

**OWOSSO PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**Board of Education Minutes**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**November 29, 2023**  
**Report 23-71**

Present: Henne, Krauss, Mowen, Ochodnicky, Quick, Webster  
Absent: Easlick

President 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**

**Building Reports**

Emerson Elementary School social worker Alison Hutt presented the Emerson Peer to Peer program for the Board. Ms. Hutt brought Emerson students Brenna Brock, Gracelynn Tejkl, Allison Wotring, Veda Fuentes, and Lucas Siddock with her to explain to the Board the purpose of the program and share their favorite memories. Ms. Hutt explained Peer to Peer allows students to gather, play games, have snacks, build crafts, tell stories and engage with one another socially. The Emerson students enthusiastically agreed they love to join their peers for some fun games and snacks.

Owosso High School counselor Jerry Ciarlino presented to the Board the OHS Peer to Peer program. The Peer to Peer program is a mentorship program that pairs high school students with middle and elementary school students. The OHS mentors provide academic tutoring, guidance on friendships and social relationships, coaching and encouragement in extracurricular sports and activities, among other important duties. This semester, the high school has thirty mentors split between three buildings. There are eighteen mentors at the middle school, ten at the high school, and two at Emerson Elementary. The 23-24 OHS mentors are as follows: Cali Reed, Morgan Yerrick, Alison Nitz, Kaylee Strachota, Aria Wilson, Delaney Couturier, Arianna Cramer, Daniel Wittum, Skotti Ball-Duley, Destiny Feise, Paul Hrncharik, Khi-Ree Kuchar, Elizabeth McCroan, Karissa Potter, Julionna West, Abura Swallich, Mackenzie Strauss, Jacob Chant, Emma Bush, Casandra Gillett, Sharilee Giza, Alexis Hemker, Peyton Spicer, Shailen Douglas, Weston Yoho, Peyton Dwyer, Hayleigh Fejedelem, Madison Strauss, Ayla Dilts, and Maddie Miller.

Student Representative Kate Lee informed the Board that the OHS musical, The Addams Family, was a big hit. The play received rave reviews from audiences and members of the cast reported they had a blast rehearsing and performing. Ms. Lee also reported that OHS Mr. Wonderful was held in the Performing Arts Center on November 21, with Ryan Dahl taking home the prized title. She finished her report by congratulating the girls' swimming and cross-country teams for their performances at state competitions this month.

## **Board Correspondence**

Dr. Tuttle began her report with a heartfelt and sentimental goodbye to Chief Financial Officer Julie Omer. CFO Omer resigned from the Owosso Public Schools district effective December 1 after accepting a position with Walled Lake community schools. Dr. Tuttle shared with the Board and audience that CFO Omer has lived in the Owosso community for thirty-two years and has served the district as CFO for twenty-two years. She began her career in Owosso at Memorial Healthcare where she worked as Director of Finance for eight years before joining the Owosso team in year 2000. Dr. Tuttle said that throughout CFO Omer's time at Owosso, she has worked with four superintendents and has truly held the district together during times of tumultuous change. Dr. Tuttle said CFO Omer has been instrumental in preparing, managing, and executing the school's budget, she writes a tremendous amount of grants, completes IRS reports, prepares audits, and has assisted tremendously in the passing of the sinking fund and the bond project. CFO Omer has also overseen expenditures, insurance, has facilitated accounts payable and receivable, among a myriad of other responsibilities. Dr. Tuttle said most important is the fact that CFO Omer has worked tirelessly to find resources and opportunities for the students of Owosso, and her main mission has always been helping the students. Dr. Tuttle recognized that CFO Omer was largely responsible for office gatherings, celebrating employee birthdays and accomplishments, and was always the first to offer a gift and delicious food. Dr. Tuttle shared that both personally and professionally she, and many others, have leaned on CFO Omer throughout their careers. Dr. Tuttle said that she has relied on CFO Omer for advice, input, and historical knowledge, and has always trusted her for accurate information. Dr. Tuttle commended CFO Omer for her advocacy in Owosso, particularly for her involvement in the Voices of Children Board, Memorial Healthcare Board, Baker College Governmental Affairs Committee, and Kiwanis. Dr. Tuttle finished her goodbye by reminding CFO Omer that she will continue to be loved and respected by the Owosso Public Schools team, and that everyone is so excited for her future opportunities. The audience and Board members gave CFO Omer a standing ovation, as well as a parting gift from Copper Top Country Store.

