IRON RIVER—Discussions regarding the high school drafting program continued at the November meeting of the West Iron County School Board.
The topic was brought up briefly at the October meeting, but with Superintendent Chris Thomson hoping to look further into the sustainability of the program, no decisions had been made. __PUBLIC__
If implemented, the board also faced the decision of which form of drafting to utilize, auto CAD, which is a computer aided design technique, or the basic hand-drafting practice.
The basic auto CAD program was estimated at $625 per student slot, costing $13,000 for 20 seats. That number did not include the cost of the computers or upgrades to the drafting lab. A drafting room with necessary equipment to teach 20 students hand drafting was estimated at $12,000 and could last 15 to 20 years if properly maintained, according to building trades instructor Jeff Swenski.
Swenski recommended the pen and paper technique for beginning drafting students, noting that he does not see the method ever going away completely, despite updated technology. Board Member Arthur Sachek maintained his opinion that drafting students would eventually need to move on to a computer program.
All agreed that the program, in one form or another, would benefit West Iron students. Thomson suggested purchasing fewer computer programs and offering limited enrollment, while offering hand drafting for the rest of the class. The suggestion to replace one semester of Woods 2 with a semester of hand drafting this year was agreed upon. Pending student interest, the class will be offered in the 2013-14 school year.
High School and Middle School Principal Mike Berutti explained the possibility of a school-wide Title One program. Title One currently allows for specialized assistance for those eligible for the program, which goes through eighth grade. Targeted students have poor grades, low MEAP scores or low economic standing. With the help of a new grant, the district may soon be able to give extra help to all students, not just those given the Title One label. As it stands, teachers and aides can not give that extra support. The $3,000 grant was recently approved, starting the year-long process of incorporating the new program. It is expected to start effect next October.
The board passed a resolution requesting funds from the Michigan Association of School Boards to assist with legal expenses incurred from an ongoing case involving the state mandated Public Act 152.
P.A. 152 led to the district's decision to cap its portion of union employees' health insurance costs at 80 percent of the premium, prompting regional union representatives to challenge the move in West Iron County and other districts. With West Iron as a test case, the MASB approved payment of up to 50 percent of legal expenses or unfair labor costs incurred by the district. A July hearing in Iron County Circuit Court overturned a temporary restraining order against the decision, and a Lansing court date is expected in early 2013 if the union continues to argue the case.
A database of all district-owned computers and other related equipment will be compiled, according to district technology director Brian Rippey. He recommended keeping a record, which will enable the district to plan for future needs while keeping tabs on all equipment.
A new data directory program is also being looked into. The state mandated requirement has the district looking at different programs that allow pertinent student information to be easily obtained by those who need it. The current program was described as cumbersome, and the

PowerSchool version is costly at $9 per student. Thomson said that he and other ISD superintendents are continuing to search for new software.

Thirty-three local veterans attended the West Iron County High School's Veterans Day program, sponsored by the Student Council. The morning included breakfast for the veterans and a flag folding presentation during the program, according to Berutti.

Berutti congratulated the district champion varsity girls' volleyball team and the junior varsity football team, which took the West Pac Conference title.

Four applicants were recently interviewed for a vacant Middle School teaching position. Berutti said he would be giving his recommendation to Thomson and hopes to have the new hire start soon after Thanksgiving.

Spanish teacher Jen Berlinski reported to the board on her recent trip to Northern Michigan University with Spanish 3 and 4 students. The purpose of the trip was to attend a play put on by the NMU Spanish department, which included audience interaction. Although the West Iron Spanish classes have attended a Spanish Field Day for the past 21 years, Berlinski said this was the first play her students had attended. She thanked the board for allowing the trip.