

**NEW BUFFALO AREA SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION
Performing Arts Center
1112 E. Clay Street
P.O. Box 280
New Buffalo, MI 49117**

Special Meeting

**Joint with River Valley Board of Education
Monday, July 13, 2026, 6:30 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: Donnelly and Haskins
Also in Attendance: Mr. Adam Bowen, Superintendent of Schools
Devinnie Wysocki, Adm. Asst. to Superintendent
3. Expressions from the Public: None
4. Adoption of the Agenda
Motion: Thun
Second: Werner
All ayes, motion carried.
5. Joint Board meeting for presentation by the River Valley and New Buffalo Athletic Directors on the progress being made in the first three years of the sports merger approved by both Boards of Education in 2023.
Athletic Director(s) Matt Johnson and Colby Caid presented the 2026 Raider Athletics Board Update, providing an overview of the athletic co-op program, its progress, accomplishments, and future direction. Declining student enrollment (approximately 34–37% over the past 13 years). Increased opportunities for more student-athletes to participate at an appropriate competitive level. A commitment to providing a stronger overall athletic experience through improved competition, skill development, accountability, and team development.

Measures of Success: Student-athlete well-being and satisfaction, athletic skill and leadership development, program sustainability, coaching quality and development, financial stability, and administrative effectiveness.

2025–2026 Athletic Highlights: Ten merged varsity athletic programs, 64 All-Conference athletes, 9 All-District athletes, 27 All-Region athletes, conference championships in Girls Basketball, Softball, Baseball, Girls Track &

Field, and Boys Track & Field. Individual district, regional, and state champions. Multiple state qualifiers and All-State recognitions. Academic All-State honors for the Girls Basketball team and individual student-athletes. Used participation and survey results.

Challenges and Opportunities: Moving into higher competitive divisions, increased competition for varsity roster spots, larger participation numbers in certain sports.

Integration Progress and Future Goals: Regular Co-op Oversight Committee meetings, development of a consolidated athletic handbook, standardized coaching pay scale, consolidated athletic software and communication systems, weekly transportation coordination.

Future priorities include: Additional software consolidation, continued coaching development and evaluation improvements, improved facility and equipment alignment, exploration of middle school co-op opportunities, continued refinement of transportation logistics, consideration of a formal long-term co-op agreement.

RV Board Member: How do we make transportation better for both schools? Van/Bus?

Caid – Managing dismissal for both schools has presented logistical challenges, particularly in recruiting staff willing to work only during timeframe. Initially, a van was used for transportation. The type of vehicle utilized is determined by the number of students requiring transportation.

Board members discussed the importance of ensuring student-athletes arrive at events with adequate time to warm up. They also inquired whether game start times could be adjusted to begin earlier.

Johnson: This is an administrative conversation. Students receive meaningful instruction through the end of the school day, making it difficult to release them early for athletic travel. However, there are occasions when students must be released early for athletic travel.

Werner: What do you mean to “shuttle” students?

Caid: It is a bus that goes back and forth. Not just one trip it could be going back and forth between schools.

President Churchill: Formal Agreement/Contract, what are your thoughts?

Caid: I believe a document outlining the program's rules and guidelines would help ensure consistency should a new Athletic Director assume the role.

Johnson: Each sport operates under a two-year commitment as required by the MHSAA. The agreement document would outline how the co-op program functions and the guidelines governing its operation.

RV Board Member: In addition to a great academic program I think this will help persuade families to enroll their children.

President Bender: What is the possibility of having baseball/softball double header. 2 – 5 inning games?

Caid: We are strapped by all of the other schools, teams, and athletic directors. This is something that we can try to discuss with other districts.

Thun: How can we combine our athletic site information?

Johnson: New Buffalo currently uses Schedule Star, a scheduling platform that has been in place for many years. Due to the athletic Co-Op operating across two school locations, the platform cannot be fully consolidated, as it is designed around a single-site structure. Staff are working toward implementing a dedicated Raiders Fan Site for

the 2026–2027 school year to provide a centralized source for schedules and athletic information. Efforts to enhance and streamline communication will continue.

Johnson: We want our coaches to enter all of our stats on one site. We want to have a Red Arrow Raiders stats page but there is not an address to attach this to for both schools to share. We are a unicorn in all of this. We are the first school in the State of Michigan that has done this. I anticipate you will see more schools following this platform in the future.

RV Board Member: There is another Co-Op but they use one school as the main school.

Caid: One school has submitted to the other.

Superintendent: Thank you, we have a lot to be grateful for. Students have chosen to come together and work together for the benefit of both schools. Appreciative of the board and their support. This is also difficult for the coaches as they merge the program, it is a shift and I compliment them for that. Thank you to the New Buffalo leadership, Adam, he is outstanding to work with. Business managers, Pano and Brian working behind the scenes. Mostly Colby and Matt, they are really in this and it is very powerful. Do you want us to start working on a formal contract/agreement? I just wanted to ask, is that what I am hearing?

President Churchill: It is certainly something New Buffalo would want to explore. We are missing two members here tonight so we would want to get their input before we say we are all in.

Superintendent Bowen: When I think about the merger, the two slides that you shared with the participation is the most powerful and solidifies why we are doing this. Opportunities for our students. My own kids are a part of this process and have made friends that will last a lifetime. The data shows that the merger is working well. Coaching data and student answers, there is a lot of thought behind this. There were many conversations and I think we can look back now and say the proof is in tonight's presentation. Matt and Colby, they are a great team and I feel that they work for each other. The CPOC team is excellent and they care so much about kids. Transportation is our biggest obstacle and we will continue working on that.

6. Items for Board Discussion

A. Consideration of adding MS Girls Basketball as a Co-Op/merged sport in 26-27

We want to do what is best for the kids by placing them where they can develop at the appropriate level while keeping them with their peers whenever possible. Difference in ability level (who am I coaching to?) We need some direction from the board. We also have the question regarding transportation.

President Churchill: Could this help increase our female sports population?

Johnson: We are trying to do different things to get the kids to compete. If they compete together, this could help drive the numbers.

RV Board Member: How are we going to get the students back and forth?

Caid: Chances are it is us. Matt and I are driving students back and forth for them to have the opportunity to play. Also, the 3:05 bus has helped us in getting students back and forth as well.

Johnson: We had someone in place, but there wasn't consistency. Some days the student(s) rode the bus, while on other days they did not.

RV Board Member: I really appreciate your commitment to this and how you both are really dedicated.

Werner: Will this help the JV and V league?

Caid: They want the MS program to be successful because that may help build their JV and V program when they come to them.

President Churchill: What is the timeline for needing a decision?

Johnson: MS Girls Basketball the sooner the better due to scheduling. Get the coaches in place, order uniforms, contact opponents. The program does not start until January.

Consideration of adding MS Cross Country as a Co-Op/merged sport in 27-28.

Caid: Participation need of 3-4 kids. More of a logistical transportation need. We would like to consolidate to make this program work a little better.

Johnson: I assume our respective superintendents will collaborate and present this formally at a board meeting?

President Churchill: Yes, for New Buffalo Schools.

7. Adjournment

Motion: Werner

Second: Thun

All ayes, motion carried

Meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Vanessa Thun, Secretary
BOARD OF EDUCATION
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