

Tawas Area Schools
Special Board of Education Meeting
September 23, 2024

The special meeting of the Tawas Area Board of Education was called to order by President Bruning at 5:02 p.m. on Monday, September 23, 2024 in the boardroom at the administration office.

Mrs. Bruning led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Present: Edmonds, Miller, Lentz, Ulman, Jenkins, Bruning

Absent: Butzin

Tardy: None

Administrators Present: Danek

PUBLIC COMMENTS – INFORMATION AND PROPOSALS

There was no one present in the audience so there was no public comment.

RECOMMENDATIONS & REPORTS FROM THE ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. Danek said that Mr. Mejeur is recommending Mrs. Stephanie Lichota be hired as the 7th grade boys' basketball coach. Mrs. Lichota is a Tawas alumni and has played many sports for Tawas as well as playing collegiately. She is dedicated to teaching the sport and showing the athletes her passion for the sport of basketball. Mrs. Lichota was chosen as the top candidate for this position. Motion by Jenkins, with support by Lentz to hire Mrs. Stephanie Lichota as the 7th grade boys' basketball coach. Motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Bruning transitioned to the next agenda item, board work session to discuss and establish superintendent goals.

Mrs. Danek stated that in the superintendent evaluation workshop with Mr. Brian Pearson from MASB, the goal setting process was discussed. Mr. Pearson advised that the board and the superintendent come up with one to two goals initially for the superintendent to be evaluated on in December. Then in January, the board would come back together and set goals for a new calendar year. Mrs. Danek then stated that she had come up with 3 potential goals to present to the board. The first goal she presented was to establish clear and effective communication channels that promote transparency, foster trust and enhance engagement among all stakeholders. The second goal she presented was to build strong relationships with staff, students, parents and the community while fostering a culture of collaboration and transparency. The third, and final, goal she presented was to create and promote diverse platforms for student leadership that encourage active participation, skill development and ownership of the school community.

Mrs. Ulman said that she really liked the second goal which focused on building and strengthening relationships. She said bullying is a big issue in the school and she believes that seeing this issue alleviated starts at the top. Mrs. Ulman said she would like to see relationships strengthened with the board and the administration team and stated that this would then trickle down. However, she feels that this may be difficult to track and gauge.

Mrs. Lentz said that she liked the first goal regarding communication channels and transparency. She said this is a goal that could be easily measured. Mrs. Lentz said that she thinks that bullying is an issue in the school but that it will take more than a few months to make progress in combatting it. She also stated that she believes that one goal is sufficient for now until December and then re-assess in January.

Mrs. Danek acknowledged that the first goal is a big adjustment for her in this position, as it is not something she regularly did in her previous role.

Mrs. Bruning stated that communication is important. She said she thinks some tweaks need to be made to the current communication processes and this would be a good short term goal for Mrs. Danek to work on. Mrs. Bruning went on to say that bullying is a huge issue and she wants to see it addressed, long-term.

Mrs. Lentz stated that she thought we had initiatives that are directed at combatting bullying.

Mrs. Danek said that everything they bring in from the outside focuses on kindness initiatives and anti-bullying campaigns. She said they have speakers come in and speak at assemblies and address bullying. Mrs. Danek said she believes that race is become a big issue in the school that needs more attention. She said students don't feel like they belong.

Mrs. Lentz said that the term "bullying" is thrown around a lot. She believes the district needs to define bullying for the kids and educate them on what bullying is.

Mrs. Ulman said we need to help these kids feel more comfortable.

Mrs. Danek said there needs to be more of a focus on culture and climate.

Mrs. Ulman said that involving kids in this initiative may be a good way to bring in new and fresh ideas. She said the district needs to show that they are doing their best to address the issue of bullying.

Mrs. Bruning said she would like to see something where kids who aren't usually included are brought in to be a part of something.

Mrs. Lentz said that bullying will never be eliminated, but we can teach kids to cope and give them the tools they need to overcome it.

Mrs. Edmonds said that she would like to see Mrs. Danek's goals include seeing her start the foundational groundwork for a future goal regarding bullying. She would like to see Mrs. Danek come up with an action plan for future steps to address it by December and then they can re-assess in January.

Mr. Miller asked what the process is when a kid reports that they are being bullied.

Mrs. Danek stated that the handbook does address bullying, but often when kids report bullying, it isn't always black and white. Peer mediation has been used effectively to help address some of these issues but the consequential side of the policy regarding bullying doesn't typically fit the situation.

Mrs. Ulman said there should be a mental health class offered to students.

Mr. Miller said any initiative to combat bullying would need to start at the elementary level.

