

Tawas Area Schools  
Regular Board of Education Meeting  
July 13, 2020

The regular meeting of the Tawas Area Board of Education was called to order by President Freel at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, July 13, 2020 through Google Meets or a teleconferencing method.

Roll Call:

Present: VanderVeen, Bruning, Ulman, Edmonds, Klenow, O'Connor and Freel  
Absent: None  
Tardy: None

Administrators Present: Klinger, Danek, Suttle

**POSITIVE HIGHLIGHTS**

Mrs. Freel said we are being joined tonight by Dr. Jo Studley-May and Dr. Emily Kloska, both from Ascension Health, to provide some information and guidance regarding COVID-19. Dr. Jo said the purpose of this guidance is to support education, public health, local leadership and pediatricians collaborating with schools to create policies for school re-entry that foster overall health of children, staff and communities. She said face to face learning is best for children and recommended that in-person instruction should resume. She said studies have shown that children are less susceptible to contract the novel coronavirus than adults are. She said there is a lower prevalence in the pediatric population, and children who are exposed are less likely to become infected and if they do become infected, their symptoms tend to be less serious. She said that children with multi-system inflammatory syndrome have a higher recovery rate and the risk of transmission from children to adults in their households seems to be lower. Schools haven't been proven to have a major role in infecting children. Dr. Jo said that the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school, especially for elementary students. The importance of in-person learning is well documented and there is evidence of the negative impacts on children because of school closures this past spring. Time away from school and the interruption of supportive services can result in social isolation, learning loss, child and adolescent abuse, substance use, depression and suicidal thoughts. There has also been a substantial impact on food security and physical activity for children and families. Dr. Kloska said school will certainly look different than it has in the past for administrators, educators, staff and students. Dr. Jo said there are several suggestions that the AAP and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have shared including frequent and effective handwashing, cough etiquette and sanitation measures. Screening for illness and appropriate signage about hygiene and social distancing, along with the use of face coverings, would be beneficial. Dr. Jo suggested students remain in the same classroom whenever possible, with teachers moving as needed. She said the CDC recommends that schools space seating at least 6 feet apart but many times 6 feet isn't feasible without limiting the number of students. She said spacing as close as 3 feet may be just as beneficial, if students are wearing face coverings. She suggested that teachers, especially in the lower grade levels, wear face shields so that students could see their facial expressions while in the classroom. Adults within schools should attempt to maintain a 6-foot distance from others as much as possible, especially around other adult staff. She said meetings and curriculum planning should take place virtually if possible. Visitors to the building should be limited. She said there will be other illnesses in the classroom during the school year, and it is important to recognize which illnesses and exposures require staying out of school. She said the local health department and doctor's offices will be available to consult if there is an outbreak or exposure. Mrs. Freel asked if students and teachers should wear masks and/or face shields. Dr. Kloska said their

recommendation is to consider face masks for children since they seem to tolerate those quite well, especially if they have adjustable ear straps. She said teachers could be in a 3-foot proximity of a student as long as they are wearing a mask. Mrs. O'Connor asked if the older student's respiratory droplets carry farther than the younger children. Dr. Kloska said the risk of spreading droplets does increase as children get older. She said she has seen that for the most part, children in Texas, the Netherlands and other countries, have done quite well going back to face-to-face learning. Mrs. Freel asked if staff would need to wash all of their clothing every day when returning home, or if they can just thoroughly wash their hands and be safe. Dr. Kloska said that is an individual decision, and they should do whatever they are most comfortable with. Mr. VanderVeen asked if there is a different quarantine period for students if they test positive. Dr. Jo said the quarantine period would be the same for both students and staff. Mrs. Freel asked if the entire district would need to shut down if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the school. Dr. Jo said no, that would not be the protocol for one case. She said a person would be considered "exposed" if they came in contact with a person who has tested positive and they were less than 6 feet apart, and unmasked, for at least 15 minutes. Mrs. Klenow asked if it would help to have a piece of Plexiglas placed in front of a teacher's desk to create a barrier from their students. Dr. Kloska said that wouldn't hurt, to serve as an additional barrier for droplets, especially in the high school setting. Dr. Jo and Dr. Kloska both encouraged anyone to reach out to them with questions and said they would be happy to speak to the board and administration again in the future as more questions come up.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS – INFORMATION AND PROPOSALS**

