

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

The regular meeting of the Tawas Area Board of Education was called to order by President Ulman at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, February 10, 2025 in the boardroom at the administration office.

Mrs. Jenkins led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Present: Miller, Bruning, Jenkins, Edmonds, Butzin, Ulman
Absent: Malewska
Tardy: None

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

POSITIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Mrs. Danek introduced Michael Tiffany to present the positive highlight. Michael gave a brief presentation about his journey to the state finals for choir, being chosen as a member of the State Honors Choir. Michael also performed a Johnny Cash song for the board.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – INFORMATION AND PROPOSALS

Mrs. Ulman asked if there were any public comments on agenda or non-agenda items. She stated that public comment would be limited to 3 minutes. Mrs. Anna Dalman introduced herself as a Tawas parent and teacher. She said she was there to ask the board to seriously consider forming a committee to explore the GPA multiplier. Mrs. Dalman talked about the unintended bias that the multiplier has created. She talked about kids foregoing music classes because taking these classes leaves no space in their schedule for dual enrollment classes. In order for students to be considered for valedictorian and salutatorian they must have dual classes in their scheduled to boost their GPA, otherwise, they are unable to compete with the kids taking multiple dual classes.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Bruning, support by Edmonds to approve the consent agenda items which included the approval of the January 13th regular and special meeting minutes and the January 15th special meeting and closed session minutes. It also included the payment of bills as follows: the monthly contractual and prepaid expenses for the general fund in the amount of \$964,442.25 and the lunch fund expenses in the amount of \$100,550.91. It also included payment of presented bills for the general fund in the amount of \$22,727.84. Letters of resignation were accepted from JV football head coach Derek Moe, junior high football head coach Shane Plank, and junior high girls' basketball coach Anna Dalman. Motion carried unanimously.

RECOMMENDATIONS & REPORTS FROM THE ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. Danek said that Mrs. Sancrant is recommending that Mrs. Julie Shellenbarger be hired as a cook's helper. Mrs. Shellenbarger has her food safety certification and will be an asset to the department. She was chosen as the top candidate for this position. Motion by Edmonds, support by Butzin to hire Mrs. Julie Shellenbarger as a cook's helper. Motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Danek said Mrs. Clouse is recommending Mrs. Sara Rood be hired to fill the special education educational assistant vacancy in the elementary school. Mrs. Rood is a Tawas graduate and has an associate's degree in early childhood education from Bay Mills Community College. She also has experience teaching preschool and was chosen as the top candidate for this position. Motion by Jenkins, support by Butzin to hire Mrs. Sara Rood as a special education, educational assistant. Motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Danek said Mr. Livingston is recommending that Ms. Kateri Biggers be hired as a special education, educational assistant in the high school. Ms. Biggers has been a substitute in the

district for the last two years and has served as a substitute in the position she is being recommended for since the retirement of Mr. Gilbert. She was chosen as the top candidate for this position. Motion by Bruning, support by Jenkins to hire Ms. Kateri Biggers as a special education, educational assistant. Motion carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Committee Reports – None

Legislative Report – Mrs. Danek said she is keeping an eye on the executive budget, which is calling for an increase in the foundation allowance to \$10,000/pupil as well as increases to special education, English Language Learners, rural/isolated districts, at-risk students, and ISD's.

NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Danek said she created a power point using AI to create a slideshow presentation illustrating the student growth statistics mid-year in reading and math proficiency. Mrs. Danek then reviewed the achievement/growth data outlining our mid-year goals and providing the percentages of students who are meeting those goals in grades K-8.

Mrs. Danek said that Mr. Lichota is requesting approval to purchase cameras for the school buses. Due to the total estimated cost of this product being approximately \$71,000.00, an RFP would need to be posted and bids accepted before a decision is finalized. Mrs. Danek talked about the benefits of having these cameras on the buses, including video footage automatically loading to the cloud from buses when they enter the school grounds, protection of bus drivers and students. These cameras would also assist in compliance with new state legislation regarding vehicles stopping for school buses. Mrs. Danek said the current system is slow and out of date. She stated that this would cover cameras for the entire fleet of buses and the school vans and would be paid for with grant funds. Motion by Butzin, support by Jenkins to post an RFP for bids for new cameras for our transportation fleet. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

INFORMATION & PROPOSALS

Superintendent Report – Mrs. Danek said that she had approved overnight trips for wrestling, bowling and robotics. She stated that Wednesday is our supplemental count day and she is looking forward to seeing what enrollment numbers look like due to what seems like a big influx of students. Mrs. Danek also shared that students on the eBoard would be attending the MASC conference from February 22-24 with Mrs. Sigulinsky. She stated that interviews for the vacant HR/Payroll position started today. Lastly, Mrs. Danek reviewed the current numbers for dual enrollment and EMC courses and talked about attending a meeting with ACC regarding these courses and what the future may look like regarding these classes.

