IRON RIVER—The West Iron County Board of Education received a positive mark for finances, following its annual audit report Sept. 17.

CPA Dianne Rostagno noted the district ended the fiscal year with a fund balance of $1,358,248.

This would provide approximately two months' reserve, she said, which was good, but advised the board to try to increase it.

"I would like to see three months," she said.

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The sinking fund ended the year with $126,143 in equity; and food services also reported a balance in the black by $27,702. Rostagno commended the department in that it received the same amount of revenue as last year, but was able to cut expenses by 6 percent.

The athletic department saw a small drop in revenue last year, she said, and expenses were up, yet the department ended the year with a $194 fund balance.

Rostagno told the board of her concerns with the district's student activities' funds, which the finance committee has been working to streamline over the past year.

"It's been a thorn in your side," she said. "It had gotten better, but now is getting a little worse this year."

Business Manager Amber Laturi said she has been working with the board on the problem. All the books for the separate accounts are kept in the business office now, and advisors must request checks and make deposits there.

"That policy has begun, and it's working well," Laturi said.

"It's been a great audit," Rostagno concluded, "and it's been getting better every year."

in other business:

--Elementary and middle school education specialists are in place and doing well, reported Stambaugh Elementary School Principal Michelle Thomson. They are being used in the lower grades. Middle/High School Principal Mike Berutti said he also has specialists helping out in sixth through eighth grades.

--The board approved a gas and diesel bid from Krist Oil, the only bid received. It approved a renewal of its contract with Teck Solutions, and approved a second reading of NEOLA policies.

--A request was made for a reduced schedule for a 12th grade student, with circumstances requiring him to care for a younger sibling while the parent is at work.

"I don't think this is a good practice," said Berutti, although he and the board were sympathetic to the situation. The student is current with credits--however, Berutti advised the board that it may need to look at increasing the number of credits required for graduation, "just so these requests don't start happening more often."

Superintendent Chris Thomson agreed, noting the requests are handled on a case-by-case basis, but hoped "it doesn't set us on a slippery slope."

The board approved the reduced schedule request, with the stipulation that the student return to a full schedule if the parent's work situation changes.

--The board gave its approval to have Piwarski Logging cut on district land in Iron River Township. Thomson said forester Terry Read will scale the timber at no cost.

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