

Tawas Area Schools
Regular Board of Education Meeting
October 14, 2024

President Bruning called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, October 14, 2024.

Mrs. Bruning led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

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

Administrators Present: Danek, Livingston, Tiffany, Clouse

Motion by Ulman, with support from Jenkins, to amend the agenda by adding section 2(a)(3) Hire High School Assistant Principal and the addition of section 4(d) Amendment to Dress Code Policy. Motion carried unanimously.

POSITIVE HIGHLIGHTS

First grade teacher, Karen Kienitz gave a presentation on a new development at Clara Bolen Elementary, Friday morning video announcements. Ms. Kienitz talked about the MACUL Conference that her and several other teachers attended earlier this year and how numerous other schools represented at the conference were already utilizing technology to do video announcements. She talked about how the long-term goal is to have the students create these videos, but it is a work in progress. Ms. Kienitz discussed some of the things included in these announcements, like today's happenings, book recommendations, birthdays, special announcements and a PBIS weekly update. Ms. Kienitz then showed the most recent video announcements from Friday, October 11.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – INFORMATION AND PROPOSALS

Mrs. Bruning stated that next we would move into the public comment portion of the meeting. Those wishing to share public comment would have 3 minutes to speak. She also stated that the board would not address their concern immediately but would definitely take it into consideration for further action.

Ms. Jeri Kokowicz spoke first and said she was at the meeting to discuss leggings. Ms. Kokowicz stated that she disagrees with the schools currently policy regarding leggings and said that the policy is negatively affecting the mental health of kids.

Ms. Katie Smith was the next to speak. Ms. Smith said she has 3 children who attend school in the Tawas Area district. She said her daughter was sent to the office recently for violating the dress code, due to her wearing leggings that were shorts. Ms. Smith said she was at the meeting to talk about the policy because there was nothing inappropriate about the way her daughter was dressed. Her daughter was held in the office and was very upset by the time Ms. Smith arrived. Once Ms. Smith arrived at the school, they were taken to Rachel's closet to look for different clothing, and on the walk there, Ms. Smith stated that she saw 4 girls wearing leggings and short tops who were not immediately called to the office for a violation. Ms. Smith said that this policy is affecting her daughter's mental health and it needs to be changed.

Guilia Urban spoke next about an incident that had taken place at the school regarding a letter being distributed. Ms. Urban stated that her son was punished for distributing the

letter to other kids and she feels he was wrongly punished and is looking to have the suspension removed from his record. Ms. Urban stated that her son was trying to inform one of the students named in the letter of what was being said about him and that is why he passed it along.

Paul Vainer was present to update the board about the varsity girl's golf team. He informed the board that the team won 7 events this season, including the conference championship. The team had great success and showed great improvement in their first year as an official team.

There was no further public comment at this time.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Ulman, support by Jenkins to approve the consent agenda items which included the approval of the September 9, 2024 regular and closed session minutes, the September 23, 2024 special meeting minutes, the September 30, 2024 special and closed session minutes and the payment of bills as follows: the monthly contractual and prepaid expenses for the general fund in the amount of \$921,864.42, the sinking fund expenses in the amount of \$7,587.00 and the lunch fund expenses in the amount of \$105,729.53. It also included payment of presented bills for the general fund in the amount of \$45,025.48. Letters of resignation were also received from Matthew Pfundt, bus driver, effective immediately and Nicole Siebert, educational assistant, effective October 22, 2024. Motion carried unanimously.

RECOMMENDATIONS & REPORTS FROM THE ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. Danek said Mr. Mejeur is recommending the following coaches for winter sports: Reuben Edwards for boys' varsity basketball; Craig Prescott for boys' JV basketball; Jason Woelke for girls' varsity basketball; Scott Herbolsheimer for girls' JV basketball; Kohl Coffin for 8th grade boys' basketball; Stephanie Lichota for 7th grade boys' basketball; Gina Murphy for 8th grade girls' basketball; Anna Dalman for 7th grade girls' basketball; Melissa Kendall for varsity cheerleading. Mr. Mejeur also recommends the following non-paid coaches: Kim Miller for girls' bowling; Allen Miller for boys' bowling and Mel Rettell for hockey. The wrestling head coach and wrestling assistant coach positions are still vacant. Mr. Butzin questioned why the bowling coaches, after many years of volunteering as coaches, are still not paid. Mrs. Ulman explained that a request for them to be paid would need to be brought before the Board during negotiations, and that has not happened. Motion by Jenkins, support by Lentz to hire the winter coaches as discussed for the 2024-25 school year. Motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Danek said Mr. Lichota is recommending Mr. Scott Gingerich be hired as a full-time bus driver. Mr. Gingerich has shown enthusiasm for the job and has been a great asset since being hired as a substitute driver last year. He has a good demeanor with the students and was chosen as top candidate for this position. Motion by Lentz, support by Butzin to hire Mr. Scott Gingerich as a full-time bus driver. Motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Danek said that she is recommending that the Board of Education hire Mr. Aaron Hazen to fill the High School Assistant Principal vacancy. Mr. Hazen is a graduate of Hope College with a major in secondary education with a focus on English and History. Mr. Hazen is currently working toward a master's degree in administration and supervision, with an expected completion date of May 2025. He is actively engaged in the Education Foundation, MICIP team and HIL project and was chosen as the top candidate for this position. Motion by Ulman, support by Jenkins to hire Mr. Aaron Hazen as the high school assistant principal. Motion carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Committee Reports – Mrs. Danek said that the personnel committee met twice, once on October 3rd and once on October 11th, to conduct first and second round interviews for the high school assistant principal position. The outcome of these meetings was presented to the board in the form of a motion to hire Mr. Aaron Hazen as the high school assistant principal.

