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'Burg sex assault under Title IX review

Students still in school. Differences between staff and student discipline measures remain unclear

by **Steven Vetter**
Managing Editor

STRASBURG — While a federal sex discrimination and harassment law has been cited for Strasburg middle school students remaining in class since an early April assault between students, why Hemphill Middle School staff and coaches remain on administrative leave remains unannounced.

In front of a packed audience during the May 12 Strasburg School Board meeting, Superintendent Kelle Bongard reported that back-to-back incidents April 8-9 have fallen under Title IX and that the legislation does not allow disciplinary actions to be levied until the federal investigation is concluded. But, while students involved are allowed to still attend classes and participate in extracurricular activities, a handful of middle school administrators and coaches have been on paid administrative leave since April 11.

Whether a separate district staff disciplinary policy was used to suspend the staff members is unknown despite public comment that included a question inquiring about the inconsistencies between student and staff attendance.

In follow-up comments late last week, Bongard acknowledged public unrest regarding the situation but reiterated privacy concerns when not answering questions about the varying disciplinary decisions.

“Please understand that the district is unable to share details regarding any ongoing investigations, as doing so would violate privacy laws and confi-

dentiality protocols,” she stated in a May 17 e-mail response. “Any information beyond what we have already provided would inadvertently disclose more than we are legally permitted to share. My sincere hope is for the community to know that I am committed to fully adhering to district policies and prioritizing student safety above all else.

“I am genuinely saddened by the mistrust that has developed between some members of the community and the school district. Please know that I will continue to work tirelessly to rebuild that trust for as long as I am given the opportunity to do so.”

As the meeting commenced, school board president Michael Marrero reiterated, “We take our responsibilities for confidentiality seriously, within applicable laws and regulations. Once the investigation is complete, we’ll take the appropriate action.”

During the board meeting, Bongard did confirm that a third-party external investigator and decision-maker has been assigned the investigation, which has an undetermined timeline.

During discussion about Title IX, the board approved reverting back from the 2024 version of the law to 2020 because of an administrative change at the federal level.

Despite public calls for more transparency, family members of students involved asked for the investigation to run its course and also reported that the school district has been supportive through the process.

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Strasburg Northern Arapaho Partnership (SNAP) Council student leaders Will Hauser, left, and Dakota Strasser present the Strasburg School Board with a final land acknowledgment agreement between the school and the Northern Arapaho Tribe from the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming. According to Strasser, the outgoing SNAP President, the agreement will help the school further its efforts to educate students about Strasburg’s Native American history and strengthen the bond between the two entities. Strasburg has had a partnership in place with the Northern Arapaho since 2016, which allows the school to retain its Indian mascot. Hauser is the group’s incoming president for 2025-26.

Tornadoes demolish homes, solar farm near Bennett



PHOTOS BY STEVEN VETTER/The I-70 Scout

At approximately 1 p.m. May 18, tornadoes touched down, wreaking havoc west of Bennett. While the first funnels reportedly touched down around Manila Road south of I-70, storm activity moved northeast with most of the preliminary damage occurring from Highway 36 and Harback Road west of town and moving in a northeasterly pattern to 88th Avenue east of Highway 79. At press time Sunday afternoon, preliminary reports from local fire districts and the Adams and Arapahoe County Sheriff’s offices indicated that at least 10 homes were directly hit but that there were no injuries. The solar farm at the intersection of Highway 36 and Harback Road received significant damage and power lines were downed along much of 38th Avenue. Clockwise from left photo, one of the first funnels to touch down was along Manila Road south of I-70; one of the homes ripped apart was on the north side of 38th Avenue between Harback and Penrith Roads; a broken CORE Cooperative power pole sags along the south side of 38th Avenue; and solar panels are mangled near Harback Road and 38th Avenue. For full coverage of Sunday’s storms, see the May 23 *Eastern Colorado News*.



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