Center Cass District 66
December 10, 2025 Board of Education
News Release

By Maria Gannon

The Center Cass 66 Board of Education special levy hearing was called to order by President Brian Liedtke at 6:25 pm on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, in the Lakeview Jr. High LRC.

Dr. Wise presented the 2025 Levy which provides funds for the 2026-2027 school year. He noted that the District uses the funds from the levy to improve the educational environment, enhance buildings, assist with transporting students, and build appropriate fund balances for financial stability. Dr. Wise noted that although there was one objection to the levy, no one else contacted the District. He stated that the levy complied with state and local policy.

The regular Center Cass 66 Board of Education meeting was called to order by President Brian Liedtke at 6:34 pm on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, in the Lakeview Jr. High LRC.

The Board approved the following consent agenda consisting of:

- BOE Minutes from the November 5, 2025 Regular Meeting
- District Monthly Financial Statements for October and November
- Monthly Board Bills Payable for November
- Hire of Sharon Dadepogu, Data and Technology Associate
- Hire of Maria Ginez, Full Time Custodian, Prairieview
- Hire of Francisca Beltran, District Bus Driver
- Resignation of Samantha Henry, Lakeview Teacher, Social Studies
- Resignation of Taylor Lucas, Paraprofessional, Prairieview
- Resignation of Sydney Drum, BACC Aide
- Annual Statement of Affairs
- Title Change for Rusty Novotny from Senior Network Manager to Assistant Technology Director
- Contract with TJ Consultants for Student Services Audit in the amount of $22,000

The Board heard from students excited to share why they believed their schools were recognized by US News and World Report as outstanding learning environments. The proud students were Evelyn Harrison, Wade DeFors, Zadie Abadin, Scarlette Smentek, Austin Sage, Charlotte Funk, Max Roberts, Mostafa Aly, and Santiago Fong Uvence . After their comments, they posed with a picture of the banner and plaque. Board members commented that the reason our schools received recognition is because of amazing students like the ones who presented.

Tara Herndon presented a revised District Dashboard. The new strategic dashboard is housed on the District's homepage. The dashboard reflects the indicators of the Strategic

Plan, while providing other key data from the School report card. Board members commented on the appealing graphics, ease of use, and comparison to state.

Dr. Rhoads highlighted key results from the student, employee, and parent survey. Student self reported strengths for the District included their preparedness to learn, self-management, classroom effort, social awareness, and ability to utilize learning strategies. The District's focus on student ownership of learning is taking hold throughout the student population. While student ownership is high, the District would like to make greater gains in student emotional literacy, their ability to recognize, understand, and express their emotions appropriately, as well as have the perspective taking ability to recognize and understand the feelings of others.

In addition to student results, Dr. Rhoads highlighted key employee results. Employee self reported results show high levels of belonging and collaboration among staff, which are necessary to help students grow throughout their educational journey at Center Cass. The largest area of growth for the District was in providing support for staff in the area of instruction. Survey results indicated that employees needed more feedback, consultation, and coaching, actions that usually come from Administrators, Specialists, or Instructional Coaches. Dr. Wise mentioned that the lack of Assistant Principals, Instructional Coaches, and Literacy Specialist positions in the District contributes to the low scores, but more importantly, contributes to employees not receiving the timely feedback, support, or coaching that they need to increase student achievement.

Lastly Dr. Rhoads displayed parent results that showed positive in areas of school climate and culture, while showing growth is needed in two-way communication and home-school partnerships. While the response rate was not as high on the Fall survey as the Spring survey, the themes are similar from both. Administration will continue to work toward improving results.

Dr. Wise recommended an increase in bus driver pay due to our drivers being paid far less than surrounding districts and bus companies. While the District has been increasing driver pay since the passage of the referendum, the pay was so low that the upward corrections were not closing the gap between our drivers and the field. The Board supported the increase which certainly helps retain current drivers and attract new drivers.

Board President Liedtke also noted that while the Board has talked about the long term vision of the Transportation Department, and studied what other districts do in terms of walk zones, fees, and routes to school, having bus drivers is the first step, and without drivers there isn't a transportation department. He further noted that being able to attract and retain employees is a current Strategic Plan goal that the Board continues to fulfill. Lastly he noted that while the "1.5 mile" calculation is used by the state as a distance from a school building in which transportation is required, that only applies to school districts in which the law applies, and the "1.5 mile" calculation doesn't apply to Center Cass nor most K-8 Districts in the southwest suburbs. He thanked Director Tiede and drivers for their loyalty and effort transporting students to and from school.

The Board has been attending Woodridge Village meetings and keeping up to speed on the 75th Street proposed Tax Increment Finance District. More information on a potential Inter-governmental Agreement will be provided after the New Year. As a result, the Board of Education is calling a special meeting on Tuesday, January 6th to discuss the potential TIF and provide Administration direction as they convene for the Joint Review Board meeting on Wednesday, January 7th.

Dr. Wise thanked the Board for attending the Board conference. Vice President Watson noted that all 7 board members attended and are committed to the district's success. Dr. Wise followed by noting that there is a direct correlation between Board member development and District success, and thanked this Board, and Boards from the recent past, who were committed to learning and helping grow the District.

Adjournment was at 8:25 p.m.

The Board approved the following action items:

- 2025 Tax Levy
- Transportation Pay Schedule with starting rate at $33.00/hour
- Bid for the roof retrofit at Lakeview in the amount of $1,243,975 to Malcor Roofing
- Pre-bid package for the Lakeview Parking Lot Replacement
- Special BOE Meeting on January 6, 2026

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 14, 2026 at 6:30pm in the Learning Resource Center at Lakeview Junior High.