

Agenda

326.24 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG – Gray

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Bradley Gray.

327.24 ROLL CALL/ATTENDANCE – Hines

Board members present: LeWanna Abney-Mitchell, David R. Cox, Bradley Gray, Melandie Hines, Kimberly R. May, Mark F. Neal, Frederick L. Weaver, Th.D.

328.24 ADJOURNMENT TO A CLOSED SESSION – Gray

NOTE: There may or may not be action taken by the Board following the closed session.

Resolved, that the Board of Education will adjourn to a closed session at 5:05 p.m. pursuant to 8(a) according to the Open Meetings Act. Motion by F. Weaver, support by M. Hines.

ROLL CALL VOTE

AYES:	7
NAYS:	0
ABSTAIN:	0
ABSENT:	0

MOTION PASSED

329.24 ADJOURNMENT TO AN OPEN MEETING – Gray

Resolved, that the Board of Education adjourn to an open meeting at 6:19 p.m. Motion by L. Abney-Mitchell, support by M. Hines.

ROLL CALL VOTE

AYES:	7
NAYS:	0
ABSTAIN:	0
ABSENT:	0

MOTION PASSED

330.24 CITIZEN'S COMMENTS: AGENDA ITEMS – Gray

Michelle Sample commented on agenda item 331.24, specifically addressing the budget presentations. She noted that the handouts were very detailed, easy to understand, and clear. She also mentioned that the presentation Brandon Walsh gave last month was easy to understand. She expressed curiosity about why this document could not have been provided 8-9 months ago. She questioned whether the budget presentation was prepared by the district, by Brandon Walsh, or a combination of both? If the district did it, she wondered why it could not have been provided earlier. Additionally, she brought up agenda item 332.24 and inquired whether Ms. Curry was performing two jobs or just one.

Tonya Karpinski shared concerns about the changes in the budget. The mid-year budget amendment included a figure of \$7.1 million, but now the final budget has been reduced to only \$3.6 million. She also expressed concern that, back in December, there was a promise of meetings with stakeholders and union associations to gather input, but this has not occurred. The budget presented various proposed scenarios, which the unions feel were pulled out of thin air. Negotiations are similarly problematic, with numbers and answers frequently changing. Due to this lack of transparency, the MEA's 84% vote of no confidence still stands for Mr. Cox, Dr. Dignan and Dr. Ofili.

331.24 REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF BUSINESS SERVICE & FINANCE – Campbell

I. 2023-2024 General Fund Operating Budget Final Amendment Presentation

Julie Campbell shared a detailed presentation of the 2023-2024 General Fund Operating Budget Final Amendment Presentation.

II. 2024-2025 General Fund Operating Budget Presentation

Julie Campbell shared a detailed presentation of the 2024-2025 General Fund Operating Budget Presentation.

K. May shared that they discussed the scenarios shared this evening during the finance committee meeting. She then asked for clarification on scenarios 1-3, specifically inquiring about the enrollment numbers for each scenario.

J. Campbell explained that scenarios 1-3 were based on an enrollment of 9,150.

B. Gray asked if the millage was adopted, would it go into effect for the next school year, or would we receive it for half of this year?

J. Campbell shared that if the voters approve reinstating the district's 18 mills and capturing Inkster's taxable values, the district would be able to issue a

new levy in December to capture the difference between 18 mills and 17.9 mills from all municipalities and capture a half-year from Inkster of debt retirement, sinking, and general fund. If it passes, it will increase revenue this year.

M. Hines expressed her concern about moving forward with this budget, noting that the 2024 final budget will end at 2.4%, and the projected budget for 2025 will end at -5.56%. Since a school district does not generate funds like that, she asked if there is more time to negotiate before we take a vote.

J. Campbell pointed out that this is looking a year ahead, and the district can take measures during the school year to save money. She noted that we will also do a mid-year amendment and final for the 2025 year, reflecting any budget changes.

M. Hines mentioned that, given the budget crisis regarding enrollment, we will still need to recruit students. She questioned whether a budget would be allocated for that purpose?

