

Tawas Area Schools  
Special Board of Education Meeting  
April 20, 2020

The special virtual meeting of the Tawas Area Board of Education was called to order by President Bacarella at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, April 20, 2020, through Google Meets or a teleconferencing method.

Roll Call:

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

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

**POSITIVE HIGHLIGHTS**

None.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS – INFORMATION AND PROPOSALS**

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

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion by Freel, support by O'Connor to approve the minutes of the April 6, 2020 special board meeting as presented. There were no additions or corrections. Motion carried unanimously.

**PAYMENT OF BILLS**

None.

**RECEIPT OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS**

None.

**RECOMMENDATIONS & REPORTS FROM THE ADMINISTRATION**

None.

**OLD BUSINESS**

None.

Legislative Report – None.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Klinger said that all district employees will see an increase in their insurance contribution costs because of high claims throughout the 2019-20 year. This has specifically impacted the student term hourly employees regarding affordability under the Affordable Care Act. Mrs. Huitema is working with our Blue Cross Blue Shield representative to see if the monthly cost for the plan can be reduced so it doesn't impact those hourly employees. The district currently pays \$350 per month toward their insurance premium and the employee pays the balance. If Blue Cross is unable to work with us on the increase, the district will need to pay an additional \$15 per month toward the premium in order to comply with the affordability piece. Mrs. Huitema said there are two requirements that must be met under the Act including providing minimum essential coverage and meeting the criteria of affordable coverage to single subscribers. She said if the district pays the additional \$15 per month toward the coverage it will cost a total of \$2,340 for all employees for the year. There are large penalties if employers do not comply with the Affordable Care Act

requirements. Motion by Klenow, support by O'Connor to increase the district insurance contribution to \$365 per month for student term employees as discussed, if Blue Cross Blue Shield will not reduce the monthly cost for that plan. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Klinger said the personnel committee met on April 16<sup>th</sup> to discuss how to compensate spring coaches and extra-curricular advisors and sponsors due to the governor's executive order to close schools. The spring coaches were only about a week into their season when that occurred. Some coaches had been working with athletes through pre-season workouts before regular practice began. Mr. Unke checked with other districts locally and around the state to see how they planned to compensate their coaches. He found there was no consistency; district's ranged from paying as little as 10% to as high as 100% of their normal coaching salary. The personnel committee is recommending the district pay spring coaches 25% of their normal compensation.

Mr. Klinger said many of the extra-curricular groups had already completed their "seasons" for the year, or were very close to completion. Since those requirements were very close to completion the personnel committee is recommending those advisors/sponsors be paid 100% of their normal compensation.

Motion by Ulman, support by O'Connor to pay the spring coaches and extra-curricular advisors/sponsors as discussed; 25% for spring coaches and 100% for extra-curricular advisors/sponsors. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously. Mr. Bacarella said there was no scientific way that they arrived at those numbers, but it was their "best guess" as to what seemed fair.

Mr. Klinger said the personnel committee also discussed teacher evaluation pay based on the fact that administrators will not be able to complete their evaluations due to the school closure. Normally, teachers are provided effectiveness ratings each year based on their evaluation results. In the past, a staff member receiving an "effective" rating was awarded \$50, and a "highly effective" rating earned \$100. Since school was closed so abruptly in March, each staff member's evaluation was at a different stage and they are not able to be completed this year. The committee is recommending that all teaching staff be paid \$50 this year for their evaluation pay. Mr. Bacarella stated there isn't a fair way to determine separate ratings this year and the committee felt it was their "best guess" to award everyone \$50. Motion by O'Connor, support by Klenow to assign evaluation pay to teaching staff at \$50. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Klinger said the district's continuity of learning and COVID-19 response plan has been completed. He had hoped to have the board review it before submitting to the ISD, but the plan needed to be completed, approved and implemented by April 16<sup>th</sup>. The district plan, along with the building plans, were all completed timely through a concerted district effort. He said there were 15 questions in the template that needed to be answered to complete the plan. Many stakeholders had input in the plan, including the board, administration, teaching staff, our collegiate partners and the ISD. Staff reached out to their 4<sup>th</sup> hour students to check on them, and to check on internet availability, digital devices and to inform them of the food program, among other things. Mr. Klinger asked if there were any questions. Mrs. O'Connor asked if our plan was based off other plans in our area, or if it was a blend of ideas from administration and teachers. Mr. Klinger said the superintendents in the area shared ideas with each other; however, we knew our plan would be a hybrid composed of digital and paper learning based on our student's needs.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