Mrs. Danek said the sinking fund committee met on September 30, 2024 to discuss several upcoming projects. They first discussed the pit/concrete project, which includes adding an additional lane for the shot put and fixing the current pit. This also involved fencing this area in to provide multiple lanes for the event. Since the meeting, the district has been able to move forward with the best bid and they will be breaking ground on this project this week sometime. The committee also discussed possible solutions to the Clara Bolen parking lot situation.

Mrs. Danek said that the board governance committee met prior to tonight's meeting to discuss the creation of a board operating manual. The committee has determined that we will reach out to Mr. Scott Morrell to move forward with the manual and attempt to secure his assistance in doing so, using the Berkley Schools Operating Procedures manual as a framework but tailoring it to our policies.

Legislative Report – Mrs. Danek shared with the board the updated amounts for bidding requirements., which were increased. She stated that she had nothing else to report at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Ulman said that at the September 9th regular board meeting, the board discussed a bonus for Mrs. Danek in order to compensate her for the time period of August 6, 2024 through September 9, 2024, when she was in the Superintendent position but not being compensated at that higher rate. This bonus would amount to \$943.92, calculated as the difference in the rate of pay between her job as principal and her new role as Superintendent for the span of the time period stated previously. Motion by Ulman, support by Butzin to approve a one-time bonus in the amount of \$943.92 for Mrs. Danek. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. BuysSENS was present at the meeting to provide details regarding the requested Washington D.C. trip for 8th grade students. Mrs. BuysSENS talked about the application process and provided the Board with the informational packets that were sent home with students. When asked if she only received quotes from Bennett Travel and EF Travel, she stated that those were the only quotes she received and talked about it being a very cumbersome process. She also stated that Bennett Travel has historically been the best to work with. Mrs. BuysSENS stated that EF Travel offered Flight Only trips, and she was not ready to be in an airport with that many 8th graders. Mrs. Ulman questioned why there was such a large increase in price and asked if it had to do with just the 8th grade class going, as opposed to 8th and 9th grade students going as was done in the past. Mrs. BuysSENS said the increase in price was not due to taking only one bus and was instead a result of higher fuel prices as well as the bus being a better quality bus. Mr. Miller asked if the trip is at capacity as far as students, and Mrs. BuysSENS said they are at capacity with 44 students officially attending, and a waiting list in case someone is unable to attend at the last minute. Mrs. Lentz spoke about Bennett Travel and said the company is tried and true. Last year, another company was used and it did not go well at all. She talked

about Bennett Travel sending a tour guide with their bus and being responsible for anything that happens that may not have been in the plan. Mrs. BuysSENS also stated that there would be scholarships available and fundraisers to offset the cost to students, so no student would be unable to go due to monetary concerns. Motion by Miller, support by Butzin to allow the 8th grade students to go on a field trip to Washington D.C. as presented. Yes: Ulman, Butzin, Jenkins, Miller, Bruning. Abstain: Lentz. Motion carried.

Mrs. Danek said that due to conflict and problems in the past with auditing requirements, she was asking the board to approve project graduation as a Tawas sponsored club. This would allow the district to have control and discretion over the funds raised and donated and would also offer a \$500 stipend to a chairperson and co-chair for the club. Motion by Jenkins, support by Butzin to approve project graduation as a Tawas sponsored club. Motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Danek said that next we would discuss an amendment to the dress code policy. She recommended that the policy be changed to say “Yoga pants and leggings may be worn as pants, provided they are paired with a top that extends for appropriate coverage. Tights may also be worn under skirts or shorts, as long as the skirt or shorts reach mid-thigh length.” This language would further be supported with a “good taste” disclaimers at the bottom of the dress code section and would give discretion to administration. Mrs. Lentz expressed that she worries about the “appropriate coverage” terminology, saying that it is too vague. Mr. Butzin stated that the policy needs to be addressed across the board. He said that everyone needs to enforce the policy equally throughout the district. Mrs. Danek stated that this has been reinforced with the staff. Mrs. Ulman asked the student representatives to take the proposed, modified language to SLS and get their feedback on it. She also encouraged them to look at other schools’ policies, and not just schools in our district, but statewide. If the policy remains as is recommended by Mrs. Danek, this would be considered a first reading and no action is necessary. If the student representatives come back to the next meeting with different proposed language, we would need to discuss it and possibly consider the next meeting a first reading.