Student Representatives – Ms. Whetstone said that the All Star Band performed on January 17th and 18th in Alpena and students performed at the solo and ensemble festival. Ms. Whetstone also talked about the senior class doing candy grams and tip nights to help raise money for project graduation.

Administration – Mr. Livingston stated that the Top 10 had been verified and announced. He also said that the middle school technology classes as well as Mrs. Stratz finance classes were participating in a pilot for "Nucleus," a pre-packaged curriculum for coding, robotics, and tech. Mr. Livingston said he would be attending the Michigan Testing Conference later this week with Mrs. Mejeur and stated that there would be a staff training coming up on youth mental health and First Aid presented by Diane Gorney. Mr. Hazen said that only 4 students ended up failing more than one class due to attendance. 11 students in the high school had perfect attendance for the first semester. These students were treated to Taco Bell. Mr. Hazen also stated that he is putting together samples to share with the teachers of new math curriculum to get feedback. He said there was a FAFSA night on January 28th and they had 45 people in attendance. Mrs. Tiffany said they had a perfect attendance party recently, with 13 students attending. The middle school went ice skating for celebration day. Mrs. Tiffany highlighted the students of the month and said that

she would be attending a Kagan coaching training in Las Vegas with 3 teachers coming up. Mrs. Clouse highlighted her students of the month and said that she had 27 kids with perfect attendance in the first marking period. She also mentioned that the Literacy Night would take place on March 12th from 5-7 p.m.

From the Board – Mrs. Edmonds said the mental health training is great. She also said that they had received a weekly update regarding the multiplier and wanted to share that she is in support of the need to form a committee to explore this. Mr. Butzin said that he is also in support of forming a committee. He said he is proud of Mrs. Tiffany and said that everyone is doing a great job. Mr. Miller did not have anything to add. Mrs. Bruning said she loved that kids are able to learn coding and is excited about the mental health training and that Diane Gorney does a great job. Mrs. Jenkins welcomed the new hires and said she also loves the mental health training. Mrs. Ulman thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. She said they will definitely be discussing the multiplier in more detail and she was hoping to discuss on at the special meeting on February 24th. Mrs. Ulman also gave a shout out to the 4th grade teachers for their numbers and statistics,

ADVANCE PLANNING

Mrs. Danek said that they needed to schedule a health center committee meeting. This meeting was scheduled for Monday, February 17, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. Mrs. Danek mentioned that April 1st is the deadline to have this finalized and ready to go.

At 7:55 p.m., the board took a 5-minute recess.

At 8:05 p.m. the board returned to open session for a student discipline hearing. The student and family chose to conduct the hearing in open session. Present in the board room for this hearing was student Adriana Andrade, her mother Merrisa Andrade and Merrisa's boyfriend Scott Morrish. Mr. Livingston read the description of incident, which is as follows:

Adriana reported that this conflict began this fall after a falling out over a Halloween/Birthday party in which she un-invited Student A. Last week, this conflict intensified after Student A and another student commented about Adriana's weight. Student A made an embarrassing comment that exposed a crush on a seventh-grade boy in social studies class. Student A reported that Adriana had started rumors about her in a note to a teacher. Throughout the day on Friday, January 31, rumors of the girls' desire to fight were reported. Adriana was offered an opportunity for mediation with Student A, which she refused and told Mrs. Tiffany that she would keep the peace by "leaving her alone and would back off." Student A's parent took her home in the afternoon. Late last week and over the weekend, the conflict intensified with videos made by Student A in social media comments on Snapchat.

On Monday, February 3, 2025, during her 5th-hour math class, Adriana told students she would jump Student A during passing time. Having heard these back-and-forth comments between both students, some reported that they did not believe they would fight, while others tried to provoke Adriana into fighting. A group of seventh-grade boys who heard from Adriana directly and by word of mouth gathered with their backs to the wall in the hallway by Mrs. Thiell's room. Student A was dancing and talking to some friends with her back turned, and Adriana had students hold her things while she yanked student A's hair from behind and took at least four swings before wrestling her to the ground. Both girls swung their arms and kicked on the floor, and Mrs. Thiell, who was directly on the other side of the hallway, interceded very quickly to break up the girls and stop the fight. The incident was over within ten seconds, and both girls were escorted to the office, offered first aid, questioned, and hallway surveillance footage was checked.

