

ATHENS AREA SCHOOLS  
Board of Education  
East Leroy, Michigan 49051  
November 18, 2024

REGULAR MEETING  
Jr./Sr. High School Media Center  
7:00 P.M.

Athens Jr./Sr. High School  
300 E. Holcomb St., Athens, MI 49011  
TELEPHONE: 729-5414

1. Call to order, \_\_\_\_\_ Knowles \_\_\_\_\_ presiding at \_\_\_\_\_ 7:00 p.m. \_\_\_\_\_.

A. Membership count to determine quorum presence:

Present: Penick:   X   Setlak:   X   Harvey:   X   Knowles:   X    
Loew:   X   McClure:   X   Stanton:   X  

A quorum   X   is, \_\_\_\_\_ is not, present.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

2. Approval of Agenda.

RECOMMENDED MOTION: Move that the Board of Education approve the agenda as amended: moving item 4.A. to the end of the regular meeting (prior to adjournment), and adding items 4.E. and 7.C. regarding the second reading of and approval of NEOLA policy updates.

Motion: \_\_\_\_\_ McClure \_\_\_\_\_.  
Second: \_\_\_\_\_ Penick \_\_\_\_\_.  
Ayes:   7  . Nays:   0  .  
Passed:   X  . Defeated: \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Public Comments.

**Board President John Knowles** shared a portion of a statement that was prepared by the District's attorney, regarding the termination of Mr. Eric VerHey.

*Jenny Lussier – Shared comments regarding “unjust” termination of Mr. Eric VerHey as a substitute teacher. Wonders if due process was properly followed during this matter. Concern regarding the impact on students, especially the 6<sup>th</sup> graders.*

*Eric VerHey – Shared experiences with his background culminating with his time served at Athens Area Schools. Served as Academic Intervention Room staff member and then later as a substitute 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, as well as a coach.*

**Cliff Denney** (gave 3 minutes of time to **Eric VerHey**) – Continued to discuss his time at Athens. Shared details around the incident that led to his termination. Noted that he was under the impression that the matter had been handled with the meeting with the building principal and his colleague.

**Melissa Irons** (gave 3 minutes of time to **Eric VerHey**) – Asks the Board of Education to reconsider his termination and to be reinstated as a substitute teacher.

**Shannon Tuttle** – Read statements from other parents who couldn't make tonight's regular meeting, due to an athletic conflict. Letters continued to express concern over the termination of Mr. Eric VerHey.

**Nate Kiefer** – Asked a question regarding why the substitute teacher was terminated?

**Kacie Brunner** – Read information from a FOIA request she completed with the District regarding the incident that resulted in Mr. Eric VerHey's termination. Shared that she was disturbed to hear that Mr. Eric VerHey had contacted students after the incident, with his personal phone number.

**Nate Kiefer** – Discussed process that his son went through regarding disciplinary actions and ensuring that it is a fair process for all.

**Jessica Blanchard** – Discussed perspective from her student's experience after Mr. Eric VerHey was terminated. Academically, seeing her student's grades impacted.

**Michelle Kounelis** – Retired Portage Schools teacher. Here to attest to Mr. Eric VerHey's character. Also spoke to the ongoing teacher shortage.

**Terry Nixon** – Believes that there should have been some type of progressive discipline followed in this incident. Concern regarding the timing of Mr. Eric VerHey's termination, as well. Concern over the lack of education being conducted during this transition period.

**Haley Denney** (gave 3 minutes of time to **Cliff Denney**) – We elected the Board of Education to do what's in the best interest for the students and our school. Wonders if a policy review is in order? Encourages the Board of Education to reconsider this process.

**Sandy Paesans** – Michigan Education Association (MEA) representative for Athens Area Schools. Discussed the difference between a professional staff member and an "at-will" employee. Mr. Eric VerHey was a substitute teacher for Athens.

**Thomas Burke** (gave 3 minutes of time to **Sandy Paesans**) – The question isn't "was it legal to terminate Mr. Eric VerHey?" but if "we should have terminated him?"

**Rebecca Kinney** (gave 3 minutes to **Eric VerHey**) – Shared that he did not text students, but instead reached out via email regarding his health, as students were scared that a health issue had resulted in his absence from school.

