

OWOSSO PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Board of Education Committee Meeting Minutes
August 12, 2026 – 5:30 pm
Report 26-18

Board Members Present: Shelly Ochodnicki, President, Adam Easlick, Vice President, Olga Quick, Treasurer, Nick Henne, Secretary and John Pappas, Trustee, Rick Mowen, Trustee and Marlene Webster, Trustee.

Absent: None

The Committee of the Whole Meeting of the Owosso Public Schools Board of Education was called to order by President Ochodnicki 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 Ochodnicki 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.

For Action:

Moved by Quick, supported by Henne, to approve the hiring of the following certified staff.

Name	Building/Grade	Recommending Administrator	Salary Schedule Step
Aubrey Busby	Emerson/5th	Superintendent Steve Brooks	BA-1 \$46,210
Kyle Nesbit	OHS/CTE Construction	Superintendent Steve Brooks	BA-8 \$62,578

Motion carried unanimously.

Superintendent Steve Brooks presented New Teacher Hires for Board consideration. He recommended the hiring of Aubrey Busby and Kyle Nesbit. Superintendent Brooks shared that Ms. Busby is an Owosso High School graduate who graduated from the University of Michigan-Flint. She has substitute teaching experience in Shiawassee County and completed her student teaching in Chesaning. Superintendent Brooks recommended Ms. Busby for a fifth-grade teaching position at Emerson Elementary. He also noted her involvement in the community and her interests outside of school.

Superintendent Brooks also shared Kyle Nesbit as the recommended candidate for the Construction Trades teaching position at Owosso High School. He explained that Kyle brings more than twenty years of construction experience and that he had spent considerable time meeting with him. Superintendent Brooks expressed confidence that Kyle would connect well with students and be successful in the position. He also noted that Kyle is a highly regarded wrestling referee who officiates state championship meets. Superintendent Brooks explained that the district had been working for approximately two months to fill the Construction Trades position, and that the candidate was identified through local recruitment efforts and conversations with area contractors.

Opening Days

Superintendent Brooks provided an update regarding the district's preparations for the opening of the 2026-27 school year. He explained that the district was in a particularly busy period with opening day activities and back-to-school events scheduled throughout the week. Information had been distributed to Board members outlining the schedule for the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday activities, and information had also been communicated to families through district communications and social media. Upcoming activities included the Community Pep Rally, school open houses, Trojan registration days, and Lincoln registration days.

Professional development was also a significant component of the opening days. Superintendent Brooks highlighted the required dyslexia training that will be provided to district staff pursuant to state requirements. Teachers are required to participate in the training, document their attendance, and the district is responsible for maintaining records and submitting the required information to the State.

Dr. Cathy Dwyer provided additional information regarding the professional development schedule. She explained that four other districts would be joining Owosso Public Schools for dyslexia training on Tuesday. Secondary training would be held in the morning and elementary training in the afternoon, with the two groups receiving different content appropriate to their respective grade levels. On Wednesday, because the day is a half day, Owosso Public Schools would be the only district participating in the training. Separate elementary and secondary sessions would be held, with one session taking place in the Performing Arts Center and the other in the atrium.

Dr. Dwyer explained that the training would represent a significant portion of the professional development schedule. During other portions of the day, staff would work within their departments on curriculum mapping and related instructional work. Staff would also have approximately forty-five minutes built into the schedule to debrief and discuss how the training applies specifically to their grade level, content area, or position. The training includes staff from the RESD, county personnel, and district literacy coaches. Makeup opportunities will be developed for employees who are unable to attend, including possible video or EduPath coursework.

Superintendent Brooks also noted that he would address staff on Monday August 17 at 10:00 a.m. as part of the opening day activities. He described the presentation as motivational and indicated that several activities had been planned for the staff.

Bond Results

Superintendent Brooks provided a detailed report regarding the results of the district's recent bond election. He described the district's election-night process, explaining that approximately twenty-five

individuals gathered to monitor election results while individuals were assigned to various precincts. Results were communicated throughout the evening, including precinct results, absentee voting, early voting, and in-person voting information. The district worked with the City and County to compile the results as they became available.

Superintendent Brooks reported that by approximately 11:00 p.m., the district had sufficient information to determine that the outcome was unlikely to change significantly unless there was a substantial shift in the remaining results. Final updates continued into the early morning hours. Superintendent Brooks expressed appreciation to the Owosso community for supporting the bond proposal and recognized the efforts of the Vote Yes team, business leaders, retired teachers, district staff, teachers, administrators, and Board members who worked throughout the summer to communicate information about the proposal.

