

OWOSSO PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Board of Education Minutes
March 15, 2021
Report 20-114

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

President Rick Mowen called the Board of Education Meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. The meeting was held at the Washington Campus Gymnasium, 645 Alger Street, Owosso MI 48867.

Pledge of Allegiance

Building Reports

As part of the Celebrate Kids! segment of the meeting, Owosso Middle School (OMS) Teacher and Service Club Advisor Chris Bird introduced Builders Club President Desiree Mofield, Builders Club Vice President Quinn Schemenauer, 8th Grade Student Council President Julionna West, and 8th Grade Student Council Co-Vice President Charlie Agnew. Mr. Bird explained Madelyn Usher also serves as an 8th Grade Student Council Co-Vice President but was unable to attend the Board meeting because she was competing in a swim meet. Mr. Bird gushed that the students have done a tremendous job leading weekly Zoom meetings, organizing service projects to help the community, and spreading positivity throughout the district in the midst of a pandemic. The student leaders presented a PowerPoint slideshow to the Board and explained various events and projects they have organized. The Awareness Projects were favorites amongst Builders Club and Student Council members, and the student leaders explained these projects bring awareness to challenges that teens and adults face around the world including homelessness, body image disorders, autism, breast cancer, and suicidal thoughts. Additionally, Builders Club and Student Council members celebrated International Women's Day by wearing empowerment shirts and collecting donations for the Safe Center.

Superintendent Dr. Tuttle and President Mowen thanked the OMS students and Mr. Bird for their leadership and excellent presentation. Dr. Tuttle asked each student what their favorite project has been this year. Ms. Mofield expressed how much she enjoyed the "Photo Voice Project" in which students used photography to tell stories about developing healthy habits and staying true to oneself. Ms. Schemenauer enjoyed crafting posters. Mr. Agnew was proud of the positive impact students had made by organizing donations for the Safe Center. Ms. West's favorite projects have been the Awareness Day projects, and she commented on the incredible amount she has learned from each project. Mr. Bird concluded by saying that as unusual and crazy as the year has been, OPS students have stepped up to help their community, stayed positive, and made a difference!

Dr. Tuttle introduced Owosso High School (OHS) students Sam Feldpausch and David Neese. Each were recognized for their recent accomplishment of earning the prestigious Eagle Scout rank. Dr. Tuttle commented that earning the rank of Eagle Scout is not easy, and Eagle Scouts must demonstrate a strong passion to serve their community. Dr. Tuttle asked Mr. Feldpausch and Mr. Neese to share with the Board a bit about what they chose for their Eagle Scout Project.

Mr. Feldpausch explained that he organized and led the construction of a playground at Pleasant Valley Mobile Home Park in cooperation with Shiawassee Hope. From fundraising to adding drainage tile, leveling the ground, and installing the equipment, Mr. Feldpausch managed the project every step of the way. Mr. Feldpausch explained the project timeline was slowed due to

the pandemic, and it took a great deal of patience and perseverance to steer the project to completion. Mr. Feldpausch shared that he was extremely proud of how the project came together in the end and how much he loved seeing the kids jump on the playground equipment as soon as the project was completed.

Mr. Neese shared that he worked with the Shiawassee Humane Society to organize and lead the construction of athletic play equipment for animals at the shelter. He explained that three shelters were built in total— a seesaw, climbing tires, and a ramp. Mr. Neese chose this project because of his love for animals. Like Mr. Feldpausch, Mr. Neese's project also faced surprising obstacles due to the pandemic that required extra coordination and communication efforts. Mr. Neese noted that he was happy with the final outcome and thanked his family who has helped and supported him along the way.

Dr. Tuttle and the Board applauded Mr. Feldpausch and Mr. Neese for completing projects that were truly needed in the community, congratulated them on their accomplishment of earning the Eagle Scout rank, and thanked the boys for sharing with them.