Mrs. Freel asked if there were any public comments on agenda or non-agenda items. There were no comments.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion by Klenow, support by Ulman to approve the minutes of the June 22, 2020 board meeting as presented. There were no additions or corrections. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **PAYMENT OF BILLS**

Motion by Klenow to approve the monthly contractual and prepaid expenses for the general fund in the amount of \$682,356.67, the sinking fund expenses in the amount of \$4,774.70 and the lunch fund expenses in the amount of \$30,173.00. She also moved to approve payment of presented bills for the general fund in the amount of \$48,540.82, as funds become available. Motion supported by O'Connor. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

#### **RECEIPT OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS**

Mr. Klinger said he received a letter of resignation/retirement from high school social worker, Mary Beth Schearer. Mary Beth has worked in the district for the past 14 years and has a total of 30 years of service in the public school system. Her resignation was effective June 30, 2020. Motion by Klenow, support by Ulman to accept Mary Beth Schearer's letter of resignation, thank her for her years of service and wish her well in her retirement. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS & REPORTS FROM THE ADMINISTRATION**

Mr. Klinger said we have four teachers to hire tonight. He said Mrs. Danek conducted interviews for the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher vacancy at Clara Bolen Elementary. She is recommending Kelli Rau be hired to fill this vacancy. Ms. Rau is a graduate of MSU and pursued her teaching certification through the Michigan Teachers of Tomorrow program. She holds a Bachelor's of Science degree from MSU and a Master's degree in Family/Consumer Science in Youth Development. Motion by Klenow, support by Bruning to hire Kelli Rau as a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Klinger said Mr. Suttle has conducted interviews for the middle school teacher vacancies and is recommending three candidates for hire tonight.

First, Mr. Suttle is recommending Mrs. Wendi Paulson to fill the current middle school Title teacher position that became vacant when internal shifting occurred. Mrs. Paulson received her Bachelor's degree from SVSU and also hold a Master's degree in E-Learning and Technology. She has endorsements in social studies, math and educational technology. She has 13 years of experience with her most recent teaching experience in West Branch. Motion by Klenow, support by Ulman to hire Wendi Paulson as a middle school teacher. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Next, Mr. Suttle is recommending Mrs. Meaghan Martinez to fill the middle school vacancy that was created when Mrs. Tera Albert resigned. Mrs. Martinez received her Bachelor's degree from CMU with a math major and a language arts minor. She spent 10 years leading her math department in Nevada where she taught Algebra and Pre-Algebra. Motion by Bruning, support by Klenow to hire Meaghan Martinez as a middle school teacher. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Finally, Mr. Suttle is recommending Ms. Veronica Schlosser to fill the middle school 5<sup>th</sup> grade vacancy created when Mr. Tim Webb resigned. Ms. Schlosser received her Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education from U of M-Flint, and her Master of Arts degree in teaching from SVSU. She also holds credentials in science, social studies and is a K-12 reading specialist. She has 26 years of teaching experience and comes to us with excellent references. Motion by Klenow, support by Ulman to hire Veronica Schlosser as a middle school teacher. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Klinger said Mrs. Danek held interviews to fill a special education educational assistant role based on a student's IEP need at Clara Bolen. This position is to cover an IEP requirement for an incoming student. Mrs. Danek is recommending Ms. Celia Wixtrom to fill this position. Ms. Wixtrom holds a Bachelor's degree in psychology and has cared for children with specific needs for many years. She also has experience as a teacher aide and recently worked as an applied behavior analysis technician. Motion by Klenow, support by Bruning to hire Celia Wixtrom as an educational assistant. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

