

**NEW BUFFALO AREA SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR SESSION**

Performing Arts Center

1112 E. Clay Street

P.O. Box 280

New Buffalo, MI 49117

June 8, 2026

6:00 PM

New Buffalo Area Schools will be a beacon of academic excellence and individualized learning, where every student thrives in a supportive and inclusive environment. We will lead in preparing students for future success, driven by strong community partnerships and a commitment to growth and sustainability.

1. Call to Order by President Denise Churchill - Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

2. Roll Call: Denise Churchill, Stephen Donnelly, John Haskins, Jennifer Summers, Vanessa Thun, Greg Vosberg, Lisa Werner

Absent: Werner

Also in Attendance: Mr. Adam Bowen, Superintendent of Schools
Devinnie Wysocki, Adm. Asst. to Superintendent

3. Expressions from the Public:

Diane Pyschos: Expressed concerns regarding the proposed use of the upgraded baseball field by Dune Coast Baseball, citing potential impacts from increased noise, evening games, amplified sound systems, lighting, traffic, and larger crowds in a residential neighborhood, and zoning.

Nora Howe: Expressed concerns about potential noise levels, increased traffic from large game-day crowds, impacts on local streets, rain delay procedures, and compliance with state liquor laws if alcohol is served. She also voiced concerns regarding what she perceived as limited transparency, resident engagement, and collaboration during the planning process.

Jim Howe: Asked whether extra-inning games could extend as late as midnight and inquired whether the organization's softball league would also utilize the school's softball field.

Conner Lijewski: Stated that he believes the district has kept the community informed through Facebook posts and media coverage and has worked collaboratively with the City. He commended the Board and administration for their efforts and expressed his appreciation for their work on behalf of the community.

Justin Cohen: Resident and local developer expressed support for the project, citing potential economic and community benefits, including new business opportunities and additional revenue to help address local infrastructure needs. He noted that the baseball program would provide a family-friendly community activity and stated that he looks forward to seeing the positive impact of the project.

4. Items too Late for Printed Agenda – #9 Community Garden Presentation

5. Adoption of the Agenda

Motion: Summers

Second: Thun

All ayes, motion carried.

6. Communications

A. Class President: Lena Hyatte - 9th Grade: Reported on the year end exams. Parties for end of the year celebration. Summer basketball and volleyball has started. Graduation commencement event was great. All students are excited about the start of summer break.

7. Committee Report(s)

Student Senate Voice

Township Meeting Bison Preserve

Baseball Town Hall Meeting

Dune Coast TownHall was June 4. It was a great presentation that covered many aspects of the team playing at New Buffalo in great detail. I want to begin my remarks tonight with a sense of tremendous excitement and pride. We are standing on the cusp of an incredibly bright new chapter at New Buffalo Area Schools. In April, this Board made a monumental decision to officially execute a multi-year lease agreement, partnering with Dune Coast Baseball to bring a premier Northwoods League summer collegiate franchise right here to Bison Field for the Late May 2027 season!

This is a massive win for our community as one of our strategic plan goals is community involvement. There is not another project that I could think of that could do any better involving our community. We are talking about bringing vibrant, family-friendly summer entertainment to Harbor Country, injecting vitality into our local economy, and creating an absolute crown jewel of a facility.

We are aware that a few members of the public have raised questions regarding the timeline and the transparency of how we got here. Because we value the trust of our community above all else, I want to take a moment to clear up any misconceptions and put the exact public record into the narrative.

The Board and I have guided this initiative through an exhaustive, 14-month public process:

- **In March 2025**—nearly a year and a half ago—the initial proposal for this regional summer collegiate model was first introduced in open, public sessions to *both* the New Buffalo Area Schools Board and the New Buffalo City Council. That very month, the *Harbor Country News* published a front-page story titled, '*Summer college baseball league proposed for New Buffalo field,*' alerting the entire community.
- **Throughout the Fall of 2025**, we held formal public sessions regarding site alignment and field selection right here at the high school complex. The *New Buffalo Times* ran dedicated community updates across four consecutive weekly editions in August and September of last year to ensure residents were informed.
- **In November 2025**, the City Council hosted a formal public presentation to hear the pitch directly from the team owners, and this Board voted during an open session to approve the Phase 2 fundraising mechanisms. Both steps were covered openly by local media.
- **In October 2025 and February 2026** in the district mailed newsletter to every New Buffalo resident home there was mention of the district's partnership with a collegiate summer baseball team.
- **Finally, in Q2 of 2026**, after more than a full year of public debate, media coverage, and community input, the multi-year lease agreement was officially executed by this Board in an open meeting.