Board Correspondence

Board of Education Student Representative Tyler Hoag thanked Mr. Bird for encouraging students to take on leadership positions at a young age, establishing a strong foundation for Key Club and Student Government at OHS. Mr. Hoag reported the OHS Student Government has concluded their canned food drive, excitedly sharing that one teacher alone raised over \$1,000 (which equates to approximately 7,000 pounds of food) by offering extra credit for donations. Mr. Hoag stated the OHS choirs submitted their festival music to compete virtually this year. The music will be uploaded to their Facebook page. Mr. Hoag noted OHS bands are finishing their preparations for a virtual festival as well, and the Theater Department will soon be choosing their spring musical. Mr. Hoag was happy to report the OHS Bowling Team proudly ended their season and are hoping a few team members will place at state finals. Winter sports are in full swing, and Mr. Hoag reported all basketball teams, boys wrestling, and boys swim have competitions this week. Mr. Hoag congratulated Mr. Feldpausch and Mr. Neese on their Eagle Scout achievements, noting that to have two OHS students receive the award in one year is an amazing accomplishment. Mr. Hoag was sad to announce that Mr. Zyrowski will be stepping down as OHS' Model United Nations Counselor but wished him the best in his future endeavors. In closing, Mr. Hoag reflected on the fact that one year ago, the OHS choirs were on their trip in New York City when the pandemic shut everything down for the first time. Mr. Hoag said despite how crazy of a year it has been, he is hopeful that if everyone continues to do their part by wearing face masks and social distancing, the next school year will look a lot more normal.

Dr. Tuttle thanked Mr. Hoag, stating that he has been a wonderful student body representative. Dr. Tuttle noted her appreciation for Mr. Hoag's positive attitude and leadership, both skills that are sure to help him achieve his future goals.

Dr. Tuttle began her monthly Board report recognizing OHS seniors and how difficult of a year it has been for them. OPS staff is organizing an "Adopt a Senior" event in which every senior is "adopted" by an individual or family in the community. The seniors receive gifts or positive notes from their adopted family throughout one of their final weeks of high school. She thanked all staff members and community members who have participated in the program that has helped lift many senior students' spirits!

Dr. Tuttle reported the district celebrated Black History Month throughout the month of February. At OHS, staff members decorated their classroom doors in honor of many influential and notable African Americans.

Dr. Tuttle shared the district has hosted twelve vaccination clinics for educators and individuals age 65+.

Kindergarten and Preschool registration occurred throughout the month of March. Dr. Tuttle noted kindergarten enrollment numbers are slightly down, likely an outcome of the pandemic. Bentley Bright Beginnings, on the other hand, has already reached enrollment capacity for many of their programs next school year.

Dr. Tuttle thanked community members and OPS staff for celebrating March is Reading Month with students. Elementary classrooms hosted virtual guest readers on Zoom, including Dr. Tuttle. Dr. Tuttle explained that while it is harder to build relationships through a virtual screen, she is incredibly impressed by OPS students and teachers for their optimism and passion for learning.

Dr. Tuttle reported the Bond Project is progressing on schedule. All interior projects are anticipated to be completed by early April, and the district is tentatively planning for a Grand Opening on Thursday, November 4th, 2021.

The district is moving forward with scheduling events to celebrate this year's seniors including the Blue & Gold Banquet, Academic Achievement Awards, Athletic Awards Night, and Commencement ceremonies. Dr. Tuttle noted that all celebrations will be different this year in order to follow the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services' emergency rules, but OPS staff is working hard to be creative and make the events special for seniors and their families.

Dr. Tuttle announced the district plans to offer regular, in-person instruction for OSP students during the 2021–2022 school year. She explained that school districts around Michigan are waiting to hear if the State will fund virtual instruction next year, so OPS does not yet know if an online option will also be offered.

Dr. Tuttle reminded the Board the first day of school for the 2021–2022 year is August 19th, 2021. She explained the district follows Lansing Community College's (LCC's) schedule. If LCC pushes their start date back, the OPS start date will also be pushed back along with all other districts in the county. Dr. Tuttle further explained that OPS has an unusually short summer due to Bond Project construction, which caused a later end date. Beginning with the 2021–2022 school year, the district will be back on schedule with regular length summers.

Curriculum Director Steve Brooks reported the district hosted SAT assessments for 8th graders across the county. 50 OPS students completed the optional assessment, and a total of 180 students across the county completed it.