Committee Reports – Mr. Klinger said the curriculum committee met on July 6<sup>th</sup> to discuss the Return to School Roadmap created by the State of Michigan. Mr. Klinger said he has partnered with several stakeholders, including legal counsel, our local hospital, the health department, the ISD, superintendents, and families and students to get feedback. A discussion on the state guidelines was held on several topics. Discussion was held on required, strongly recommended and recommended language within the plan. In Phases 1-3 the school is closed, all events are cancelled and virtual learning is occurring. Phases 4-6 allows for in-person instruction for all students every day, with Phase 4 being the most restrictive. Safety protocols were discussed including the use of face masks, hand washing and personal hygiene and signage throughout the buildings for social distancing. Student's social and emotional health needs were discussed along with the methods of instruction in the phases. Mr. Klinger said the plan must be approved by the board by August 15<sup>th</sup> and must be submitted to the ISD no later than August 17<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Klinger said he hopes to have the plan complete by the first week of August and plans to bring it to the board at the August 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. He said several policies will help guide us in creating the plan and he will communicate with the stakeholders throughout the process. Mrs. Bruning said if we are

moved back to Phase 3 and digital learning, we need to improve the delivery model. Mr. Klinger said professional development for digital learning instruction has already been planned for our staff and all of our professional development is being built around improving delivery of instruction. Mrs. Klenow said even if we start the year in Phase 4 we may be moved back at some point to Phase 3 so we will need to be prepared to provide virtual learning again.

Legislative Report – Mr. Klinger said we recently learned the House, Senate and the Governor’s office have reached agreement to help support schools and the 2019-20 budget is likely to come in healthier than originally expected. This is positive news, but the numbers will continue to change, especially for the 2020-21 budget. Based on the May revenue conference we budgeted a \$650 proration cut for the 2019-20 budget. Now it is anticipated to be a \$180 proration cut. This would increase our revenue by about \$568,700 for 2019-20. The state has also proposed a possible increase in CARES Act restricted funding that will be \$341 per student and will most likely be during the 2020-21 school year. That equates to approximately \$412,600 as increased revenue. Between those two budgets we anticipate we may see a potential increase in revenue of \$981,000. Currently, the savings from previous recommendations will save our district approximately \$413,100 which doesn’t include the \$220,000 in original CARES Act money that has already been allocated to our district. Our new potential overall increase in revenue is \$1,394,494. That is based on the most recent information that we have, but things continue to change. At this point we still don’t know what the foundation allowance will be for 2020-21. We also don’t know our student enrollment numbers and what potential categorical cuts may occur. Mr. Klinger was asked if the CARES funds are restricted. He said they are, but they are fairly “school friendly” in that there is flexibility with these funds, at least in the first round of CARES funds. Mrs. Ulman asked when we will know for sure about the 2019-20 budget proration amount. Mr. Klinger said he doesn’t know that, but he will share the information as soon as he knows. Mr. VanderVeen asked if we could potentially hire an aide with those restricted funds that could monitor a “quarantine room”. Mr. Klinger said that it could potentially be used for salaries but we will need to wait and see for sure.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Klinger said with Ms. Schearer’s retirement, we now have a vacancy to fill for our special education leadership vacancy. It is his recommendation that we partner with IRESA to find a replacement. This person would be employed by IRESA that we could contract part-time to lead our special education department. Mr. Klinger said there would be a cost savings as we absorb a portion of Ms. Schearer’s position. Under the agreement we would have the person for 110 school days per year and we would save about \$9,000 in the special education leader role. We would use At-Risk funds to cover the remaining social worker’s wages. We would not replace the half-time social worker portion of Mary Beth’s position. The other social workers and the counselor would be reassigned to cover the grade levels, and hopefully we will be able to continue to pay for a full-time School Success worker in the elementary building. We know that our At-Risk funds will probably be cut so this is a way to try to offset some of that expense. Any of those expenses beyond what At-Risk funds cover will need to be paid from the general fund. Mr. VanderVeen asked if he understood correctly that we will not plan to replace the social worker portion of Ms. Schearer’s position. Mr. Klinger confirmed that, and added that a few years back we added one extra social worker position. Now, we would be cutting a half-time social worker position, so we would still be up one half-time position compared to a few years ago. Motion by O’Connor, support by Ulman to enter into a shared agreement with Iosco RESA for the special education director as presented. Yes: Klenow, Bruning, Ulman, Edmonds, O’Connor and Freel. No: VanderVeen. Motion carried.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Klinger said we are looking to purchase personal protective equipment for our students and staff. There are several different options and types of equipment that can be used and several vendors as well. At this time, he doesn't have definitive numbers, but he is considering disposable paper masks, reusable cloth facemasks, face shields, and facemasks that have a replaceable filter. He said plastic face shields must be worn, along with a mask, for cleaning. Students in grades K-5 are not required to wear masks. Mrs. Freel asked Dr. Kloska for her input as to whether young students should wear masks. Dr. Kloska said she doesn't think it's a bad idea for young students to wear a mask. Face masks with adjustable ear straps work best for young children. She said they don't need to be surgical grade masks. She said she purchased some for her children locally, and knows some people are making homemade masks as well. She said two layers of cloth is best, or a mask that a filter can be inserted into would also work. A filter provides more protection for the wearer. Mrs. Bruning mentioned that people need to be careful that there isn't latex in the mask if they are allergic to it. Mr. Klinger said we need to have a good stock of masks on hand. Some families may be able to provide masks for their children, but we need to be able to provide them for children that don't have them. Dr. Kloska said masks are more tolerable for children than face shields. Shields tend to distort a wearer's vision while looking through them. Mrs. Freel suggested the students wear double layered cotton face masks and wondered if we should request donations for homemade facemasks. Mrs. Klenow said students don't necessarily need to wear a face mask, but must wear some type of face "covering", which could include bandanas or neck gaiters. Motion by Klenow, support by Ulman to approve Mr. Klinger to spend up to \$75,000 for personal protective equipment and cleaning chemicals and supplies as discussed. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

