, his 5th grade year, before any of the current Covid19 crisis was easily the most difficult school year he has ever experienced. It was beyond shocking to have him come home with stories of fights, disruptive behavior in the classrooms, and a general atmosphere of brawling and lack of discipline. My son was actually getting permission to remove himself from the classroom to sit in the hallway and read or do homework just to get away from the toxic atmosphere. We were extremely concerned and met with administration and teachers and were assured that there was a plan. A plan to get everyone to calm down and focused on learning, a plan to regain control of the classroom and move forward. Instead what we heard from our son was a continuation of daily fights, occasional ambulance visits, a teacher that was assaulted, a young student bringing a knife to school and threatening another student. Stories about playground and hallway physical bullying, him and a friend feeling that they had to stand guard over a little girl on the playground because she had been attacked by other students. I could go on, it was a long year. My wife and I have very seriously been considering removing him from the Lewiston School system entirely as a result of all of this.

As I type this out the day before we all get to celebrate this amazing and beautiful country, I have been reflecting a lot on the current call to arms to defund the police. I watch the news and read horrifying stories of citizens of this country being attacked, businesses destroyed, lives completely up-ended and it doesn't matter what color/race/creed/belief, no one is safe. Defund the police and replace them with what exactly? I have yet to hear a coherent thought/plan to that effect. Citizens with AR's roaming the street and enforcing whatever version of law and order they feel is correct? Seattle tried that and two young men's lives were snuffed out. Now it's coming here and rumours of removing the men and women in blue that protect our children have me terrified. Who's going to stop that child with a knife if he attacks my child?

I fully support the Lewiston Police Department and their School Resource Officers and hope you do as well. Our children's safety should be priority one, please make sure you keep that in mind and do not bend to the mob, do not stoop to virtue signalling. Continue to back and support SROs in Lewiston Schools.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Michaud

To whom this may concern,

This is regarding the matter of SRO's remaining in the Lewiston Public Schools. My husband and I fully support keeping SRO's in our schools, for the safety of our kids, other kids, and staff members. These past few years have been full of horror stories about school shootings, violent bullying, etc. To us, SRO's in schools these days is an essential necessity. I hope you consider these matters very seriously, contemplate the consequences of any decisions made, and pass my support along to chairmen and others who need to hear it. If there are others I should email as well, please let me know. Thank you.

Signed,

Enka Suli

Hello Committee Members:

I'm hoping this email finds you well.

I recently read the proposal put forth by the committee member from Ward 3 to remove RSOs and the D.A.R.E. program in LPS. This is a dangerous idea and I cannot help but assume this proposal is politically motivated given the national attention police officers are currently facing. Nationally glorified political agendas have no place on our local school committee. But, I digress. I would like to offer some positive reasonings as to why SROs are important to my family:

- SROs were my children's first experience with the police. It turned out to be an easy way for my kids to form a positive opinion of what the police do to keep them safe. They have never felt scared or nervous in the presence of their SRO.
- There is an SRO with a friendly smile and a heart of gold that walks the halls of McMahan Elementary where both of my children attend(ed). He exudes a positive energy and truly cares about every child he meets, it's obvious.
- My oldest daughter was a proud D.A.R.E. essay winner in 6th grade. All three of my nieces were also essay winners. My youngest daughter is excited for the challenge of joining the ranks of her older sister & cousins. This has become a positive goal in our family that encourages creativity and writing. Also, obviously, D.A.R.E. is an important program that teaches our kids about various kinds of substance abuse and violence. It also gives them key tools to resist peer pressure as they journey into adolescence.
- My husband and I feel our children are safe at school when a police presence is known. Unfortunately, violent ideas and actions exist among children. SROs have clear strategies that work to help keep violence out of our schools. In keeping our buildings safe, they create a sound environment for our children to learn.

My family and I currently reside in Ward 2 and we insist that our representative take our comments into consideration when casting a vote. We wholeheartedly want RSOs to stay at LPS for the safety of our children.

I'll end with this - when I explained to my children why I was emailing all of you this evening, they were shocked. My oldest said "removing our police officers from school is the dumbest idea I've ever heard."

And there you have it folks. Why don't we just ask our children?

Thank you for your time.

Janet Beaudoin

Dear Committee Members, City leaders, & To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you as a member of the Lewiston community and more importantly, the mother of two teenage girls in the Lewiston School Department.

I respectfully disagree with the proposal to remove School resource officers from the Lewiston Public School system.

