

Tawas Area Schools
Reorganizational and Regular Board of Education Meeting
January 11, 2021

The reorganizational and regular meeting of the Tawas Area Board of Education was called to order by President Ulman at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, January 11, 2021, through Google Meets or a teleconferencing method.

Mrs. Ulman led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Present: Bruning, Lentz, Edmonds, VanderVeen, Butzin, Klenow and Ulman
Absent: None
Tardy: None

Administrators Present: Klinger, Mochty, Danek, Suttle, Bolen

Mr. Klinger administered the Oath of Office to Mrs. Ulman who was re-elected to the Board in November and to Mrs. Lentz, Mrs. Edmonds and Mr. Butzin who were newly elected in the November election. Mr. Klinger welcomed them to their terms on the Board.

POSITIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Mr. Suttle introduced Mrs. Kerri Buysens, 8th grade English and literature teacher. Mrs. Buysens said that the 8th grade students participate in creative writing every Friday. The students seem to enjoy the assignment and the 9th grade English teacher has noticed an improvement in student's writing skills when they move into 9th grade. Each student writes about 6 or 7 pieces each marking period and at the end of the marking period they get to choose their best piece and enter it into the writing competition. Each of the four English classes then picks the best story for their class. Then, all four classes hear the top four choices and vote to select the best story of the marking period. By the end of the year there will be 4 "best" stories and the high school English students will review those stories and choose one winner for the entire year. Mrs. Buysens said she loves that each student gets to write their own best story and they can choose their own topic. The students also discuss the stories after they have heard them and point out the merits of each story while choosing the strongest one. And at the end of the year the high school English students will be picking a champion, so this is all about students from start to finish. She appreciates the collaboration with the English department and administration in making this successful. She thanked Mr. Suttle for his enthusiasm with the project and Mrs. Bolen for her help in showcasing the winning stories in the trophy case. Each winning story is framed and placed in the trophy case for all to see. The 1st marking period winner was Nora Kassuba and the 2nd marking period winner was Marisol Klinger. She said the stories will be placed in a binder to keep for the students to look back on and be proud of. The board thanked Mrs. Buysens for sharing this project with them.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – INFORMATION AND PROPOSALS

Mrs. Ulman asked if there were any public comments regarding the extended learning plan. There were no comments. Mrs. Ulman asked if there were any public comments on agenda or non-agenda items. Mr. Todd Kaems addressed the board. He indicated that he had talked to board members and administration regarding a concern he has. He said the 2021 valedictorian and salutatorian will be determined in the very near future. His daughter is a senior and followed the district's course curriculum including taking all AP courses she could take. She will very likely

have a 4.0 grade point average at the end of the first semester, but may not be the valedictorian. Beginning with this year's graduating class, a 1.1 multiplier was put in place for courses that earn college credit. He feels this puts students that have taken only AP courses at an unfair disadvantage compared to those that have taken dual enrollment or Early Middle College courses as he believes those students have more opportunity to obtain a higher number of college credits. He said our administration isn't able to evaluate those dual enrollment staff members nor do they dictate the curriculum for those courses, but they are valued the same as our AP courses. He is concerned that some students and parents weren't aware they would be at a disadvantage if they only took AP classes. He feels it is unfair to the students that don't take dual enrollment classes and asked the board to take a look at this issue and how it will affect this year's graduating class. Mrs. Ulman thanked him for sharing his concern.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mrs. Ulman indicated that board officers need to be selected for the calendar year. Mrs. Ulman then made a motion to nominate Shannon Klenow for President. Support by VanderVeen. There were no other nominations or discussion and nominations were closed. A roll call was taken on the motion to nominate Shannon Klenow as board president. Motion carried unanimously. Mrs. Klenow then took over the meeting.

President Klenow called for nominations for Vice-President. Motion by Butzin, supported by Edmonds to nominate Julie Ulman for Vice-President. There were no other nominations or discussion and nominations were closed. A roll call was taken on the motion to nominate Julie Ulman as vice-president. Motion carried unanimously.

President Klenow called for nominations for Secretary. Motion by Ulman, supported by Edmonds to nominate Jennifer Bruning for Secretary. There were no other nominations or discussion and nominations were closed. A roll call was taken on the motion to nominate Jennifer Bruning as secretary. Motion carried unanimously.

President Klenow called for nominations for Treasurer. Motion by Bruning, supported by Butzin to nominate Greg VanderVeen for Treasurer. There were no other nominations or discussion and nominations were closed. A roll call was taken on the motion to nominate Greg VanderVeen as treasurer. Motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Klenow said there is one addition to tonight's agenda. The item will be added under Recommendations and Reports from the Administration to hire a 4th grade teacher.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Bruning, support by Ulman to approve the minutes of December 14, 2020 as presented. There were no additions or corrections. Motion carried unanimously.

