

Tawas Area Schools
Regular Board of Education Meeting
November 10, 2025

I. Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Tawas Area Schools Board of Education was called to order by President Ulman at 7:00 p.m. in the administration board room.

A. Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Jenkins.

B. Roll Call

Present: Miller, Malewska, Butzin, Jenkins, Ulman

Absent: Edmonds, Bruning

Tardy: None

C. Positive Highlight

Mr. Paul Vainer gave a brief presentation about the Girls' Golf Team, showing how they have grown over the last few years and highlighting their accomplishments and achievements as a team and personally.

D. Public Comments – Information and Proposals

Members of the public were invited to address the Board. Mrs. Ulman explained that they would have 3 minutes to speak. Mr. John Bolen introduced himself as a resident and voter of East Tawas. He said that he was coming to the Board as a concerned parent and community member due to the recent chain of events surrounding the contract of Varsity Hockey Coach, Mel Rettell. Mr. Bolen expressed his disappointment in the process behind the decision making and indicated that he felt it lacked transparency and communication. He said his son played hockey for Mr. Rettell for several years and he has seen the program become a source of pride and great achievement. Mr. Bolen concluded by asking the Board what their expectations of a good coach are and asked them to reconsider their decision.

Ms. Sarah Rettell introduced herself next as the daughter of Mr. Mel Rettell. Ms. Rettell stated that she is very disappointed in Tawas Area Schools and how her dad has been treated. She asked the Board to reconsider how they treat people who have given so much time and commitment and to really consider the dedication of Mr. Rettell when making their decision regarding the hockey coaching position.

II. Action Items

A. Consent Agenda

Motion by Jenkins, supported by Butzin, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented:

1. **Approval of Minutes** –October 13, 2025 regular meeting and closed session minutes and October 24, 2025 special meeting minutes.
2. **Approval of Payment of Bills** –
 - o Monthly contractual and prepaid expenses:
 - General Fund: \$1,427,998.44
 - Sinking Fund: \$0.00
 - Lunch Fund: \$102,394.58

- Presented monthly bills:
 - General Fund: \$35,542.60
 - Sinking Fund: \$0.00
 - Lunch Fund: \$0.00
- 3. **Receipt of Written Communications** – A letter of resignation was received from Mr. Ken Cook, Varsity Boys' Soccer Coach, effective immediately, after 30 years of service to the district.

B. Routine Matters

1. Recommendations & Reports from Administration

a. Hire Coach

- Motion by Butzin, supported by Jenkins, to hire Mr. Matthew Buresh as the Varsity Hockey Coach. Motion carried unanimously.

C. Old Business

1. Committee Reports

a. Policy Committee – Second Reading of New/Revised Board Bylaws and Policies

The second reading of proposed new and revised policies was conducted as presented by the Policy Committee. Motion by Malewska, supported by Butzin, to adopt the policy changes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Student Achievement Committee

The committee met prior to the board meeting. Mrs. Danek provided a summary of the biggest challenges impacting learning and growth, including increasing accountability for attendance utilizing the in-house School Resource Officer, adjusting the full inclusion special education model, and addressing the decreasing home value placed on education. She also discussed some of the potential solutions to these issues that were discussed which included daily subs in each building, having “responsibility rooms” staffed by certified teachers with cubicles, behavior interventionist, restructuring special education, partnering with NEMSCA for a family night and including parenting classes, and leaving notes upon classroom visits as an encouragement.

2. Legislative Report

Superintendent Danek reviewed highlights of the FY 2026 state budget, noting increased per-pupil funding to approximately \$10,050 and targeted increases for ELL, at-risk, CTE, and rural districts. The Board discussed implications of the School Aid Fund structure and potential future shifts in MPSERS cost-sharing responsibilities. She shared that although the budget has been approved, there are still many unknowns at this time.

D. New Business

1. 2024–2025 Audit Report

Cindy Scott from Stephenson & Company, P.C. presented the annual audit. The district received an unmodified (“clean”) opinion.

Highlights:

- **General Fund:** +\$632,258 (increased revenues, reduced capital outlay)
- **Lunch Fund:** -\$46,694 (higher supply and equipment costs)
- **Sinking Fund:** +\$119,434 (fewer projects completed)
- **Student Activity Fund:** +\$4,173 (donations exceeded expenses)
- **Debt Retirement Fund:** +\$12,549 (property tax collections exceeded payments)

Cindy Scott then began the audit report presentation. She began by referring to the audit opinion letter and stated that the district received an unmodified opinion, which is the highest level of assurance. She then referred to the management's discussion and analysis which recaps the current year activity and encouraged the board to read through it when they get a chance. She then went on to the government-wide financial statements which combines all funds of the district. These statements incorporate all long-term activity such as fixed assets, long term debt, etc. The district's ending net position is (\$284,330). She said there were some big changes from last year with the net pension liability, offset by related deferrals, decreasing by about \$1.48 million. The net OPEB asset, offset by related deferrals, was increased by another \$1.14 million. Total revenues decreased about \$705,000 and total expenses decreased about \$400,000.