SROs are more than police in our schools . They are tremendous supporters for some of the most vulnerable students. They provide stability , guidance and safety in this crazy world today. They help dissipate bullying & violent situations and help create a sound environment for our children to learn.

As a parent I feel better knowing that there is an onsite response if something should happen in our schools. To propose the removal of SROs , hardworking individuals who play such a crucial role in the day to day safety and well being of our children, would be a huge disservice to the LPS community.

Our family currently resides in Ward 6 and we request that our representative consider our comments when casting a vote. We strongly feel it is in the best interest to keep SROs in our school system for the safety and welfare of our children, as well as the school staff members.

Thank you,
Jennifer Belanger

We support SRO officers in the school. SRO's help both the children and the teachers to feel safer in school especially in this violent world we live in. We are 35 year plus lewiston tax paying citizens and we do NOT think SRO officers should be removed from schools!

Sincerely,

Dirk and Tina DeHaan

Please please keep the police and dare program!!!!

Kelly Dumont

To Whom It May Concern,

As a teacher in the Lewiston School System I am ashamed to be associated with the proposal of removing SROs from our schools. Not only do I feel this way as a teacher, but I also grew up in with an SRO in my school system that made a huge impact on my life. I met my SRO in 2nd grade and continued that relationship well into my late 20s. He helped me make smart choices when drugs and drinking were around me and helped me fight through when I was feeling depressed in high school. He was also a support for me as I was experiencing physical abuse from my mother's boyfriend when I was in elementary school and didn't fully understand what was happening to me. He would stop by and check on me at home and helped put a stop to the abuse and made me feel safer.

Students in our building feel safer with a police presence in our building. There have been multiple issues (such as harassment or drugs) that students have brought to my attention and they needed the assistance of Officer Cramp. The ability to access his assistance within the building helps many students be proactive in their situations. If a student had to go down to the police station to go forward with handling a situation the majority of students wouldn't do it because of inability to get there and doing that is also scary for them. The safety and security of seeing Officer Cramp in his office in our building makes him easily accessible and students actively seek out his help or just seek out building a relationship.

As a teacher I have to have the difficult conversation with students about lockdowns and what happens if someone attacks our building. The largest concern they have is the cafeteria and feeling safe at lunches. I have told the students that Officer Cramp is there to keep them safe. As soon as they hear this their bodies relax and they are visibly more comfortable and feel safer.

While some of you may believe the DARE program doesn't help, it really does. What you don't see is how much worse it can become with drugs without that program. The only adjustment I would recommend is having a secondary part of the program to be part of 7th grade as middle school is where many of the poor decisions about drugs and drinking are starting to happen.

By proposing a restorative justice position at the high school to replace the elementary school SRO is not thinking about the bigger picture. By focusing on the relationships with students and police officers at an elementary level it is proactive. Once students are in high school they have typically made MANY choices prior to that and sending them to work with a restorative justice person at that point is after the fact thinking. Students need to begin the restorative practices at the elementary level in order for it to be effective in their long term values and beliefs.

As a teacher it amazes me that people would even propose the removal of such vital people in our schools without actually speaking with teachers, students, and the SROs. I propose you each spend a day shadowing an SRO in our buildings so you can see the relationships you are proposing to destroy. I also invite you to spend a day shadowing me as a teacher in the middle school to see the situations we navigate as teachers on a daily basis. I propose you do not make decisions like this about our schools before doing the actual research. If opinions of teachers, students, and other staff were truly taken into account I should have received at least a survey asking my thoughts before this proposal.

Thank you for your time,

Alicia Ricker

Alicia Ricker 7th Grade Math 7th Grade Girls Basketball Coach Lewiston Middle School Sent from Gmail Mobile

Good Evening City Councilors,

I am writing to you today to express my deep concerns with a proposal that Mr. Collins of the school committee has presented. This proposal is regarding the School Resource Officers within our public schools and the programs they provide. I know the City council has vested interest in this topic. As you know, the city provides 25% of the budget for the SRO program. More importantly, SROs protect and educate our children, our faculty and staff. SRO duties are vast and their relationships are long lasting. I am not a politician, I am a parent. I am an active parent. I have never once heard a complaint about any SRO officer, there presence within the school or the DARE program. Actually, I have always heard the opposite.]

There is a lot going on in the nation right now and we can argue that all day long. I don't want Lewiston to have a knee jerk reaction. reacting without thinking it though. We are LEWISTON and my concern is with THIS city and with OUR schools.