**Kacie Brunner and Melissa Irons** – Shared information about a new program through the Athens Community Library for Athens students. New eResources now available for Athens students. Shared handout with specific details for new resources.

## 4. Presentations/Discussions:

## A. Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) Training.

*Moved to the end of the regular meeting.*

## B. Insulin Litigation Resolution.

*End result of litigation for school districts to receive cost reimbursement for purchased insulin.*

## C. New Hires.

- *Lacey Holder, paraprofessional*
- *Allison Fuller, teacher*

## D. Calhoun Area School Board Association (CASBA) Annual Awards.

*Board of Education has until the December 2024 regular meeting to decide if they would like to nominate any individuals for the professional or citizen awards.*

## E. Second Reading of the NEOLA Policy Changes.

*These proposed NEOLA policy changes were first read at the Oct. 21, 2024 regular meeting. No changes to note since the first reading.*

## 5. Routine Matters.

## A. Presentation of Minutes of Prior Meetings.

RECOMMENDED MOTION: Move that the Board of Education approve of the minutes of the Oct. 21, 2024 Regular Meeting, as presented.

Motion: \_\_\_\_\_ McClure \_\_\_\_\_.

Second: \_\_\_\_\_ Setlak \_\_\_\_\_.

Ayes:   7  . Nays:   0  .

Passed:   X  . Defeated: \_\_\_\_\_.

## B. Presentation of Financial Statements.

RECOMMENDED MOTION: Move that the Board of Education receive and place on file for audit the financial reports for the District for the period through Oct. 31, 2024.

Motion: \_\_\_\_\_ Harvey \_\_\_\_\_.

Second: \_\_\_\_\_ Stanton \_\_\_\_\_.

Ayes:   7  . Nays:   0  .

Passed:   X  . Defeated: \_\_\_\_\_.

## 6. Reports.

A. Board President – **Mr. John Knowles.**

*MASB training tonight is for the Board of Education to be certified/trained to conduct the superintendent's annual evaluation.*

B. Superintendent – **Mr. Kipp Beaudoin.**

*See attached report. Thanked the community for the passage of the District's sinking fund renewal. Shared information from a recent training he attended regarding the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).*

C. High School Principal – **Mr. John Thompson.**

*See attached report. Working to improve parent/teacher conference turnout. Good turnout for the annual Trunk-or-Treat at the high school on Oct. 31. Youth In Government fall conference was held at Kellogg Community College on Oct. 24, with 11 students participating. Partnered with the Calhoun County Public Health Department and the Substance Abuse Council for middle school education on vaping. T-lock installation in progress to secure classrooms doors for lockdowns, etc.*

D. Elementary Principal – **Ms. Jheri Wilson.**

*See attached report. Parent/teacher conferences held on Nov. 12 with over 92% participation. Veterans Day program was a success again this year. East Leroy PTSO is looking for more parent involvement! Currently have one staff member in the "Grow Your Own" teaching program. 5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade winter band concert to be held at 6:30 p.m. on Dec. 17.*

E. Athletic Director – **Ms. Kathy Parlin.**

*See attached report. Four high school cross country runners qualified for the state meet. We are in great need for volunteers for home athletic events.*

F. Special Education, Assessment, and Compliance Officer – **Mr. Walter Dubbled.**

*See attached report. Still working on curriculum plan. Shared additional "quality points" data from the 2024 M-STEP testing cycle (this data compares Athens with neighboring districts, districts in the CISD, and the state as a whole).*

7. Action Items.

A. Approval of Insulin Litigation Resolution.

RECOMMENDED MOTION: Move that the Board of Education approve the Insulin Litigation Resolution.

Motion: \_\_\_\_\_ Penick \_\_\_\_\_.

Second: \_\_\_\_\_ Stanton \_\_\_\_\_.

Roll Call Vote: Penick: \_\_\_Yes\_\_\_ Setlak: \_\_\_Yes\_\_\_ Harvey: \_\_\_Yes\_\_\_ Knowles: \_\_\_Yes\_\_\_  
Loew: \_\_\_Yes\_\_\_ McClure: \_\_\_Yes\_\_\_ Stanton: \_\_\_Yes\_\_\_

Ayes: \_\_\_7\_\_\_. Nays: \_\_\_0\_\_\_.

