Owosso Public Schools
Board of Education Regular Meeting Minutes
June 24, 2026 – 5:30 p.m.
Report 25-169

Present: Adam Easlick, Nick Henne, Rick Mowen, Shelly Ochodnicky, John Pappas, Olga Quick, and Marlene Webster
Absent: None

President Ochodnicky called the Board of Education Meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was held at the Owosso Performing Arts Center, 765 E. North St., Owosso, MI 48867.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Building Reports

Recognition of Retirees

The Board and administration recognized the following employees for their years of dedicated service to Owosso Public Schools. Superintendent Brooks noted that retirees honored represented a combined 288.5 total years of service to the district.

Superintendent Brooks expressed his appreciation for the dedication and commitment demonstrated by those retiring employees throughout their careers. He acknowledged that replacing nearly three centuries of institutional knowledge presents a significant responsibility but expressed confidence that the district was actively recruiting highly qualified staff members to continue serving students and families.

Debra Klaver
Diane Goldberg
Michael Hartsell
Linda Chase

Recognition of Athletes

Eli Worthington
Gabi Hufnagel

Athletic Director Nick VanDuser recognized several outstanding student-athletes for their exceptional accomplishments during the spring athletic season. He shared that both the boys' and girls' track and field teams captured league championships, marking a significant achievement for the district. He also noted that members of the softball team would be recognized at the July Board meeting due to scheduling conflicts.

Mr. VanDuser introduced Eli Worthington, a sophomore at Owosso High School, for his remarkable track and field season. He highlighted Eli's accomplishments, including breaking multiple school records in the shot put with a throw of 62 feet, 6¾ inches, earning league championships in both the shot put and discus, winning regional championships in both events, and receiving All-State honors in both disciplines. Mr. VanDuser commended Eli's exceptional work ethic, leadership, and dedication, noting that he has established himself as one of the most accomplished throwers in school history.

Eli introduced his family in attendance, including his mother, Lydia, his father, Chris, and his brother, Asa. He thanked his family for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout his athletic journey.

Mr. VanDuser then recognized Gabi Hufnagel for her outstanding leadership and athletic achievements. He praised her commitment both on and off the track, describing her as an exemplary student-athlete and an outstanding leader who consistently leads by example.

Girls Track and Field Coach, Coach Jacobs addressed the Board, highlighting Gabi's dedication, work ethic, and commitment to excellence throughout the year. He noted that while spectators see the records and championships, they do not see the countless hours of training, preparation, and leadership she demonstrates daily. Coach Jacobs credited Gabi's team-first attitude and mentorship of younger athletes as key contributors to the girls' track team's league championship. He also recognized her accomplishments of setting four school records, qualifying for the state meet in multiple events, and earning All-State honors. He described Gabi as one of the finest track athletes in Owosso High School history and thanked her for the lasting impact she has had on the program.

Gabi thanked her parents, Coach Jacobs, and the Owosso Public Schools community for their encouragement, support, and belief in her throughout her academic and athletic career.

Board President Shelly Ochodnicky congratulated Eli and Gabi on behalf of the Board of Education, commending their hard work, dedication, and accomplishments. She wished them continued success in their future endeavors.

Student Representative Report
None

Superintendent's Report
Superintendent Brooks provided a districtwide update highlighting summer activities and ongoing operational work throughout Owosso Public Schools.

He reported that district administration has been focused on year-end budgeting, staffing, and conducting interviews to fill several open positions across the district. Superintendent Brooks noted that several recommendations for new hires would be presented later in the meeting.

Superintendent Brooks announced that the Owosso High School Drama Club would present *Little Shop of Horrors* June 25 through June 27 at the Performing Arts Center and encouraged community members to attend the performances.

He shared that Owosso Middle School had successfully completed the school year, with report cards distributed and student schedules for the 2026-2027 school year currently being finalized. He also noted that both the eighth-grade graduation ceremony and Spring Fling activities were successful events celebrating students at the conclusion of the school year.