PAYMENT OF BILLS

Motion by VanderVeen to approve the monthly contractual and prepaid expenses for the general fund in the amount of \$1,036,881.53 and the lunch fund expenses in the amount of \$61,277.32. There were no sinking fund expenses to be paid. He also moved to approve payment of presented bills for the general fund in the amount of \$24,835.79, as funds become available. There was no sinking fund or lunch fund bills to be paid. Motion supported by Ulman. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

RECEIPT OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Klinger said we received a letter requesting an unpaid leave of absence from bus driver Steve Shaver. Mr. Shaver is recovering from surgery and may request up to twelve (12) months leave based on the non-certified employee handbook. Motion by Ulman, support by Bruning to grant Steve Shaver an unpaid leave of absence for up to twelve months. Motion carried unanimously.

RECOMMENDATIONS & REPORTS FROM THE ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Klinger said that January is School Board Recognition Month. He said our school board members are elected officials performing public service. He thanked them for their support and dedication to Tawas Area Schools, its students, staff and the programs provided. He said their commitment to the district is appreciated. He noted their years of service as follows: Tracee Lentz and Mike Butzin are newly elected; Ami Edmonds, half a year; Jennifer Bruning and Greg VanderVeen, 2 years; Julie Ulman, 4 years; Shannon Klenow 6 years. He told them he has a certificate of appreciation for each of them.

Mr. Klinger said maintenance supervisor, Martin Couch, is recommending the board hire Mr. Christofer Martin to fill the custodial position that became vacant when Kal Jones retired. Christofer has worked in custodial positions since 2007 and was selected as the top candidate. Motion by Edmonds, support by Lentz to hire Christofer Martin as a custodian for Tawas Area Schools. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Klinger said a 4th grade teaching position was posted following the December 14th meeting. Interviews were conducted last week and Mrs. Danek is recommending Mrs. Tricia Briggs be hired to fill the position. Tricia holds a Master's of Education degree from Saginaw Valley State University. She has experience as an Autism Behavior Technician and as a School Success Liaison in an elementary setting. She has been teaching 4th grade for more than three years and comes with high recommendations. Motion by Ulman, support by Bruning to hire Tricia Briggs as a 4th grade teacher for Tawas Area Schools. Motion carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Committee Reports – None at this time.

Legislative Report – There were several Senate and House bills taken to the governor in December, including one that would grant an extension of holding virtual board meetings through the end of March, and the COVID relief bill. The COVID relief bill passed by Congress has allocated \$54.3 billion to states/districts for education-related expenses. Some guidelines have been provided and we expect to hear more soon regarding how to distribute these funds.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Klinger said we are required to revisit and reconfirm our Extended Learning plan each month. The plan discusses how instruction is being delivered for our K-12 students, that we are providing a free and appropriate education for our special needs students, and provides the weekly two-way communication rates. Mr. Klinger reviewed the January plan. We are currently offering face to face and remote learning opportunities at all buildings. Based on the most recent Emergency Order from MDHHS on December 18, 2020, 9-12 grade in-person instruction was allowed to resume on December 21, 2020. We used the time over the holiday break to meet with our local health department to discuss that return and on January 4, 2021, all students K-12 returned to in-person instruction if the families chose that option. Mr. Klinger said we are offering both face to face and remote learning for our special needs students and families can choose which delivery option works best for their child's needs to meet their free and appropriate educational rights. Mr. Klinger