Superintendent Brooks noted that, when compared with the November election, the number of votes opposing the proposal remained relatively consistent, within approximately fifty votes, while the district gained approximately 1,300 additional yes votes. He credited the extensive community outreach and coordinated efforts of the Vote Yes team for helping secure passage of the bond. He also indicated that members of the Vote Yes team would be recognized at an upcoming event.

The Board discussed the importance of planning for the district's future debt obligations and the possibility of considering another bond proposal approximately five years in the future.

Superintendent Brooks explained that the annual tax levy discussion provides an appropriate opportunity to review the district's outstanding debt, the amount being collected, and the anticipated repayment timeline. He also noted that the district had been operating under a 4.7-mill debt levy and that, had the bond proposal failed, the district would have been required to reduce the levy when the December tax levy was considered.

The Board also reviewed election results by geographic area. Superintendent Brooks explained that some rural areas were closer to a fifty-fifty result, while several Owosso precincts provided significant support for the proposal. Central Elementary, Emerson Elementary, Precincts Two and Three, and Owosso Precinct Two were identified as areas where strong support helped carry the election.

Bond Authorization

Superintendent Brooks provided an overview of the next steps associated with the bond authorization following the successful election. He explained that he had met with PFM the day following the election to discuss the bond sale process and that the Board would need to provide direction regarding the method by which the bonds would be sold. He emphasized that no formal action was required at the August 12 meeting and that the purpose of the discussion was to provide information and obtain direction so the appropriate resolution could be prepared for Board action at the August 26 meeting.

Two possible approaches were discussed. The first was a competitive sale, in which the district would establish a specific date and time for the sale and advertise that date in advance. The advantage of a competitive sale would be the ability to establish the sale date ahead of time; however, the district would be exposed to market conditions that might occur on the specific date of the sale, including changes in interest rates or other financial market conditions.

The second option was a negotiated sale. Under this approach, PFM would monitor market conditions and determine the most advantageous timing within the required sale window. This approach would provide greater flexibility to delay the sale if market conditions were unfavorable and proceed when conditions were favorable. Superintendent Brooks explained that the bonds would need to be sold by the end of October or early November and before December 1.

Superintendent Brooks stated that PFM recommended a negotiated sale because the district's bond issue is relatively smaller than some of the bond issues PFM manages. He indicated that each series is approximately \$12 million and that PFM believed a negotiated sale would provide the district with greater flexibility and allow the financial advisors to closely monitor market conditions.

The Board also discussed the district's eligibility for an arbitrage rebate. Superintendent Brooks explained that because the district has maintained a healthy fund balance and does not borrow money during the summer to meet payroll obligations, the district is in a favorable financial position. He stated that the district's practice of using its general fund balance rather than borrowing during the summer saves approximately \$100,000 annually in legal and interest costs. He further explained that the district's financial position and lack of additional debt beyond its existing obligations allow it to benefit from the arbitrage provisions associated with the bond issue.

Superintendent Brooks estimated that the district could receive approximately \$250,000 in additional funds from each round of bonds sold over the next three years, potentially resulting in nearly three-quarters of a million dollars in additional funds. When combined with the savings associated with not borrowing during the summer, he estimated that the district could have approximately \$1 million in additional financial flexibility to address future projects or unexpected costs.

Following the discussion, the Board indicated support for pursuing a negotiated sale. Superintendent Brooks clarified that this was not a formal vote and that the Board would take official action on the bond resolution at its August 26 meeting. He stated that Thrun would prepare the bond resolution based upon the negotiated sale approach. PFM representative Kerry Blanchett was available via a phone call to answer questions regarding the process if needed.

Rural Development Grant

Dr. Cathy Dwyer provided an update regarding the Rural Development Grant. She explained that she and Tim had been working on the grant for an extended period and that the district had now signed the official contract. The grant is expected to provide approximately \$100,000 toward work at the barn. The funds would be used to complete interior work, including cement pads for the forms, insulation, and electrical components such as wiring, electrical boxes, outlets, and related work.

Dr. Dwyer expressed appreciation that the grant had reached the contract stage. Superintendent Brooks clarified that garage doors associated with the project remained on backorder. Once the garage doors are installed, the identified work is completed, and the building inspector provides the required approval, the district will be able to proceed with the grant-funded work.

Superintendent Brooks explained that the district had been advised to avoid making a public announcement or beginning additional work associated with the grant until the state had completed its review and the building inspector had signed off on the existing work. He clarified that the district would

not bypass any required inspection and that the remaining work consists primarily of completing cement, electrical, and insulation work. The Board discussed the nature of the facility and the specific requirements associated with its use.