Dr. Tuttle continued her report with some good news in the district. Bentley Bright Beginnings is participating in the 'TEACH' scholarship program. The program will pay for an employee's CDA certification, or pay a certain amount towards obtaining a degree, for participating members. By partnering with TEACH, employees agree to work with OPS for one year after completing their degree or certificate and OPS pays a small portion towards their degree. This helps OPS employees pay for education, gain knowledge in the field, and helps to decrease staff turnover. Continuing with good news at Bentley, Dr. Tuttle shared five of Bentley's classes are participating in the community tinsel tree program this year. The children will be decorating their trees this week and are very excited to display the ornaments they have been crafting. Dr. Tuttle continued with good news from Bryant Elementary School. Bryant Elementary provided seventeen families with meals for Thanksgiving. Dr. Tuttle thanked Bryant staff, the Owosso community, specifically Woodard LLC and their employees for donating the turkeys, the Bryant PTO for providing side dishes, and Cupcakes and Kisses for their desserts. Dr. Tuttle continued with good news at Emerson; Emerson Elementary School teacher Mrs. Kristina Crandell kicked off this year's Mileage Club at Emerson this month. Each morning for a period of twenty minutes

students walk, jog, or run around the track behind the playground. Students can earn tokens for each mile they complete. The Mileage Club provides an opportunity for students to participate in physical activity and have fun before classes start. Dr. Tuttle continued with great news at Lincoln High School. 39 Lincoln students ended the trimester gaining credit in all six classes. Dr. Tuttle gave kudos to both Lincoln students and staff for the tremendous accomplishment. Lincoln's KORT Leadership also had a wildly successful fundraiser for Halloween, selling 300 'Boo Bags' in just a few hours. The money raised from the Boo Bags was used to adopt two families for Christmas and update volleyball uniforms. KORT is now organizing a similar fundraiser for the Christmas season. Owosso High School also had good news to share. OHS, as well as LAHS, was recently awarded a grant of \$11,100 to assist with FAFSA completion initiatives for students and parents. Applying for federal student aid is the first step in preparation for post-secondary education and training. OHS students recently visited LiUNA Training of Michigan. LiUNA training offers a variety of courses and programs covering different aspects of construction, safety, and industry specific-skills. LiUNA structures apprenticeship programs for students entering the construction trades, allowing them to learn and work under experienced professionals. Dr. Tuttle shared good news from Central Elementary; Central is officially a Special Olympics Unified School. Dr. Tuttle explained that Unified Schools begin with Special Olympics Unified Sports to build inclusive school communities for young people of all abilities. This programming creates an environment where everyone feels welcome, valued, and included both in school and in their local community. Dr. Tuttle thanked Mrs. Sarah Bahm and Mrs. Stacy Willyerd for spearheading this effort for Central. Dr. Tuttle shared one final piece of good news from the Transportation department; due to the pay raise the Board passed over the summer, the transportation department has been able to hire additional drivers and restructure several routes.

Curriculum Director Mr. Stephen Brooks informed the Board that the district's consolidated application was officially approved by the Michigan Department of Education. Mr. Brooks thanked CFO Omer for her assistance in completing the application. Mr. Brooks informed the Board that the International Baccalaureate audit has been scheduled for December 11 and 12. The IB team will review the district's processes, procedures, and rubrics, and ensure the district is complying with the IB philosophy and mission. Mr. Brooks finished his report by informing the Board that the Michigan Department of Education released preliminary results for the School Quality Index for all district buildings. Mr. Brooks said the district has shown significant increases, particularly in the category of student growth, and this has positively affected the district's index score.

### **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.

No public participants addressed the Board.

### **For Action**

- Moved by Webster, supported by Henne, to approve the October 25, 2023 Board of Education Regular Meeting Minutes, November 8, 2023 Committee of the Whole minutes, the current bills and financials as presented. President Mowen conducted a roll call vote; Henne, Krauss, Mowen, Webster, Quick, Ochodnicki voted aye, Easlick is absent. Motion carried unanimously.
- Moved by Quick, supported by Webster, to approve the hiring of Brittany Drake for the Early Childhood Special Education teaching position at Bentley Bright Beginnings, at BA -Step 1, \$43,332. Motion carried unanimously.
- Moved by Quick, supported by Webster, to approve the hiring of Stacy Witt for the Chief Financial Officer position at Step 1, \$113,116. Motion carried unanimously.