At Lincoln High School, Superintendent Brooks recognized the successful graduation of 37 members of the Class of 2026. He also congratulated Principal Rugenstein on her election to the Michigan Alternative Education Organization Board of Directors, describing the appointment as an important professional accomplishment for both Principal Rugenstein and the district. In addition, he highlighted that two district teachers were participating in the Michigan Center for Civic Education's educational tour of the American South, emphasizing the district's commitment to continued professional learning even during the summer months.

Superintendent Brooks reported that Bentley Bright Beginnings had begun its summer programming with strong participation. Students were engaged in educational enrichment activities including field trips, water days, bike days, visits to Impression 5 Science Center, and local community experiences. He also noted that extended school year services had begun for qualifying students.

The Board received an update on the district's summer maintenance program. Superintendent Brooks commended the maintenance department for beginning classroom moves and summer cleaning immediately following the conclusion of the school year. He recognized the department's hard work and progress on numerous summer improvement projects taking place throughout district facilities.

Superintendent Brooks also highlighted the continued success of the district's Meet Up and Eat Up summer meal program. Meals are served Monday through Thursday, with families receiving additional meal kits on Thursdays to provide food for Thursday evening through Sunday. He reported that approximately 140 meal kits were distributed in just twenty minutes during the previous Thursday's distribution at Bryant Elementary, demonstrating the tremendous community need and success of the program.

He concluded his report by noting that numerous athletic camps were taking place throughout the summer and encouraged families to monitor the Owosso High School Athletics social media pages for schedules and additional information.

Curriculum Director's Report

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Cathy Dwyer reported that preparations for the upcoming school year were well underway across the district.

She informed the Board that instructional materials, student consumable workbooks, teacher resources, and classroom supplies for the 2026-2027 school year were currently being ordered and delivered. District staff will inventory, organize, and distribute materials throughout the summer to ensure classrooms are fully prepared before students return in the fall.

Dr. Dwyer also provided an update on summer school programming, noting that the program continues to provide valuable opportunities for students needing credit recovery and academic skill development. She explained that the first summer session would conclude before the Independence Day holiday, with the second session scheduled to resume later in July.

She highlighted the continued success of Bryant Elementary's Books at Bryant literacy-based summer programming, which combines free summer meals with engaging literacy activities and family events. Attendance has averaged approximately 100 elementary students each week, along with many parents and family members participating in educational activities designed to encourage reading and family engagement.

Dr. Dwyer expressed appreciation to Principal Spielman, district staff, and numerous community partners whose dedication has contributed to the program's success. She emphasized that their collaborative efforts continue to provide meaningful educational opportunities for students and families throughout the summer months.

Public Participation

The Board of Education recognizes the value of public comment. No individuals came forward to speak during this portion of the meeting.

Venture

Superintendent Steve Brooks introduced Brad Michaud from Venture, Inc., to provide the Board with an update on the proposed redevelopment of the former Middle School property. Mr. Brooks reminded the Board that the district has been under contract with Venture since August 10, 2022, and that the company has been working through the necessary steps to complete the acquisition and redevelopment of the building.

Mr. Michaud reported that Venture's plan is to redevelop the former school into 53 affordable housing apartments. He explained that the project is being financed through a combination of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, Historic Tax Credits, and other financing sources. He noted that the process has taken several years due to the competitive nature of securing tax credits and the subsequent challenge of obtaining a tax credit syndicator to purchase those credits and provide the project's equity financing.

Mr. Michaud announced that Venture has recently secured a Letter of Intent from a tax credit syndicator, representing a significant milestone in the financing process. He explained that the Letter of Intent outlines the syndicator's intent to purchase the tax credits under agreed-upon terms, allowing the project to move into the due diligence phase and toward financial closing.

While the financing is not yet finalized, he stated that Venture is confident the project is progressing and anticipates closing on the financing by the end of the calendar year, at which time construction could begin immediately.

Treasurer Olga Quick asked Mr. Michaud to clarify what he meant by "making progress." Mr. Michaud explained that securing the Letter of Intent allows Venture to begin the formal due diligence process with the syndicator and work toward finalizing financing.