Both students' versions of events matched the video footage. Both have claims of bullying and general nasty behaviors back and forth in and out of school for some time and have been involved on social media outside of school. The incident involving bullying among the girls is still under investigation. However, per the student handbook, this matter must be immediately reported to the Tawas Area School Board for a disciplinary hearing. As a result, Adriana will be suspended

until the next board meeting due to her violation of the TAMS Handbook rule outlined on Page 26: Assault.

Adrianna spoke first, stating that she was sorry and it was all a mistake. She said that she and Student A both apologized to each other and even hugged at church after the incident.

Mr. Morrish said that Adrianna just recently moved here from her dad's residence in North Carolina. He said Adriana is a good kid but she is misunderstood. He said that Adrianna had been being picked on for a long time.

Ms. Andrade stated that she didn't entirely agree with the narrative that was read. She said that Adriana had reached out for help numerous times and said that a person can only handle so much. Ms. Andrade said that Adriana has never done anything like this and this is the first time she has even been in trouble.

Adriana said that she approached Student A and asked her if she had been talking about her. Student A admitted to talking about Adriana. Adriana also stated that Student A had asked a friend of Adriana's for her address so she could go to her house to fight her.

Mr. Butzin talked about his concerns regarding Adriana's past behaviors and a history of name calling and racial slurs. He spoke about an incident that occurred on December 12, 2024 when Adriana called a teacher a rude name and got in trouble.

Ms. Andrade expressed frustration with not being contacted when her daughter gets disciplined. She said this was the first time she was even hearing about this incident. She said that the incident Mr. Butzin spoke about doesn't have anything to do with the incident they were before the board for anyway.

Mrs. Ulman explained that it shows a pattern of behavior.

Mrs. Danek explained to Ms. Andrade that she was not contacted because a lunch detention referral is something that the classroom would handle and it gets documented as a referral to show a pattern.

Mrs. Bruning asked Adriana if this back and forth fighting had been going on for a long time. Adriana said it had been going on for a while with Student A.

Mrs. Ulman asked Adriana if she felt safe at school and if she had a safe person she felt she could talk to. Adriana said she does feel safe and that she always goes and talks to Mrs. Murphy. Mrs. Ulman asked Adriana if looking back she thinks mediation could have been helpful. Adriana said that when mediation was mentioned she said that she was so angry she did not feel she could be in the same room as Student A. She said she has learned her lesson and she has learned that she needs to let things go. When asked by Mrs. Ulman what she wants to do after high school, Adriana said she wants to be a good person and go to college.

Mr. Butzin stated that Adriana has good grades and seems like a good student.

Ms. Andrade asked why Student A has not had to go before the board. She said that Student A recently slapped another student across the face and only got 3 days of suspension. She said Student A has gotten in trouble numerous times and questioned at what point she they realize she is the problem and disciplined her. She said it did not make sense to her why they were even going before the board. Ms. Andrade questioned why this incident is considered assault and not fighting.

Mrs. Bruning read the handbook rule regarding assault and Mrs. Ulman read the rule regarding fighting. Mrs. Danek pointed out that the main difference is that fighting is mutual. Assault is one person going after the other.

Ms. Andrade said that it was eventually mutual and they both hit each other.

At 8:03 p.m. the board went into a closed session for deliberation.

At 8:45 p.m. the board re-entered the room and was back in open session.

Motion by Edmonds, support by Jenkins that Adriana Andrade be suspended for 30 days, out of school suspension, and be entered into a behavioral contract upon her return. A roll call vote was taken. Yes: Bruning, Jenkins, Edmonds, Butzin, Ulman. No: Miller. Motion carried.

Mrs. Danek explained that administration would contact the family regarding next steps.

Ms. Andrade stated that she would be withdrawing her immediately from Tawas Area Schools and she would be suing the school.

Mrs. Ulman left the meeting at 8:48 p.m. The board took a brief recess at that time.

At 8:56 p.m. the board return to open session. Motion by Edmonds, support by Jenkins to go into closed session for another student discipline hearing. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Jenkins, support by Edmonds to return to open session at 9:20 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Edmonds, support by Jenkins to suspend Student 2024-2025-#7 for 33 days, including days served, contingent upon the completion of an MDR, and effective immediately upon her return to face-to-face instruction will be entered into a behavioral contract. A roll call vote was taken. Yes: Bruning, Jenkins, Edmonds, Butzin. No: Miller. Motion carried.

The family was advised that administration would be in contact with them to set up the MDR and discuss next steps.

Motion by Edmonds, support by Jenkins to adjourn at 9:23 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.