

Cassopolis Public Schools  
Cassopolis High School  
Media Center  
(269)445-0503

Board of Education  
Minutes  
Regular Meeting  
February 26, 2024

Welcome: This regular meeting of the Cassopolis Board of Education was at Cassopolis High School in the Media Center on Monday, February 26, 2024. Meeting was called to order at 5:31p.m., as President Deubner welcomed those attending. Heather Beaudoin led the Pledge.

Roll Call:

Board of Education Members present: Heather Beaudoin, Jesse Bement (arrived at 5:32pm), Teresa Dahlgren (arrived at 6:05pm), Deb Deubner, William Lee, Amanda Smego, and Aaron Steensma.

Members absent: None

Also present: Dr. John Ritzler, Misty Christian, James English, Lindsay Gorham-Pflug, Ray Govert, Hannah Hoff, Zuri Kelper, Carey May, Yara Neuerburg, Tammi Preston, Heather Rigby, Lauren Sheeley, Brian Smith, Patty Waldschmidt, Beth Westrick, and members of the community.

Agenda:

**Moved by** Amanda Smego, **supported by** Heather Beaudoin to approve the agenda as amended. There was no discussion. **Motion carried** 6-0 Yes – Beaudoin, Bement, Lee, Smego, Steensma, and Deubner. No – Zero

Minutes:

**Moved by** Aaron Steensma, **supported by** William Lee to approve the minutes as presented. There was no discussion. **Motion carried** 6-0 Yes – Beaudoin, Bement, Lee, Smego, Steensma, and Deubner. No – Zero

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Ritzler recognized members of FFA that have advanced to the State competition. Jackson Bement, Chase DeBruin, Jared Wellman, Dickson Samadder, Micah Christian, Brylee Jones, Olivia Hayden, and Emily Carlisle will all be representing Cassopolis FFA in Lansing this week.

Ray Govert, from Timberwolf, presented an update on the progress in the IT department. Ray has been updating services that were put in place 13 years ago that were also impairing productivity of newer programs. He has been working to improve vendor relations, improve equipment, provide on-site support, and make cost effective decisions to save money for the district. The IT department is also working to repair Chromebooks in house with the help of the newly formed Timberwolf Student Tech Program which allows for students to be educated in the IT field.

Dr. Ritzler gave special thanks to the Cassopolis Public Schools Foundation for the grants received by the staff members of Cassopolis Public Schools. A total of \$2700.42 was awarded to staff.

### Financial Report

Mr. English reminded those in attendance of the first community forum on March 11<sup>th</sup>. His focus was the Governor's budget proposal that was released earlier in the month. Mr. English stated that the School Aid Fund Surpluses (one-time and ongoing) are largely exhausted. One-time federal ESSER funding must be spent by September. The 2025 Fiscal Year proposal from the governor builds on previous budget priorities which will implement a free PreK-14 education system, as well as provide differentiated funding to meet unique needs of students such as "at-risk", special education, English learners.

Overall, K-12 appropriations would see an inflationary increase of \$264 per pupil, which is below the rate of inflation. The base funding per pupil increase proposed by the governor was \$241.

Funding continues to shift from K-12 to higher education and community colleges with more than \$1 billion of K-12 funding allocated to higher education and community colleges. Mr. English shared a table that showed the shift of K-12 funding that should have been distributed to Cassopolis Public Schools from 2009 through 2024, with the amount totaling more than \$6 million.

One major concern from the governor's budget is the diversion of K-12 funds previously allocated to the public-school employee retirement system to new priorities including \$140 million for free preschool, \$60 million more for higher education and community colleges, and \$200 million for free lunch and breakfast for all students. Mr. English expressed concern over these funding priorities reducing the amount of money available to cover the cost of pensions and provide base funding to school districts.

### Public Comment on Agenda Items:

There was no public comment on Agenda Items.

### Consent Agenda:

**Moved by** Aaron Steensma, **supported by** Jesse Bement to approve the consent agenda as presented. There was no discussion. **Motion carried** 7-0 Yes – Beaudoin, Bement, Dahlgren, Lee, Smego, Steensma, and Deubner. No – Zero

### New Business: Action Item

**Moved by** Jesse Bement, **supported by** Teresa Dahlgren to approve the Utility Distribution Easement to Indiana Michigan Power for the price of \$1 as presented. There was no discussion. **Motion carried** 7-0 Yes – Beaudoin, Bement, Dahlgren, Lee, Smego, Steensma, and Deubner. No – Zero

### New Business: Action Item

**Moved by** William Lee, **supported by** Heather Beaudoin to relinquish Title III, Part A – Immigrant Student Funding for the 23-24 fiscal year. There was no discussion. **Motion carried** 7-0 Yes – Beaudoin, Bement, Dahlgren, Lee, Smego, Steensma, and Deubner. No – Zero

Miscellaneous Administrative Items:

There were no miscellaneous administrative items.

Public Comment on Non-agenda Items:

There was no public comment on Non-agenda Items.

Closed Session: Superintendent Evaluation (Formative)

**Moved by** Jesse Bement, **supported by** Amanda Smego to move into closed session at 6:45pm. **Motion carried**  
7-0 Yes – Beaudoin, Bement, Dahlgren, Lee, Smego, Steensma, and Deubner. No – Zero

Adjournment:

**Moved by** Teresa Dahlgren, **supported by** Amanda Smego to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 8:19pm.

Submitted by Beth Westrick  
Teresa Dahlgren, Secretary