J. Campbell responded that money is allocated in the communications budget specifically to market the district and increase enrollment.

I. State Aid Note Presentation

Julie Campbell shared a detailed timeline outlining the process of borrowing against the district's future state aid, if the district encounters difficulty in covering expenses during the month when state aid is not received.

332.24 REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE ITEMS – Tocco

I. Supplemental Pay Agreement – [under separate cover]

M. Neal commented that he would vote no on the issue, not because he doubts Ms. Curry's capabilities but because he believes we shouldn't be paying for an acting superintendent when we are paying for the current superintendent. He shared his feelings on the matter during a closed session.

Resolved, that the Board of Education approve Human Resource Item I. as presented. Motion by M. Hines support by K. May.

## ROLL CALL VOTE

AYES: 5  
NAYS: 1 (Neal)  
ABSTAIN: 1 (Cox)  
ABSENT: 0

## MOTION PASSED

### 333.24 SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS – Curry

Ms. Curry thanked Ms. Campbell for the budget presentation and looks forward to collaborating on the district's next steps.

### 334.24 CITIZEN'S COMMENTS: NON-AGENDA ITEMS – Gray

Jennifer Owens read an anonymous statement from a teacher expressing their concern for the Special Education Department, which is facing significant challenges, with the closure of the cross-categorical room in the middle school intensifying the situation. Students who would have been placed in these rooms are now being shifted to other settings despite promises made to parents. Additionally, the department is experiencing staff turnover, with two social workers leaving recently, further straining resources. The addition of emotionally impaired rooms at Hamilton adds to the burden, as such classrooms require additional support and resources. There's a lack of respect for exceptional education staff, leading to concerns about staff retention and the safety of students. The board is urged to address these issues promptly by meeting with relevant stakeholders and taking action to ensure appropriate support and staffing levels. Additionally, the change in the curriculum is a problem. Please investigate the staff in the district, starting at the central office, for the cuts. Positions created are no longer needed, especially with salaries exceeding \$200,000 per year.

Jessica West raised concerns about a community petition expressing a lack of confidence in the Superintendent and calling for an investigation into fiscal and operational mismanagement and alleged backroom deals involving board members. She questioned the budget allocation for operations and maintenance, highlighted concerns over the failure to sell unnecessary properties, and noted staff resignations attributed to mismanagement. Additionally, she identified accounting errors in the presentation and emphasized the need for a comprehensive plan. She understands that this is a necessary first step. She also expressed concerns about special education, warning that continued loss of support staff could impact the district's ability to support its students.

April Dabelstein-Shepler expressed her past decision not to move out of Wayne-Westland due to the special education programs offered. She criticized the district for prioritizing administrators over student needs. April emphasized that some special education students cannot thrive in general education and noted that

paraprofessionals are not adequately trained to support them in that setting. Additionally, she mentioned that tonight's budget was understood despite previous claims that it was too complex for parents to comprehend.

Melinda Harris spoke about the changes at the school and the loss of the social worker, expressing her frustration with the district and government. Melinda also voiced her disappointment regarding Dr. Dignan's leave and the unfair blaming of the budget issues on him, stressing that budget decisions involve many people. She complimented the new principal at Stottlemeyer but raised concerns about staffing and staff transfers within the district. Additionally, Melinda advocated for more parent volunteers even though some teachers may have reservations. She mentioned that research shows the benefits of parent volunteers in the classroom.

Noel West shared her concern about the AP and Music classes. She doesn't see how bussing students from one building to another will work. Taking 10-20 minutes away from class daily will cause students to suffer. Combining beginning orchestra students with more advanced ones will hold back the advanced students. Additionally, when she selected classes, she could choose AP classes online, but now she is told these classes are no longer offered. These programs are vital.

Michelle Sample shared that seeing this year's and next year's numbers in the presentation was nice. However, comparing them with last year's numbers would have been helpful. She also inquired if the superintendent search would be open to community participation and if retreats would be planned for this purpose. Michelle expressed concern about the number of closed meetings and the lack of community involvement. She asked about the timeline for the state to assist with the budget and appoint a controller. Additionally, she emphasized that the board needs to come together and present as one voice.

