

ADDISON-RUTLAND SUPERVISORY UNION

49 Main Street

Fair Haven, Vermont 05743-1094

Phone (802) 265 – 4905

Fax (802) 265 – 2158

Brooke Olsen-Farrell, Superintendent

Kristin H. Benway, Director of Special Services

Casey O'Meara, Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

Cheryl Scarzello, Director of Finance

Christopher G. Cole, Director of Operations

February 15, 2018

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am sending this out as a follow-up to my communication from last night. Last night, Fair Haven Union High School, along with our local police, received information that there was a possible threat against the high school from a former student. Upon learning of the threat we immediately restricted access to all of our schools and the Fair Haven, Castleton and Vermont State Police investigated the possible threat. We now know that the threat was approximately 2 years old. However, as a precaution and due to recent events around the country we added additional security measures to all of our schools for the foreseeable future. We took appropriate action based on the recommendation of law enforcement. All student events around the school districts will occur as planned with appropriate precautions in place.

Best,

Brooke Farrell
Superintendent

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February 15, 2018

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I would like to provide you with some information regarding a report of a possible threat to the high school last evening. We initially notified high school parents only as to the possible threat as it was only focused on the high school. The reason I am contacting you today is to provide you with current information as a courtesy.

Fair Haven Union High School along with our local police received information that there was a possible threat against the high school from a former student. Upon learning of the threat we immediately restricted access to all of our schools and the Fair Haven, Castleton and Vermont State Police investigated the possible threat. We now know that the threat was approximately 2 years old. However, as a precaution and due to recent events around the country we added additional security measures to all of our schools for the foreseeable future. We took appropriate action based on the recommendation of law enforcement. All student events around the school districts will occur as planned with appropriate precautions in place.

Best,

Brooke Farrell
Superintendent

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February 15, 2018

Dear Parent/Guardian,

This morning at approximately 10:00am I sent you a letter via email updating you in regards to the situation at the high school. At that time we had no information that a possible threat directed at the high school was credible but we took extra precautions based on old information and the current atrocity in Florida. At approximately 10:30am local authorities received new information from other sources and subsequently they were able to take the former student into custody.

There is no current threat to the school district and our students. We understand that this has been extremely stressful for all involved. Under these circumstances we work closely and take direction from our local authorities. We appreciate your understanding and further cooperation. All student events in and around the schools will occur as normally scheduled. Student safety was and continues to be our number one priority.

Sincerely,

Brooke Farrell
Superintendent

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February 16, 2018

Dear students, staff, parents and community members,

In the wake of a recent threat to school safety in our community, I want to assure you that we take the safety and security of our students and staff very seriously.

From the first word of concern, we have worked with our local law enforcement to take precautionary measures to ensure the safety and well-being of our students. Staff and administrators were in constant communication with local law enforcement, and we sent continuous updates as more information became available.

At the beginning of the school day, yesterday February 15th, we had no credible threat. In these instances we worked closely with law enforcement and take direction from them in regards to student safety. As soon as we were aware of credible information we took action and provided you with the information that was known to us at that time. Due to the on-going investigation, I am not able to release additional details.


An arrest was made, and there are no additional concerns on the part of law enforcement. There is no credible threat at this time.

The safety and security of students is always first and foremost on the minds of school administration and law enforcement. We will continue to ensure all of our students feel safe in our school buildings. I wish to thank the local law enforcement agencies, the school administration, the faculty, and the students for their response and support. In the coming days, we will be sending out information about a school and community forum that we will be hosting to discuss the events that have taken place and our response.

Extra counselors are available on-site today, and mental health first aid will continue to be provided. During the break next week counselors will be available at the high school Monday-Friday from 9:00-11:00 and all day on Wednesday.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns. The students are all of our students, and we will always work to make sure they are safe and supported.

Sincerely,



Brooke Olsen-Farrell
Superintendent of Schools

Benson – Castleton – Fair Haven – Fair Haven Union High – Hubbardton – Orwell – West Haven

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February 20, 2018

Dear students, staff, parents and community members,

In light of the events of last week Fair Haven Union High School will be holding a Community Night on Wednesday, February 28th at 6:00pm in the high school gymnasium. There is no doubt that these events left us unsettled and with the realization that these types of things can take place even in our small town in Vermont. Over the past few days I have been amazed by the outpouring of support the school and law enforcement has received around the response to this event. I know that many of you including myself have thought about the “what if” and that is a natural reaction but on the 28th we will be focusing on “what didn’t”.

On the 28th you will hear about the timeline, response of law enforcement, school and state. You will not hear specifics since it is an ongoing investigation and we will not be able to answer questions in relation to the investigation. In order to prepare for the evening we request that you submit your questions in advance via the survey below. You can also submit questions directly to your building principal. Please submit your questions by Tuesday, February 27th. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Brooke Farrell

Survey Link <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/fhuhs>

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April 11, 2018

Dear students, staff, parents and community members,

Today the Vermont Supreme Court issued a decision overruling the lower court decision to hold Jack Sawyer without bail. I want to assure you that we continue to take the safety and security of our students and staff very seriously.

