



Neil Wetherbee, Superintendent
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Regular Meeting Minutes October 14, 2024 NPS Board of Education

Board President, Ben Purdy, called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.
This meeting was held at 104 S Wing St. Northport, Michigan, in room 300.

Roll Call

Members Present: Jake Zimmer, Tom Wetherbee, Ben Purdy, Dr. Barbara Conley, Ryan Blessing, Dan Duffiney and Danielle Percy

Members Absent: NONE

A quorum was present.

Approval of Agenda

Motion: Moved by Ryan Blessing, seconded by Danielle Percy, to approve the agenda at this October 14, 2024, regular board meeting.

All Ayes

Motion Carried 7-0

Students of the Month

- Elementary: Finlay Sporer, presented by Carrie Wadas
- Secondary: Taryn Kelley, presented by Carrie Wadas

Discussion

2025 Close-Up Trip to Washington, D.C.

The National Honor Society (NHS) and the National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) presented information to the Board regarding their proposed trip to D.C. in the spring. Former attendees described their best experiences from the trip in 2023. Corrine Wetherbee noted that the groups have considerably more money than they did last time, having raised almost \$8,000. They will continue to fundraise throughout the winter. In 2023, a grant from the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) paid for airfare and the group will apply for those funds again. There are 7 NHS members and 4 NJHS members. Costs for the trip are approximately \$2,300 per student. The group will come to the November meeting with more detailed numbers and request funding support for the trip.

Superintendent's Report

- Superintendent Wetherbee described the idea behind Project 234 (18 students per grade x 13 grades). To reach this optimal school size, Superintendent Wetherbee identified several areas of importance including housing, childcare, increased access to extra-curricular activities, and marketing. He noted that these are large, "infinite goals," and we will need an ongoing effort to accomplish this growth.

- Our Mental Health Specialist, Olivia Messer, resigned to move downstate. Her and her spouse were unable to secure housing here. We have had two good candidates apply for the position and extended an offer today. We also have another bus driver candidate who already has his CDL.
- After last month's presentation by LIFT (Leelanau Investing for Teens), the Board seemed reluctant to grant their funding request. We will not put it on the agenda as an action item unless requested by a Board member. LIFT is incorporated under the 501c3 held by the Friendship Center in Suttons Bay.
- The Dandelion Discovery Center (housed in the former Children's Center building) is still awaiting final approval from the fire marshal. The provider is still excited and willing, but no process can be made without the fire marshal signing off.

Public Comments

- Laura Cavendish gave an update on the PTO. They are still meeting on the 1st Monday of each month. There are about ten families that attend regularly and a few new families each meeting. The group has drafted its bylaws and mission statement and will confer with teachers before presenting to the Northport Board of Education. The group recently helped with Walk & Roll to School Day which was a big success. The group ultimately wants to build a greater sense of school community and are very event focused.
- Bradley Price, a community member, again stated his frustrations with the Board regarding not receiving a response to his letter. He reiterated that his ideas for the school are to stop bullying, have all students graduate with a mastery of a second language, and that each student should receive a specialized plan of education in the 9th grade.

Consent Agenda

- Approval of September 9, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes
- Approval of Bills Presented for Payment for \$89,669.20

Hearing no objections, these items were approved by consent.

Action Items

Annual Summer Tax Resolution

MOTION: Moved by Jake Zimmer, seconded by Dan Duffiney, that the Northport Board of Education approve the Annual Summer Tax Resolution, as presented, imposing a summer tax levy of 100% of annual property taxes.

DISCUSSION: NONE

All Ayes

Motion Carried 7-0

Discussion

Quarter & Semester Grades

Neil discussed the challenges and successes of our transition to standards referenced grading. He presented the grading purpose statement that our teachers created:

The primary purpose of grading is to effectively communicate student achievement toward core content standards, at this point in time. The academic grade identifies students' current levels of performance regarding the learning intentions. Students will receive separate feedback and evaluation regarding their Habits of Character, which will not be included in the academic achievement grade.

We are using two software programs to track student achievement (OTUS) and habits of character (Kick Board). Many things are going well, and we are working with the companies to fix glitches and improve functionality. We are currently working to ensure all information from Kick Board flows into OTUS so parents can access both academic and non-academic information in one place.

One of the biggest shifts of this transition is that grading is based on what a student knows *at this point in time*. We do not want to penalize a student who doesn't understand something in the beginning of the semester, as long as they get the concept by the end of the semester. To better reflect this, Superintendent Wetherbee asked the Board to consider changing our quarter weighting. Traditionally, each quarter was 40% of the semester grade and the exam was 20%. Superintendent Wetherbee suggested weighing both quarters as 80% of the semester and keeping the exam at 20%. The Board can discuss this further at the November meeting.

Staff Retention

Superintendent Wetherbee brought the Board's attention to two financial issues. First, he discussed the recent financial audit and noted that, due to very conservative budgeting, we ended the last fiscal year with \$353,758 more than planned. This has increased our prudent reserve to over 4 million, which is more than our goal of 3.6 million. Secondly, Superintendent Wetherbee reported to the Board that the increase in employee health insurance was 14.5% this year, far higher than the 0.2% increase that the State allowed District's to contribute to employee health benefits. This has led to a large, unexpected, cost for employees that lowers their paychecks. To retain staff during this time of high inflation, Superintendent Wetherbee proposed giving staff a \$1000 retention bonus for all staff who remain in January 2025. The total cost of this bonus would be approximately \$42,000. The Board can choose whatever amount, if any, they would want for this bonus.

Old Business

NONE

New Business

Ryan Blessing asked if we plan to give Mr. Price a written response. Board discussed the best way to approach the situation and recommended a response to Mr. Price that included information for how to reach Board President, Ben Purdy.

Superintendent's Comments

Superintendent Wetherbee thanked the Board members for all being in attendance today.

Public Comments

Carrie Wadas, teacher, noted her appreciation for the Board's thoughtfulness and consideration of staff. She thanked them for our competitive pay and health benefits.

Laura Cavendish, parent, informed the Board that Superintendent Wetherbee will present at the next PTO meeting regarding the new grading system. She stated that she is excited to have parents know more about these changes and the goal of the 234 Plan. She also noted that she was impressed by the Board's willingness to help compensate employees.

State Representative Betsy Coffia submitted a letter for the record to the Northport Board of Education.

Board Member Comments

NONE

Adjournment

MOTION: Moved by Dr. Barbara Conley, seconded by Jake Zimmer, to adjourn.

Motion Passed 7-0

The meeting was adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

Danielle Percy, Secretary

Elizabeth Schwind, Recording Secretary