



Merry Christmas

Menominee school tensions run hot

Board president says 'no playbook' for what's transpired

By ERIN NOHA
 EagleHerald Staff Writer

MENOMINEE—More than 75 frustrated parents, teachers, staff, principals and board members packed Menominee's Board of Education

Turn to **SCHOOL** on Page A3

“ ”

"If this were a business, it would've filed bankruptcy a long time ago. I understand it's an act of God, but I am scared for the mental health of the children."

Nikki Mathieu, school employee



EAGLEHERALD/ERIN NOHA

Derek Butler, Menominee Board of Education president, apologized to the community, faculty and parents at the meeting on Tuesday. "It pains me to sit here. I'm sorry. If you want to blame me, that's fine," he said.



Merry Christmas from the EagleHerald!

There will be no paper Monday because of the holiday, but there will be a paper on Tuesday.

Sports

Marine girls finally overcome Tigers.

Page A20

Good morning, **Joe and Marie Margis!**
 Thank you for subscribing to the EagleHerald

DEATHS

Behnke, Donald F.
Danielson, Janet M.
Rastall, Douglas K.
Staal, Vivian N.
Winger, Donna B.

More on A6



TODAY'S WEATHER

High 15 | Low 8
 Light snow and windy with gusts up to 40 mph
 More on A11

Advice.....A9-A10
 Classified.....A14-A15
 Comics.....A8, A10
 Crossword.....A8
 Deaths/Obits.....A6
 Opinion.....A5
 Records.....A6
 Sudoku.....A8
 Sports.....A18-A20

Adams Publishing Group.
 ©2022. All rights reserved.

Snow signs



EAGLEHERALD CONTRIBUTOR/PAUL WILLIAMS

Larry Morehead clears snow off a sidewalk along Van Cleve Avenue Thursday in Marinette. Area residents woke up to several inches of snow with flurries still coming down in the late morning.

Future of field house up in air

Marinette County Board votes to amend lease with UW Regents

By DAN KITKOWSKI
 EagleHerald Editor

MARINETTE—The Marinette County Board took action that potentially could save the Max E. Peterson Field House on the UW-Green Bay—Marinette Campus from being "moth-balled."



Alexander

The board voted 24-3 with one abstention Tuesday to amend a lease between the county and the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents to remove the field house and surrounding property from a 75-year lease that originally was signed on Aug. 23, 1967. The term of the lease is \$75 or

Turn to **FIELDHOUSE** on Page A2

School

Continued from Page A1

meeting Tuesday.

The school board announced a new date for the students to return to the Junior/Senior High School—Monday, Jan. 16, and also voted for School Board president Derek Butler to meet with a law firm's public relations person and bring forward his findings at the next board meeting. The district is considering hiring a PR person, at the suggestion of its legal counsel, to fulfill its obligation of transparency, follow-through and communication with the community, Butler said.

The decision may impact how information gets communicated to parents, who are receiving none at this time. This meeting started with one hour and 10 minutes of supercharged public comments.

Nikki Mathieu works in the guidance office and stressed that the kids and parents are walking on a tightrope. From her research, out of 368 students in the high school, 142 have at least one F or are failing, which is just under 40%, she said.

"If this were a business, it would've filed bankruptcy a long time ago," Mathieu said, saying she's glad she doesn't have a child in high school.

"I understand it's an act of God, but I am scared for the mental health of the children," Mathieu said.

Jean Stegeman said the closure of Menominee Junior/Senior High School has been challenging as the on-line administrator for the school.

"We can't make them come if they don't have a school," Stegeman said. "A string of Fs is what they have."

The school was closed after sustaining flood damage in an estimated 30 rooms on Aug. 1. Heavy rains overwhelmed the temporary caps placed on five openings in the roof for the installation of new ventilators. Contractors were recently brought back in to do work, and students were brought back to the



EAGLEHERALD/ERIN NOHA

Stephanie Guay, a paraprofessional at the Junior High, said many contracts expired in June at Tuesday's Menominee Board of Education meeting.

CTE wing.

"Community, faculty, parents—I apologize," Butler said. "It pains me to sit here. I'm sorry. If you want to blame me, that's fine."

