ATHENS AREA SCHOOLS

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Board of Education
September 21, 2026

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

Athens High School
300 E. Holcomb Street
Athens, MI 49011

1. Call to order, President Hunt presiding at 7:00 pm
   Members Present: Harvey: ✓ Hunt: ✓ Knowles: ✓ Loew: ✓ Penick: ✓ Setlak: ✓
   One board vacancy. A quorum is present. There were approximately 30 guests in attendance.

   PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. Approval of Agenda.
   MOTION: Move that the Board of Education (BoE) approve the agenda as presented.
   Motion by: Penick, Second: Harvey; Ayes: 6, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.

3. Public Comments. Vice-President Penick administered the 3-minute time limit.
   - Kelly Hulce (former EL Elementary Teacher): concerns regarding our compliance with the Michigan School Meal Program. She feels Athens Area Schools (AAS) is in direct violation of MCL 388.168b.

4. Presentations/Discussions

A. 2026 Audit - presented by Christine Kratzer, Willis & Jurasek representative
Our annual audit completed by CPAs and Consultants Willis & Jurasek is for year ended June 30, 2026. Christine referenced a management letter and hardcopy of the Athens Area Schools Financial Report with Supplemental Information for year ended June 30, 2026 provided to each board member. She stated there were no findings, no issues, and very few adjustments. For General Fund information, she referenced the Balance Sheet on page 3 which shows Assets and Liabilities, as well as the Statement of Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balances on page 5. The total Fund Balance at the end of the year is $1,009,956 in the General Fund. The records are well kept and well organized. She appreciates the opportunity to work with us.

AAS remains dedicated to providing the highest quality education for our children. We plan to continue supporting both infrastructure and instructional goals through thoughtful financial allocation. Our cost-reduction efforts have included reviewing and optimizing teacher certifications, our transportation needs, evaluating borrowing requirements, and doing an energy audit. We will be looking at a board voted bond that will use the savings to pay for the improvements alongside our sinking funds without going to tax payers for a bond. We have expanded our funding sources by securing previously untapped grants, planning to utilize Title VI funds, and exploring impact aid opportunities. While we have drawn down our fund balance this year, this was necessary to address unforeseen issues and to close the gap on deferred maintenance needs. AAS is well-positioned to meet future challenges and continue delivering outstanding educational opportunities for the children of our community.

B. Middle School Boiler Project – presented by Chad Kandow, Senior Project Manager, Frederick Construction
Chad reviewed the Bid Packages and Award Recommendations. This will be a pretty simple project, taking 4-5 weeks to complete. In May, their original design budgeted project estimate was $432,205. Chad presented two bid packages: 23.1 HVAC improvements and 26.1 Electrical improvements. There were 5 well-known local contractors interested in the HVAC work. 9 total quotes overall were received. One low bid was disqualified as the contractor missed critical equipment needs. Chad provided updated project costs as of Sept. 14 showing a saving of $22,972 (5.3%) from the design estimated budget to the actual 'as quoted' construction budget, resulting in an updated project cost of $409,233. There are some voluntary alternates that, if approved, could reduce costs. The budget allowance is for unforeseen issues that may arise during construction. Unused funds are returned to the Sinking Fund at the completion of the project. The start date is the first week in October.

C. MASB Call for Delegates – presented by Interim Superintendent Vorce
Deadline to appoint a representative and alternate for the fall conference is October 1st.

D. Formal Complaint, Dan Benoit
The Executive Committee reviewed the formal complaint, district policy and documents that were shared from the FOIA responses and determined that this complaint should be placed on the September BoE agenda. Board members were provided with all the documentation so a decision can be made tonight.

E. New Hires – reported by Interim Superintendent Vorce
Recommendations to hire Melinda Wright as a Substitute Bus Driver, Kelly Smeltzer as a Paraprofessional at Athens Jr/Sr High School, Anthony Warmington as a Special Education Teacher at Athens Jr/Sr High School, and Savanna Pavc as the girl's golf coach.

F. Student Handbooks – presented by Interim Superintendent Vorce
BoE members received copies of the East Leroy and Middle School/High School handbooks for 2026-2027. These are for our information; they do not require BoE approval.