INFORMATION & PROPOSALS

Superintendent Report – Mrs. Danek said that it was nice to see the positive highlight bringing in tips and tricks from professional development. She also reminded board members that the CASBA meeting is this Thursday and she hopes to see them there.

Student Representatives – Ms. Gabrielle Whetstone said that there wasn’t much going on now that homecoming is over and fall sports are wrapping up. Ms. Abby Kloska said that SLS is currently working on getting more people to join. She said the kickoff event went well. Ms. Kloska also said that they had a Mental Health Matters day last week, which went very well and stated that the student section has been great this year and has been full of energy and not so much negativity.

Administration –Mr. Livingston talked about enrollment numbers from the beginning of the year until count day. In the high school, enrollment was at 367 in August, which included all students that were expected to show up, and is currently at 353 as of count day. High school parent teacher conferences saw about 40% attendance. In the middle school, enrollment was at 312 in August and is currently 301 as of count day. The middle school parent teacher conferences saw about 64% attendance. Mr. Livingston gave a shout out to the new band director. He said kids are having fun and staying involved. The book fair is currently underway. On October 2, there was a choir invitational. On October 4,

students had a half day, and staff had professional development. In the middle school and high school, teachers attended a co-teaching seminar. The social studies department planned Veteran's Day. Sophomores attended Career Quest at SVSU last week. The Pink Power Walk is on October 16. On November 1, teachers would attend their final Kagan training for the school year.

Mrs. Tiffany highlighted the students of the month. She stated that the coffee fundraiser started today for the middle school. Ms. Tiffany also said that some teachers would be attending a HIL conference next week. The Braves Parent Council had 18 people in attendance and is just in its beginning stages of organizing.

Mrs. Clouse also highlighted the students of the month at Clara Bolen. She talked about a math coach coming to Clara Bolen to assist teachers. She also said that the PTO has organized a Zombie Run, which will take place on October 18th at 7 p.m. Everything will be free, with the exception of the food truck that will be present. She also mentioned the Halloween parade, which will occur on October 31. Mrs. Clouse also gave a shout out to Mrs. Shelli Blazic, school social worker, for all of her hard work and help with PBIS this year.

Mr. Mejeur said the boys' soccer team won their conference. They have districts tomorrow at Midland Calvary Baptist. The 7th/8th grade girls' volleyball team were league champions. Varsity volleyball will have districts the week of November 4th. In cross country, the middle school girls won the team award. Mr. Mejeur said fall sports are winding down. Middle school girls' basketball started today and middle school boys' basketball will start next week.

From the Board – Mrs. Lentz said she loves the positive highlight. She thanked everyone who spoke during public comment and wanted them to know that their concerns are being heard. She congratulated all of the sports teams on their success and wished good luck to all the coaches. Mrs. Lentz also welcomed the new hires and thanked the administration team for their work. Mr. Butzin and Mr. Miller said that they had nothing to add. Mrs. Ulman thanked Mrs. Edmonds for sitting on the personnel committee for her when she was unable to attend the committee meeting. She thanked everyone for being at the meeting and thanked Mrs. Buysens and her team for their work on the D.C. trip. Mrs. Jenkins congratulated the sports teams on dominating the north star league. She welcomed Mr. Hazen and thanked those who spoke during public comment for sharing their concerns. Mrs. Bruning said she loved the positive highlight. She thanked the public and said the board does hear them and appreciates them coming in and sharing. She said it has been an amazing fall start to the school year.

ADVANCE PLANNING

Mrs. Danek said the technology committee will meet on October 28th at 4:00 p.m. to discuss future projects.

Mrs. Danek said the policy committee will meet on October 28th at 5:30 p.m. to discuss the newest release from NEOLA. Mr. Butzin stated that he was unable to attend this meeting, and Mrs. Bruning agreed to fill in for him.

The Michigan Association of School Boards is celebrating their 75th year. As part of the celebration, they are extending \$750 worth of specific event registrations or services for the coming year. The board must collectively determine how to best use these funds by

selecting from a list of eligible events and services what they would like to register for. The board discussed possibly using the fund for a workshop to have Mr. Scott Morrell come in and create a board operations manual for the district. If that was not an option, then they would use it for a workshop to be determined at a later date.

Motion by Lentz, support by Jenkins to adjourn at 8:23 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.