

**OWOSSO PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**Board of Education Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes**  
**April 12, 2021**  
**Report 20-116**

Present: Sara Keyes, Ty Krauss, Rick Mowen, Olga Quick, Marlene Webster, Shelly Ochodnicky  
Absent: Adam Easlick

President Rick Mowen called the Board of Education Meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was held at the Washington Campus Gymnasium, 645 Alger Street, Owosso MI 48867.

Superintendent Dr. Tuttle informed the meeting's audience that Vice President Ochodnicky was participating in the meeting via telephone in accordance with revised bylaw 0100.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**NEOLA Board Policy Review with Wayne Wright**

NEOLA Representative Mr. Wayne Wright provided members of the Board with explanations of the following proposed policies: New Policy 7450, Revised Policy 7455, Revised Policy 2260.01, Revised Policy 2266, New Policy 5341, New Policy 5342, New Policy 5343, Revised Policy 7440.01, Revised Policy 8321, Revised Policy 8330, Revised Policy 8400, Revised Policy 8500, Revised Policy 8510, Revised Policy 1422, Revised Policy 1623, Revised Policy 1662, Revised Policy 2260, Revised Policy 3122, Revised Policy 3123, Revised Policy 3362, Revised Policy 4122, Revised Policy 4123. Revised Policy 4362, Revised Policy 5517.

Dr. Tuttle said there are concerns at a regional level regarding Policy 5342–Do Not Resuscitate Orders (DNR) For Minor Students and Policy 8400–School Safety Information. She recommended the Board review the two policies closely and reach out to state legislatures with any concerns.

**Public Participation**

President Rick Mowen announced the Board of Education is a public body and recognizes the value of public comment on educational issues. Time was included in the meeting's agenda for public participation. Members of the audience should announce their name and group affiliation when applicable and limit their participation time to three minutes or less. Comments should be directed to the Board and be relevant to the business of the Board of Education. This is not an opportunity for dialogue with the Board of Education. The rules of common courtesy should also be observed.

The following individuals addressed the Board:

- Dave Faulkner
- Janena Kregger
- Stephanie Griffin

- Megan Friend
- Wendy Strauss

### **OMS Boat Launch Easement**

Dr. Tuttle informed the Board the City of Owosso has requested an easement be granted for the purpose of a canoe launch on the Owosso Middle School (OMS) property. Currently, there are 18 easements on OMS property. Dr. Tuttle noted the district is in favor of granting the easement, explaining Community Housing Network, the nonprofit organization planning to purchase the OMS property, is in support of the easement. Dr. Tuttle stated Community Housing Network is doing everything they can to be a great partner with the district and community.

### **Plans for Next School Year**

Dr. Tuttle announced the district is still waiting to hear if the State will fund virtual learning options next school year. Dr. Tuttle noted she is aware there are some Owosso families who would like a virtual learning option, and if the state approves the funding, the district hopes to provide something for these families; however, Dr. Tuttle noted the virtual learning format in 2021–2022 would likely differ than it did in 2020–2021 (e.g. districts across the county might partner on a virtual program). The district is predicting most students will return to in-person learning next school year.

### **Handbooks**

Dr. Tuttle informed the Board that handbook revisions will be a “for future action” item on the May agenda and a “for action” item on the June agenda. She noted that, with so many unknowns at this juncture, handbook revisions are being pushed back a month later than usual.

### **COVID Numbers/Decision**

Dr. Tuttle reported that while the number of students and staff members in quarantine or isolation is on a sharp rise following Spring Break travel and Easter gatherings, very few COVID-19 transmissions have occurred in school. The vast majority of COVID-19 cases affecting students and staff have originated at family/friend gatherings outside of school. Dr. Tuttle reminded the Board that students who are “isolated” are COVID-19 positive, and students who are “quarantined” have been identified as a close contact to a positive case. In order to be considered a “close contact,” an individual must have been exposed to a positive case from less than six feet away, for 15 minutes or longer over a 24-hour period. Dr. Tuttle commended Steve Brooks, Alexa Stechschulte, and the OPS Administrative Team for working around the clock to contact trace and keep students as safe as possible. Dr. Tuttle informed the Board that the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) again changed their isolation and quarantine guidance from 14 days to ten days. MDHHS guidance has changed multiple times over the past month, and Dr. Tuttle thanked Owosso families for their patience as the district works hard to stay on top of and follow the latest updates. Dr. Tuttle noted teachers are very cognizant of the six-feet social distancing rule, and they work hard to keep students apart in the classroom to minimize the number of students who will need to quarantine if there is a positive case. Dr. Tuttle also explained the district is being flexible in allowing students to move between tracks: Families who would like their student to move from virtual to in-person instruction or from in-person to virtual instruction should contact their building for accommodation. She noted switching between tracks is a bit trickier at the elementary level, as it

often requires students change teachers. Dr. Tuttle concluded stating the district believes giving families the ability to choose their form of instruction this year is prudent, especially now that all OPS staff members have had the opportunity to be fully vaccinated.