Superintendent Brooks requested additional clarification regarding the significance of the Letter of Intent. Mr. Michaud explained that the document represents the syndicator's commitment to purchase the project's tax credits for an agreed-upon amount, subject to satisfactory completion of due diligence and financing requirements.

Ms. Quick asked whether the Letter of Intent guaranteed financing. Mr. Michaud responded that while no financing is guaranteed until closing, Venture is very confident in the current partnership and the progress being made.

Trustee John Pappas asked for a realistic timeline for when the project could be considered finalized. Mr. Michaud stated that, while final due diligence must still occur, Venture anticipates closing on the financing within the coming months. Once financing closes, the project would move forward immediately with rehabilitation of the building.

Secretary Nick Henne asked whether Venture would be willing to extend its purchase agreement with the district beyond the current expiration date of August 1, 2026. Mr. Michaud confirmed that Venture would need it and is willing to extend the agreement in order to complete the financing process and maintain its tax credit commitments with the state.

Mr. Henne also asked whether the Letter of Intent could be viewed as an "intent to award financing." Mr. Michaud agreed that the description was generally accurate, while noting that the remaining due diligence process must still be completed before financing can officially close.

Board President Shelly Ochodnicky invited Justin Horvath, representing the Shiawassee Economic Development Partnership (SEDP), to provide additional comments.

Mr. Horvath stated that SEDP has worked closely with Venture on the project for several years and emphasized the complexity of affordable housing developments utilizing tax credit financing. He explained that rising construction costs make these financing tools essential for projects of this nature. Mr. Horvath expressed confidence in Venture's experience and in the financing process, noting that the recent Letter of Intent represents a significant and meaningful step toward completion.

Mr. Horvath also referenced Venture's successful completion of the Washington Park affordable housing development in Owosso, noting that the 16-unit project is fully occupied with a substantial waiting list. He stated that this demonstrates the significant community demand for affordable housing and expressed confidence that the proposed 53-unit redevelopment would also be well utilized.

Mr. Henne thanked Mr. Horvath for his explanation, noting that, based on his professional experience, a Letter of Intent generally signifies a strong commitment to move toward a finalized agreement once all required documentation and due diligence have been completed.

Ms. Quick asked what additional progress the Board could expect prior to its July meeting. Mr. Michaud explained that Venture will be working with the syndicator to complete due diligence and prepare the required financing documentation. He indicated that while significant visible progress may not occur before July, additional developments are expected over the following several months.

Superintendent Brooks reminded the Board that Venture's current purchase agreement with the district is scheduled to expire on August 1, 2026, and noted that any extension would require Board consideration.

During Board discussion, Ms. Quick expressed her appreciation for the additional information provided and stated that learning of Venture's successful local developments and the demonstrated need for affordable housing was encouraging. She also commented that continued transparency and regular updates would be beneficial as the project moves forward.

Trustee Marlene Webster clarified that the Board's current action was limited to adding discussion of the proposed contract extension to the meeting agenda, with the opportunity for additional discussion and formal action occurring later under the appropriate agenda item.

For Action

Moved by Mowen, supported by Webster, to approve the Consent Agenda, including the May 27, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes, June 10, 2026, Committee Meeting Minutes, June 10, 2026, Closed Session Committee Meeting Minutes, Current Bills, and Financials. Roll Call Vote: Ayes-Easlick, Henne, Mowen, Ochodnicky, Pappas, Webster, and Quick. Nays-None. Motion carried unanimously.

Moved by Mowen, supported by Easlick, to approve the 2025-26 Final Budget Revisions. Motion carried unanimously. Roll Call Vote: Ayes-Easlick, Henne, Mowen, Ochodnicky, Pappas, Webster, and Quick. Nays-None. Motion carried unanimously.

Moved by Easlick, supported by Mowen, to approve the 2026-27 Original Budget Adoption. Motion carried unanimously. Roll Call Vote: Ayes-Webster, Pappas, Easlick, Mowen, Henne, Quick and Ochodnicky. Nays-None. Motion carried unanimously.