Transparency means giving the community a voice, a timeline, and a paper trail—and we have done exactly that for over 14 months.

Because the lease is signed, our role has now shifted from planning to strict administrative oversight. We are holding our partners to every single guardrail established to ensure this project is executed flawlessly. We believe that we have very responsible partners in Dune Coast that are going above and

beyond the expectations and have problem solved thoroughly with excellent solutions. Brain Williams experience of visiting thousands of fields over his years of scouting positions us very well because he knows what works well and what doesn't for baseball operations. With that being said, we are confident that this will be very successful.

Our facilities team is already coordinating the site logistics for the \$750,000+ in privately funded capital improvements coming to Bison Field. I want to remind the public that these elite upgrades are paid for entirely by the franchise at zero cost to New Buffalo taxpayers. They will remain permanent assets of the school district for our own student-athletes to use during the regular school year. We have heard comments about 1000 people in attendance at these games. The bleacher system currently being reviewed for has 198 chairback seats behind home plate, bleacher seating at both the 1st and 3rd base line with a total of 586 people capacity.

I want to highlight a specific detail that reflects how seriously we take our responsibility to our neighbors. The stadium lighting is being provided by [Musco Sports Lighting](#), an industry leader globally recognized for its advanced, customizable [New LED Sports Lighting](#) technology. These systems are explicitly engineered with directional shielding to pin-point light onto the field of play while protecting our surrounding residential neighborhoods and the night sky from light pollution and spillover. Furthermore, we are strictly enforcing our 'Good Neighbor' operational policy: stadium lights will be turned off within 30 minutes of the final out, and most games will conclude by 9:30 PM.

As part of our commitment to keeping you completely informed, I also want to give a transparent update on our sound infrastructure. While the lighting and bleacher plans are locked in, we have not yet begun to look into the new PA system. This is an operational piece that needs to be addressed in the near future. As we move closer to that procurement phase, we will approach it with the exact same level of care, neighbor mindfulness, and fiscal responsibility that has guided every other asset of this project.

Furthermore, we are actively working on game-day traffic. School lots will be the primary parking areas, and the team is fully funding the parking staff to ensure smooth flow. Traffic will be funneled to the major roads such as US 12, Red Arrow, and 94 with trying to limit traffic through our neighborhoods.

We just had graduation two Fridays ago. There were 200 chairs set up on the gym floor - majority of those chairs were occupied. In addition, we had the bleachers pulled out and there were quite a few people in the bleachers. With that said, it is estimated that between 300 and 400 people were in attendance at graduation. We used the west parking lot, STEAM lot, and some of the east parking lot. There was plenty of parking and no issues with traffic leaving the ceremony. This is what I expect with Dune Coast baseball.

Lastly, we are preparing to launch the student career pipeline. This partnership guarantees seasonal internships and jobs for our local youth, and residents, offering hands-on, real-world vocational experience in sports management, marketing, business, and live media broadcasting.

This Board made a deliberate, careful, public, and incredibly exciting decision to unlock massive capital reinvestment and career readiness for our students. We are on schedule, with a well-planned and thoughtful approach guiding every aspect of hosting this team; we are holding our partners accountable and moving forward boldly and out in the open.

8. Presentation: 5th Grade Camp - Teachers and Students

Fifth-grade students shared highlights from their recent trip to YMCA Camp Eberhart in Three Rivers, Michigan. During their presentation, they discussed participating in team-building activities such as archery, as well as

perseverance-building challenges including rock climbing. Students also learned about environmental stewardship through lessons on maintaining healthy lake ecosystems and lake communities. Additionally, they had the opportunity to interact with camp counselors, gaining exposure to diverse cultures and perspectives.

9. Community Garden Presentation – Rich Eberly and Students:

Our Community Garden Project is more than just a place to grow vegetables and flowers—it is a hands-on learning experience that brings students, staff, and community members together. Through planning, building, planting, and maintaining the raised garden beds, students develop valuable skills in teamwork, responsibility, environmental stewardship, and healthy living. The photos below highlight the progress of the project and showcase the dedication and collaboration that have helped transform an idea into a thriving educational and community resource.

