

OWOSSO PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Board of Education Committee Meeting Minutes
May 06, 2026 – 5:30 pm
Report 25-136

Board Members Present: Shelly Ochodnicky, President, Adam Easlick, Vice President, Olga Quick, Treasurer, Nick Henne, Secretary and John Pappas, Trustee

Absent: Rick Mowen, Trustee and Marlene Webster, Trustee.

The Committee of the Whole Meeting of the Owosso Public Schools Board of Education was called to order by President Ochodnicky at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was held at the Washington Campus Administration Building, 645 Alger St, Owosso, MI 48867.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Participation

President Ochodnicky 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 to 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.

No members of the public addressed the Board.

Bond Resolution

The Board engaged in discussion regarding the upcoming bond and related planning considerations. Conversation included timing, communication, and the importance of ensuring clarity and transparency with the community. Members discussed the potential financial impact of the bond not passing, including the possibility of significant costs returning to the general fund, such as major facility repairs and infrastructure needs. Concerns were expressed regarding the strain this could place on the district's budget, particularly considering existing financial pressures. The Board acknowledged the importance of careful planning and communication moving forward to ensure community understanding and support.

Cell Phone Policy

The Board discussed the current cell phone policy and its implementation across district buildings. Conversation centered on the challenges of maintaining consistency in enforcement, as well as the impact of student cell phone use on classroom engagement, behavior, and academic focus. Administration and Board members reflected on the need for clear expectations for both students and staff, emphasizing that any policy must be applied uniformly to be effective. Consideration was also given to balancing instructional needs with appropriate limitations on device usage during the school day. The discussion indicated a desire to continue reviewing the policy to ensure it supports a productive learning environment while remaining practical for staff to enforce.

Staff Member Appreciation / Starfish

Administration highlighted district-wide efforts to recognize staff during Staff Appreciation Week through both traditional and personalized approaches. Staff members were given the opportunity to select appreciation items meaningful to them, with additional support provided through partnerships with local businesses contributing incentives and resources.

Individual buildings further supported staff recognition through organized meals, snacks, and other gestures of appreciation, ensuring inclusion across departments and roles.

A key component of the week was the “Starfish” initiative, in which all students were invited to write notes of appreciation to staff members and other individuals who have positively impacted them. These messages were distributed throughout the week, reinforcing a culture of gratitude and highlighting the strong relationships within the district.

The initiative continues to receive positive feedback and reflects the district’s commitment to recognizing both instructional and non-instructional staff contributions.

Attendance and Behavior

The Board engaged in a detailed discussion regarding student attendance and behavior trends across the district. Administration provided insight into ongoing challenges related to student engagement, absenteeism, and the connection between attendance patterns and academic performance. It was noted that chronic absenteeism continues to be an area of concern, with efforts in place to monitor attendance closely and intervene when patterns emerge. These interventions include communication with families, support services, and, when necessary, more structured plans to improve student attendance.

In addition to attendance, student behavior was discussed in the context of maintaining a positive and productive learning environment. Administration highlighted the importance of consistent expectations and the use of proactive strategies to address behavioral concerns before they escalate. The role of staff in reinforcing behavioral standards, as well as the need for continued support and resources, was emphasized. The Board also acknowledged that behavior and attendance are often interconnected, with disengagement sometimes leading to both issues.

Overall, the discussion reflected a continued commitment to addressing attendance and behavior through data monitoring, early intervention, and consistent practices across all buildings. No formal action was taken, but the Board expressed support for ongoing efforts to improve student outcomes in both areas.

Facilities

The Board discussed both immediate facility needs and long-term planning efforts. The recently approved bond resolution was reviewed, with a focus on district-wide infrastructure improvements, including maintenance, safety upgrades, and replacement of aging systems. The bond was noted as a zero mill increase initiative, providing an opportunity to address critical needs without increasing the tax rate.