said the percentage review of weekly 2-way interactions shows a low of 96.7% to a high of 99.5% over the four-week period, though we were only in session for two of those weeks due to the holiday break. These numbers reflect all students, both face to face and virtual learners. Motion by Ulman, support by Edmonds to approve the extended COVID-19 learning plan reconfirmation update as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Klinger said over the last several months he has been updating the Emergency Operations Plan for the district. The plan provides procedures on how to handle a variety of potential emergency situations that could occur on campus and/or within the community. The plan is updated annually and is ever changing and involves approval from many different stakeholders, including law enforcement, fire service, the county emergency manager and the district. Motion by Lentz, support by Ulman to approve the Emergency Operations Plan as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Klinger said district legal counsel, attorney Robert Huber, announced in an official letter that he was retiring effective December 31, 2020. In his letter, he stated that Thrun has designated Mr. Roy Henley to assist the district with our legal needs. Mr. Klinger has solicited feedback from several other superintendents in regards to the legal counsel representative they are currently using. Several positive references were made for both Mr. Henley and Mrs. Martha Marcero. Thrun Law provides the opportunity to work with several attorneys as they will often times recommend different people who specialize in certain areas. After receiving all the information, he is recommending the board continue to work with Thrun Law Firm and utilize Martha Marcero as our primary contact for legal guidance. Mrs. Ulman asked if we are contracted with Thrun Law and if so, for how long. Mr. Klinger said we do have an annual contract with Thrun Law and while under contract we have all of their experts at our disposal, even though we are “assigned” to one main point of contact attorney. Motion by VanderVeen, support by Ulman to approve the recommendation to utilize Martha Marcero from Thrun Law Firm as our district point of contact as presented. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Klinger said as part of the Extended COVID-19 Learning Plan the state has asked that we provide academic data on our K-8 students for both reading and math before February 1st and before the last instructional day of the school year. Information has been provided to the board in the form of achievement/growth data that outlines our mid-year and end of the year growth goals. It also provides the percentages of students who have met these goals. Mr. Klinger reviewed the data with the board and said the mid-year goals for reading and math are shown at the top of the page. The bottom half of the page shows the percentage of students that have met or exceeded those goals. We are always looking to see at least 50% of the students meeting or exceeding the goals. The data shows that at least 50% of our students in every grade level, K-8, have achieved that goal. The reading results ranged from 52% of students in 7th grade meeting or exceeding the goal to 91% of our 1st graders exceeding the goal. The math results range from 53% of our 5th graders exceeding the goal to 85% of our 1st graders exceeding the goal. These results are very good considering the school closure from March through the end of the year and all of the transitions between in-person and remote learning. We continue to look for gaps and weaknesses but the data shows that our students are still doing very well. He said that our assessment systems don’t always pull all the data in the subcategories that we would like to see so we are working with the companies to see if we can get some more of that detail. Mrs. Lentz asked if we have any mid-year data from past years in comparison to this year. Mr. Klinger said we have some data from last fall in the Star program, but not NWEA data because it is a fairly new assessment to the middle school. Motion by Lentz, support by Ulman to approve the information as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Klinger said there is an opening on the MASB Board of Directors for Region II, which includes our district. Nominations to represent our region are open until January 13th. Board members may be nominated to serve by their local board as long as they have met certain criteria. The local board would need to approve the nomination. At this time, there were no board members interested in serving on that board.

Mr. Klinger said we have a student requesting permission to return to school from an expulsion. They have requested the discussion be held in open session. Mrs. Mochty said student 2019-2020-#3 made a poor choice last January. The student admitted their mistake and took responsibility for their actions. At that time the student came before the board and was expelled. Since that time, the student has attended the Alternative Education Academy and has done a good job earning credits. The term of the expulsion will be up in two weeks. The student is asking to return one week earlier, so they may get started at the beginning of the second semester so as not to be behind. Mr. VanderVeen said the 180-day expulsion represents an entire school year and he feels the intent has been accomplished. The difference of keeping the student out for one more week doesn't seem to make a lot of sense to him. He would be in favor of allowing the student to return next week at the beginning of the semester. Mrs. Klenow said keeping the student out one more week would seem like an extra punishment, especially since the student has been completing work at the Alternative Ed Academy and obviously wants to return to school. Mr. Butzin asked if the student will be on track to graduate with their graduating class when the time comes. Mrs. Mochty said the student will need to make up some credits that have been lost, but there is time to work that into the student's schedule over the next few years so they can graduate with their class. Mr. Butzin asked if there is a way to protect the district if the student repeated the offense. Mrs. Mochty said we have put students on a behavior plan when they return from a suspension or expulsion and that could be done in this case. Mrs. Klenow said she would be more comfortable with a behavior plan in place. Motion by Ulman, support by Butzin to allow student 2019-2020-#3 to return to school at the beginning of the second semester, on January 18, 2021, under a behavior plan to be created by administration. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

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Administration – Mr. Suttle said we have been in touch with the Engage Michigan Program which will help reach students that have disengaged when we moved into the remote learning mode. We will be in partnership with them to serve 79 of our students. It will be based on the individual needs of students and will provide personal academic coaching, tutors and advocates to help them overcome some of their struggles. Mrs. Bolen said middle school teachers are conferencing with their students to help prepare them for spring testing and they are working to get more students to return to in-person learning. 12 middle school students have returned to face to face learning since the Christmas holiday. Mrs. Danek said Mr. Huizar has been working on the first round of upgrades to teacher interactive whiteboards and document cameras. Five have been purchased and one teacher will receive the upgrade per grade level. The new devices will be much brighter and easier to view for students and teachers as well as the ability to cast from the teacher's screen to each individual student's device so they can follow along on their screen. She said they have purchased three water bottle filling stations, with one being in the gymnasium. 15 teachers have signed up for live PD from now until mid-May on some great topics. Clara Bolen has 103 students with perfect attendance for the first semester, 58 in-person students and 45 remote learners, and they will each be receiving a free pizza from Hungry Howies. She said Clara Bolen started with 104 virtual learners this year and they are down to 67 at this time with the rest being face to face. Mrs. Mochty said this is exam week with half days on Wednesday and Thursday. She said depending on what we learn this week student athletes may be able to begin practicing for winter