10. Presentation: Counselors/Social Workers/Student Advocate Angela Robertson, Keri Haskins, Megan Smith, Melissa Teed, and Caroline Fortunato.

The NBAS Wellness Team provided an overview of its efforts to support student academic success, attendance, mental health, and post-secondary readiness across all grade levels. Team members highlighted student advocacy interventions, counseling services, attendance supports, restorative practices, PBIS initiatives, and social-emotional learning programs. The team reported strong attendance rates, extensive student support services, and a 100% graduation rate. High school counseling efforts included college and career planning, FAFSA completion initiatives, AP and dual-credit opportunities, and college and career exploration experiences. Middle and elementary school counselors shared updates on student support programs, PBIS implementation, family engagement activities, and preventative wellness education. The presentation concluded with appreciation for the staff, community members, businesses, and Board members whose support has contributed to the success of NBAS wellness initiatives.

11. The Superintendent and Transportation Director recommend the Board approve Keystone Cooperative to supply fuel products for 2026-2027 school year.

Motion: Thun
Second: Summers
All ayes, motion carried.

12. The Superintendent recommends the Board approve the "Agreement for Collection of Property Taxes" between New Buffalo Area Schools and the City of New Buffalo, as attached.

Motion: Donnelly
Second: Vosberg
All ayes, motion carried.

13. The Superintendent and Food Service Director recommend the Board approve Scholl Dairy to supply milk products for the 2026-2027 school year.

Motion: Thun
Second: Donnelly
All ayes, motion carried.

14. The Superintendent and Transportation Director recommend the Board approve the purchase of a 2026 Ford Transit for \$68,968.00, per attached purchase agreement.

Motion: Haskins
Second: Donnelly
All ayes, motion carried.

15. Remarks from the Superintendent

- Multiplex artificial turf and track resurfacing is scheduled to begin next Wednesday, June 17, 2026. The multiplex field and the track will be closed to both the school and the public until

construction is complete. We are anticipating the construction to last until August 10, which is when fall sports are to begin.

- Our last day of school is tomorrow. Teachers have records day Wednesday and then they will begin summer break.

16. Remarks from the Board President and Members

Donnelly: What a wonderful experience for our elementary students at the Wax Museum! A special thank you to our incredible PTO for their seamless efforts in relocating the event from outdoors to indoors. The event was exceptionally well attended, and students, families, and staff enjoyed a truly memorable and engaging experience.

Summers: Thank you to our dedicated staff and maintenance team for their outstanding work in preparing for graduation. Your attention to detail and hard work helped create a beautiful and memorable event, and everything looked absolutely incredible.

Thun: I hear you about the Dune Coast Baseball. I want to assure you that our intentions have always been driven in transparency in the best interest of our students and our community. We put a lot of time and care into this position that we are in and we do care and we do hear you. Over the past year we have held multiple meetings on this matter. Discussed in various local publications and city meetings. We recognize some may feel skeptical about this decision and we understand those feelings. However, I want to emphasize the wonderful opportunities this partnership can bring to our children and our community.

Churchill: Student Voice was a wonderful event and the feedback from the kids is that they were very happy to be heard. I really felt like the students were honest and happy to have a casual dialogue. Graduation: on behalf of the board Congratulations to the Class of 2026, a wonderful graduation ceremony and significant milestone in their lives. The event reflected their hard work, growth and achievements of all of our graduates as well as the support of their families, teachers, staff that helped them along the way. The Town Hall event was a well attended event and I thought the presentation was informative. Their mission is thoughtful and truly focused on bringing a positive community centered opportunity to New Buffalo. The steps the Board of Education has taken with Dune Coast has been clearly vetted with legal counsel and we have been thoughtful to keep the best interest of our students and community at heart. We have been discussing this project at several board meetings as it has developed over the last year and have had Dune Coast Baseball present several times to maintain transparency to the public. All of our board meetings, agendas, and minutes are posted on the website and we encourage the public to engage with the district and Dune Coast Baseball directly with any questions you may have regarding this project.

17. Discussion Item(s)

A. The Superintendent approved the following hires:

Day Camp Hires, per attached.

Summer School Hires, per attached.

18. Other Business

19. Adjournment

Motion: Thun

Second: Donnelly

All ayes, motion carried

Meeting adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Vanessa Thun, Secretary

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