Contingency planning was also discussed in the event the bond is not approved. This included identifying alternative funding strategies and prioritizing urgent repairs such as boilers, roofing, and structural needs.

Updates were provided regarding district properties, including the former middle school site. Discussion included estimated costs associated with asbestos abatement and demolition, as well as exploration of potential grant opportunities and future redevelopment options.

The district continues to evaluate the sale and use of other properties, balancing financial considerations with long-term community and development goals.

Superintendent Rubric

The Board discussed the potential transition to a revised Superintendent evaluation tool. While the current model aligns with the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) framework, consideration is being given to adopting the Collins & Blaha model, which is being utilized by neighboring districts. It was noted that the proposed change would not alter evaluation criteria but would improve the structure, clarity, and usability of the rubric.

The Board expressed general openness to the transition, contingent upon a formal contract amendment and appropriate training. The evaluation process will continue to include goal-setting, mid-year progress review, and end-of-year evaluation to ensure accountability and alignment with district priorities.

Budget

Administration provided a comprehensive overview of the district's financial position and projected budget outlook. The district is expected to deficit spend in the current fiscal year, with an estimated deficit of approximately \$750,000, although earlier conservative projections had estimated up to \$1.8 million. It was explained that budgets are developed using conservative assumptions and often improve through adjustments such as grant funding, staffing changes, and reallocation of expenditures. However, due to increased operational costs, including inflation, utilities, and contractual obligations, a deficit is anticipated for the current year.

Looking ahead, administration outlined several projected financial impacts. A potential loss of 100 students would equate to approximately \$1 million in lost revenue. Staffing adjustments, including reductions in sections, are expected to generate savings of approximately \$748,000. Additional cost pressures include rising utility expenses and general inflation. Administration also noted that a one percent increase in teacher salaries represents an additional cost of approximately \$172,000. These projections were presented as worst-case scenarios, with the understanding that actual outcomes may improve depending on enrollment stability, grant funding, and other variables.

Willsub Bentley DHHS Funds

The group discussed the use and limitations of DHS-related funding, specifically clarifying that individuals or entities considered third-party would not be eligible to benefit from those funds. It was emphasized that any DHS funds received by the district are restricted and must be used for the specific building to which they were allocated. Administration noted that in the past, these funds have been used appropriately for building-specific improvements, including the purchase of equipment and playground upgrades. While there is still remaining funding available, it was expressed that the current proposal under discussion would be an appropriate and worthwhile use of those funds, aligning with past practices and the intent of the funding source.

Motion for Agenda Placement and Timing Considerations

Board members discussed the procedural need to formally move the DHS-related item forward for action. It was noted that a motion would be required in order to place the item on an upcoming agenda. Administration indicated that while a formal board report with complete financial details was not yet prepared, the item could still be advanced for action at a future meeting. There was discussion regarding whether action could occur without a full report, with administration expressing some concern about not having finalized figures readily available. Ultimately, it was agreed that placing the item on the agenda for the next meeting would be appropriate, as it would allow sufficient time to finalize details and ensure that any approved payments could be processed in a timely manner, likely in early June. It was also noted that the payment timing would align well with existing payroll cycles.

Student Enrollment

Administration presented a detailed report on student enrollment trends. A fall-to-fall comparison showed that 281 students transferred into the district while 244 transferred out, resulting in a net gain in enrollment. The data was broken down by building and type of enrollment, including new students, out-of-state transfers, homeschool transitions, non-public school enrollments, and students categorized as dropouts or unknown. It was noted that while certain categories can be difficult to track precisely, the overall trend from fall to fall was positive.

A second comparison, covering the period from the October count day to mid-February, showed 52 students enrolling and 86 students leaving the district, resulting in a net loss. Administration explained that this mid-year decline is typical. A significant portion of the loss occurred at Lincoln, which accounted for 32 of the total departures, including early graduates and students identified as dropouts. It was noted that this is common during this time of year, particularly among students in alternative or online programs who may disengage despite intervention efforts.