It was decided that Mrs. Danek would have 2 goals as superintendent, which she would be evaluated on in December. The first goal is to begin setting the foundational groundwork for addressing bullying long term by coming up with an action plan to address it and to foster culture, climate and inclusion in 2025. The second goal is to establish clear and effective communication channels that provide transparency.

Mrs. Bruning said the next agenda item was to review applicants for the high school assistant principal vacancy.

Mrs. Edmonds expressed that she was not aware that the board would be involved in the hiring of the high school assistant principal.

Mrs. Danek said that they need to take a look at policy 3120 and adjust the policy, which was discussed at the last meeting. The candidates were brought to the board tonight so that everyone is aware of who is being considered for the position.

Mrs. Ulman asked about internal candidates and suggested changing the pay scale to possibly encourage internal applicants to apply. Mrs. Danek said that most of the tenured teachers who have the credentials required for this position are maxed out and making close to the same amount as an assistant principal, but she was not sure if it would lead to more internal applications.

The board decided that the assistant principal position would be re-posted for one week, both internally and externally, with a salary range of \$90,000-\$95,000. The deadline would be Monday, September 30. The personnel committee would then conduct first round interviews on October 3rd at 6:30 and 7:30 tentatively. The officer on the committee would communicate out the details of the interviews. Mrs. Danek stated that she would ask Cady Mounts and another high school teacher (likely Chris Lerczak) to sit on the interview panel.

INFORMATION & PROPOSALS

Mrs. Jenkins spoke about the Back to School Legal Workshop that she attended next. She said that the board already does most of the things that were discussed at this workshop. The one thing that she wasn't sure of and wanted to make everyone aware of was regarding Title IX. She said Brad Banasek from MASB stated that if our school is named in the Moms of Liberty Lawsuit, we cannot enforce Title IX. However, Tawas Area Schools has not been named in the lawsuit.

Mrs. Jenkins also attended the 2024 summer institute. She said the speaker was awesome and she would send his presentation to President Bruning to share out with the board.

Mrs. Lentz asked if she could bring up the gym lighting issues. She said the lighting in the gym is only 7 years old and we are already having issues. She feels like some corners were cut when they were installed and she cannot believe that Hendricks isn't stepping up to help resolve this problem. Lentz said we need to rethink hiring Hendricks for future projects.

Mrs. Danek said no one would guarantee lights for more than 5 years. Danek is working with Mr. Lichota to get quotes to replace the lights. She also talked about the block widows in the

gym and said McMath Masonry has been found to be responsible and they are waiting to see what the next steps are.

Mrs. Danek said she also wanted to address ticket price issues that were brought to her attention after a board member attended a sporting event and was charged \$7 for her child to attend. It was discussed at a previous meeting, with Mr. Mejeur, that there would be two different ticket prices, \$5 for students, and \$7 for all others. Danek explained that Mr. Mejeur was having some difficulty understanding how to make his record-keeping accurate with 2 different ticket prices, but said that she met with him and they discussed it and he will adjust back to offering \$5 tickets to students and \$7 tickets to adults.

Mrs. Bruning said what bothers her is that instead of asking for help, he just changed the price unilaterally.

ADVANCE PLANNING

Mrs. Danek said we had a few committee meetings to schedule tonight. Recently, Mr. Huizar has communicated that he is thinking about leaving his current position. Due to his possible departure and the fact that the district has been using ESSER funds for many large technology purchases over the last few years, Mrs. Danek felt it would be beneficial for the technology committee to get together and begin looking at future plans and trying to monopolize any time Mr. Huizar has left with the district. A committee meeting was scheduled for October 28, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.

Next, Mrs. Danek said a meeting needed to be scheduled with the personnel policy. They would need to review and revise the current nepotism policy as well as go over the NEOLA update that is set to come out very soon. The committee would also need to look at revising policy 3120, which addresses the hiring of family and the hiring process as a whole. A committee meeting was scheduled on October 28, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.

The sinking fund committee would also need to schedule a meeting to discuss some projects that Mrs. Danek is looking to complete prior to the frost. This meeting was scheduled on October 14, 2024 at 5:30 p.m., with the board governance committee meeting already having been scheduled on that same day at 6:00 p.m.

Lastly, Mrs. Danek said that 2 students discipline hearings needed to be scheduled. These hearings were not on the agenda for tonight's meeting due to the timing of the packets being sent out and the time required for administration to complete the discipline packets. These hearings needed to be scheduled before October 2. A special board meeting was scheduled for Monday, September 30, 2024 at 4:00 p.m. to complete the two student discipline hearings.

Motion by Ulman, support by Lentz to adjourn at 6:40 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.