- Ms. Scott said that the single audit had no findings or questioned costs related to the major federal award program audit. She clarified that the single audit had not been released yet so they tested everything through the draft guidance.
- The Management Letter is made up of two appendixes. There were no comments in the first appendix. The second appendix shows no material weakness, no significant deficiency and states that the only other written matters are regarding material proposed journal entries regarding student activity support.
- Ms. Scott said that the single audit finding from the previous year regarding student activity fund bank reconciliations had been corrected,
- She asked the board if they had any questions, which they did not, and they thanked Ms. Scott for her presentation.

Motion by Butzin, supported by Jenkins, to accept the 2024–2025 audit report as presented. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

2. Roof Replacement Bids

Following review of nine bids for the Tawas Area Middle/High School roof project, Mr. Lichota recommended awarding the contract to Beyer Roofing for a total of \$147,400, covering both base and alternate bid work. This amount is \$7,400 above the current sinking fund budget for the project; however, given the high-priority nature of the work, it is recommended that the additional cost be covered using available remaining funds from this year's sinking fund budget so the project can proceed without delay. Mrs. Danek noted that this work represents Phase 1 of the planned roof renovations. Future phases will continue based on identified priorities and roof condition assessments.

Motion by Butzin, supported by Jenkins, to accept and approve the partial roof replacement bid from Beyer Roofing in the amount of \$147,400." Motion carried unanimously.

3. Resolution to Accept/Decline Section 31AA Funding

Based on legal guidance from Thrun Law Firm, the Board discussed declining the 2025–2026 Section 31AA funds due to restrictive compliance requirements and potential risks, including the potential for state audit findings that could infringe upon local and constitutional rights.

Motion by Butzin, supported by Jenkins, to adopt Resolution B and decline acceptance of the 2025-2026 Section 31AA funds. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Request for Approval – Business-Sponsored Uniform Purchase

The girls' golf team received an offer from Neighborhood Lending to sponsor team polo shirts, including a small logo on the sleeve per MHSAA guidelines. Per district policy 9700.01, Advertising and Commercial Activities, Board approval is required for this request.

Motion by Ulman, supported by supported by Malewska to approve the donation of team golf polo's from Neighborhood Lending with the business logo placed on the sleeve in compliance with MHSAA regulations.”

Ulman questioned whether the district buys their own uniforms typically. Mrs. Danek said that the District does purchase uniforms but an offer was made and they wanted to consider it. Ulman asked if the girls' golf team currently has uniforms and Danek said that they do have polo's, but these would be a little different. Butzin asked if the Board would get the opportunity to see the shirts before they approve or decline the request. Ulman stated that she hates to set a precedence for this. Butzin agreed and said this could be a slippery slope. Danek said that the Boosters Club has teams on a schedule for new uniforms but there is a process to request assistance with purchasing uniforms outside of this schedule. Ulman asked if someone could make a donation to a specific program and Danek told her that they could.

Yes: Miller; No-Malewska, Butzin, Jenkins, Ulman. Motion failed.

III. Information and Proposals

A. Superintendent Report – Mrs. Danek said she is making updates to the Emergency Operations Plan and it should be finalized by next year. Revisions are still being made to the hockey contract. Mrs. Danek said that a few months ago the Board was approached by the band regarding the purchase of new marching band uniforms. She circled back and advised them to come back before the Board with a quote and the amount that the booster's will contribute. There is a school success candidate, so they are hopeful they will be able to fill that position soon. She also talked about the H2Leadership program that administration is doing and said it has been phenomenal. Mrs. Danek also mentioned that with the changes to bowling and hockey, it has raised some questions about pay to play. At this time, athletes participating in bowling and hockey are not required to pay to play due to the use of outside facilities for practice and games but wanted to make sure it is okay to continue this practice. She encouraged the Board to reach out to her with any questions or concerns. Lastly, she mentioned that as of the fall count, enrollment is up about 15-20 students.

B. Student Representatives –

- Senior Representative: Miss Abby Kloska – Ms. Kloska said that Halloween Parade at Clara Bolen was nice and she couldn't believe how many parents showed up. She also said the book fair was a lot of fun as well. In the middle school, both boys' and girls'

basketball teams beat Oscoda. And they are working on how to get more students to attend events.