G. NEOLA Policy Updates – presented by Interim Superintendent Vorce
The question has been asked if home school students are eligible to play sports at Athens. Upon extensive research, Mrs. Vorce found our policy does not allow home school students to participate; however, the BoE can amend the policy. MHSAA does allow home school students to participate in sports if they are enrolled and passing 66% (4 out of 6) of classes held at the school. They have to be approved home school which meets the requirements of the State. If it's an on-line class it must be an Athens virtual class, so we can monitor eligibility.

H. Law Enforcement Unit Resolution – presented by Interim Superintendent Vorce and SRO Mark Mellinger
Our current video footage is held in the system for 30 days then dropped off. If an investigation is requested beyond the 30 days, a complicated request for a Search Warrant would be pursued. Local districts are going to this Law Enforcement Unit resolution which can access footage not retained in our system, it designates who can access the file, and it eliminates the need for a Search Warrant. This action would allow us to retain the video footage if it's needed for required investigations.

I. Sale of Property Bids – presented by Interim Superintendent Vorce
The last bid opportunity closed last Friday, September 18th for the vacant property at 304 E. South Street (the blue house). One bid was received for the amount of $40,000.

J. Before and After School Program – presented by Interim Superintendent Vorce
One of the requests from the community during the Strategic Planning meetings, is that we have a before and after school program for our K-5 students. Some families have withdrawn their children from our district because we do not offer these options. We are not trying to compete with local daycare businesses, we are simply trying to offer solutions for our families who cannot afford childcare. We are looking at one classroom with a maximum of 20 students (the room is already licensed); we would begin with just an after-school program; we would partner with Community Unlimited who would be fiduciary and it would be our program to run – we would be looking at hiring 3 of our staff to run it (a lead Coordinator, a lead Teacher and a Teacher Assistant). If it goes well, we could expand next year. This program could be offered each day until 6:00p (if after 6p we would need to provide a meal). All snacks and expenses are reimbursed to the district.

K. 31aa Security Grant – presented by Interim Superintendent Vorce
The NHBP grant for our SRO officer has been applied for, but it's uncertain at this time if it will be granted. The current grant covers the position through December, the end of the calendar year. We may not know until the end of October or November if we will get the new grant to extend the position. Mrs. Vorce has been looking at different opportunities to fund the position if we don't receive the grant. There is an SRO grant, 31aa4, a grant for SROs and service animals; however, it does waive Attorney/Client privileges for that event. There is also new legislative language to define significant physical injury. Mrs. Vorce has reached out to local Superintendents and Thrun law firm for advice and has been involved in discussions at conferences. Unlike last year when we did not accept these funds, we need to rethink our position. The grant closes October 5, 2026.

L. SCAA Conference – Stryker High School – presented by AD Kathy Parlin
Stryker High School in Stryker, Ohio is asking to join our SCAA conference at the football level (they currently travel two hours to games in their conference, when schools in our conference may be only 20 minutes away). This doesn't affect us because of our Co-Op. This would help schools on the east side of our conference.

5. Routine Matters

A. Presentation of minutes of prior meeting
MOTION: Move that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the August 17, 2026 Regular Meeting as presented.
Motion by: Setlak, Second: Penick; Ayes: 6, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.

B. Presentation of financial reports
MOTION: Move that the Board of Education receive and place on file for audit the financial reports for the district for the period through August 31, 2026.
Motion by: Harvey, Second: Setlak; Ayes: 6, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.

6. Reports

A. Board President Rachel Hunt – the beginning of the school year is going smoothly, very proud of all the work that went into securing we had a football team, and again thanked Sebastian Hamilton for stepping up to assist with our Math and Science students.

B. Interim Superintendent Tonia Vorce (see attached report)

C. Elementary Principal Amy Hughes (see attached report)

D. High School Principal William Heffner (see attached report)

E. Athletic Director Kathy Parlin (see attached report)

7. Action Items

A. Middle School Boiler Project
MOTION: Move that the Board of Education approve the Middle School Boiler Project from RW LaPine in the amount of $261,100 and CT Electric in the amount of $29,400.
Motion by: Penick, Second: Harvey; Ayes: 6, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.