### **For Future Action**

- The Board will be asked to review and approve the Emergency Operations Plan for the year 23-24.

### **For Information**

Dr. Tuttle announced the following personnel changes:

### **Accepted Positions**

- Sarah Palmer has accepted the Paraprofessional position at Bryant.
- Michelle case has accepted the Paraprofessional position at Bryant.
- Isaac Williams has accepted the Monitor position at Central.
- Lauren Orlor has accepted the Sub Monitor position at Bryant.
- James Burnett has accepted the Bus Driver, Custodian and Food Service Worker position.

### **Resignations**

- Juanita Burke, Monitor at Bryant has resigned effective 10/11/23.
- Robyn Downer, Bus Monitor has resigned effective 10/16/23.
- Peggy Luce, Food Service Worker has resigned effective 11/9/23.
- Julie Omer, Chief Financial Officer has resigned effective 12/22/23.

### **Mental Health and School Safety Survey**

Mr. Brooks informed the Board that the district is preparing to apply for a safety and mental health grant. Part of the application process is distributing a survey to stakeholders, teachers, students, and the community, to gauge how the community would like the grant to be used. Prior to Thanksgiving, the survey was made available and a mass communication was sent to district staff and Owosso families to inform them of the purpose of the survey. The district received over

900 responses and Mr. Brooks shared that approximately 85% of those who participated in the survey would like to see additional mental health supports for students and staff, such as additional counselors, social workers, and additional nurses. 77% would like to see additional security measures such as window films, doors, cameras, locks, and additional school resource officers. 54% of survey takers indicated they would like to see more threat assessment training for staff. Mr. Brooks said the next step is to condense the information from the survey and include it in the application. Mr. Brooks said the total grant money is a little over \$600,000, and at least half of the funds must be used on mental health supports. Mr. Brooks will keep the Board informed as the district moves forward in the application process.

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### **Board Comments**

Secretary Krauss thanked CFO Omer for her dedication and service to the district. He welcomed new CFO Witt, and said he is looking forward to the holiday performances this coming month.

Treasurer Quick thanked CFO Omer for her twenty-two years of service to the district. She thanked her for ensuring the Board always had accurate, up-to-date information, and for communicating complex ideas in ways that Board members can fully understand and base decisions on. She welcomed CFO Witt to her new role.

Vice President Webster thanked CFO Omer for her professionalism and expertise that she has shared with the district over the last twenty-two years. She wished CFO Omer well and looks forward to seeing her around the Owosso community.

Trustee Henne shared that he first met CFO Omer during a project several years ago, and quickly realized the depth of CFO Omer's knowledge and professionalism, and was quickly comforted knowing that a complicated budget was in capable hands. He wished CFO Omer well in her future endeavors. Trustee Henne is also looking forward to the holiday activities planned at each building.

Trustee Ochodnický shared that she has known CFO Omer for many years, and although the district has seen some hairy messes, and some big projects, she has never once seen CFO Omer rattled. Trustee Ochodnický said she has always admired CFO Omer's professionalism, her parenting, and her dedication to building relationships in the community. She will miss CFO Omer, her honesty, and her integrity.

President Mowen thanked CFO Omer for all her years of service to the district, he wished her well in Walled Lake. He welcomed CFO Witt to her new position. President Mowen ended his comments by thanking Emerson Elementary and Owosso High School for sharing their Peer to Peer mentorship program, and remarked that it is wonderful to see students helping each other grow and learn.

### **Upcoming Dates**

- November 30: Books for Bryant, 6:00pm, Bryant Elementary
- December 5: OMS Holiday Band Concert, 7:00pm, PAC
- December 6: OHS Band Concert, 7:00pm, PAC
- December 8: Senior Citizen Holiday Breakfast, 8:30am, PAC
- December 12: OMS Choir Concert, 7:00pm, PAC
- December 13: OHS Choir Concert, 7:00pm, PAC
- December 13: Regular Board of Education meeting, 7:00pm, Washington Campus
- December 19: Half Day for All Students
- December 20-January 2: Christmas Break
- January 3: School resumes

### **Adjournment**

Moved by Quick, supported by Ochodnicky, to adjourn at 6:46pm. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes recorded by Brooke Barber.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Ty Krauss, Secretary