Further discussion highlighted that student transfers out of the district are widely dispersed across numerous districts and states rather than concentrated in a single location. Students moved to a variety of in-state and out-of-state locations, including neighboring districts, other regions of Michigan, and states such as Florida, Texas, and Virginia. Some students also transitioned to homeschool or private school settings. Administration emphasized that the district often receives students from many of these same areas, indicating no significant imbalance with any one district.

Current Enrollment and Projections

Current enrollment was reported at approximately 2,735 students, with the understanding that this number fluctuates frequently due to student mobility. Kindergarten enrollment for the upcoming school year is currently around 200 students, which is consistent with previous years. Graduation projections include approximately 172 students from the high school and an additional 36 to 38 students from Lincoln. Administration noted that while incoming kindergarten numbers are slightly below graduating totals, additional enrollments typically occur throughout the summer and at the beginning of the school year. The district's goal remains to maintain stable enrollment and replace graduating students with incoming kindergarten cohorts.

Box Food Service Truck

Administration presented a proposal to replace one of the district's aging box trucks. The district had originally budgeted approximately \$100,000 for the replacement of a single vehicle. During the procurement process, an opportunity was identified to purchase two new 2024 box trucks at a significantly reduced price due to dealer incentives aimed at clearing existing inventory. Each truck includes full warranties and necessary equipment, including lift gates, making them comparable to newer models. The reduced price of approximately \$52,000 per truck would allow the district to purchase two vehicles for roughly the same total cost as originally budgeted for one. The purchase would be funded through designated food service funds, which must be used for specific purposes. Administration recommended moving forward with the purchase of both vehicles and indicated that the proposal would be brought forward for action at the next meeting.

Intern 2026/2027

Administration reported that seven interns, or student teachers, are scheduled for placement in the district for the 2026–2027 school year. This represents an increase from prior years and includes placements across multiple grade levels and subject areas. Interns will be coming from several universities and will be assigned to both elementary and secondary classrooms. Administration noted that these placements are strategically aligned with anticipated staff retirements, allowing the district to

evaluate potential future hires. Internships are now generally one semester in length. The increase in participation was viewed as a positive development for both recruitment and program support.

Board Meeting Location – Performing Arts Center (PAC)

The Board discussed the transition of future meetings to the Performing Arts Center. Two potential setup options were reviewed. The recommended option involves positioning the Board at the front of the stage with the curtain closed, while the audience is seated in the auditorium. This configuration was preferred due to its flexibility, minimal disruption to existing stage setups, and reduced workload for custodial staff. It was noted that the PAC provides built-in sound systems, microphones, and climate control, eliminating the need for additional equipment. While the microphones require manual activation with a slight delay, overall sound quality was determined to be adequate. The Board expressed agreement with the recommended setup and indicated support for utilizing the PAC for future meetings.

Closed Session

Moved by Quick, supported by Easlick, to move into closed session at 7:07 p.m. to address matters protected by attorney-client privilege and contract negotiations. President Ochodnický conducted a roll call vote: Ayes: Henne, Pappas, Quick, Ochodnický and Easlick Nays: None. Motion carried unanimously.

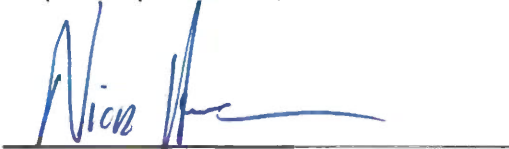
Moved by Easlick, supported by Henne, to move back into open session at 7:30 p.m. for the purpose of adjournment. President Ochodnický conducted a roll call vote: Ayes: Henne, Easlick, Pappas, Ochodnický and Quick Nays: None. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment

Moved by Quick, supported by Easlick, to adjourn at 7:32 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes recorded by Melissa Buehler

Respectfully submitted,



Nick Henne, Secretary