A second motion was made by Klenow, support by Bruning that students in grades K-5 follow the CDC guidelines regarding face masks and students in grades 6-12 wear a face covering of choice while in school. Yes: Edmonds, O'Connor, VanderVeen, Klenow, Bruning and Ulman. No: Freel. Motion carried.

Mr. Klinger said the graduation committee discussed not having a formal senior awards ceremony. Instead, the students who earned scholarships will be honored by recognizing them through an article in our local paper, on our website, and on our Facebook page. Everyone agreed that was a good idea. Motion by Klenow, support by Bruning to approve the Senior Awards Night as presented. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Klinger said the Project Graduation Committee, led by Mr. Haskin, Mrs. Klenow and other parents of seniors, have organized an off-campus event at Dewey Durant park. Senior students would be required to have permission slips signed by their parent acknowledging the risk of COVID-19. Students will be provided a mask if they don't have one. They will have their temperature checked before participating and will need to complete the questionnaire. Hand sanitizer will be provided, surfaces will be sanitized between uses, single serve food and drinks will be served to students by a volunteer and games will be played following social distancing guidelines. Police volunteers will provide security along with other parent volunteers. Mr. Klinger said he reached out to legal counsel, local police and the health department for their input. Based on the plan, they all felt we have safe protocols and steps in place that comply with the executive orders for physical distancing and protective measures. The health department was quoted as saying "whenever events that bring people together are held, there is always some risk of disease transmission but the plan you have outlined appear to minimize the risk and comply with recommendations." Mrs. O'Connor said the park is open to the public and wondered what the plan is if other people show up that want to mingle with the seniors. Mrs. Klenow said they will not allow that to happen. Mrs. Klenow said there are several volunteers that will be monitoring

## **NEW BUSINESS**

things very closely. Motion by Klenow, support by Bruning to approve the Project Graduation plan as presented, with masks being worn in close proximity areas where a 6-foot distance can't be observed and without masks in open areas where a 6-foot distance can be followed. Yes: Klenow, VanderVeen, Bruning, Ulman and Edmonds. No: O'Connor and Freel. Motion carried. Both Mrs. O'Connor and Mrs. Freel indicated their vote was based on advice given by legal counsel.