I struggle with this proposal- it is trying to changing something, in my opinion, that is not broken. Mr. Collins wants to phase out a program that has a proven success. Mr. Collins wants to change how Lewiston fosters positive police relationships in order to advance his own political agenda.

We are the parents that clutch our phones praying our children all come home safe after we receive notification our children are in lock down. We are the parents heartbroken for the victims of school shootings. We are the parents that told our kids the Officer Matt Veriling would protect them. We are the parents that dropped our kids off at school after a shooting has been announced on the news. While we can never guarantee such a thing, removing SRO from school makes us more vulnerable in every possible way.

This proposal is a chance for certain individuals to use the current national hot button issues to advance a political agenda. Getting rid of SROs in our school and their programs is NOT what is in the best interest of Lewiston Public Schools. I know that the final decision comes down to the Lewiston School Committee; however, I urge the council to issue a statement to the School board IN SUPPORT of keeping our School Resource Officers and their programs within our schools.

Thank you,

Sarah Morin

Dear Members of the City Council,

I am a life long resident of Lewiston. I have lived on the same Lewiston Street my entire life. I also ran my business in Lewiston for over 20 years and still have a large amount of clients in Lewiston. I am now raising my two girls within the Lewiston Public School system. They walk the same hallways I did, sometimes having the same teachers I did. To say that I love this city is an understatement.

It has been brought to my attention that there has been a recent tiered proposal brought up by School Committee member Collins, regarding School Resource Officers and their programs within the schools. I find that the timing of this proposal coincides with current hot topic buttons happening within our country. While our city is far from perfect, we are not the same.

When doing my own research on OUR program, all the conversations were positive. I spoke with students, teaches, faculty and staff. I have read Mr. Langlais letter. I know the curriculum of the DARE program and I support it. I have never even heard any whispers of displeasure with the DARE program, the SRO officers themselves, or having officers within our schools. Everyone I reached out to had not heard of any either. I don't want to hear about studies for other parts of the country, they are not US and WE are not them. I wanted to hear about OUR program. I wanted to hear from the people it affects from the top to the bottom. After digging and finding nothing, I struggle to see why this is being brought up. AND why is it being pushed through so quickly? Since when has something that has never been a problem get a proposal presented and action of that proposal happen at the next meeting. Have all the stakeholders been brought to the table to discuss what isn't working? Is there even anything that isn't working? Has the school reached out to the officers or the Police department to express their displeasure? Do they even have any displeasure? Has the School committee even broke out into a workshop to discuss this? Has the School Committee even identified what part of the program isn't working? What does the school committee have in place to try and replace all the services and education that the SROs provide? Has the school committee thought through the guaranteed repercussions of this proposal? If they pass this resolution and a situation were to occur are the school committee members and other city officials and elected officials liable for civil suit? The budget has been passed by the school board and the city council, so money is not the issue. I don't believe there is an issue. In closing,

OUR schools benefit from having SROs in the schools.

OUR administration, teachers, faculty and our student body LOVE OUR SROs.

OUR parents appreciate and support our SROs

OUR student body feels safer with the SROs within our schools

OUR teachers, administration, faculty and staff WANT our SROs to stay.

OUR program isn't broken so STOP messing with it. As the mayor stated if we need to take a look at the program as a whole on ways to broaden it and improve it, I'm all for it.

Greg Morin

Lewiston, Maine

Greetings City Councilors,

I found this news WMTW footage from Lewiston High School (May 2018) while researching SRO positions in Lewiston schools:

<https://www.wmtw.com/article/school-resource-officers-offer-more-than-just-security/20889939>

There are hugs, there are high fives, there is a calm demeanor and an endorsement by Jake Langlais for the high school SRO "having a different lens... so we can plan and be prepared should something else pop up." The officer has a role so essential that Jake endorsed hiring ANOTHER officer at that time. He

said "To me, it's about the relationship that our officer has with kids in our building - and it's a good one".

This news article is barely 2 years old and I have not seen any abuse of powers carried out by Lewiston school resource officers in the news. My family supports officers in schools (and any measures to keep ALL Lewiston children safe). If there were direct evidence that SROs were endangering students, I would support replacing bad officers, but the position of an SRO and the DARE program is so important to safety and raising our kids to resist peer pressure / stay away from drugs. Even if one child is able to say "no" thanks to DARE - the program is worth it.