#### 335.24 REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS, BOARD OF EDUCATION – Gray

L. Abney-Mitchell shared the following comments:

- The public opinion is essential to the board. Please keep attending and holding the board accountable.
- We haven't had a budget in a year but can now move forward with the process.
- She will look into the classrooms.

M. Neal shared the following comments:

- Board members are allowed to have different opinions on what is right and wrong.
- There is no way to verify the numbers presented. If it says there is a deficit, then I guess there must be a deficit, just like when there was a surplus, the board thought there was a surplus. The board trusted the person who presented the budget. It took a long time to figure out the problem. There was a plan that included layoffs, but the board did nothing.
- At the last meeting, for which he was not present, there was nothing on the agenda about putting Dr. Dignan on leave. The board came out of a closed

session and determined to place Dr. Dignan on leave, which he feels lacked due process. Due process is important for everyone. Just like unions have due process, where you go through steps to address a problem. He personally felt it was rushed. The vote took place in an open meeting with no community members present.

- The board has done more to stop the process than to plan.

K. May shared the following comments:

- Thanked everyone for coming out, expressing their opinion, holding the board accountable, and have a great evening.

D. Cox shared the following comments:

- For 40 years, despite not being funded like neighboring schools, no district has suffered a fund deficit. Making decisions was essential to the school district and community's health. As a result, the district's bond rating has been lowered.
- The superintendent has been put on leave. He does not spend money without board approval. The board had opportunities to make fiscal moves, but those opportunities were wasted due to the board's inaction.
- Someone mentioned student enrollment tonight. The board's actions are not attracting new families to our community.
- The idea that the state will come in and help is incorrect. They are waiting to see if the board can make the right decisions. If the state intervenes, they will not consider contracts or the community's best interests. The state will take over decision-making from the elected board.

M. Hines shared the following comments:

- Congratulated the class of 2024
- Shared that she has been on the board for ten years. When she started, the district had a fund balance of only 4% and was in danger of state intervention. Over the years, the district had a surplus of as much as 24%, but now it's down to 2.4% and facing a deficit next year. How does this happen in such a short amount of time?
- She is talking to legislators about securing additional funds.
- Mentioned potential revenue options, such as renting the Planetarium, selling or leasing buildings, renting swimming pools, and opening the print shop for community purchases.
- The district needs to get the Headlee Millage.
- The board and district need to move in a new direction. It is not true that the board did nothing. The board was not provided with the information to make informed decisions.
- She is saddened for the AP students and questions why the district cannot offer alternative options like online, hybrid classes or alternating the teacher between the schools.
- Suggested that some positions might need reclassification.
- Thanked everyone for coming.

F. Weaver shared the following comments:

- Strongly disagreed with the rush to place the superintendent on leave. The board requested collaboration with the community to move the district forward, which did not occur. Neither the board nor the community received the information requested.
- He emphasizes transparency and urges immediate action to address the district's financial challenges. Correcting the situation cannot be achieved solely through cuts to employees. Exploring program cuts may be necessary, which will be difficult.
- Despite differing opinions, finances are something that the district can pull into place.

B. Gray shared the following comments:

- Thanked Ms. Campbell for answering many questions asked by the board members. She did an excellent job explaining those.
- Thanked Ms. Curry for stepping into the role of Acting Superintendent.
- The district released notification of a leadership change in the district.
- Noted that several other districts are facing financial challenges and have already begun planning. The board remains dedicated to collaborating with leadership to stabilize the district and prioritize classrooms.
- The budget was presented this evening and will be voted on at the following Monday's meeting. The board welcomes any feedback or comments.

336.24 ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, that the board adjourn the meeting at 8:02 p.m. Motion by M. Hines, support by F. Weaver.

ROLL CALL VOTE

AYES: 7  
NAYS: 0  
ABSTAIN: 0  
ABSENT: 0

MOTION PASSED



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Melandie Hines  
Board of Education Secretary  
Wayne-Westland Community Schools