Strategic Plan

Superintendent Brooks presented the current draft of the district's strategic plan. He explained that the document had been included in the previous Friday Letter and that several wording and formatting changes had been made. He provided printed copies to the Board and requested that Board members review the document and provide feedback, corrections, or suggested revisions.

Superintendent Brooks explained that the district's administrators had not yet reviewed the document. He planned to present the strategic plan at the next All-Administrator meeting and have administrators provide input. Dr. Dwyer would then work with the Instructional Leadership Council so that teacher leaders would also have an opportunity to review the plan and provide feedback. The revised document would subsequently be brought back to the Board for consideration and approval before the end of the calendar year.

Superintendent Brooks noted that he had worked to align the strategic plan with the goals established for his superintendent evaluation. He also emphasized the inclusion of fiscal responsibility, along with goals related to staff, attendance, academic instruction, and other district priorities. The Board was encouraged to review the document and provide input during the coming months.

Facility Updates

The Board received several facility updates. Board President Ochodnick reported that Venture would provide an in-person presentation to the Board on August 26 regarding the former middle school property. Superintendent Brooks reported that significant activity had taken place at the former middle school during the preceding weeks, including environmental inspections and reinspection's, architectural inspections, and building inspections. He indicated that the required items identified during the previous review were progressing and that no new issues had been identified. If the remaining requirements continue to be satisfied, the project could potentially be approved in the coming months, with construction anticipated to begin shortly after the first of the year.

Superintendent Brooks also reported that the City and Friends of the Shiawassee had contacted the district regarding the river trail near the current bus garage demolition area. The district currently has an easement associated with the trail because the district owns the surrounding property. Representatives expressed interest in participating in the planning process. Superintendent Brooks indicated that the district would be willing to discuss the project, particularly if the outside organizations were willing to fund their portion of any improvements.

The Board discussed the existing trail and whether additional space might be needed for a wider trail. The discussion included the possibility of an eight-foot or ten-foot trail compared with the existing narrower trail. The Board also discussed the district's previous improvements to its athletic complex for parking and the positive community use of the walking paths and athletic facilities.

The Board discussed district property, including the future of the Cass Street property and other properties that may become available for disposition once the district's transportation and maintenance facilities are relocated. Superintendent Brooks indicated that the district would need to complete the new transportation and maintenance center before considering the sale of certain existing properties.

Superintendent Brooks also announced that the district was developing large signs for individual buildings to recognize the Owosso community for supporting the bond. Each sign will identify the building and provide information regarding the projects planned for that location. The goal is to have the signs installed before the beginning of the school year. Board members discussed documenting facility conditions before, during, and after the bond-funded improvements so that the district can demonstrate the progress made through the projects.

The Board also discussed the distinction between projects funded through the sinking fund and those included in the bond proposal. Superintendent Brooks explained that certain previous projects, including work on the road to Middleton, were funded through the sinking fund rather than the bond. The discussion emphasized the importance of clearly communicating to the community which projects are funded through the various district funding sources and ensuring that bond proceeds are used for the projects identified in the bond proposal.

Superintendent Brooks provided an additional update regarding the district forklift. The district currently has a forklift dating to the 1970s, and its batteries, which were purchased approximately nine years ago for about \$10,000, are no longer functioning properly. A refurbished propane-powered forklift was identified through Alta Material Handling in Lansing for a little more than \$15,000. The refurbished forklift includes a warranty and would eliminate the need for the existing battery system. The district anticipates being able to scrap the existing forklift and apply the proceeds toward the purchase.

Superintendent Brooks explained that the purchase would not require Board approval because it does not meet the Board's purchasing threshold. Funds are available within the maintenance budget, and the district would continue exploring whether Food Service could participate in funding the equipment because of its use for unloading food products and other heavy materials.

The Board also discussed future vehicle purchases. Superintendent Brooks reported that the district is ahead of schedule regarding bus purchases and expects to bring a bus purchase to the Board for future action. The Board discussed smaller passenger vehicles and the current Michigan requirements governing their use for student transportation. Superintendent Brooks explained that current law limits the district's ability to use larger passenger vans for transporting students and that the district is considering the purchase of two smaller vehicles. The vehicles could be used for athletics, small catering needs, student government activities, transportation to the Flint Metro CTE program, and other district purposes.

Superintendent Brooks emphasized that these purchases had been planned before the bond election and were not dependent upon the newly approved bond funds. He explained that the district has budget capacity to purchase the vehicles and that the purchases would help reduce wear and tear on larger buses and provide greater flexibility for district activities.

