Neil Wetherbee , Superintendent
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Regular Meeting Minutes
NPS Board of Education

Date of Meeting: September 14, 2026
Time: 5:30 p.m.
Location: Room 300, Northport Public School

Call to Order

President Ben Purdy called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. in Room 300, Northport Public School.

Roll Call

Present: Carrie Wadas, Tom Wetherbee, Ryan Blessing, Ben Purdy, Dan Duffiney, Ben Hale.
Absent: Danielle Percy.
A quorum was present.

Approval of Agenda

Motion: Moved by Carrie Wadas, supported by Ryan Blessing, to approve the agenda for the September 14, 2026, regular board meeting.
Vote: 6–0 Motion carried.

Public Comment

- **Erin Potes:** Commented on parent involvement, administrative changes, and district communication.
- **Eric Bahle:** Expressed gratitude to district staff and leadership for their support.
- **Virginia Foley:** Shared negative family experiences regarding district programs and student services.
- **Jamie Scripps:** Addressed board oversight, governance responsibilities, and administrative support.
- **Kristi Fischer:** Spoke regarding board communication, parent engagement, and governance structure.
- **Eric Potes:** Addressed whistleblower protection, public record requests, and board communication.
- **Kali Dignan:** Raised concerns regarding district climate, parent communication, and leadership.

- **Laura Cavendish:** Provided a PTO update and addressed parent feedback.

Written Correspondence

President Ben Purdy acknowledged written correspondence received by the Board.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Neil Wetherbee reported on the following items:

- **Staffing Updates:** District staffing is nearly complete, with an opening in the kitchen following a recent retirement.
- **Staff Recognition:** Recognized Jen Evans for being named the 2027 Michigan Art Education Association Secondary Art Educator of the Year, and Susan Sobehrad for completing her doctorate and presenting her dissertation in Italy.
- **Regional Leadership & Demographic Trends:** Superintendent Wetherbee was selected as Vice President for Region 2 of the Michigan Association of Superintendents and Administrators. A community member recently wrote to all Superintendent members of that association regarding declining enrollment and dissatisfaction with the current administration at Northport. Superintendent Wetherbee presented countywide demographic and enrollment data showing district retention compares favorably to county trends. He also displayed state and historical achievement data from the Mackinaw Center and MiSchool Data highlighting significant school performance growth, including a ranking of 26th out of 2,188 elementary/middle schools statewide in 2025.
- **Board Discussion:** The Board engaged in discussion regarding student-led conferences, parent communication, and family engagement strategies.

Consent Agenda

Items Approved by Consent:

- August 10, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes.
- Bills presented for payment in the amount of $116,458.69.
- Hiring of Mikayla Roman as a Long-Term Substitute Teacher for the 2026–2027 school year.
- Hiring of Larry Busby as a Bus Driver.
- Hiring of Corine Zeffero as a Custodian.

Action Items

Resolution to Explore Interdistrict Cooperative Programming & Shared Educational Opportunities

Discussion: Superintendent Wetherbee noted that while this was introduced as a preliminary conversation last month with expectations of back-and-forth, Leland adopted it

as presented and Suttons Bay is expected to do the same, with no changes made since last month. In response to an inquiry from Carrie Wadas regarding concerns, Superintendent Wetherbee stated that he has no concerns and views it as a great step in the right direction. He emphasized that as a smaller county, districts must collaborate more to maximize opportunities and benefit from programs shared across districts.

Motion: Moved by Carrie Wadas, supported by Dan Duffiney, to approve the Resolution to Explore Interdistrict Cooperative Programming & Shared Educational Opportunities as presented.

Roll Call Vote: Ryan Blessing (Yes), Dan Duffiney (Yes), Ben Hale (Yes), Carrie Wadas (Yes), Tom Wetherbee (Yes), Ben Purdy (Yes). Vote: 6–0 Motion carried.

Discussion Items

a. Secure Environment Consultants
Superintendent Wetherbee noted that the District has an emergency response plan in place that complies with State Law, but that it needs to be reviewed annually. Administration recommended engaging Secure Environment Consultants (at an estimated cost of $2,000) to review and update district emergency response protocols.

b. Protection from Retaliation Policy
Board Member Ben Hale proposed expanding existing whistleblower policies to explicitly encompass parents and community members. The Board had no objections to exploring expansion as long as the proposed policy additions are sent to legal counsel for review prior to any Board vote.

Public Comment

- **Elizabeth Schwind:** Spoke in support of Superintendent Wetherbee and shared concerns over online climate.
- **Eric Potes:** Commented on survey data, district enrollment, and conference feedback.
- **Jen Evans:** Spoke regarding classroom activities, professional boundaries, and social media discourse.
- **Mollie Brendel:** Spoke in support of staff professionalism, classroom environment, and district leadership.
- **Kali Dignan:** Raised questions regarding assessment data and school environment.
- **Laura Cavendish:** Provided updates on PTO events, upcoming community forums, and parent engagement.
- **Kristi Fischer:** Encouraged constructive communication between parents and school staff.
- **Laura French:** Suggested improvements to the meeting audio system to enhance public communication.
- **Corrine Wetherbee:** Shared comments regarding school culture, community support, and online interactions.

- **Matt Dignan:** Addressed concerns regarding communication channels, exit interviews, and community accountability.
- **Annabelle Fortine:** Shared remarks on community unity and staff dedication.
- **Erin Connolly:** Expressed appreciation for her family's positive experience with the district and advocated for civil discourse.
- **Ruth Steele Walker:** Provided historical context on area demographics, birth rates, and housing economics.
- **Patty Lesch:** Commented on community involvement, educational research, and district growth.
- **Alex Post:** Expressed appreciation for contract negotiations, administrative leadership, and teacher support.
- **Alan Woods:** Challenged district achievement statistics and noted high per-pupil funding in district.
- **Sarah Hoskins:** Shared positive experiences regarding her child's enrollment in the district.
- **Elizabeth Conley:** Spoke regarding her positive experience as a district staff member and administrative support.
- **Margret French:** Addressed community involvement and board focus on student needs.
- **Rebecca Teahen:** Commended staff achievements and advocated for community unity and respect.
- **Manmeet Dhami:** Raised questions regarding governance transparency and board engagement during public comments.

Superintendent's Comments

Superintendent Wetherbee expressed gratitude for the feedback offered, voiced regret over the current community tension, and noted a shared desire to find a path forward. He apologized if his advocacy for students had made anyone feel unheard, reaffirming his commitment to always make decisions based on what is best for children. Highlighting his 10-year tenure and personal dedication to the district, he rejected any notion that he would undermine or derail the school, emphasizing his daily focus on student needs.

Board Member Comments

- **Carrie Wadas:** Expressed a desire for community unity and clarified meeting phone usage related to safety concerns.
- **Ben Hale:** Reaffirmed parent dedication to student well-being and emphasized policy compliance.
- **Ben Purdy:** Apologized for any distraction regarding notetaking during public comments, emphasized the Board's role in weighing input and data, and announced upcoming Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) training sessions scheduled for November and December meetings.

Adjournment

Motion: Moved by Carrie Wadas, supported by Ryan Blessing, to adjourn the meeting.
Vote: 6–0 Motion carried.
The meeting adjourned.