Passed: \_\_\_X\_\_\_. Defeated: \_\_\_\_\_.

## B. Approval of New Hires.

RECOMMENDED MOTION: Move that the Board of Education approve the hiring of Lacey Holder as a paraprofessional.

Motion: \_\_\_\_\_ Setlak \_\_\_\_\_.  
 Second: \_\_\_\_\_ Penick \_\_\_\_\_.  
 Ayes: 7. Nays: 0.  
 Passed: X. Defeated: \_\_\_\_\_.

RECOMMENDED MOTION: Move that the Board of Education approve the hiring of Allison Fuller as a teacher.

Motion: \_\_\_\_\_ Loew \_\_\_\_\_.  
 Second: \_\_\_\_\_ Harvey \_\_\_\_\_.  
 Ayes: 7. Nays: 0.  
 Passed: X. Defeated: \_\_\_\_\_.

## C. Approval of NEOLA Policy Updates.

RECOMMENDED MOTION: Move that the Board of Education authorize for adoption and submit as a second reading of the NEOLA policy updates, as presented by the Policy Committee at the Oct. 21, 2024 regular meeting. (Policies 1130, 2264, 3110, 4110, 6110, 6111, 6112, 6114, 6325, 6550, 7310, 7450, 3120.08, 5330.02, 5340, 5500, 7440.03, 7540.09, 8321).

Motion: \_\_\_\_\_ McClure \_\_\_\_\_.  
 Second: \_\_\_\_\_ Penick \_\_\_\_\_.  
 Ayes: 7. Nays: 0.  
 Passed: X. Defeated: \_\_\_\_\_.

## 8. Public Comments.

**Public Comments**

**Kacie Brunner** – Commented on how great it is to have the middle school sports back at the former middle school gymnasium. Shared that the band program was recently granted a total of \$25,500 from the Athens Area Community Foundation, Athens Youth Council, Athens VFW, and the Binda Foundation.

**Missy Irons** – Suggested that our coaches submit scores/details to the Battle Creek Shopper and Battle Creek Enquirer, to assist with the Athens Community Library archiving local athletic and other school-related information.

**Cliff Denney** – Read a letter from his 6<sup>th</sup> grade student/daughter regarding the concern over the termination of Mr. Eric VerHey.

**Eric VerHey** – Shared again that he didn't reach out to any students regarding his termination. He wanted to clarify that for the Board of Education.

**Thomas Burke** – Important for the Board of Education to re-examine policies given this issue. Also discussed a gift card/certificate program that gives some cash back to participating districts.

*Terry Nixon – Curious as to when Mr. Eric VerHey’s teaching license expired? Was he given the opportunity to renew his license?*

**Board Comments**

*Teri Loew – Asked for an update on the middle school door installation timeline, for occupancy of the middle school multi-purpose room.*

*John Knowles – Answered the public comment question surrounding the policy around Mr. Eric VerHey’s termination.*

*Eric McClure – Congratulated Ms. Teri Loew on her re-election to the Board of Education, as well as Ms. Rachel Hunt on her election to the Board. Also thanked the community for their continued support of the District by passing the renewal of our sinking fund.*

**4. A. Board President John Knowles** shared that the Board of Education’s MASB training for the certification/re-certification for the Board to complete the annual superintendent’s evaluation would be held at a later date/time, due to a scheduling error.

9. Adjournment.

RECOMMENDED MOTION: Move the meeting be adjourned.

Motion: \_\_\_\_\_ Stanton \_\_\_\_\_.

Second: \_\_\_\_\_ Harvey \_\_\_\_\_.

Ayes:   7  . Nays:   0  .

Passed:   X  . Defeated: \_\_\_\_\_.

Time of adjournment: \_\_\_\_\_ 8:32 p.m. \_\_\_\_\_.

Minutes signed by: Eric N. McClure, Acting Secretary/Secretary of the Board of Education

Minutes prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_ Eric McClure, Board of Education Secretary \_\_\_\_\_

Approved for publication by the Board of Education on: \_\_\_\_\_ December 16, 2024 \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

ATHENS AREA SCHOOLS  
Board of Education  
East Leroy, Michigan 49051  
December 4, 2024

SPECIAL MEETING  
Jr./Sr. High School Media Center  
7:00 P.M.

