

**OWOSSO PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**Board of Education**  
**Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**April 10, 2024**  
**Report 23-142**

Present: Easlick, Krauss, Mowen, Ochodnicky, Quick, Webster (arrival 6:00pm), Henne  
Absent:

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

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Public Participation**

President Mowen stated that the Board of Education is a public body and recognizes the value of public comment on education issues. Time has been included in the meeting's agenda for public participation. Members of the audience were reminded 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.

The following participants addressed the board:

None

**NEOLA Policy**

Superintendent Brooks introduced Mr. Wayne Wright from NEOLA who will review the policy updates and changes. The policies will come before the Board for action at the regular meeting in April for the first reading and in May for the second reading and adoption.

- New Policy 1540 Administrative Staff Reductions/Recalls: Mr. Wright explained this policy has been added to address existing administrative staff reduction/recalls. In the event of a layoff of an administrator, it is not done by seniority, rather, all of the qualifications and administrator accomplishments in the district are to be considered. There may be a situation where someone with higher seniority does not have the same qualifications as someone with lower seniority. There are no choices to make, it is written as law.
- New Policy 6350 Prevailing Wage: This policy came into effect February 13, 2024. There was a flaw that was added. Prevailing used to be required for the state when we did bond

and sinking fund projects. Therefore, back in 2013 that law was removed. It has since been reestablished, which means you need to have a prevailing wage as we move forward. If you have bond and sinking fund projects approved prior to February 13, 2024, you do not have to worry about prevailing wage. Any bond projects or sinking funds approved after this date, prevailing wage is required. There are some choices you need to make in this, the first being “The Superintendent shall designate a Prevailing Wage Coordinator for the District who shall be tasked with ensuring compliance with State and Federal regulations concerning prevailing wage rate”, most districts are not taking this option. The next choice being “The Superintendent or Prevailing Wage Coordinator shall oversee the District’s obligations including, but not limited to, ensuring the following:”, if you did not choose the first option of Prevailing Wage Coordinator, you will choose Superintendent and also in paragraph B. Everything else in the policy is law. Superintendent Brooks asked for clarification, the district had sinking fund projects approved last summer that we will be finishing up this summer and that does not fall under prevailing wage. Mr. Wright confirmed it does not fall under prevailing wage.

- Revised policy 1100.01 Organizational Chart: Mr. Wright explained this is district specific that you are putting into policy. Superintendent Brooks explained this came about when Trustee Easlick asked about this and Brooke Barber put this together prior to her departure. There are some items that need to be updated on this and this is just a template. The previous organizational chart had not been updated in several years. The areas in light blue are positions that have been eliminated through attrition and not replaced. This is an active document, so that if you hover over Building Principals, it will list all of the building principals. There was discussion of updating the top line (Stakeholders, Students, Parents, Teachers, Business, and Community Leaders). It will read Stakeholders and then underneath; Students, Parents, Teachers, Business and Community Leaders.
- Revised Policy 8321 Criminal Justice Information Security (Non-Criminal Justice Agency)- Mr. Wright explained, this is the first time he has seen the most recent update. NEOLA works closely with the Michigan State Police (MSP) in regard to this policy. The last update he has seen was in 2021. It is anticipated the updated will be in the fall update. This policy is being presented based upon an MSP Audit conducted in March. At that time, it was indicated by MSP the policy update was required for compliance.
- Revised Policy 1240 Evaluation of the Superintendent – This is a change and mirrors the teacher evaluation. The policy takes effect July 1, 2024. Beginning July 1<sup>st</sup> there are only three ratings; effective, developing and needing support. Also, effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, 20% of the year end evaluation will be based upon student growth and objectives and the remaining 80% of the Superintendent evaluation shall be based on objective criteria. It is also now required the superintendent evaluation include a mid-year progress report, which does not replace the year end evaluation. Administrators may now appeal and go to arbitration. As we move forward, all superintendent contracts must include this provision. The Board will need to be retrained in the evaluation.
- Revised policy 2370.01 On-line/Blended Learning Program. This policy has been revised to reflect the changes in the law and the legislature, including MCL 388.1621f(14) which allows a district to switch to online learning in certain circumstances for the not more than

fifteen (15) days for pupil count purposes. This has to be declared at the beginning of the school year prior to the start of school. Superintendent Brooks commented the district has no intention of applying for virtual days for our district at this time.