Many of the dynamics of this situation are fluid and evolving but at this moment he is still being held. We are working very closely with members from our public safety team, Vermont State Police, local law enforcement, Fair Haven Town Officials and the state to take further measures to ensure the safety and well-being of our students, faculty and staff.


School will continue to be in session and operate as normal as the situation dictates. Some of the additional measures we have in place are:

1. Ensuring staff and students are being vigilant.
2. Continuing to restrict access to our schools
3. Additional law enforcement at schools throughout the district and in the surrounding area.
4. Issuing a no-trespass order
5. Security audits have been conducted at all of our buildings
6. Installing an upgraded E911 system at FHUHS next week
7. Installing a swipe-card access system at FHUHS May 1st and the remaining school buildings
8. Integrating our alert system with Castleton University
9. Additional training for staff, students and the community

Furthermore, we are sensitive to the fact that this decision may re-traumatize our staff, students and community. We will continue to provide counseling resources.

We are working closely with the State's Attorney's Office. We will provide an update you again by the end of day tomorrow if not sooner as information becomes available.

Regards,



Brooke Farrell
Superintendent

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April 12, 2018

Dear students, staff, parents and community members,

Last night I issued a statement regarding yesterday's Vermont Supreme Court decision to overrule the lower court decision to hold Jack Sawyer without bail. To say I am disappointed in the decision is an understatement. At that time, I informed you that I would update you today with any new information that I might have. This is still a fluid situation and there has not been a lot of new information. He continues to be held at this time and we will be informed immediately if that status should change.

Today, the Supervisory Union Public Safety Team met to discuss the situation further and put additional plans in place depending on the outcome. Law enforcement, state officials and community partners could not be more collaborative and supportive. We are doing everything that we reasonably can to provide for the safety and security of our staff and students.

I cannot stress enough the importance of relying on the community for information. We need everyone's eyes and ears. Today we met with both the staff and students at the high school to stress this and identify supports we have in place. Some of these were outlined yesterday in my letter but are also listed below.


1. Vigilance of staff and students
2. Continued restricted access to our schools
3. Additional law enforcement stationed at schools throughout the district and in the surrounding area.
4. Issued a no-trespass order
5. Security audits have been conducted at all of our buildings
6. Installing an upgraded E911 system at FHUHS next week

7. Installing a swipe-card access system at FHUHS May 1st and the remaining school buildings to follow shortly after
8. Integrated our alert system with Castleton University
9. Additional training for staff, students and the community
10. Frequent perimeter checks of the school grounds

We have counseling supports that continue to be available to support students and staff at FHUHS and the sending schools. This support will be available throughout this week and at specific times during the break week, should students or staff need to access it. In addition, our local mental health agency (Rutland Mental Health) also has confidential clinical support and a crisis line available to persons in need. Those services can be accessed by contacting RMH directly at 775-2381 or for crisis needs, the crisis line at 775-1000.

The physical and emotional safety of our staff and students continues to remain our number one priority.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brooke Farrell', written over the word 'Regards,'.

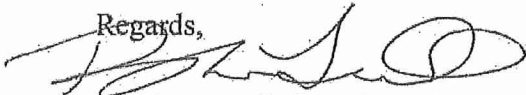
Brooke Farrell, Superintendent

7. Installing a swipe-card access system at FHUHS May 1st and the remaining school buildings to follow shortly after
8. Integrated our alert system with Castleton University
9. Additional training for staff, students and the community
10. Frequent perimeter checks of the school grounds

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The physical and emotional safety of our staff and students continues to remain our number one priority.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Brooke Farrell', written over the printed name.

Brooke Farrell, Superintendent

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Christopher G. Cole, Director of Operations

April 17, 2018

Dear students, staff, parents and community members,

Today the Court decided to set bail at \$100,000 cash assured bond and applied conditions of release for the criminal charges against Jack Sawyer. With this news I know that we all will continue to come together and support our schools. I have been tremendously encouraged by the positive outreach from parents, staff and community members, asking what they can do to help. I continue to encourage vigilance among our stakeholders, that if you see something, say something. A potential atrocity was thwarted because several individuals spoke up in February. This still remains our best defense. I know that our schools will remain safe and secure if we work together.

We have been coordinating very closely with law enforcement, representing seven different entities across both Vermont and New York. We will not disclose publicly all that we have done or how law enforcement will be keeping us safe, but we are confident that our buildings are safe.

Based on advice from law enforcement officials, including the Vermont State Police, we believe that it is reasonable to hold classes after the spring vacation and to proceed with educating our students. It has been a difficult and frightening time, but we must move forward with learning.

We have counseling supports that continue to be available to support students and staff at Fair Haven Union High School and our sending schools. This support will be available throughout this week and continue as students and staff return from break. In addition, our local mental health agency (Rutland Mental Health) has confidential clinical support and a crisis line available to persons in need. Those services can be accessed by contacting Rutland Mental Health directly at 802-775-2381 or for crisis needs, the crisis line at 802-775-1000.

