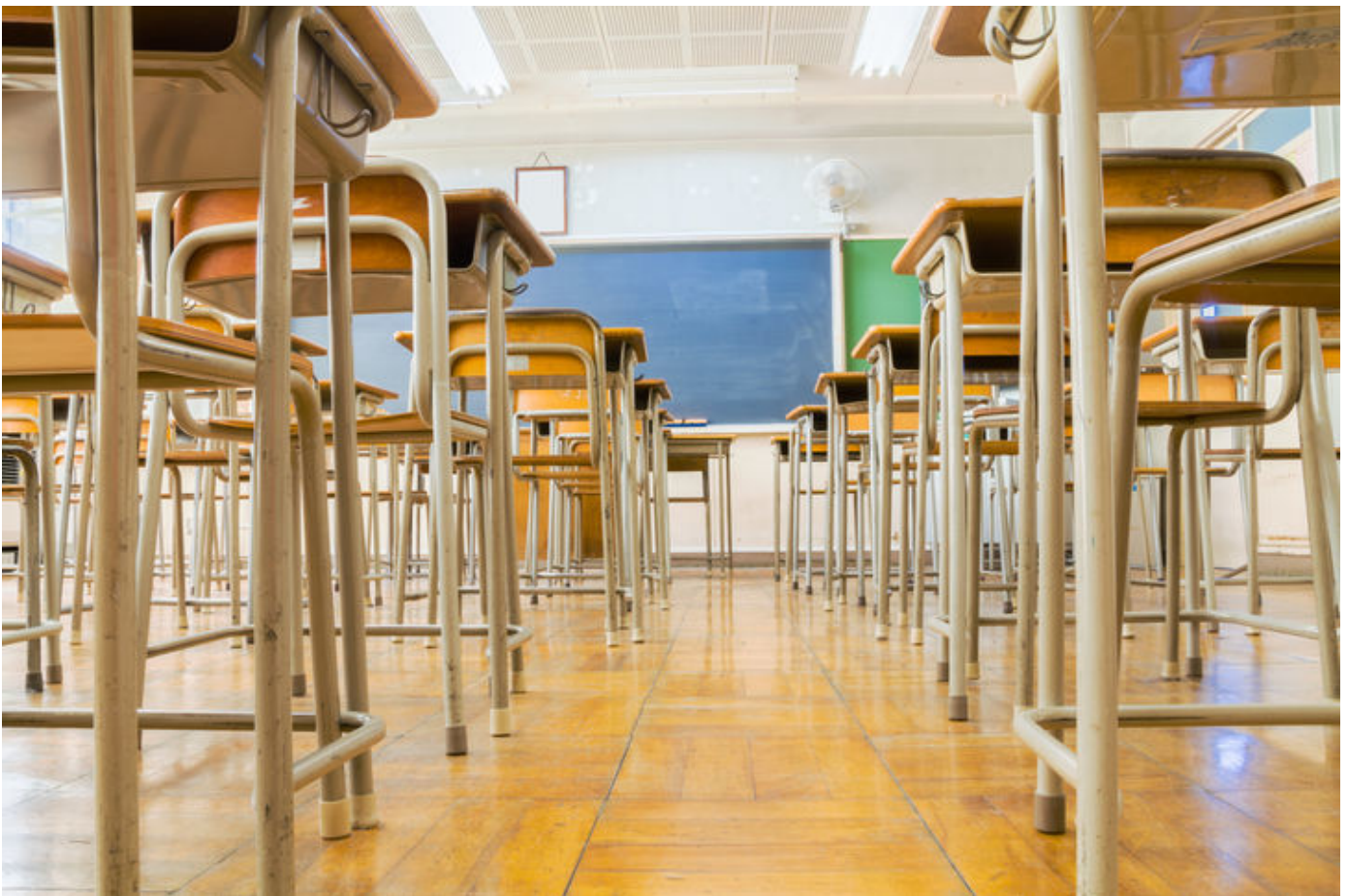

https://greensboro.com/news/local_news/guilford-commissioners-want-new-school-safety-task-force/article_67301dbc-02cb-5622-8109-552f9d7bf774.html

Guilford commissioners want new school safety task force

Jessie Pounds
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GREENSBORO — The Guilford County Board of Commissioners approved Monday at its annual retreat to ask county staff to create a new task force to make recommendations on school safety spending — and they want those recommendations fast.

In an 8-1 vote, the new, not-yet-assembled working group would have 45 days to meet and then send a spokesperson to give recommendations to the commissioners and school board. The group would include two members each from the school board and commissioners, plus school-resource officers, Greensboro and High Point police, the Sheriff's Office plus fire and emergency services departments.

Commissioners have pledged \$10 million for school security, but they've been reluctant to give Guilford County Schools full authority on how that money would be spent.

Back in September, school board members voted to request that the county transfer the \$10 million to the district, based on plans that Superintendent Sharon Contreras and her staff outlined. They had anticipated spending about \$4 million to better secure doors across the district, \$2.5 million for communication systems, \$2 million for security cameras and surveillance systems, \$685,000 for fire-alarm systems and \$615,000 for student photo-badge printing stations.

But commissioners disagreed with some points of that plan, and chose to release just \$600,000 to the district, instructing them to bring in outside expertise to study the options. Much of the focus was to be on communications, specifically looking at potential dead spots or poor reception for walkie-talkies or cellphones in schools and how that could be improved.

According to Angie Henry, the district's chief financial and operations officer, teams are walking through buildings and testing communication capabilities with plans to give the school board a formal report in March.

During their retreat Monday at Bur-Mil Park's clubhouse, county commissioners discussed a wide range of possibilities on how to move forward, before settling on the idea of a task force. It was unclear how the timing of the task force would relate to the communications study.

Henry and school board member Winston McGregor watched the discussion from the audience. Both wondered after the meeting whether the vote to create the task force might slow things down. Henry said the district already had representatives of local law enforcement and others offer advice prior to the plan outlined in the fall.

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