- Revised policy 2414 Reproductive Health and Family Planning. The former language has been replaced with what is currently in the law.
- Revised Policy 2418 Sex Education – A sentence was added directly for what is written in the law, MCL 380.1507b to ensure all curriculum requirements are noted.
- Revised policy 6320 Purchasing – This is a technical change. A technical correction is being made to include a cross reference to Policy 6350 Prevailing wage. It also includes miscellaneous grammar/punctuation corrections.
- Revised policy 6321 New School Construction, Renovation – This was also a technical change adding a reference to Policy 6350 Prevailing Wage. It also includes miscellaneous grammar/punctuation corrections.
- Revised policy 6325 Procurement Federal Grants/Funds – This is a technical change adding a reference to Policy 6350 Prevailing Wage and one word was changed.
- Revised policy 7217 Weapons – There was a need to add a reference at the end of the policy relating to two court cases that are at the opposite decision. One is Michigan Gun Owners and Michigan open carry. The Clio case, an individual if you had a CPL you could open carry and they did not want any weapons in the school. An individual was going in every day with an open carry and the district said this is causing a lot of disruption. Genesee county courts decision, the district could post outside of door weapons free zone, if that is posted cannot have an open carry. In Washtenaw County they ruled a 2nd amendment right. Conflicts, Federal law conflicts state law. State law says you can have a weapon in the parking lot. Michigan law takes precedence. The main thing they reference these two court cases.
- Revised policy 7540.03 – Student Technology Acceptable Use and Safety: The policy has been revised to include optional language addressing artificial intelligence. Superintendent Brooks recommends adding this option.
- Revised Policy 8390 Animals on District Property: Mr. Wright explained, there are two main categories in this policy; emotional support animals and therapy dogs. The definitions are provided and you may choose from those options. An emotional support animal can be anything, i.e. rabbit, turtle, etc., there is no training requirements, therefore it is recommended not to choose that option. Therapy dog is an option that has been recommended, as the district currently has six therapy dogs. In the policy there are requirements of what must take place for the animal to be a therapy dog. It has to be trained through a certain organization, it has to have a veterinary certificate that it has been tested, insurance is required in case something happened, the handler has completed a background check consistently with Board policy and an agreement that the therapy dog and handler will abide by school rules and any specific rules for the therapy dog's presence on District grounds. All of these things have to be accomplished for the animal to be a therapy dog.
- Revised Policy 8531 – Free and Reduced-Price Meals: Mr. Wright explained for the last few years, for the most part, the state has provided meals for every student. Last year was not, causing students to pay for their meal if they were not free and reduced.

This may cause debt for the student. The state allowed for districts to apply for a grant to remove the debt if shaming rules are prohibited as part of policy. Federal funding is based upon free and reduced. There is an option requiring parents or guardians be required to fill out the relevant information to determine eligibility. It is recommended to choose this option. Mr. Brooks commented, the district has had free and reduced district wide so the shaming has not been an issue. The Food Service department has done a great job in having parents complete the required paper work and the district has an electronic option to do this.

- Revised Policy 8800 – Mr. Wright explained there are a lot of strikeouts and new language in this policy, which are very similar. The reason for the changes is a Supreme Court Ruling in Kennedy v. Bremerton School District. What took place was a football coach in another state and after every game he went to the 50-yard line for a prayer and the students, staff and parents would follow him. The district was very concerned of the separation between church and state, doing a prayer after an athletic event. The district asked the coach several times to stop and he refused. After several times the district said if you do not stop, your employment will be terminated with the district. The coach did not stop and the district terminated his employment. It was taken to court and the lower court agreed with the district that they can terminate his employment, he took it to the next level and the court of appeals agreed with the district. It elevated all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. The U.S. Supreme court decision, said you cannot terminate his employment as you are violating his first amendment rights. He is not doing it during work time, the game is over. He is not requiring others to join in, he is going by himself. Explaining you can pray as long as you are not requiring others to do so and it is not during work time. The district had to re-employ him. The language is part of the Supreme Court decision. There is only one piece of optional language that is recommended, “The district may offer students and staff a Moment of Silence to commemorate a significant event that has a significant impact on the community. The decision to offer a moment of silence shall be the building principal’s and/or the Superintendent’s decision. No moment of silence shall be described by school officials with reference to religious symbolism or activity.” Most schools already do this.
- It is recommended the above policies move forward to the April 24, 2024 Board of Education meeting for the first reading.

