

Tawas Area Schools
Special Board of Education Meeting
September 28, 2020

The special meeting of the Tawas Area Board of Education was called to order by President Freel at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, September 28, 2020 through Google Meets or a teleconferencing method.

Roll Call:

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

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS – INFORMATION AND PROPOSALS

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

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Klinger said for the past few weeks, administration and the Board have listened to the teacher's concerns and have been looking for solutions to help support and bring a balance to the delivery of instruction while staff delivers both in-person and remote learning. An alternative schedule has been created that will modify the bargaining agreement between TAFT and the Board of Education. The schedule will provide an early release for in-person students by reducing each class period by six minutes, as well as lengthening the teachers' work day by six minutes. The schedule was agreed upon by TAFT and the Board. This will increase the teacher's current contractual time from seven and one half hours per day to seven hours, thirty-six minutes per day. Mrs. Klenow asked Mr. Klinger when this new schedule would begin. Mr. Klinger said he would like to give families a couple weeks' notice so he would like to begin on Monday, October 12th. Mr. VanderVeen asked what the new release time would be by shaving the six minutes off each class period. Mr. Klinger said we would be releasing high school students about 2:07, which is about 42 minutes earlier. The extra time at the end of the day will be used by the teachers to provide help and instruction to the virtual learners, and they would also be available for the face to face students.

Motion by Ulman, support by O'Connor to approve the letter of understanding between TAFT and the Board of Education as presented. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Freel said there were some questions that came in when she asked for public comments that she would like to address now. The first question was whether there will be mask breaks for the middle school students. Mr. Klinger said a new Executive Order was issued by the governor last Friday that will require all students in grades kindergarten and up to wear masks at all times while in the building. This new mandate begins next Monday, October 5th. Mr. Klinger said we are trying to schedule outside time for students, when possible, so they can have mask breaks while in large open areas. We are trying to take advantage of these opportunities when weather permits. The next comment was from Erin Challenger who first thanked the board for making the difficult decisions they do, and for looking out for everyone's best interest. She asked if the board had considered how an early release will affect working parent's schedules that rely on daycare, and how it will affect the face to face learners that will now have shorter class periods. Mr. Klinger

said all of those concerns have been taken into consideration as they work to find a solution to this dilemma and he understands parent concerns. He said they have discussed the changes to the schedule with the local parochial schools as well since they use our busing for their students. He said we need to educate all of our learners and we are trying to address everyone's needs. He said we typically have more students ride the bus at the end of the day than in the morning. We plan to dismiss and load our students, send buses to the parochial schools to pick up those students and then proceed with the afternoon run. Mr. Klinger said a lot of time has gone into planning this solution and he knows it's not a perfect fix but we are trying to minimize the impact to everyone as best we can. He said the new schedule will be communicated with families in a variety of ways so everyone is aware of the coming change. The next comment was from Suzie Billinghamurst who expressed frustration regarding a letter that came home Thursday afternoon informing families that a high school staff member was being monitored for COVID-19 after being exposed to a COVID positive person. She felt it put her daughter in a difficult situation requiring her to decide if she should stay at home so as not to put herself at risk by being in school and possibly being exposed, or going to school so she would be eligible to participate in her cross country meet. She felt her daughter should have been able to participate in remote learning from home, as a virtual student, for safety reasons, and still be allowed to participate in her athletic contest. She is also disappointed that band is considered a non-essential activity and the students aren't allowed to perform and attend the football games. Mrs. Freel said she understands her concerns but we can't make schedule changes on a daily basis for students to go from face to face to virtual. We are doing the best we can as situations arise. Mrs. Klenow added that we are attempting to provide structure for our students and we are addressing COVID exposures in conjunction with the health department and hospital officials, and the school is going above and beyond to create a safe environment for everyone. She apologized for the situation her daughter was in and reminded her that we are doing our best to help and protect all students.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Klenow, support by Ulman to adjourn at 7:21 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.