The other local district's plans are very similar. Mrs. Freel asked what percentage of students don't have access to internet services, and wondered if those students might be able to use a hotspot from their parent's phones. Mr. Klinger said he has learned that phone hotspots won't work if there isn't a good signal strength in the area, which is a problem for some. Mr. Suttle said about 20% of our students in the high school are without connectivity and a little less than that in the middle school. Mrs. Danek said there are about 15% - 20% of Clara Bolen students without internet connectivity. She added that 135 Chromebooks have been signed out to families as some had internet service but no device to use. Mr. Klinger said we will use many different modes to communicate with our students including Google classroom, Google Meets, email, phone calls and office hours for our staff. Teachers will provide instruction on what has already been taught and will also introduce some new material through those various methods. Mrs. Freel asked what the plan is for those students that don't participate and do any of their work. Mr. Klinger said that based on the executive order we cannot hold student's accountable if they don't participate and complete their work. Teachers will be reaching out to students weekly, and if needed, counseling staff will do the same. Administrators will also contact students if they are not responding, so there is a tiered system in place. If necessary, we can retain students in their current grade level for those that were already struggling before the school closure went into effect. However, based on the executive order, we are to do everything in our power to ensure that the students have all the help they need so they can advance to the next grade level. Mr. Bacarella said he is happy to hear the staff will be proactive by reaching out to those struggling students. Mrs. O'Connor asked how long the continuity plan will be in place. Mr. Klinger said it will run through the end of the current school year which is May 28<sup>th</sup> for seniors, and June 5<sup>th</sup> for K-11 students. We plan to offer summer school again, if possible, and keep our credit recovery programs in place as well. Mrs. Freel asked if students will receive the letter grade based on what their grade was when school closed. Mr. Klinger said there have been many conversations about how to handle credits and grades. Student's that had a passing grade as of March 11<sup>th</sup> will receive at least that grade for the 3<sup>rd</sup> marking period. Their grade can't get any worse than it was on that date but it could get better. The work students are currently working on is to wrap up the 3<sup>rd</sup> marking period. For the second semester, we will be awarding credit/no credit. Mr. Klinger said there were several questions we needed to consider if we were opting to give letter grades, including how our coursework compares to other districts, how staff has consistency in grading, how we can ensure integrity of the work and how we could determine all standards were achieved. We don't want to penalize students for completing their work and we want to encourage them as much as possible.

Motion by O'Connor, support by Freel to support the Continuity Plan as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

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Administration – Mrs. Danek said 135 Chromebooks have been distributed to Clara Bolen families. Student belongings have been distributed to all families but two. Books have been sent home to some students and others are able to access the digital resources available to them and paper packets are also an option. She said virtual interviews are scheduled this week for some teaching positions that will be available next year. Mrs. Bolen said technology has been extremely useful for our students since the closure through the use of the Google suite resources that we have in place for classwork and communicating with the students. Mrs. Mochty said the high school has been focusing on the digital resources that come with our textbooks to engage the students. She said if students don't have access to the digital components teachers are providing comparable paper packets with examples or notes for the students and they are able to answer questions via email, telephone calls, or office hours. Teachers are able to mark if students are participating, in

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the grading portal. Students that didn't have a passing grade for the 3<sup>rd</sup> marking period are given this week to bring their grade up to passing. If they don't, they will be given an incomplete so they can still have a little more time to complete their work. Report cards will be printed next Tuesday and mailed home to students. The 4<sup>th</sup> marking period started today. Mr. Suttle said it has been a cohesive effort to make everything come together and everyone has stepped up to do their part. 703 students were given 8 meals each last Tuesday through the food program so a total of 5,624 meals were provided. The maintenance crew tagged and bagged 800 lockers so belongings could be distributed to the students and 170 Chromebooks have been distributed to 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. The counseling department has been available 24/7 to help students and the educational assistants helped prepare paper packets for students without access to digital resources. Teachers have worked hard to make sure their students are able to achieve the high expectations that have been set. Transportation employees have worked to tag and bag 100 bags to get out to students. Biographies on our senior students have been put together to share out on Facebook, radio spots will be aired on WKJC and banners or signs will display pictures of our seniors along US-23 and on Newman Street. Mr. Klinger said a graduation committee has been formed and they are working on ideas for ways to celebrate our seniors. We would like to have a ceremony, possibly at a later date this summer, and the committee is working on a backup plan option. Mr. Klinger has put together a Business Preparedness and Response Plan based on executive order 2020-42 from a template provided by the local health department. It is available on the district website with definitions and information to ensure safety for those on campus. Mr. Klinger said some supplies have been gathered around the district and they were provided to Mrs. Amy Groff at the hospital today. They were very grateful for the donation.

From the Board – Mrs. Ulman thanked everyone for the hard work that has gone into making everything come together in this uncertain time. She is grateful for everyone's efforts. Mr. VanderVeen said kudos to all. He asked Mr. Klinger if we need to prepare for a special review plan for students for the fall, to make sure they completed the work available to them now and see if they are ready to move on. Mr. Klinger said teachers will likely spend more time reviewing in the fall than normal and he said we will utilize our Title services to make sure we close the gaps where necessary. Mr. VanderVeen asked if we know anything more about the GSRP classrooms for next year. Mr. Klinger said he has spoken to Dana McGrew and he is working to find an alternate location with classrooms for them to use next year that would not be on our campus. Mrs. Klenow thanked everyone for their great efforts and said the hospital really appreciated the donations today. Mrs. Bruning also thanked everyone for their great work on getting everything organized. She said some parents were confused and frustrated when this all started but the teachers have done a great job reaching out to families and students and things are going even better than expected. She thanked the graduation committee for working to find a way to recognize our seniors. Mrs. Freel agreed with the earlier comments and thanked everyone for their hard work. Mrs. O'Connor thanked everyone for their efforts and is pleased to know our students can continue their education. She is grateful that we had our digital resources in place and she is certain our students will go above and beyond while learning from home. Mr. Bacarella said he appreciates the resilience of administrators, teachers, and all support staff in recreating ways to educate our students. We were fortunate to have our millage pass a few years back which allowed us to purchase Chromebooks and begin using digital resources. We were more prepared than many districts and he is grateful for that. He hopes we can have a meaningful graduation ceremony at some point for our seniors, and for their parents. The way we have come together in this crisis is a reflection of our community and we can be very thankful for all of the teamwork.

### **ADVANCE PLANNING**

Mr. Klinger said he would like to schedule virtual policy and curriculum committee meetings. It was decided the policy meeting will be May 4<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m., followed by the curriculum meeting at 7:00 p.m. The next board meeting will be May 11<sup>th</sup> and a board workshop will be held May 18<sup>th</sup> to discuss Mr. Klinger's evaluation.

Motion by Freel, support by Klenow to adjourn at 8:18 p.m.