### **Grants**

Superintendent Brooks gave an update on the 35j and 27k grants received by the district. He expressed his gratitude to Dr. Dwyer and the Title I team for their assistance in preparing the 35j literacy grant. The amount received (\$440,000) was more than anticipated and was based on a per pupil basis. The notification letter was shared with the Board in the Friday letter.

The 27k Grant is a loan forgiveness grant for any staff that work directly with students. If they had a direct student loan debt, the staff member completed information to see if they qualify and a third-party vendor determined if they were eligible. The district had 19 staff apply. This was a partnership with the RESD. The third-party vendor was paid by the RESD. The loan forgiveness was an amount up to \$200 a month. It was a collaborative effort with the OEA and

OESPA to encourage staff to apply and this is also a retention benefit for new staff as it is an ongoing grant.

### **Arbiter**

Superintendent Brooks reported Arbiter is an online system that pays sports officials. Owosso was one of the only districts that was still paying officials with a check. This will save time for the Business Department. Dr. Dwyer has been working closely with Arbiter to set this up and they have given it to us to use for free for the remainder of the school year. The district has secured a 5-year contract with Arbiter.

Superintendent Brooks commented another streamlining process for the business office is to pay recurring bills with ACH instead of issuing paper checks. This saves a tremendous amount of time for our business department.

Trustee Henne commented, there is a level of security when writing paper checks and cautioned there have been a couple districts that have been hacked and some fraud when using ACH and direct deposit. This occurred when information comes from a certain email and someone will pay someone and it goes off to overseas. This is a scam email that appears to be real, but is not. Superintendent Brooks commented our goal is to start slow utilizing ACH.

### **Barn**

Superintendent Brooks reported the CTE and Agri Science departments have written a couple of grants and have received designated funds for a barn as the next layer of the program and looking to share your thoughts and concerns before we move forward. Superintendent Brooks shared the scenarios with the Board that are being considered. Superintendent Brooks has also had discussion with Derrick Huff of Spicer Engineering with his recommendations being taken into consideration. There was also discussion as the district looks to the future of a maintenance/bus garage.

### **ESCE Room**

Superintendent Brooks informed the Board of needs and opportunities of the ESCE special education classroom and GSRP in collaboration with the RESD looking at itinerant staff to ensure all services are taken care of.

### **Spring Testing**

Superintendent Brooks reported today was the first day of PSAT and SAT digital testing. Everyone has been very pleased in the process and tomorrow is day two. A positive of the digital testing is our special education students are able to have the questions read to them. All of the virtual students were required to come in person to be tested. Superintendent Brooks expressed gratitude to Lance Little, Carrie Warning and Gizelle Ross who have played key roles in the process.

### **Sinking Fund**

Superintendent Brooks shared all of the gyms have been completed with the exception of Bryant. Bryant will be under construction this summer after school is out. The Owosso High School

doors have been installed and Superintendent Brooks shared photos of the completed project. All leftover projects from last summer are being finished. An RFP is going out for interior doors and this is paid by a Safety and Security grant. The heating control panels for Central and Bryant have been ordered and it is anticipated six weeks for delivery.