I really wished that Geiger Elementary had a full time SRO at that school when the 2016 bomb threat was called in. My family knows first-hand what it feels like to have your child evacuated from a school, not being able to get to him, praying that the whole thing was a hoax... we are reminded of that fear anytime the middle and high school has had to go on lock down for dangerous people in the area. It's reassuring to know that in those schools, there is one person locked inside with my child who has a direct line to the police, is armed, trained in CPR/first aid, and can be part of creating and executing safety plans with building administration. Also, having the presence of an officer in a building can persuade a violent person to reconsider invoking violence in the first place.

I have voted for every safety and security upgrade that has been on a ballot in Lewiston since Sandy Hook. I know that each upgrade (like security doors) are not foolproof on their own, but all the safeguards can work together to ensure student safety - this includes the role of SROs. Officers are trained to deal with emergencies, keep a clear head, and be a calming presence. Everyone I know sings praises of their school officers.

I am imploring you to **please keep SROs in the budget**. I would love to have one in every school! In my opinion, the #1 job of schools is to keep our kids safe... it cannot be over-supported.

Thank you,

Shari Cloutier

Ward 6

I am writing regarding the proposal to remove the SRO position in the Lewiston schools. As a father of two children who attend Lewiston Public Schools I am dismayed and frightened by the direction of our School Board. Over the last week I have come to realize that the interests of our children are taking a backseat to political ideology and social media grandstanding.

I feel that our SROs are a valuable resource in our schools and the relationships they establish through interaction with our kids is mutually valuable. I remember as a child my excitement as Officer Friendly returned the lost gingerbread man back to our classroom and I also remember the conversations had after participating in the DARE program. Dialogue and discussion are good and removing our SROs from schools takes them away from the conversation. I value the information provided and taught via the DARE program, Mr. Collins states that it's akin to teaching abstinence as sexual education, I however feel that the topics of cyber bullying, alcohol and drugs and the teaching and discussions provided are valuable. I hope that the school board will do the right thing and stand with our Lewiston SROs. We are

fortunate to live in a city with a police force that is committed to outreach, discussion and community involvement. I hope that the school committee is able to put party agendas aside and focus on OUR COMMUNITY and the service they provide to OUR LEWISTON CHILDREN.

Jason Gaudette
Lewiston, Maine

Good evening,

Thank you for taking public comments in this matter. I am glad to see that the city council is addressing this concern. I would think that the city council would have some say in this matter since 25% of the school resource officer budget is from the city budget and there are binding contracts at play here.

I think it is important to point out that I live in Lewiston, own property in Lewiston and I have a child at Lewiston High School and nieces and nephews in the Lewiston School System. At the last school committee meeting, letters were read from special interest groups and anti police activists as well as people from out of town. This is none of their concern. It is our concern as residents of Lewiston.

It is shameful that one school committee member has taken it upon himself to put his personal agenda before the committee.

Mr. Collins has made it clear on his public Facebook page that he intends to start with this initiative but would like to remove all School Resource Officers from our schools.. I believe that this is a personal agenda of Mr. Collins because he was involved in a protest in front of the police department chanting "FUCK THE POLICE"! His personal motives against the police should not be considered as being in the best interest of our students and school faculty.

School resource officers are an extremely valuable asset to our students and faculty. They make students and faculty feel safe. Students know that there is a caring person that they can go to with there problems or to report a crime. Many crimes that would not normally be reported are reported to school resource officers because students feel comfortable talking to the school resource officer where they may not feel comfortable going to a police station.

School resource officers receive special training in how to handle the issues of students and how to keep the school safe. If there is a concern that they are not trained in a certain aspect, then train them.

I am certain that you will hear from the police department and school faculty so I will leave the details to them.

Thank you again for addressing the concerns of your constituents.

Tim Morin
Lewiston

As you prepare to vote for the upcoming proposal of eliminating the SRO and DARE program in LPS, please consider why this may not be in the best interest of our students. I am a 1st grade teacher at Geiger and I have had the SRO, Ken Strout in my classroom on a few occasions. His presence in my classroom brings joy to my students. He interacts with all children and is often seen high-fiving them in the hallway. The interactions are brief but meaningful. Lewiston has always been my home. Being familiar with this community, I am aware of some of the crime that happens here. Unfortunately,