Mr. Brooks announced the district is continuing to offer professional development to teachers throughout the school year. For example, several sessions with Reading Expert Dr. Taylor have been offered to K–8th grade teachers. Teachers are paid to attend the training after school hours, and all sessions have been conducted on Zoom. In addition, the district is offering Math Recovery training to K–3rd grade teachers. Mr. Brooks noted that professional development opportunities require constant planning, and the district is already scheduling opportunities for teachers and staff during the 2021–2022 school year.

Mr. Brooks excitedly announced a summer school program called "Kindergarten Camp," targeting students transitioning from preschool to kindergarten will take place this summer. In

addition, summer school opportunities will be offered at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. Mr. Brooks noted OPS teachers are being recruited to run the programs. Many teachers have already expressed interest and are excited to engage with students before next fall!

Public Participation

President Mowen stated that the Board of Education is a public body and recognizes the value of public comment on educational issues. Time has been included in the meeting's agenda for public participation. Members of the audience were reminded that they should announce their name and group affiliation when applicable and to 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.

OPS Teacher Carrie Miculka addressed the Board.

For Action

- Moved by Ochodnicki, supported by Easlick to approve the February 22, 2021 regular meeting minutes, March 1, 2021 committee of the whole minutes, current bills, and financials as presented. Motion carried unanimously.
- Moved by Ochodnicki, supported by Easlick to reaffirm the Extended COVID-19 Learning Plan. Dr. Tuttle noted there have been no changes made to the plan since the February 22nd Board meeting, but at the time of the meeting there were eight OPS staff members and 55 OPS students in quarantine or isolation due to COVID-19. Trustee Quick reminded attendees that while the high school cafeteria is currently closed to students because of vaccine clinics, it was originally closed for the purpose social distancing to limit possible COVID-19 exposures during the lunch period. Dr. Tuttle, Trustee Quick, and President Mowen thanked Director of Operations John Klapko and the food service team for working tirelessly to offer students two hot meals each day, even during the summer and holiday breaks. Motion carried unanimously.
- Moved by Quick, supported by Keyes to renew the contract with Baker College for Adult Education Services for fiscal year 2021–2022 and authorize the superintendent to sign the contract on behalf of the district. Motion carried unanimously.

For Information

Superintendent Dr. Tuttle reported the following personnel changes:

- **Accepted Positions**
 - Irene Podolan has accepted the 1.75-hour Monitor position at Emerson Elementary.
 - Justin Bailey has accepted the Custodian II position at Washington Campus.
- **Resignations**
 - Linda Chase has resigned her position as Lead Cook at Central Elementary effective March 15, 2021.
 - Patty LaVigne, part-time GSRP/Tuition Preschool Teacher has announced her resignation at the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year.
 - Weston Humble, OMS Custodian II has submitted his letter of resignation effective March 5, 2021.
- **Retirements**
 - Sarah Collins, Owosso High School Teacher has announced her retirement at the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year after 26 years of service.

- Mike Gregory, Owosso High School Teacher has announced his retirement at the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year after 8 years of service.
- Elizabeth Kelley, Lincoln Alternative Education High School Teacher has announced her retirement at the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year after 16 years of service.
- Julie MacKay, Elementary Teacher at Bryant Elementary has announced her retirement at the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year after 27 years of service.
- Susan Phillips, Owosso Middle School Teacher has announced her retirement at the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year after 19 years of service.
- Denise Tefft, Elementary Teacher at Bryant and Central has announced her retirement at the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year after 26 years of service.
- Clark Wilson, Owosso High School Teacher has announced his retirement at the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year after 24 years of service.
- Lynda Porter, Paraprofessional at Emerson Elementary has announced her retirement at the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year after 24 years of service.
- Linda Dignan, Executive Secretary at Owosso High School has submitted her letter of retirement effective June 30, 2021 after 18 years of service with the District.
- Jeff Phillips, Owosso High School Principal has submitted his letter of retirement effective June 30, 2021 after 19 years of service with the District.

Public Participation

OPS Student Tyler Hoag addressed the Board.