### **Budget Amendment Presentation**

Dr. Dwyer provided an overview of the budget amendment that will go before the board at the April 24<sup>th</sup> meeting. Dr. Dwyer explained where the numbers were pulled from, the March 24<sup>th</sup> State Aid report and SchoolsOpen. SchoolsOpen, the district software that is used for the school, it is like QuickBooks. Everything is logged in there and the budget is entered from the beginning of the year. Former CFO, Julie Omer had inputted the budget from the beginning of the school year and it tracks those numbers for you. Some changes that you are seeing in the budget amendment, the foundation allowance came in at \$9,608 which is what exactly we projected. The next thing that affects our school budget is student count. Typically, we budget for a loss of 50 students, on the state aid report we came in with 33 more than the original budget, so a total loss of 17. The state in general is losing students across the board, birth rates, people moving out of state. The state in general lost .4% of the student population and we are right on target with that. There is an increase in our interest revenue. One of the things we are being creative with is transferring money into the Michigan Class account because we get a higher interest rate, earning approximately 5%. Generating quite a bit of interest on a monthly basis. MPSERS is retirement costs and we are a pass through. The state gives us money for it but then the district has to pay the bill. You are going to see an increase in the revenue, but you are also going to see an increase in the expenses. There are a lot of grants coming in. Everything that we receive that is recurring, Title I, Title II, Title IV, all of those numbers came in higher than expected, providing an increase in revenue. On the expense side, one of the benefits we have going into budget, our contracts were settled. The salaries were set as they are. MPSERS stabilization increases with the revenue increases and is a net wash. The same thing with the grants, as they are tied to specific things. The budget is on track. Looked at all of the expenditures and did not see any need to increase the expenditures anywhere. This is attributed to the great procedures that we have in place and the great supervisors we have watching their budget and tracking the spending to ensure they are not overspending. A couple thoughts moving forward, ESSR and COVID funds is going to come to an end. All ESSR must be spent by September 30, 2024. We were very creative in how we used the ESSR funds and did not create any new positions with those funds. Funds were used for one-time off schedule stipends and programing for students. The district will continue to budget conservatively. The district has collected all of the sinking fund money for now, currently \$3.8 million to date which is sitting in Michigan Class accruing interest of approximately \$18,000 - 19,000 a month. Dr. Dwyer reported the district is earning approximately a total of \$45,000 a month interest, which is a benefit. We are continuing to secure grants as they become available. The SchoolsOpen software has the feature to project the next year's budget and has parameters you can set, which is a helpful tool to the CFO.

President Mowen expressed his gratitude to Dr. Dwyer for stepping up in the absence of a CFO.

### **Venture, Inc. Project**

There will be a representative from Venture, Inc. at the April 24<sup>th</sup> board meeting to present on the progress and next steps of the project. Treasurer Quick asked if the district is still paying expenses on the old middle school. Superintendent Brooks responded, yes, but very minimal.

Vice President Webster commented the Senior Center has been in conversation with Venture, Inc. for several months.

### **Staffing Update**

Superintendent Brooks reported another CFO candidate was interviewed, Tim Dame an accountant for Ionia County with 10 years' experience and also worked for Social Security. Treasurer Quick commented his interview was very impressive. As part of the interview, Mr. Dame was asked to pull the district budget and tell us what he saw. Mr. Dame's response was very impressive. His reference check was absolutely phenomenal and they had no hesitation in his ability to learn school finance. He is leaving his current position, as his boss is moving to the upper peninsula and he does not want to move to the upper peninsula. His brother is a detective for the Owosso Police Department and Central Teacher, Liz Dame is his sister-in-law. His wife is a current teacher at Bath and has elementary children. He will be attending the MSBO conference at the end of the month and his scheduled start date is May 6, 2024.

Interviewed for the Administrative Assistant position and two candidates are coming back on Friday for testing. One of the tests is a brief recording of board minutes for them to dictate. Lisa Pilon is retiring so we are also thinking of that position.

Superintendent Brooks cautioned the Board to be aware of scam emails. He shared the district received several FOIA requests that was a scam.

Superintendent Brooks has Pontoon tickets if anyone needs one.

The board inquired as to the status of the OHS student that was in the car accident. Superintendent Brooks shared, Mom puts messages on Facebook and he is holding his own.

### **Public Participation**

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The following participants addressed the board:

None

**Meeting Updates**

**April 24:** Board of Education Regular Meeting, 5:30 PM, Washington Campus Gymnasium

**May 8:** Board of Education Committee of the Whole, 5:30PM, Washington Campus Gymnasium

**May 22:** Board of Education, Regular Meeting, 5:30 PM, Washington Campus

Moved by Quick supported by Easlick to adjourn at 7:36 p.m. Motion Carried Unanimously.

Minutes recorded by Bev White

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ty W. Krauss", written over a horizontal line.

Ty Krauss, Secretary