

**‘Time to think outside the box’**

**Parents, other community members share concerns of school safety at board meeting**

**By Dave Fidlin**

Special to The Freeman

WAUKESHA — In the daytime, students had their say. In the evening, parents and other adults in Waukesha weighed in on the everincreasing concerns surrounding school safety.

During their routine monthly meeting, members of the Waukesha School Board on Wednesday received an earful from more than a half-dozen district residents on the topic of securing each of the district’s schools.

The Rev. David Kraemer, who heads the United Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Waukesha, was among the speakers who used the board’s public comment portion of the agenda to weigh in on the issue.

Kraemer said he stood in solidarity with Waukesha students who took part in the national school walkout Wednesday morning.

Kraemer and several other speakers asked the Waukesha School Board to take a position in opposition to assault weapons in the hopes of continuing a national conversation that extends beyond the walls of school classrooms.

“An assault weapon is made to kill people,”

said Kraemer, who pointed out he has less powerful weapons for hunting purposes.

Parent Tara Lloyd implored the entire school community — administrators, teachers, parents and students — to come together.

“My children have lived their entire lives in this type of reality,” Lloyd said. “The solutions we’ve come up within the last 19 years (since the Columbine shooting) have not worked.”

Lloyd added, “It’s time to think outside the box. I challenge the School Board to look at school safety in a different light.”

Although board members did not directly respond to the concerns aired during the public comment portion of the agenda, several officials did express a willingness to dive deeper into school safety during an open-ended discussion of future topics at upcoming board meetings.

School Board member Kurt O’Bryan suggested the board hold one or more special meetings to discuss a risk assessment of the district as a whole.

“I think this is a very complicated topic,” O’Bryan said. “I don’t think we can cover all of this in one board meeting.”

Board President Joseph Como Jr. pointed out school safety has been an issue on the radar screens of administrators across the district, and he anticipates further discussion and policy

reviews in the road ahead.

“I think we’re going to see this topic appear in many forms — and it already has, quite honestly,” Como said.

**Also Wednesday, the School Board:**

■ Approved an agreement linking the district with the Waukesha Public Library and sharing the resources of a position known as a community library liaison.

The plan calls for making some of the district’s curricular features available at the library on a year-round basis.

■ Discussed proposed changes about a district policy pertaining to public records. At its core, the language under review pertains to outside groups, not affiliated with the district, on referendum- related issues.

Statewide, issues have arisen of outside groups using districts’ names, logos and branding on literature advocating for referendum spending questions.

School Boards and district officials, by state law, are expected to present any referendum information factually and not take a position. The proposed policy change in Waukesha is aimed at distancing district officials from any referendum-related literature that would surface in the future.