

Tawas Area Schools  
Regular Board of Education Meeting  
August 12, 2024

President Bruning called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, August 12, 2024.

Mrs. Bruning led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Present: Edmonds, Ulman, Jenkins, Bruning  
Absent: None  
Tardy: Butzin, Lentz

Administrators Present: Klinger, Danek, Livingston, Tiffany, Clouse

Motion by Ulman, support by Edmonds to make 2 amendments to the agenda; the addition of the election of an officer prior to the positive highlight and the addition of the approval of Smart Pass under New Business. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Ulman, support by Edmonds to elect Amy Jenkins as board secretary until the reorganizational meeting in January. Motion carried unanimously.

### **POSITIVE HIGHLIGHTS**

Tonight's positive highlight was presented by Mr. Livingston. Mr. Livingston spoke about the new wall art that is being displayed on the wall by the cafeteria/commons area. He said that administration had received input from staff and students and from that they created the artwork, which displays positive messages and encouragement for the students.

Mr. Butzin arrived to the meeting at 7:06 p.m.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS – INFORMATION AND PROPOSALS**

Mrs. Bruning stated that there were 3 people on the sign-in sheet for public comment. She explained that they would each have 3 minutes to share. Mr. John Lesneski was the first to share. Mr. Lesneski stated that he felt Tawas Area was missing an opportunity by not hiring Mr. Toby Suttle as the girls' varsity basketball coach. He stated that he wanted to make it clear that he was not there to speak ill of Mr. Jason Woelke, who was hired as the coach. He said he felt that the Tawas Girls' basketball Team could achieve something extraordinary with Mr. Suttle leading the team. Mr. Lesneski said the girls don't understand why Mr. Suttle was not hired for the position, which is hard as a parent to explain. He encouraged the district to take a look at the hiring process and try to be more transparent throughout the process. Mr. Lesneski ended by saying whatever the outcome was, they will unite and move forward.

Mr. Toby Suttle was the next to speak. He stated that he was at the meeting to speak about the hiring process. Mr. Suttle said that he had invested over 100 hours into non-mandatory practices and had built relationships with the girls. He also referenced that he had endorsement of the previous girls' basketball coach, Amy Edwards. Mr. Suttle talked about how he had spent a lot of time making big plans for the basketball program and that this was a huge letdown. Mr. Suttle asked the board to consider including students and parents in the interview process. He concluded by saying the Mr. Woelke is a great person and he knows that Mr. Woelke will support the kids and the community no matter what happens.

Mr. Jason Woelke was the next person to speak. Mr. Woelke started by saying that he supports everyone who came out to share their thoughts on this whole process and has no hard feelings toward anyone. He said that he has been teaching for over 21 years and has coached 21 seasons. Mr. Woelke said that he loves being a part of the community and loves working for the district. He stated that he works hard to serve the kids as best as he can and will continue to do so. Mr. Woelke stated that he hopes he can earn everyone's trust moving forward.

Mrs. Bruning asked if there was anyone else that would like to speak during public comment. No one responded.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

Motion by Ulman, support by Edmonds to approve the consent agenda items which included the approval of the July 8, 2024 regular meeting minutes, the July 10, 2024 special meeting minutes, the July 16, 2024 special meeting minutes, the August 6, 2024 special meeting minutes, the August 7, 2024 special meeting minutes and the payment of bills as follows: the monthly contractual and prepaid expenses for the general fund in the amount of \$1,342,470.36, sinking fund expenses in the amount of \$25,000 and the lunch fund expenses in the amount of \$21,174.36. It also included payment of presented bills for the general fund in the amount of \$49,176.81. Letters of resignation were received from Andrew Salwey, boys 7<sup>th</sup> grade basketball coach and Matt Torrez, varsity football assistant coach, both effective immediately. Motion carried unanimously.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS & REPORTS FROM THE ADMINISTRATION**

Mr. Klinger said that he is recommending that the Board of Education hire Mr. Dustin Falls to fill the current high school special education teacher vacancy. Mr. Falls graduated from Western Kentucky University with a bachelor of science in exercise physiology and a master of science in kinesiology. He has past experience as an adjunct professor at WKU and as a health educator at the high school level. Mr. Falls will be brought in on a long term substitute contract until he passes the MTTC test, at which time he will be a fully certified teacher and will continue working toward obtaining his special education endorsement through a credentialed program. He was chosen as the top candidate for this position. Motion by Ulman, support by Butzin to hire Mr. Dustin Falls as a long term substitute teacher until he passes his MTTC test, at which time he will become a fully certified TAFT member. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Klinger went on to say that Mrs. Danek is recommending that Mrs. Danek is recommending that Mrs. Arianna VanderVeen be hired to fill the current 5<sup>th</sup> grade teaching vacancy. Mrs. VanderVeen has a bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in sociology from Grand Valley State University and is currently working through the Teachers of Tomorrow for full certification. She has completed some of the required MTTC tests for this position and is scheduled to complete her last test this week. Mrs. VanderVeen was chosen as the top candidate for this position. Motion by Butzin, support by Jenkins to hire Mrs. Arianna VanderVeen as a long term substitute teacher until she passes her MTTC test at which time she will become a fully certified TAFT member. Motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Lentz arrived to the meeting at 7:17 p.m.