We know that it is not easy to move forward, but we are confident that it is the right thing to do for our students and our families. Administrators are available to speak with parents who have ongoing concerns. We will keep you updated as more information becomes available.

Best,



Brooke Farrell, Superintendent

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Christopher G. Cole, Director of Operations

April 25, 2018

Dear students, staff, parents and community members,

With the recent decision to dismiss felony charges against Jack Sawyer, the Court today had to reconsider bail and conditions of release in the case. At this hearing the judge set a new bail amount of \$10,000 cash surety and left the previous conditions of release in place. In addition, an extreme risk protection order was served which prevents the defendant from lawful access to weapons. As a school district and supervisory union, we are taking all of the safety precautions and preventive actions that we can to ensure the safety and well-being of our staff and students. We are working closely with local and state law enforcement agencies, the State's Attorney, the Vermont Commissioner of Public Safety, the Agency of Education, and the Governor's office to ensure protections are in place for our school community.

As noted in previous communications, in recent weeks we have:

- Continued to restrict access to our schools
- Developed plans with law enforcement to provide an additional police presence throughout the district and in the surrounding area
- Issued a no-trespass order
- Security audits were conducted at all of our buildings
- Installed an upgraded E911 system at Fair haven Union High School
- Implemented plans for the installation of swipe-card access systems at all of our schools
- Upgraded our security cameras and system
- Changed locks on our school doors
- Integrated our alert system with Castleton University
- Provided additional training for staff, students and the community in A.L.I.C.E

Additionally, over the April break we had several faculty and students who were called upon to provide testimony to the Senate and House judiciary committee. They spoke of the impact that this threat has had on our school, our community, and on their ability to access their education. They called upon the legislature to immediately enact laws that would protect others in the future, as the current state of affairs, and the interpretation of existing laws have failed to offer our students protection or solace. As citizens, you have an opportunity to share your voices and concerns, as well.

As members of the FHUHS/ARSU community, it is essential that we all band together during these difficult times. This is a community issue not just a school issue. We must be vigilant of our surroundings, we must take care of ourselves, we must look out for one another, and we must ensure that we all follow the procedures for safety and security that have been put in place. We understand that some may find the new safety procedures to be inconvenient, however, they are necessary as the safety of our students and staff remain our first priority.

Regards,



Brooke Farrell, Superintendent



State of Vermont
Department of Public Safety
45 State Drive
Waterbury, Vermont 05671-1300
<http://dps.vermont.gov/>

**Department of Public Safety/Vermont State Police Response
Fair Haven, Vermont**

The Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the Vermont State Police (VSP) are providing the following support to the Fair Haven Police Department and the Fair Haven Community:

- VSP is working closely with the State's Attorney on various legal issues, including charging and bail;
- VSP and the State's Attorney have sought and obtained an Extreme Risk Protection Order pursuant to recently enacted S.221 which prohibits Mr. Sawyer from purchasing or possessing dangerous weapons, including firearms;
- DPS has been in contact with the United States Attorney's Office (USAO) and they are reviewing what, if any, federal charges might be filed (VSP is providing investigative support as needed by the USAO);
- VPS is in regular communication with Fair Haven school officials on safety issues;
- VSP is coordinating with the Fair Haven Police Department on resources and man power;
- VSP is engaging with Mr. Sawyer's family who have been cooperative;
- DPS has requested assistance from ATF so that all Federal Firearms Licensees (FFL) in Vermont can be alerted that Mr. Sawyer is under 21 and prohibited from purchasing a firearm in accordance with S.55, and is also under court order not to purchase or possess a firearm;
- VSP Detectives will be contacting FFLs in the Fair Haven area to advise them of Mr. Sawyer's status;
- VSP will be assisting the Fair Haven Police Department by providing the following additional resources:
 - Personnel to augment the Student Resource Officer (SRO) and/or to cover when the SRO is unable to fill a shift;
 - State Police cruisers to periodically post at the schools;
 - Periodic presence of a plain clothes trooper to post in and around the school;
 - Increase in State Police patrols;
 - Work to enhance radio communications within the FHUHS; and
 - Assistance with enhancing the emergency response protocols;
- In addition to the Fair Haven Police Department and Vermont State Police, seven other law enforcement agencies, in both Vermont and New York, are prepared to provide resources as needed to ensure safety.



Commissioner Tel 802 244 -8718 FAX 802 241-5377 Vermont State Police Tel 802 244-7345 FAX 802 241-5551 Criminal Justice Services Tel 802 244-8786 FAX 802 241-5557 Vermont Emergency Management Tel 802 244-8721 FAX 802 241-5556 Legal Counsel Tel 802 244-6941 FAX 802 241-5377 Internal Affairs Tel 802 244-5194 FAX 802 241-5377 Administrative Services Tel 802 244-8763 FAX 802 241-5553 Fire Safety Tel 802 479-7561 FAX 802 479-7562