Trustee Quick expressed concerns regarding the spike in COVID-19 cases in Michigan, especially in Shiawassee County citing the New York Times' "Coronavirus in the U.S.: Latest Map and Case Count" that ranked Shiawassee County as number one in the country for the most daily cases as relates to population. Trustee Quick stated there have been 396 new cases in Shiawassee County in the last week, many of which have been in the younger population. She expressed concern for the general welfare of the county. Trustee Quick explained that she too believes face-to-face learning is ideal but reiterated that her top concern is the health and safety of OPS students and staff.

Dr. Tuttle thanked Trustee Quick for sharing her concerns. She explained the district has not made the decision to continue an in-person option lightly. Dr. Tuttle noted Governor Whitmer recommended Michigan high schools go all virtual for two weeks following spring break. At the time of the recommendation, Owosso High School had already been back in school for a full week following the break. Testing was scheduled for a limited number of students the following Monday and Tuesday, meaning many high school students were already going to be virtual for almost half of the next week. Dr. Tuttle also explained students participating in athletics are taking rapid COVID tests each week, as required by MDHHS. She admitted that she does not know what the right answer is in regard to giving families the choice or moving to all online instruction, but she is trying to listen to the wants and needs of the community and believes giving parents the choice is the best thing to do at this time. Dr. Tuttle explained numerous parents have reached out to her with extreme concerns about what to with their child, having no daycare, during all virtual days.

Trustee Quick told Dr. Tuttle that she appreciates her explanation and supports her. She asked for clarification regarding the quarantine and isolation guidelines being reduced from 14 to ten days. Dr. Tuttle explained MDHHS was responsible for changing the guidelines, not the Shiawassee County Health Department. Dr. Tuttle added that all superintendents in the county are constantly communicating with the health department and following their recommendations. She again thanked Mr. Brooks and Ms. Stechschulte for taking on the momentous task of contact tracing and ensuring the district is following the most recent health and safety guidelines put out by the local health department, state, and federal government.

Curriculum Director Steve Brooks noted the quarantine and isolation recommendation change was time consuming and frustrating for OPS staff members. He said over 175 Owosso families were contacted because students in isolation or quarantine had their return to school dates altered. He explained that every case is different and has its own timeline. The district is making a concerted effort to make personal phone calls with all individuals affected, both students and staff. He emphasized Dr. Tuttle's comment that the district is seeing very little spread of infection within the schools. Most positive cases are resulting from family functions, Easter celebrations, funerals, travel, and weddings. He clarified that many students are being quarantined due to exposures in the classroom, but few students have contracted COVID-19 from a classroom exposure.

President Mowen suggested that schools may be one of the safest places for students and staff in some cases, as the cleaning protocols and mask-wearing requirement are always in place.

Trustee Quick asked if the district is testing athletes on a weekly basis.

Dr. Tuttle confirmed athletes are tested each week with an antigen test that determines if a student is in the beginning stages of a COVID-19 infection. She explained any students who receives a positive antigen test is asked to then take a PCR test to confirm the case.

Mr. Brooks noted the antigen test is approximately 90% accurate with positives and 70% accurate with negatives. He stated the district has had three students test positive with an antigen test, and all three cases were confirmed with a positive PCR test.

Trustee Quick asked Mr. Brooks if he is including athletics when he mentions low school-related transmissions.

Mr. Brooks confirmed he is including athletics.

Dr. Tuttle clarified that school-related transmissions are not non-existent, but they are low. She added the health department has been overwhelmed with cases, and the district's contact tracing has been vital in ensuring students are quarantined in a timely fashion to help prevent spread in the schools.

Trustee Quick thanked Mr. Brooks and Ms. Stechschulte for their diligent work with contact tracing, adding that she spoke to them over spring break regarding a COVID-19-related matter and both were helpful and available. While Trustee Quick appreciated Dr. Tuttle's explanations and the work of OPS staff members to keep students safe, she explained that she still felt it necessary to recommend the district move to all online instruction for the remainder of the week.

Moved by Trustee Quick to move the district to all virtual instruction through April 16, 2021. Motion not seconded. Motion failed.