Mr. Klinger said that Mr. Mejeur is recommending the following coaches be hired: Mr. Jason Woelke as the varsity girls' basketball coach, Ms. Abigail Sevener as the middle school cheer coach, Mr. Cody Jordan as the boys' soccer assistant coach, Mr. William Redman as the middle school cross country coach, Mr. Nicholas Frees as the varsity football assistant coach, Mr. Paul Vainer as the girls' varsity golf coach and Mrs. Barbara Frieden as the middle school volleyball coach. Mr. Klinger said that the Board may choose to vote on these recommendations as a group or can separate them out. Motion by Edmonds, support by Jenkins to hire the coaches as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

Committee Reports – Mr. Klinger said that the personnel committee met prior to tonight's meeting and discussed the transition process for Mrs. Danek to move into her new role as superintendent. They also talked about the contract for Mrs. Danek.

Legislative Report – Mr. Klinger said that there is no legislative update at this time.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Klinger said that Mr. Lichota is recommending the district purchase a new bus for the 2024-2025 school year. Mr. Lichota's recommendation is to purchase a new 83-passenger International diesel bus for \$145,088 from Midwest Transit. This price includes camera installation but does not include the cost of the cameras. Mr. Butzin stated that we bought 2 buses last year and he thought we were back on track to purchase a new bus every other year. Mr. Klinger explained that the State has allocated new funds for transportation through a grant. Due to this unexpected transportation grant, Mr. Lichota wanted to start updating the larger, 83-passenger buses. The only option for these larger buses is to purchase a diesel bus, as the gas buses do not have the option for 83-passengers. Mr. Klinger said that this purchase will exhaust the funds from the transportation grant. Motion by Edmonds, support by Jenkins to approve the purchase of a new International bus for \$145,088 from Midwest Transit as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Klinger stated that throughout the pandemic, the district has worked to increase the social and emotional support available to our students. The district would like to continue to provide these services to our students. One of the ways this has been provided to students is through a social worker. The individuals we have used to help support us with this initiative have teamed up with Fun First Therapy and we are asking the Board to approve entering into a one-year contractual agreement with Fun First Therapy. This agreement will be reviewed on an annual basis. Mr. Butzin asked Mr. Klinger to explain to him what these individuals do. Mr. Klinger stated that he was unaware of the details of the services but they provided support to kids with social and emotional issues, to make sure they are in a good place to learn. Mr. Butzin he did not understand how this is tied to education. Motion by Lentz, support by Ulman to accept and approve the social work support agreement with Fun First Therapy as presented. All those in favor: Edmonds, Ulman, Lentz, Jenkins, Bruning. Opposed: Butzin. Motion carried.

Mr. Klinger went on to say that Fun First Therapy also provides social and emotional support to our elementary students through the formation of social skills groups. We would also like to continue providing this support to students through a one-year contractual agreement with Fun First Therapy. This agreement will be reviewed on an annual basis. Mrs. Clouse said that these small groups deal with issues like conflict resolution and team building. It is based on what the need is in the building and helps to build confidence in the students. Motion by Ulman, support by Lentz to accept and approve the social skills group agreement with Fun First Therapy as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Klinger said a bid opening was held on August 6<sup>th</sup> for the walk-in freezer replacement project. School officials, along with project manager Mr. Michael Russo opened and reviewed 3 bids; one for a total of \$40,840, another bid for a total of \$68,750, and a third bid for a total of \$29,900. Based on the letter of recommendation from Russo Engineering Inc., Mr. Lichota and Mr. Klinger are recommending that the Board accept and approve the walk-in freezer bid from Sweet Heating & Cooling for \$29,900. Mr. Butzin questioned the huge difference in price among the quotes. Mr. Klinger responded, saying that follow up calls were made to make sure everything was included and there was not a numerical error in the bids. Sweet verified the accuracy of their bid. Motion by Edmonds, support by Jenkins to accept and approve the walk-in freezer replacement bid from Sweet Heating & Cooling for \$29,900. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Klinger said that the next recommendation comes out of the middle and high school pilot program with Smart Pass. Smart pass is a digital hall pass program and Mr. Livingston is recommending that the district purchase Smart Pass for the upcoming school year for a cost of \$2,780. Mr. Klinger stated that Mr. Livingston did do a price comparison with another company that offers a similar product but ultimately they went with Smart Pass because staff are familiar with it and they have had success. Mr. Butzin said that he spoke to the student representatives about Smart Pass and they said it really wasn't that bad. Mrs. Ulman asked how long we tried the program for. Mr. Livingston explained that it was used for the 4<sup>th</sup> marking period of the 2023-24 school year. He said this program helped increase school safety and prevent "meet-ups"

among students. He said it was an adjustment at first but quickly become the new normal. Mr. Livingston said that several neighboring districts have also implemented this program, which respects FERPA law, alleviating the privacy concern. It minimizes disruptions in the classroom and allows administration to set a cool down time between passes to help alleviate overuse. Mr. Livingston also talked about how Smart Pass can be used for positive incentives or rewards. The Board asked questions about the intricacies of the program and Mr. Livingston explained how it works. He said if a student is gone for too long, the teacher will get an alert. Motion by Ulman, support by Lentz to approve the purchase of Smart Pass for the 2024-2025 school year for a total of \$2,780, to be revisited in one year. Motion carried unanimously.