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sports as early as this Saturday. Mr. Klinger said a lot has been going on with the rollout of the vaccine and we expect that individuals in Group 1B, which includes school employees, will be able to be vaccinated very soon. Employees will be able to preregister to receive the first round dose. He said the state is starting to look at the possibility of rapid testing for schools as one of their safety protocols. The state would also like all schools to be providing face to face learning by March 1st, if they aren't already doing so. He said bids will be going out this week on the project to improve the radio signal for our emergency agencies when they need to come into our buildings. Radio signal is lost when they come into the brick and mortar building and this will improve their communication signals. The bid opening will be held January 29th and he hopes to bring those bids to be awarded at the February meeting. He also hopes to have someone come soon to review the Central Office secure front door entrance project.

From the Board – Mr. VanderVeen asked with the grade point averages being computed very soon if it would be detrimental in determining this year's valedictorian and salutatorian if the board doesn't meet to discuss the GPA multiplier until later this month. Mr. Klinger said he believed it could take months of work to undo the way the GPA's are set up to calculate with the multiplier in the equation, but he would have to check into that. Mr. VanderVeen thanked Mrs. Buysens for sharing about the writing competition and welcomed the new hires. He is hopeful winter sports can begin very soon and is pleased to hear more students are returning to in person learning. Mrs. Bruning thanked Mr. Kaems for sharing his concern and was happy to see Mrs. Buysens writing competition winners are being showcased in the trophy case. She also welcomed the new hires. Mrs. Ulman thanked Mr. Kaems for bringing his concern to the board and the board will plan to discuss that topic at an upcoming workshop. She welcomed the new hires and was pleased to see the assessment results and know that even with the remote learning our students seem to be faring quite well. She said it's good to know we were invested in remote learning and were able to administer assessments in that fashion. She thanked Mrs. Buysens for her presentation and said it's easy to see her passion for what she does. She is excited to hear about the interactive whiteboard update and thinks it will be great that the students, even remote learning students, will be able to see what their teacher has on their screen. Mrs. Edmonds welcomed the new hires and thinks it's great that the 8th grade writing student winners are being displayed in the trophy case. She is happy to hear that some of the high school students will be receiving extra supports through the Engage program. She said she heard that student athletes might be required to be rapid tested for COVID before being allowed to participate and wondered if that would be the case for our student athletes. Mr. Klinger said he had only heard about some pilot schools doing that and thought it was for those teams that were trying to finish up their fall seasons. Mrs. Edmonds thanked Mr. Kaems for bringing this concern up and said this is the first year the multiplier has come into play so it is new territory for everyone. She appreciates him bringing it up so the board can take a look at it. She said some of the board members involved in the decision to put the multiplier in place are still on the board and it would be good to have them provide their insight on that decision. She wonders if maybe there could be a limit placed on how many credits a student could get that the multiplier would be applied to. Mr. Butzin thanked Mrs. Buysens and Mrs. Bolen for their part in the 8th grade writing competition. He thanked Mr. Kaems for bringing his concern to the board's attention. He welcomed the new hires and congratulated the new board officers. He wondered how the new athletic director is doing. Mr. Suttle said he is hard at work trying to schedule games for the abbreviated winter season, which has been tough. He thinks he has been able to secure about 12-13 games for both boys' and girls' basketball. Mrs. Lentz congratulated Mrs. Buysens on the writing program and Mrs. Bolen for showcasing their academic achievements. She thanked Mr. Kaems for bringing the multiplier up, agrees it should be looked at and looks forward to being part of the discussion. She said she will be included in a

MASB webinar tomorrow and was pleased to hear of the whiteboard update. She thanked Mr. Klinger for all of the information and updates he provides the board. Mrs. Klenow agreed with the previous comments and looks forward to a workshop regarding the multiplier. She asked that the counselor be present for the workshop so she can answer questions that might come up.

ADVANCE PLANNING

Mr. Klinger asked if it works for everyone to hold the workshop in two weeks, on January 25th. Everyone was fine with that and it was scheduled for 7:00 p.m.

Motion by Edmonds, support by Bruning to adjourn at 8:31 p.m.