

Alamo Heights ISD considers more school security officers

By Megan Rodriguez STAFF WRITER



Jerry Lara/Staff photographer

Alamo Heights Police Chief Rick Pruitt discusses bringing on two additional school security officers Wednesday.



Alamo Heights Independent School District is eyeing additional school security officers as it responds to parent concerns following the Uvalde mass shooting.

The May 24 massacre at Robb Elementary School, which killed 19 students and two teachers, has sent many districts in San Antonio and beyond searching for ways to beef up security.

Since January 2019, Alamo Heights' five-campus district has contracted with the Alamo Heights Police Department to have one officer at its high school. Police Chief Rick Pruitt said Wednesday at a Alamo Heights City Council meeting that the district is looking to add two — one based at Cambridge Elementary and another at the Junior School. The officer on the Cambridge campus would routinely check in on Woodridge Elementary and the Howard Early Childhood Center, Pruitt said.

Frank Alfaro, assistant superintendent for administrative services, said the district brought in its first officer in January 2019 following the 2018 Santa Fe High School shooting, which killed 10 people. At the time, he

Alamo Heights City Manager Buddy Kuhn speaks to City Council on Wednesday. The council voted to amend the current school resource officer agreement with Alamo Heights ISD.

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said there was talk of having an officer on every Alamo Heights campus, but officials decided to ease in with one.

As the district approaches four years with an officer and sees a renewed push for more in the wake of the Uvalde tragedy, Alfaro said “it seems like the right time” to bring on more.

“Our community of parents, since the Uvalde shooting, has ramped up their calls” to do so, Alfaro said.

Adding two officers is a step in a long-term plan to have one officer at each of the district’s five campuses, Pruitt said in a June meeting. He said Wednesday that if that comes to fruition down the road, the police department would create a school security officer division since those employees will have different training needs.

On Wednesday, City Council voted to amend the current school security officer program agreement with AHISD by adding the two officers. But the change is contingent on the approval of city and district budgets in August that reflect those additional employees.

“It’s mutually beneficial,” Councilman Lawson Jessee said of the idea of adding the officers. “It makes a lot of sense.”

The police department is going to start searching for potential officers soon, Pruitt said, but he noted that the efforts could be halted if final approvals from school and city officials don’t come in August.

The school district pays for 75 percent of the cost of salary and benefits for the campus officer at the high school, and the city pays for the remaining 25 percent, Pruitt said at the Wednesday meeting.

The same would be true for the officer at the Cambridge campus, but the district would take on 100 percent of the cost of the officer at the Junior School. The district would be responsible for equipment and uniform expenses.

The officers would continue to work for Alamo Heights Police Department when school is not in session.

Alfaro said he cannot confirm certain details — such as how many officers the district is seeking, at which campuses those officers would be stationed, or how much the district will pay to bring on the officers — until after the school board meets to discuss such subjects in August.

Alamo Heights ISD is not interested in forming its own police department, Alfaro said, in part due to its small size and the schools’ access to resources around them, such as the Alamo Heights Police Department.

Alfaro said that although the district would like to move forward as soon as possible this school year, he doesn’t think that everything will fall into place by the first day, Aug. 15.

Every campus has a “variety of layers of security and safety,” Alfaro said, like bullet-resistant security lobbies, video surveillance and regular emergency drills.

A school security officer “is one additional layer to that,” Alfaro said. megan.rodriquez@express-news.net

