



## FIRST OF MANY



EAGLEHERALD CONTRIBUTOR/PAUL WILLIAMS

Brian and George Johnson, from Keweenaw Glass and Door of Calumet, Michigan, work on installing the first of about 114 windows in the Holiday Inn Express being constructed on Roosevelt Road in Marinette. They expect the process to take about five weeks. The Johnsons are brothers, with Brian working on the outside.



### LOCAL

Queen City's museum readies for summer season

A4



### SPORTS

Three Marines earn All-NEC honors in Track.

A20

Good morning,  
**Timothy Anderson!**  
Thank you for  
subscribing to the  
EagleHerald

### DEATHS

**Blystone, Nancy L. Merchant, Patricia Williams, Alma "Amy" Martha Green**

More on A6

### TODAY'S WEATHER

HIGH LOW

**74 | 55**

Sunny with light winds.

More on A11

Advice.....	A8-A9
Classified .....	A14-A15
Comics .....	A8, A10
Crossword .....	A8
Deaths/Obits .....	A8
Opinion .....	A5
Records.....	A6
Sudoku.....	A8
Sports.....	A17-A20

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## Menominee school board fires veteran employee

### Operations manager terminated for misconduct

**ERIN NOHA**  
EagleHerald Staff Writer

**MENOMINEE** — The Menominee School Board fired its long-time operations supervisor Friday over a series of profane encounters with school officials.

Board members voted 5-1 to terminate Operations Supervisor Steve Sobay on a misconduct charge related to interactions with the school superintendent and school board president.

School Board President Derek Butler abstained from voting, because he was a witness during the hearing in which he said he "felt like a victim."

The decision ends a months-long holding pattern on the decision for Sobay's employment of 27 years at Menominee High School. Superintendent Rich Sarau said that Sobay called him at about 1 p.m. on Dec. 20 — the day Sobay received his paid administrative leave letter for an allegation of misconduct related to capping walls with asbestos contamination.



EAGLEHERALD/ERIN NOHA

Steve Sobay makes a statement at a meeting concerning his employment at Menominee High School.

More **SOBAY** | A2



# Sobay/ from A1

“I received a very irate phone call from Mr. Sobay,” Sarau said. “Basically, I picked up the phone, and he started screaming at me, ‘Fn n n you, you ahole,’ and then continued on with some other profanity and then accused me of being Mr. Butler’s bn n nand having sexual relations with him. And at that time, I hung up, and then immediately after that, he texted on my phone, ‘Coward.’”

“I will say that I don’t know if all of that’s true,” Sobay said, but did confirm the text.

While Sobay was terminated as of Friday as a result of the vote, the original misconduct charge involving asbestos was not sustained, said Wes Hoffman, the official hearing officer for the meeting and local general counsel to Menominee Area Public Schools. The board voted 5-1 not to terminate him on that matter.

The board only needed one of the motions to terminate Sobay. Within three business days, Sobay would receive written notification from the school district regarding his employment status, Hoffman said.

The school hadn’t contacted him since he was issued the paid administrative leave, which Sobay said was the first and last communication from the school system.

“I didn’t get contacted for four months,” Sobay said, who was not represented by legal counsel throughout his suspension or at the meeting. “I never received a warning for anything that I had done wrong. In the typical working world, there’s always a step process.”

Sobay approached him in a vehicle on two separate accounts, Butler said.

“He passed me on the road, and he went ‘fn n n you’ through the windshield to me,” Butler said, mentioning that the incident happened March 14.

As he was leaving Lloyd Flanders, where he currently works, on March 21, Sobay drove by again.

“As I’m entering the intersection, Mr. Sobay decides to cut the corner tight, and as he’s cutting the corner tight at me, again he mouths ‘fn n n you,’” Butler said.

Sobay didn’t apologize for his behavior, Butler said.

The firing might cause a ripple effect, Sobay said. He said half of the transportation or maintenance staff is either quitting or retiring this year.

“There has to be a huge change



EAGLEHERALD/ERIN NOHA

Community members show up in support of Steve Sobay at a Menominee Area Public Schools meeting at 6 a.m. Friday.

coming,” Sobay said. “I just want the community to be aware of what’s played out. This whole asbestos — this is very stressful. And it was probably the most stressful on me. When it got super bad, everybody was pointing fingers at each other.”

The meeting, held at 6 a.m. at the KK Integrated Logistics community room on 1st Street, had 18-20 community members in attendance — most to support Sobay. All of them declined to speak on the record.

“It was very unfair to call a meeting at 6 a.m.,” Sobay said. “Both media and newspaper were not notified. The board put it on the school website one minute before the 18-hour deadline. Every little bit of this was like, ‘come on.’ We’re a small community. In the long run, people are going to find out.”

The meeting time and place was done for safety reasons and to accommodate board members with jobs, Hoffman said.

“We didn’t want to have it on school property because we were worried about safety,” he said. “It was done for safety and in consideration of working schedules for a lot of people.”

The community members who declined to speak to the paper also didn’t speak at public comment because some didn’t know it was offered, Sobay said.

“After the votes came in, nobody heard Mr. Butler say public comment,” Sobay said. “We found out that Mrs. (Julie) Krah did hear public comment almost whispered. It was so low that

nobody in the audience could hear it. It kind of ruffled feathers at the end.”

Volume was an issue at the meeting. A noisy air conditioner caused the first five minutes of the meeting to be nearly inaudible. During that stretch, board members moved the public comments after a scheduled closed session. This departed from the printed agenda, which listed public comments before the closed session. Board members deliberated on Sobay’s employment during that closed session.

“The board really, really worked hard to be fair,” Hoffman said. “The board was so concerned about bringing fairness to Steve that they bifurcated the vote. It was a signal loud and clear to him that by not supporting the first motion to terminate (based on misconduct with asbestos), that he made his point.”

Before the closed session, board member Cindy Woods ended the hearing with a question to Sobay.

“Do you think it’s OK for you to tell your boss to fn n n off and whatever else you sent him or said to him?” Woods said.

“No,” Sobay said, saying he couldn’t recall apologizing to him. “Is it OK for him to do that to me?”

“Did you apologize to him?” Woods said. “Because I know if I told my boss to fn n n off, I’d be walked out.”

Sobay also delivered a closing statement before the closed session.

“After working for MAPS for 27 years, probably one of the most committed persons MAPS has ever had, this is truly a slap in the face,” Sobay said. “I would like to thank all of you that are here this early in the morning supporting me. I will leave today with my head held high and deal with the outcome.”

The next school board meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. Wednesday at the library in Blesch Intermediate School, 1200 11th Ave, Menominee.

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

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