### **INFORMATION & PROPOSALS**

Superintendent Report – Mr. Klinger said that there are 2 board members who have been recognized by MASB for their achievements. First, Mrs. Ulman is being presented with an award of merit for completing her level one certification and a minimum of 45 education credits. Also, Mrs. Jenkins is being presented with an award of merit as well as a certified board member award for having completed the course requirements for the CBA program. Mr. Klinger presented each of them with certificates.

Mr. Klinger stated that the board seat vacancy had been posted. The Board has 30 days to fill the vacancy, at which time it will go to the ISD and they will have to appoint someone to fill the seat. The posting is open until August 26, 2024, at which time the Board will need to meet to go over the applications. This meeting will be scheduled in advance planning. Mr. Klinger said that staff returns next week and invited board members to attend the welcome back breakfast on Tuesday, August 20. He also talked about the superintendent transition and stated that he has started working with Mrs. Danek to make connections. Mrs. Danek will welcome staff back as the superintendent on August 20 and Mr. Klinger said he is excited for the district.

Student Representatives – Ms. Gabrielle Whetstone said that band and fall sports have officially started up and she is excited for the school year to start.

Administration – Mrs. Danek said the only thing she wanted to share with the Board was that they had an exciting visitor this week from Colorado. This person is creating a film on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Columbine shooting and wanted to shoot some footage at Tawas due to our experience with Rachel's Challenge. He interviewed several staff members and a student while on campus. Mr. Livingston said that he was able to attend active shooter training in Whittemore earlier that day and felt like there was a lot that could be taken from the training and applied in the district. High School orientation is August 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. He also wanted to give a shout out to the maintenance department for all of the hard work they did to get the school ready. Open house is one August 21. Administration is working on the plan for Professional Development. Mr. Mejeur said fall sports started today and he is excited that every sport is in a league this year. Mrs. Clouse said for the first time they are having a kindergarten orientation this year, on August 13 from 6-7. Clara Bolen open house is on August 21 from 5:30-7. The new playground set has been built and looks great, thanks to Ethan Buchanan and his team for building the set. She also said enrollment is looking good. Mrs. Tiffany said middle school enrollment is down a little from last year but still looking good. Orientation for middle school starts tomorrow. Administration has been discussing re-starting the PTO in the middle and high school and combining it with a site council, which will give parents a platform to voice their concerns and suggestions. She has attended 2 conferences over the summer, the adaptive schools conference in June and the Hill Summit Conference in June as well where she got to learn more about what other districts are doing.

From the Board – Mrs. Edmonds asked for an update on the door replacement project. Mr. Klinger said it should be completed this week. The catch basin project should also be completed this week. The pole barn is almost done, just waiting on the electrical work to be done. Mr. Klinger said we still need to address the handicap accessibility project and the glass block replacement project. Mr. Butzin said that if the school has to be liable for the cost of replacing the glass block

windows, we should start looking to work with another company other than Hendrix in the future. Mr. Klinger said to remember that Hendrix subcontracted things out to other companies. He also stated that there is not currently a timeline for this project. Mrs. Edmonds went on to say that she would love to have an update on the work done by Fun First Therapy before the next school year and she loves the PTO idea for the middle school and high school. Mrs. Lentz apologized for being late to the meeting. Mrs. Jenkins welcomed the new hires and said she is excited to have every sport in a league this year. Mr. Butzin welcomed everyone. Mrs. Ulman said bringing the PTO back is awesome and she loves giving people platforms to speak. She is looking forward to this school year. She thanked everyone who came in to speak during public comment and said it gives them perspective. Mrs. Ulman also stated that she appreciates administration assessing the new initiatives that are brought in to look for any negatives or problems and making appropriate tweaks and changes. She thanked Mrs. Klenow for her years of service on the board and welcomed new student representative Abby Kloska. Mrs. Bruning said she also loves the PTO idea. She said she would like to see a Fun First update sooner than one year if possible. She also thanked Mrs. Klenow for her service. Mrs. Bruning said that there have been a lot of high emotions and stress in the community and just wanted to remind people to be kind and respectful to others.

### **ADVANCE PLANNING**

Mr. Klinger said we needed to think about scheduling a few things. A special meeting would need to be scheduled to review new applicants for the board vacancy. This meeting will be held on August 29, 2024 at 3:30 p.m.

The Board also needed to schedule a workshop with Mrs. Danek to establish her goals as Superintendent. This workshop will take place on September 23, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.

The personnel committee would also need to schedule a meeting to move forward with the principal vacancy. A committee meeting was scheduled for August 26, 2024 at 3:00 p.m. to review applications for the position.

At the September meeting, Mrs. Bruning would like to discuss a board governance committee meeting under advance planning.

Motion by Ulman, support by Butzin to adjourn at 8:27 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.