children are witnesses to a lot of this crime. If they have a relationship with a SRO at a young age, it will give them a better sense of security when police may need to enter their homes. Let me give you an example of an experience I had as a child. I was playing outside with a group of children and our SRO came to respond to a call dealing with some sort of domestic violence in the neighborhood. Her name was "Officer Friendly". When we saw her, we got excited and said hello. She was happy to say hello but made it clear to us that she was there for an important reason. We didn't understand why at the time, but we felt a sense of security knowing that "Officer Friendly" is nice, and will not do any harm to anyone (which she didn't). She was a familiar face, and it made the situation a little less scary. If we get rid of this connection in the schools, children are not going to have the opportunity to trust police officers. Many of them are being told by adults and the media that "all cops are bad" and we all know that this is not true. Many of our students will learn to dislike the police, when in reality it is the police that are going to protect them in harmful situations. When our students are outside of the classroom and need outside intervention, it is not the teachers and mental health professionals that will be handling the situation, it's the police. It is crucial that we continue to build this school/community relationship with our law enforcement to ensure that our students feel safe inside and outside of school. I feel that with everything currently going on in the country, we need to build these relationships more than ever!

I was so proud to watch Lewiston/Auburn come together to march in protest for the BLM movement and I saw our very own Lewiston Police officers in the front lines of the march. I saw Ken Strout marching WITH our community not against us. So, please do not let what is happening around the country influence how we teach our children to view law enforcement here in Lewiston. I do not feel that police brutality is an issue in our community. Eliminating the SRO role in our elementary schools is certainly not in the best interest of our students that we are collectively working to protect.

I am asking you to please vote against this proposal.

Thank you,

Justine Grandmaison
1st Grade Teacher
Geiger Elementary

Dear Lewiston City Council Members,

I am writing this email today not only as parent, but as a teacher in Lewiston School Department. My concerns as a parent is higher than that as a teacher. Our children attend school for a safe learning environment. They want to know school is a place they can rely on adults to keep them safe. My son enjoys Officer Strout in school, giving fist bumps and high fives as he walks through the halls. He provides the safe feeling kids need to have. With lockdowns kids have to practice and at times fights in schools it is nice to know my child will be safe with an officer in the building. We take them away from the elementary school level there is no one to defend our children from a person with a gun or knife that may come into schools. Officers are trained for this type of situation and if we remove the first line of defense for our children we are making this unsafe environment for them to learn.

Now as a teacher, I have worked in Lewiston for 19 years. Over the years I have seen a significant change in students social emotional needs. Officer Strout has helped students in crisis in supportive ways to talk them down or just check in with them. Personally, I have needed help with students due to crisis situations leaving the building running into the woods, dangerous behavior towards staff, and moral support for the student. I am trained in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention with students as well, but at times we need support. Officer Strout has helped staff to understand students in a different way. He is supportive for staff and students with social emotional needs. Removing the SRO in our elementary school is not setting a positive example for students. We are teaching them to stay away from police instead of knowing they are supportive and there for you.

I urge you to not remove the SRO officers, but to keep them to help keep our schools remain safe and to have them build relationships with students in a positive meaningful way. Please take time to talk with a variety of parents and teachers before making this decision.

Sincerely,

Amie Sherry

I believe SRO's r crucial in Lewiston school systems. We have many children who have no one to turn too and no one telling them cops r there to help, many prob see a parent be arrested and told cops r all bad, which is not true. I believe the positive OUR SRO's provide out weigh any negative that can be brought up by the school board. This is an issue brought up by 2 school board members who t pushing BLM objectives. We need to look at Lewiston Maine, not the rest of the world. What do our SRO's provide? A good role model, there to teach kids the negatives of drugs, help our school kids if they need extra support. My daughter is now going into 10th grade but when she was in 4th grade she had an interaction with the Montello resource officer and too this day she talks about "in 4th grade when I walked to school and got picked up by the school cop". It was a bad day as a family, but not one part of her version was bad, was upsetting...it was all positive!!

Lewiston has some great school resource officers!!! Let's keep them where they belong- keeping our schools safe from the unknown! Just because of a few bad Cops in other parts of the United States does not mean we eliminate something good from our schools!!!

Thank you,

Shannon white

Taking a School Resource Officer out of Elementary Schools is one of the most absurd things I have ever seen. For reasons already stated by so many why on earth would you take a police officer away from the most influential of kids. I grew up in Lewiston and I have family in the Lewiston school system. The man who put this on the agenda has one thing in mind and that is personal gain on his political front. It is total bs and anybody who thinks this is a great idea should be ashamed of themselves. Think of these kids before your own political agenda. Thank you. David Madore