B. MASB Delegates
MOTION: Move that the Board of Education table the delegate selection for MASB Delegate Assembly on October 15th.
Motion by: Knowles, Second: Penick; Ayes: 6, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.

C. Formal Complaint, Dan Benoit
MOTION: Move that the Board of Education deny the formal complaint from Dan Benoit and support the decision made by Administration regarding this matter.
Motion by: Harvey, Second: Loew; Ayes: 4, Nays: 1, Abstain: 1, Penick; Motion Passed.

D. New Hires
MOTION: Move that the Board of Education approve the hiring of Melinda Wright as a Substitute Bus Driver at Athens Area Schools.
Motion by: Knowles, Second: Harvey; Ayes: 6, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.

MOTION: Move that the Board of Education approve the hiring of Kelly Smeltzer as a Paraprofessional at Athens Jr/Sr High School.
Motion by: Penick, Second: Setlak; Ayes: 6, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.

MOTION: Move that the Board of Education approve the hiring of Anthony Warmington as a Special Education Teacher at Athens Jr/Sr High School.
Motion by: Setlak, Second: Harvey; Ayes: 6, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.

MOTION: Move that the Board of Education approve the hiring of Savanna Pavc as the girl's golf coach.
Motion by: Knowles, Second: Setlak; Ayes: 6, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.

E. NEOLA Policy Updates
MOTION: Move that the Board of Education authorize the updates of NEOLA policy 9270 as presented. (Home School)
Motion by: Harvey, Second: Setlak; Ayes: 6, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.

F. Law Enforcement Unit Resolution
MOTION: Move that the Board of Education approve the Resolution to create a Law Enforcement Unit as presented. (see attached resolution)
Motion by: Knowles, Second: Penick; Ayes: 6, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.

G. Sale of Property Bids
MOTION: Move that the Board of Education accept the bid from Douglas and Troy Andrews in the amount of $40,000 for the sale of the property at 304 E South Street.
Motion by: Setlak, Second: Penick; Discussion: Harvey feels the lot is more valuable to the school; Knowles is not in favor of selling it.
Ayes: 1, Nays: 5; Motion Defeated.

H. Before and After School Program
MOTION: Move that the Board of Education authorize the Before and After School Program Partnership with Athens Area Schools and Community Unlimited.
Motion by: Knowles, Second: Loew; Ayes: 6, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.

I. SCAA Conference – Stryker High School
MOTION: Move that the Board of Education authorize Stryker High School in Stryker, OH to join SCAA as a football member school.
Motion by: Harvey, Second: Setlak Ayes: 6, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.

8. Public Comments
   - Dan Benuoit (former EduStaff substitute teacher): appreciates the board considering giving him a hearing; he would have denied it anyway.
   - Kelly Hulce (former EL Elementary Teacher): referencing Federal and State laws, staffing shortages are not an excuse to delay special education services – how is this legality being addressed in lieu of two open special education staff positions? She recommends that administration work with our Special Ed teachers instead of around them.
   - Seth Converse (local neighbor): concerned about high temperatures in the East Leroy Elementary classrooms; the temps are a violation of State guidelines. He recommends the BoE look at getting air conditioning instead of replacing the Middle School Boiler system.
     Tonia responded that we have looked at putting air conditioning in both buildings – we asked Trane to include this in the Energy Audit; however, they have indicated they will not consider it because it is not cost effective as we don't have the electricity capacity to do that.

9. Board Comments
   - Treasurer Harvey – thanks Interim Superintendent/Business Manager Tonia Vorce and Administrative Assistant Jill McCombs that the audit went well and for all the hard work they put into it.

10. Adjournment
    Motion by: Knowles, Second: Penick; Ayes: 6, Nays: 0; Motion Passed.
    Time of adjournment: 8:09 pm.

Minutes signed by: Teri S. Loew, Secretary of the Board of Education
Minutes prepared by: Teri S. Loew, Board of Education Secretary
Approved for publication by the Board of Education on October 19, 2026.