After hearing the remarks, Butler spoke candidly to the group.

"I didn't sign up for this," Butler said after hearing the public comments. "What we are facing as a district, board and community—there is no playbook. Nobody would ever sign up for this."

He mentioned that with construction, there are no absolutes. Meanwhile, the heat is now on in the school, and the contractors are hoping to be done by Jan. 6, said Chris DeLeeuw, senior project manager from SitologIQ. They will be working on the roof while school is going on. When the desks go back in, they'll go on a concrete floor.

"The contractors know how important it is to get kids in the school," DeLeeuw said. "We cannot risk having any delays."

The behaviors were not just focused on the high school, but on a developing situation at Central School, where

a student created a difficult scene that traumatized some children, including Melody Spies' students. After the incident, the student wasn't sent home and was allowed to go home on the bus, she said.

She said that parents—and her child specifically—are questioning whether to stay at the school. Some are considering homeschooling or moving their students to Saint John Paul II Catholic Academy in Menominee or St. Thomas Aquinas in Marinette. They need follow-through and communication.

"The behaviors are out of control, and it's not fair," Spies said.

Scott Martin, Blesch principal, questioned if the school can afford

to lose the teachers and more.

"Can we afford to lose these good families? These families are what make Menominee, Menominee," Martin said. "Our staff is physically and mentally exhausted."

He said that schools are different than they were just five or 10 years ago. While he's not from Menominee, he feels the connection the community has and wants to preserve it. However, there's more to the story. "Contract is affecting the overall morale in buildings," he said.

Drew Buyarski, principal of the Junior/Senior High, said independent contracts will be completed after the holidays, in an update from

superintendent Rich Sarau, who was not present at the meeting.

Stephanie Guay, a paraprofessional at the Junior High, said there's never been an issue in the 12 years she's been negotiating contracts with the district. Many contracts expired in June, and the renewals still need to be completed after meeting with superintendent Sarau in August.

"I told him we need to get this done," Guay said. "We started meeting, and we are still meeting. It has taken forever."

One apology from Butler and two other

admissions came from the board, one from Hunter Mans, who is retiring from the board this year.

"We have failed you," he said. "We're gathering complacency, and that's very scary."

Michael Maas, another board member who's also retiring, spoke.

"We have 20 contracts, but we're hiring a PR person?" he said. "We are not transparent."

The lack of communication was an underlying theme at the meeting. Amber Olsen, a parent, said whether the children are getting good grades or not, they're probably Googling everything. That's not learning.

"I can't express how hard this is for parents," she said.

She heard a rumor that the school wasn't opening for the remainder of the entire year, something she wanted to be clarified at the meeting.

"I was here in September—the biggest thing was communication. The communication was happening, but now all of a sudden—no communication. Rumors, rumors, rumors, again. From people in Marinette, and I'm sorry, but from teachers. Do we have a plan B?"

Karissa Bonebreak's children have always gotten good grades. Not anymore.

"We've got kids whose grades are failing now," she said. "My child has never dropped a test score. As a mom, I can't tolerate that."

Erin Noha can be reached by email at enoha@eagleherald.com

Marinette
Community REC Center
RECREATION • EXERCISE • COMMUNITY

GIFT CARDS AVAILABLE!

2501 Pierce Avenue
Marinette, WI

Interfaith Manor
Retirement Living

NORTHLAND LUTHERAN
RETIREMENT COMMUNITY, INC.

- Transportation
- Activity Room
- Close to Restaurants & Shopping
- Courtyard & More

Come Visit Us!
1220 9th Ave Menominee, MI 906-863-2211

Priority given to applicants with annual income of less than \$12,850

Equal Housing Opportunity

ADRC
Aging & Disability Resource Center
of Marinette County

2500 Hall Avenue, Marinette, WI
715-732-3850 1-888-442-3267

Connecting People, Resources, and Community

Providing information, assistance and advocacy to older adults, persons with disabilities, and their families to promote healthy choices, independence, and an enhanced quality of life.

Visit our website at www.marinettecounty.com/adrc

Happy Holidays from The ADRC