Moved by Easlick, supported by Pappas, to approve the OEA Tentative Agreement. Motion carried unanimously. Roll Call Vote: Ayes-Easlick, Henne, Webster, Pappas, Ochodnicky. Nays-None. Motion carried unanimously. Quick and Mowen abstained from voting due to having family in the teacher's union.

Moved by Mowen, supported by Easlick, to approve the Administrator Tentative Agreement. Motion carried unanimously. Roll Call Vote: Ayes-Henne, Easlick, Webster, Quick, Pappas and Ochodnicky. Nays-None. Motion carried unanimously. Mowen abstained from voting due to having family on the administrative team.

Moved by Mowen, supported by Easlick, to approve the Non-Union Personnel. Motion carried unanimously. Roll Call Vote: Ayes-Quick, Pappas, Henne, Mowen, Easlick, Webster and Ochodnicky. Nays-None. Motion carried unanimously.

Moved by Mowen, supported by Easlick, to approve the Personnel New Hire. Motion carried unanimously.

Rachael Cupples
Milo Treger
Stephanie Copeland
Julia Willhite

For Future Action

The Board will be asked to review the Baker College 26-27 Adult Education Agreement. Moved by Quick, supported by Pappas, to move to approve the Baker College 26-27 Adult Education Agreement from Future Action to For Action. Motion carried unanimously. Moved by Mowen, supported by Easlick.

The Board will be asked to review the OMS Out of State Travel Washington DC 2026-2027. Moved by Pappas, supported by Easlick, to move to approve the OMS Out of State Travel Washington DC 2026-2027 from Future Acton to For Action. Motion carried unanimously. Moved by Quick, supported by Pappas.

The Board will be asked to review the 2026-27 MHSAA Membership Resolution. Moved by Quick, supported by Easlick, to move to approve the 2026-27 MHSAA Membership Resolution from Future Action to For Action. Motion carried unanimously. Moved by Mowen, supported by Webster.

The Board will be asked to review the Michigan Works Contract 2026-27. Moved by Mowen, supported by Pappas, to move to approve the Michigan Works Contract 2026-27 from Future Action to For Action. Motion carried unanimously. Moved by Easlick, supported by Mowen.

The Board will be asked to review the Thrun Policy Updates. Moved by Mowen, supported by Webster, to move to For Action at the July 22, 2026, Regular Board Meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

The Board will be asked to review the Course Offerings 2026-27. Moved by Quick, supported by Easlick, to move to For Action at the July 22, 2026, Regular Board Meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

The Board will be asked to review the OHS and LHS Science Textbook Adoption. Moved by Quick, supported by Mowen, to move to For Action at the July 22, 2026, Regular Board Meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

The Board will be asked to review the Student Handbooks. Moved by Mowen, supported by Webster, to move to For Action at the July 22, 2026, Regular Board Meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

The Board will be asked to review the Obsolete Material. Moved by Easlick, supported by Webster, to move to For Action at the July 22, 2026, Regular Board Meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Roll call vote: Ayes – Easlick, Henne, Mowen, Ochodnicky, Pappas, Webster, and Quick. Nays – None. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Participation

No individuals came forward to speak during this portion of the meeting.

Board Member Comments

Trustee Pappas

Trustee John Pappas congratulated the staff and administration for their collaborative work in negotiating the new contract. He stated that the agreement is a positive outcome for the community and demonstrates the Board's confidence in the district's staff. Trustee Pappas expressed his appreciation that the parties were able to reach a contract agreement.

Treasurer Quick

Trustee Olga Quick Congratulated Principal Rugenstein on her election to the Board of Directors of the Michigan Alternative Education Organization (MAEO). She also commended the district for its Meet Up and Eat Up summer meal program, noting that it provides a valuable service and is a significant benefit to many families in the community.

Secretary Henne

Secretary Nick Henne echoed the comments of Trustees Quick and Pappas, wishing everyone a great summer and expressing his appreciation for the thoughtful discussions held during the meeting. He noted the importance of working through topics as a Board and commended the collaborative dialogue. Secretary Henne shared his enthusiasm for the district's future and the positive opportunities ahead for the community. He also congratulated the district's retirees and student athletes on their accomplishments. Finally, he reminded the community that absentee ballots would be available beginning the following day.