### **Bond Updates**

Dr. Tuttle proudly reported the Bond Project will conclude by the end of April, and she is excited for the community to see the building when it is safe to have a Grand Opening event. Dr. Tuttle added community members should take pride in the building. She thanked John Kalpko, Jeff Phillips, Joe Watson, Gunnar Stinson, and Julie Omer for their dedication and essential work in ensuring the completion of the beautiful new campus and its technology updates. Dr. Tuttle added that Clark Construction has been a wonderful partner throughout the project.

### **Sinking Fund Bids**

Dr. Tuttle informed the Board that the sinking fund bids came back with price points exceeding what the district had hoped for. Dr. Tuttle explained that she is working with Darrick Huff at Spicer to reduce the prices before bringing anything to the Board for approval. Unfortunately, playground updates at all three elementary schools may be cut this year to stay in the 1.1–1.3

million dollars range the district is hoping for. Dr. Tuttle added that construction costs are up around the country, as demand has outweighed supply following pandemic shutdowns.

### **Purchase Agreement Amendment for Owosso Middle School**

Dr. Tuttle informed the Board that Community Housing Network is moving forward with plans to purchase the Owosso Middle School building. The purchase has been delayed due to an issue with the flood plain, but Community Housing Network is working through this with FEMA as the trajectory of the river will need to change. Unfortunately, the delay has caused many of the deadlines in the original agreement to no longer be feasible. Dr. Tuttle explained that if FEMA approves changing the flow of the river, the Board will have to amend the dates in the agreement.

### **Senior Events**

Dr. Tuttle expressed her sympathies to the Class of 2021, who have missed out on a traditional senior year. She also expressed optimism regarding many of the end of the year celebrations moving forward, albeit in a non-traditional format with social distancing and mask wearing. Dr. Tuttle reminded meeting participants that Memorial Healthcare is administering some vaccinations to students ages 16+. Dr. Tuttle announced the following dates for senior events: Blue and Gold Banquet/Academic Achievement Awards–May 18<sup>th</sup>, Athletic Awards–May 24<sup>th</sup>, Honors Convocation–May 25<sup>th</sup>, Lincoln High School Graduation–May 26<sup>th</sup>, Owosso High School Graduation–May 27<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Tuttle stated that a decision has not yet been made on whether prom can occur.

### **Board Questions**

Vice President Ochodnický thanked Dr. Tuttle and the Administration Team for working diligently to keep students and staff as safe as possible while continuing to offer an in-person instruction option.

Trustee Krauss thanked attendees who participated in public participation for bringing their thoughts to the Board. He also thanked Trustee Quick for her courage in standing up for what she believes is best for students and staff.

Treasurer Keyes echoed Trustee Krauss' remarks, thanking all those who spoke at the Board meeting, especially Trustee Quick, and noting everyone is trying to do what is best for students. She added that parents and students have already had so much taken from their control this year, and she supports the plan to continue giving Owosso families the choice between online and in-person learning. Treasurer Keyes highlighted the learning and mental challenges that can accompany a forced move to online learning.

Trustee Quick thanked her fellow Board members for their support and for allowing her to feel comfortable expressing her opinions. Trustee Quick commented that as a member of a governing body, she feels responsibility to engage in these important discussions, even when not everyone agrees and there are difficult decisions to be made.

Secretary Webster noted her appreciation to attendees for joining the meeting and expressing their opinions on both sides of the online versus in-person learning discussion. She stated that,

unfortunately, it seems COVID-19 is around to stay, and we must learn how to live through the pandemic. She expressed her appreciation for her fellow Board member and friend, Trustee Quick, thanking Trustee Quick for her professionalism and passion for the district and students.

President Mowen stated the Board is open to ideas, discussions, and differing opinions. He emphasized that no matter the discussion, the Board comes together in the end to send a positive message to the community. He told members of the public who participated in the meeting that their comments are appreciated, and the Board listens to the community's concerns. He concluded noting the measures the district takes to keep OPS students safe and secure gives him confidence, and though it is difficult to be an elected official, parent, and grandparent during these challenge times, he has confidence in the Board and district leadership.

**Upcoming Board Meeting Dates.**

April 26: Board of Education Meeting, 5:30 p.m.

May 24: Board of Education Meeting, 5:30 p.m.

(NOTE: May 10 Committee of the Whole Canceled; May Board Meeting moved from May 31 to May 24)

**Adjournment**

Moved by Quick, supported by Krauss to adjourn at 6:52 pm. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes recorded by Alexa Stechschulte

Respectfully submitted,

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Marlene Webster, Secretary