- Junior Representative: Miss Eryn Hayes – Student Senate has been looking for more opportunities for training on leadership, including reaching out to other districts to find out if they have any insight. She said the executive council had the Couch Potato Contest recently and raised fund to buy deodorant and sweatpants for Rachel's Closet.

C. Administration – Mrs. Clouse recognized the K-4 students of the month. Friday night they would be hosting a Fall Festival, which was planned by the PTO. The Fundraiser brought in a profit of about \$2,300. They are in the process of planning the Christmas Program on December 18th at 1:00 p.m. Mrs. Clouse said she is looking forward to attending a conference on behavior solutions this week in Grand Rapids and hopes to bring back a lot of ideas to the Student Achievement Committee.

Mrs. Tiffany highlighted the middle school students of the month. The Coffee Fundraiser is currently going on. She stated that in the middle and high school, they are building a leadership program. Mrs. Tiffany also said that have a woman coming in March to perform a slavery reenactment, which she is excited for.

Mr. Livingston talked about purchasing Compass 360 for the middle and high schools. This program offers 3 tiers of support for behavioral issues and includes videos, worksheets, and questions for students to complete as part of a restorative practice. The Veteran's Day Assembly is tomorrow for middle and high school. He attended the first MICIP meeting of the year in October and will be using some of the methods from that to help with building the leadership program. Mr. Livingston said he met with the student leadership students and set some long term goals, which included representing the entire K-12 district, building a stronger sense of community and belonging, and meeting with other groups in the school to share ideas and collaborate.

Mr. Hazen said that 5 teachers were able to attend different AI conferences over the last month and bring back ideas about how to incorporate AI into the classroom. On November 21st, Tawas Area Schools will be featured on WNEM at 6:00 am. He also said that discipline issues are down in the high school and attendance is up. Mr. Hazen also shared the Tawas was ranked among the Top 100 Schools by US News & World Report, which gave them their 10th consecutive banner.

D. From the Board – Mrs. Jenkins said she had recently attended the Annual Leadership Conference and the main topic discussed was AI. There was a lot of training on AI and its uses. She said both motivational speakers at the event were great and she learned a lot from the conference. She also thanked Coach Vainer and congratulated the girls' golf team. She appreciated the feedback from administration.

Mrs. Malewska thanked the middle school staff for saving her daughter's life due to a nut allergy while at school. She thanked Coach Cook for his many years of service and his legacy. Mrs. Malewska thanked the administration for their collaboration and said that we are stronger when everyone works together. She thanked Mr. Vainer and congratulated the girls' golf team. She also encouraged more public attendance at meetings and said that she did have several parents reach out to her directly regarding hockey and she was able to discuss things with them a little bit, which she appreciated. Malewska thanked Mrs. Scott for the audit presentation and said the craft show this past weekend was wonderful. Lastly, Mrs. Malewska encouraged the students to reach out to the community to sponsor different activities that might help increase attendance at events.

Mr. Butzin said it was very enlightening to have Mr. Vainer at the meeting and to see how the golf program has grown and developed. He praised Vainer for all of his hard work and dedication and said Mr. Vainer is a tremendous asset,

Mrs. Ulman said she appreciates Mr. Vainer and that it is great to hold the kids accountable with the academic piece. She thanked Coach Cook and said she is grateful for his dedication. She loves seeing the energy regarding the H2Leadership Program and encouraged administration to continue the hard work. Mrs. Ulman thanked the finance ladies for their work. She said the student achievement committee is really fostering some good energy and thanked administration for their role in that. She is happy to hear from the student representatives and have them share a little more about all schools. She thanked the public that attended the meeting, but said she wishes they would stay until the end. Mrs. Ulman said that the Board cannot respond to public comment during that portion of the meeting, but they can address certain issues that may have been brought up at the end of the meeting. Ulman said someone mentioned that the public was never given the opportunity to give input, and she wanted to clarify that every board meeting has public comment and anyone is welcome to come and share. She also stated that a comment was made regarding the evaluation process and she wanted to reiterate that there is a consistently used evaluation process but it is not her job to share the details of any staff members' evaluation.

IV. Advance Planning

- A. Closed Session to Discuss the Superintendent Evaluation – Monday, November 24, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.
- B. CASBA – November 19, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. at IRESA
- C. Student Achievement Committee Meeting – Monday, December 8, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

VI. Adjournment

Motion by Jenkins, supported by Ulman, to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.