Board Member Comments/Updates

Trustee Easlick thanked the students who presented at the meeting. He also thanked OPS Food Service staff, asking Director of Operations John Klapko to pass his appreciation onto the team.

Trustee Quick also thanked the students for their presentations. She applauded Mr. Bird for his contributions to student leadership programs, agreeing with Mr. Hoag that OMS sets a strong foundation for OHS student leadership. Trustee Quick thanked the Food Service team, noting that she sees a lot of negativity toward the district but believes many are unaware of the amount of effort that is given by so many staff members to give students a great educational experience.

Vice President Ochodnicki thanked Dr. Tuttle and John Klapko for a tour of the secondary campus. She stated the completion of the new campus is a “ray of sunshine in our challenging times.” Vice President Ochodnicki hopes students can resume eating in the cafeteria with many hot meal options in the fall. She added that she is grateful for OPS staff and believes people can easily feed into negative stories on social media that may not portray the full truth.

Treasurer Keyes echoed Vice President Ochodnicki’s comments, stating the Board and district take heat on social media but are rarely offered solutions or suggestions. She asked community members to attend Board meetings and offer productive feedback, rather than only share negative comments on social media. Treasurer Keyes thanked Mrs. Miculka for attending the meeting and offering considerate suggestions to the Board on ways to improve hot lunches for students. Treasurer Keyes also reminded community members to always reach out to their students’ own buildings first whenever there is a concern. If issues are not being appropriately addressed at the building or classroom level, the Superintendent will address it. If community members are unhappy with the Superintendent’s response, issues should be brought to the Board. Treasurer Keyes congratulated OPS staff members retiring this year, especially OHS Principal Jeff Phillips. Lastly, Treasurer Keyes thanked Mr. Hoag, noting how much she has enjoyed watching his confidence grow as a speaker and representative over the past year.

Trustee Krauss thanked OPS Food Service employees, notably Director of Operations John Klapko, stating their work does not go unnoticed. He also thanked the retirees for their service to the district, wishing the best of luck to Jeff Phillips. Trustee Krauss finished expressing his sincere gratitude to Mr. Hoag for representing OPS students over the past year.

President Mowen asked Dr. Tuttle if there have been changes to the number of spectators allowed at athletic events. Dr. Tuttle explained members of away teams are given two tickets and members of home teams are given four tickets for each event. President Mowen celebrated the students who presented at the meeting, congratulating Mr. Feldpausch, Mr. Neese, and the OMS students. Mr. Mowen stated these students are the leaders of tomorrow. Their manners and positivity are forward thinking and full of energy. President Mowen echoed Mr. Hoag's remarks, saying though we are nearing the end of the pandemic, it is not time for the district or community to let down their guard.

Upcoming Board Meeting Dates

April 12: Committee of the Whole Meeting, 5:30 pm

April 26: Regular Board of Education Meeting, 5:30 pm

Important Upcoming Dates

March 15: 4th Marking Period and LHS 3rd Trimester Begin

March 16: Girls & Boys Varsity Basketball VS Corunna at Corunna, 5:30 pm

March 20: Girls Varsity Competitive Cheer Districts at Dewitt, 1:00 pm

March 22: Girls Varsity Basketball Districts at Home, Time TBA

March 23: OMS Parent Meeting for Incoming 6th Graders, 6:00 pm

March 23: Boys Varsity Basketball Districts at Lake Fenton, Time TBA

March 26: Virtual Learning Half-Day for all Students

March 29–April 2: Spring Break

April 5: School Resumes

April 6–8: OMS Principals Visit Incoming 6th Graders

Closed Session

The Board moved into closed session at 6:38 pm for the purpose of discussing negotiations.

President Mowen conducted a roll call vote. Ayes: Easlick, Quick, Ochodnick, Keyes, Krauss, Mowen. Nays: None. Absent: Webster. Motion carried unanimously.

Moved by Ochodnick, supported by Quick to return to open session at 7:11 pm. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment

Moved by Quick, supported by Ochodnick to adjourn at 7:12 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes recorded by Alexa Stechschulte.

Respectfully submitted,

Marlene Webster, Secretary