

**MILAN AREA SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday, February 26, 2025**

The regular meeting of the Milan Area Schools Board of Education was called to order in the Milan Area Schools District Board Room located at 100 Big Red Drive, Milan MI, 48160, by President Cislo at 7:00 p.m. on February 26, 2025.

Board Members Present: Cislo, Prior, Faro, Meray, Gutierrez, Burdette, Heikka

Board Members Absent: None

Signed in Staff: Bryan Girbach, Lon Smith, Sean DeSarbo, Margaret Durkee, Sara Beckman

Signed in Guests: George Elder, Andrea Bennink

Pledge of Allegiance

The Board received an update on Special Education presented by Lon Smith

Public Comment:

- Andrea Bennink, speaking as a parent, shared her gratitude for the growth of inclusive sports opportunities in Milan such as the new MMS Unified Cornhole team. She thanked Lon Smith for hosting a community information night and providing a presentation to the Board regarding Special Education services. She suggested the creation of a paraprofessionals handbook to support on-boarding of new paraprofessionals in the district. She also shared that the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is seeking public comment on proposed new special education endorsements for teachers that would allow for broader placement opportunities for teachers.
- George Elder thanked Lon Smith and the Special Education Department for their impact on his child's growth. He shared information from a FOIA request he made of the Milan Police Department and his concern regarding the timeline of the Milan Swim Club investigation. Additionally, he requested the resignation of those involved due to his perception that mandated reporting rules were not followed. Finally, he also shared a concern about a complaint his employer received regarding Mr. Elder speaking at board meetings while in uniform. He requested an investigation and the phone number of the person who reported him. He indicated that he will be filing a FOIA request with an individual's employer seeking information regarding legal advice provided to the Board.
- Sean DeSarbo, retiring Principal of Paddock Elementary, spoke to the Board and community about his time serving Milan Area Schools. He shared that he has remained in Milan for many years because he has been happy and has enjoyed both success and support from the district and community throughout his years of service. He thanked school board members, past and present, for their dedication to the district, the staff at Paddock for their trust in him and dedication to students, bus drivers for their commitment to safety and care for students, and his pride that Paddock has always focused on educating the whole child. He thanked Mr. Girbach for his guidance and support, both personally and professionally and for his "family first" approach to leadership. He thanked Ryan McMahon for his warm welcome to the district years ago and Mr. McMahon's consistent faith in his leadership. He closed by thanking the community for the opportunity to serve as Paddock principal.

The Board provided the community an update on the Superintendent Selection Process

Public Comment:

- George Elder asked a question regarding special education funding and why his insurance provider is billed for services provided to his student.

Student Board Member Comments: None

Assistant Superintendent Comments were heard on the following topics: None

Superintendent Comments were heard on the following topics:

- Varsity Girls Bowling Successes
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- MHS Production of Seussical the Musical
- MMS Production of Wizard of Oz
- Paddock vs. Symons Basketball Game
- Be Nice Program
- Paddock Interim Principal
- Transportation Department Accolades
- Big Red Board Chat
- No School On Friday (2-28-25) - Staff Professional Development

Board Member Comments:

- Heikka thanked Ms. Gutierrez and the Personnel Committee for their time and work on the superintendent selection process. She congratulated the bowling team and wished them good luck. She also shared about attending the unified sports basketball game in Dexter and shared the families' gratitude to Herb Morelock for serving as the referee official, in full uniform, for that game. She also shared information about a unified track team that is also available for students.
- Faro thanked Mr. DeSarbo for his influence on his children, and wished him well in his future endeavors. He gave information about the upcoming "Symons vs. Paddock" basketball game at Symons. He thanked Mr. Morelock for taking the time to recognize Huron League teams and athletes at a recent basketball game. He also shared that Schools of Choice applications will be open from April 1st through October 1st, 2025.
- Burdette thanked Mr. Smith for his informative presentation. He also thanked community members for their feedback and information during public comment. He echoed gratitude for Mr. Morelock for his recognition of Huron League athletes, and Mr. Lopez for organizing the new Pep Band. Finally, he shared information about the upcoming performances of MHS's Seussical the Musical, MHS Cheer tryouts, and MHS Girls Soccer tryouts.
- Gutierrez thanked Mr. Smith for his presentation to the Board. She also shared admiration and gratitude to Mr. DeSarbo, particularly for his support of Mr. Gutierrez in finding his purpose at Paddock. She recognized the Transportation Department for their commitment to student safety, as well as Ms. Bennink for her feedback regarding the creation of a paraprofessional handbook. She highlighted the uniqueness of the paraprofessional role, and urged the district and board to continue thinking about how we support paraprofessionals throughout the district. Finally, she shared about her attendance at the MASB Labor Relations Workshop, which included the topics of bargaining, superintendent contracts, healthcare in public schools, and a legislative update. She thanked the district for supporting continuing education for board members.

- Meray echoed thanks to Mr. Smith for his service to students and his time preparing presentations for the board and community. She also thanked Mr. DeSarbo for his 30 years of service in education, and wished him well. She encouraged the community to support our students in the theater, as well as in athletics. She also spoke about the recent US House budget proposal which seeks to cut federal education spending, and how it may impact the district budget in the future, specifically staffing and programs for our most vulnerable students. She also gave a brief explanation of how Medicare and Medicaid funding also impact students with disabilities in schools, and encouraged the community to stay informed as legislative decisions are made. She stated her commitment to using her platform as a board member to advocate for our students, regardless of partisan issues. Finally, she shared about the 5 Calls smartphone app as a way to engage in advocacy with elected representatives.
- Cislo shared appreciation for the staff members attending the meeting after a long day of working with students. He also shared his gratitude with Mr. DeSarbo for speaking at the meeting, and for his service to Milan students. He praised the transportation department and suggested inviting them to a future board meeting to be recognized.

Time of Adjournment: 8:27 p.m.