Vice President Easlick

Vice President Adam Easlick congratulated the district's retirees, student athletes, and recent personnel hires, including the two new employees and one employee promoted into a new role. He shared personal remarks recognizing one of the student athletes and expressed pride in her accomplishments. Vice President Easlick also thanked Mr. Michaud for his leadership at Venture and for providing the Board with an update on the project. In addition, he expressed his appreciation to Mr. Dame and the administrative staff for their responsible financial stewardship, commending the district's conservative approach to budgeting and careful management of district resources.

Trustee Webster

Trustee Marlene Webster thanked her fellow Board members for the thoughtful discussion regarding the tentative agreement and expressed her appreciation for the respectful exchange of perspectives throughout the deliberations. She noted that the Board's unanimous vote reflected its shared commitment to the district and willingness to work collaboratively, even when individual viewpoints may differ.

Trustee Webster also encouraged community members to stay informed about the upcoming bond proposal and to participate in the election. She emphasized the importance of educating voters about the proposal, noting that the zero mill increase bond would allow the district to maintain and improve its facilities without increasing the current debt millage rate. She stated that delaying needed facility improvements could result in higher construction costs in the future and potentially require additional funding requests. She encouraged residents to learn about the proposal and to participate in the upcoming election.

Trustee Mowen

Trustee Rick Mowen spoke about the important role that the school district plays in the overall strength and vitality of the community. He noted that public discussion often focuses on community development and infrastructure but emphasized that the quality and condition of the school district are equally important. Drawing on his years of service with the Board and his perspective as a parent and grandparent, Trustee Mowen expressed his support for the district's long-term facility improvement efforts. He also encouraged continued collaboration with local and county partners to identify strategic opportunities that benefit both the district and the broader community.

President Ochodnicky
President Ochodnicky reflected on her history with the district, noting that she attended Board meetings for approximately seven years prior to being elected and is now completing sixteen years of service on the Board. She stated that several current and former Board members were serving at the time she was first elected, and recalled the district's financial challenges at that time, including a projected multi-million-dollar deficit and the absence of a superintendent following a resignation that occurred shortly after she was sworn in.

She described the early period of her Board service as financially and operationally uncertain, including the need for a superintendent search and concerns regarding potential state intervention. She noted that within approximately two months the district hired a new superintendent and, with cooperation from staff and bargaining units, implemented necessary budget adjustments to address the deficit.

President Ochodnicky stated that she is proud of the district's progress over the past sixteen years, including the elimination of the deficit and the growth of fund equity to approximately 24 percent, which she described as a strong position compared to other districts statewide. She emphasized that this progress reflects responsible fiscal management and community trust.

She further commented on the importance of maintaining district facilities, many of which are aging, and stated that public school districts must rely on voter-supported funding for capital improvements in contrast to other governmental entities that may receive direct state funding for facility construction. She expressed support for continued community investment in district infrastructure, including consideration of a zero-debt millage approach, and stated concern about timing and the need to move forward.

President Ochodnicky also noted that Owosso Public Schools previously operated for approximately fifty years without a dedicated tax levy for buildings and stated that, even with current funding, the district's millage remains comparatively lower than other districts despite being the largest in the county. She expressed pride in the district's current financial position and encouraged comparison of fund equity among districts statewide.

She concluded by reiterating her pride in the district's fiscal progress and requested that any media reporting on district finances include context regarding comparative fund balances among other districts.

Upcoming Meeting Dates
July 22: Board of Education Regular Meeting, 5:30 PM, PAC

August 12: Committee of the Whole Meeting, 5:30 PM, Washington Campus Conference Room 112
August 26: Board of Education Regular Meeting, 5:30 PM, PAC

Adjournment
Moved by Quick, supported by Mowen, to adjourn the meeting at 7:12 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes recorded by: Melissa Buehler

Respectfully submitted:

Nick Henne, Secretary