Athens Jr./Sr. High School  
300 E. Holcomb St., Athens, MI 49011  
TELEPHONE: 729-5414

1. Call to order, \_\_\_\_\_ Knowles \_\_\_\_\_ presiding at \_\_\_\_\_ 7:00 p.m. \_\_\_\_\_.

A. Membership count to determine quorum presence:

Present: Penick:   X   Setlak:   X   Harvey:   X   Knowles:   X    
Loew:   X   McClure:   X   Stanton:   X  

A quorum   X   is, \_\_\_\_\_ is not, present.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

2. Approval of Agenda.

RECOMMENDED MOTION: Move that the Board of Education approve the agenda as presented.

Motion: \_\_\_\_\_ Harvey \_\_\_\_\_.  
Second: \_\_\_\_\_ Setlak \_\_\_\_\_.  
Ayes:   7  . Nays:   0  .  
Passed:   X  . Defeated: \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Public Comments.

***Myndeska Tomlin** – 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Athens Area Schools. Is asking whether she is a victim or a scapegoat in this whole incident? Feels that we need to do what's best for our students.*

***Patrick Klein** (gave 3 minutes of time to **Myndeska Tomlin**) – Feels that her privacy has been violated with how this entire process has been handled.*

***Nate Kiefer** - Gave the Board of Education a copy of the Board's policy on anti-harassment.*

***Terry Kiefer** (gave 3 minutes of time to **Nate Kiefer**) – Addressed concerns with the process and compared this process to the one that is laid out in the Board's policy.*

***Terry Kiefer** – Shared and compared a situation that her own student/son went through regarding a recent discipline issue.*

**Kacie Brunner** – Addressed the Board’s decision that they have to make tonight. Shared about her experiences as a former Board member. Tonight’s decision will have a wide impact, beyond just this incident.

**Cliff Denney** – Feels that tonight is about righting a wrong decision and moving forward as a District.

**Lori Doubleday** – Read a letter that she had sent to the Board of Education, prior to tonight’s special meeting. Feels that tonight’s special meeting is unnecessary. Feels that the Board should support the administration’s decision.

**Eric VerHey** – Thanked the Board of Education for their consideration of this issue.

#### 4. Closed Session.

RECOMMENDED MOTION: Move that the Board of Education go into closed session, under Section 8(1)(h) of the Open Meetings Act, so that the Board may discuss privileged, written attorney-client communications.

Motion: \_\_\_\_\_ McClure \_\_\_\_\_.

Second: \_\_\_\_\_ Penick \_\_\_\_\_.

Roll Call Vote: Penick: \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ Setlak: \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ Harvey: \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ Knowles: \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_  
Loew: \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ McClure: \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ Stanton: \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_

Ayes: \_\_\_ 7 \_\_\_ . Nays: \_\_\_ 0 \_\_\_ .

Passed: \_\_\_ X \_\_\_ . Defeated: \_\_\_\_\_.

**Board President John Knowles** returned the meeting to open session at \_\_\_\_\_ 7:57 p.m. \_\_\_\_\_.

**Board Trustee Teri Loew** read the following statement from the Board of Education, following their closed session: *We, the Board of Education of Athens Area Schools, are unified in our decision of supporting the decision made by our administration regarding Mr. Eric VerHey’s dismissal.*

#### Board Comment

**Eric McClure** – Thanked the community for voicing their concerns during the last two meetings over this issue. Realizes that this issue has made the community tense over the last few weeks, but is hopeful that we can get back to respecting one another, and treating each other with kindness and understanding.



RECOMMENDED MOTION: Move the meeting be adjourned.

Motion: Stanton.  
Second: Harvey.  
Ayes: 7. Nays: 0.  
Passed: X. Defeated:       .

Time of adjournment:        8:02 p.m.       .

Minutes signed by: Eric N. McClure, Acting Secretary/Secretary of the Board of Education

Minutes prepared by:        Eric McClure, Board of Education Secretary       

Approved for publication by the Board of Education on:        December 16, 2024        (date)