Mr. Klinger said the committee discussed having five formal graduation ceremonies to keep attendance size within the limits set by the Executive Order regarding outside events while in Phase 4. Each ceremony would last about 30 minutes, with 30 minutes between each. Each ceremony would have 17-18 graduates and up to 4 guests per graduate. Masks/face shields are being recommended by legal counsel and the committee, along with social distancing. Graduates and guests will be screened prior to entry based on health department recommendations. Families will sit in the bleachers on the football field socially distanced from one another and maintenance staff will clean the bleachers between each ceremony. Mr. Klinger said they may need to adjust the starting times as they are working on the timing for the transitions between each ceremony. Legal counsel, local police and the health department all feel we have safe protocols and steps in place that comply with the executive orders for physical distancing and protective measures. The health department was quoted as saying "whenever events that bring people together are held, there is always some risk of disease transmission but the plan you have outlined appear to minimize the risk and comply with recommendations." Mr. Klinger said they plan to spread the valedictorians and the salutatorian between the ceremonies so one can speak at each. Mrs. Bruning said she would like to see the face masks/shields be optional, and not a mandatory requirement. The board had discussion on that and there were varying opinions. Mrs. Bruning made a motion to approve the graduation ceremony. Face masks will not be mandatory but may be worn if the attendee chooses to do so. Support to the motion by Klenow. Yes: VanderVeen, Ulman, Bruning, Klenow and Edmonds. No: O'Connor and Freel. Motion carried. Both Mrs. Freel and Mrs. O'Connor said they based their vote on advice received from legal counsel.

## **INFORMATION & PROPOSALS**

Administration – Mrs. Danek thanked the board for their support of the new hires. She said she had good applicants for her positions and she hopes the state will continue to progress through the phases. Mr. Klinger said he had conversation with the new county Emergency Manager, Eric Abbott, and he is working with FEMA to assist families affected by the flooding in May. He has requested the use of the high school parking lot as a drive-thru area where paperwork can be completed by those experiencing hardships from the flooding. Mr. Klinger said our food service distribution program worked very well using the parking lot and they established a very efficient system. He feels the same type of layout would work well for this request.

From the Board – Mrs. Klenow welcomed the new hires and is excited to see things move forward. She thanked Dr. Jo and Dr. Kloska for their participation and input tonight and said they are great resources. Mrs. Bruning said she appreciates everyone's hard work putting all of these things together, especially Mr. Klinger. She thanked the doctors for their information and congratulated Ms. Schearer on her retirement. Mrs. Ulman appreciated the doctors collaborating with us, congratulated Ms. Schearer, welcomed the new hires and said we want to do what's best for everyone, including the community. Mrs. O'Connor shared the same sentiments. She said we still have a long way to go, and she doesn't want to compromise the health of our staff and students. Mr. VanderVeen agreed with the other comments. Mrs. Freel thanked the doctors for their insight tonight and welcomed the new hires. She said COVID-19 continues to be a moving/changing

## **INFORMATION & PROPOSALS**

issue and she knows not everyone will agree on what is best, so we may need to respectfully agree to disagree on some decisions. Mrs. Edmonds agreed with the other comments and wondered when the board might resume in-person meetings. Mrs. Freel said the governor's order extended virtual meetings through the end of this month so we will see what happens at that point in time. Mr. Klinger said he would like to schedule a policy committee meeting, or a board workshop, to review the Return to School Roadmap prior to the next board meeting on August 10<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Ulman wondered if the board should have a workshop on August 3<sup>rd</sup> in case they don't agree on the plan and Mr. Klinger needs to make changes to it. Mrs. Freel said the board needs to let Mr. Klinger and the administration put the plan together and not micromanage the process. Mr. Klinger said the Roadmap will include plans for the various phases. Phases 1-3 require virtual instruction, while Phases 4-6 allow for in-person instruction. He said we need to be prepared to shift and move between the various phases if necessary. Mrs. Freel said she believes we need to let Mr. Klinger put this plan together and bring it to the board for final approval.

## **ADVANCE PLANNING**

Motion by Klenow, support by Ulman to adjourn at 8:52 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.