The Board also discussed the anticipated timeline for the bond-funded facility projects. Superintendent Brooks explained that the district must first receive the bond proceeds, followed by approximately a year of planning, with construction anticipated to begin during the summer of 2028.

Superintendent Brooks noted that the district also has approximately \$3.5 million in sinking fund resources and could potentially use those funds to address a facility project during the following summer, separate from the bond projects. He also discussed the possibility of revisiting energy bond opportunities with Trane or another energy services provider. Such an approach could potentially allow the district to address items such as boilers and lighting while freeing bond resources for additional projects that were removed from the original bond scope because of funding limitations.

The Board discussed the importance of strategically maximizing available resources and maintaining transparency with the community. Superintendent Brooks stated that the district should be able to demonstrate that it completed the projects promised through the bond and, where possible, completed additional work through other funding sources. The Board discussed the importance of identifying future critical facility needs and potentially bringing Derek and other facility representatives back to the Board to review additional projects that could be addressed with available resources.

Kindergarten Enrollment

Superintendent Brooks provided an update regarding kindergarten enrollment. The district's target was approximately 225 students, which was considered the high end of the enrollment range needed for the current staffing structure. As of the day prior to the meeting, the district had 228 kindergarten registrations.

Superintendent Brooks noted that kindergarten enrollment is difficult to project because families may register with the district and subsequently enroll their child in another district without notifying Owosso Public Schools. The district therefore will not have a final enrollment count until students actually report for the first day of school. Despite that uncertainty, Superintendent Brooks reported that kindergarten registration had been strong and that the district had experienced a significant number of registrations in recent weeks.

Community Pep Rally

Superintendent Brooks provided information regarding the Community Pep Rally scheduled for August 18 at Willman Field. The event will include introductions of the district's athletic teams and participation from the band. The Sports Boosters will provide a complimentary meal consisting of hot dogs, chips, cookies, and water. Superintendent Brooks indicated that the event is expected to begin at approximately 7:00 p.m. and conclude around 8:00 or 8:15 p.m., with the doors opening at 6:15 p.m.

Superintendent Brooks stated that he would work with Nick regarding the event and planned to take a few minutes during the program to thank the Owosso community for supporting the bond proposal. The Board also discussed the timing of the community pep rally in relation to the district's open houses. The open house was discussed as occurring from approximately 4:00 to 6:00 p.m., with the pep rally beginning afterward.

Tax Levy

Superintendent Brooks explained that the tax levy would be presented for future action at the August 26 Board meeting. He stated that the tax levy is a standard annual process and will include the 4.7 debt mills as well as the 18 homestead mills. The Board will take future action on the levy, with the appropriate resolutions then submitted to the county as required for the assessment and collection of the taxes.

Superintendent Brooks also connected the annual tax levy discussion to the district's broader debt repayment planning. He explained that reviewing the district's financial position, debt repayment, and tax levy on an annual basis will help the Board monitor the district's ability to retire debt and prepare for future capital needs.

Round Table

During the Round Table discussion, Board members and administration reflected on the beginning of the 2026-27 school year and the positive momentum created by the successful bond election and recent hiring.

Superintendent Brooks announced that he would not be present for the September 23 Board meeting because he would be attending the Michigan Association of School Administrators conference. Dr. Cathy Dwyer agreed to assist with the Board meeting in his absence.

The Board also discussed the September Committee of the Whole meeting and plans for additional training related to the superintendent evaluation tool. Superintendent Brooks explained that the district may have Board members or administrators from other districts participate in the training because the RESD has agreed to cover the cost if other districts are allowed to attend. Several districts utilize the same evaluation tool. The training will be led remotely by Gary Collins of Collins and Blaha. Materials will be printed and made available to Board members. The anticipated training length was discussed, with the presenter indicating that the formal training may take less time than originally anticipated.

Superintendent Brooks also shared information regarding the materials that would be distributed to staff at the beginning of the school year. Staff would receive notebooks as part of the district's opening year theme and activities. He also explained that all district employees would be required to change their computer passwords as part of an insurance and cybersecurity requirement. Staff will be prompted to change their passwords as they return to their workstations, providing approximately two and a half days for technology staff to assist employees who need support before students return.

The Board also reflected positively on recent staffing additions and the district's ability to attract strong candidates. Board President Ochodnický shared that a former administrator from Durand had spoken highly of one of the district's recent hires and expressed surprise that the individual had left the district. The discussion highlighted the value of recruiting experienced staff and the positive impact that strong hires can have on the district.

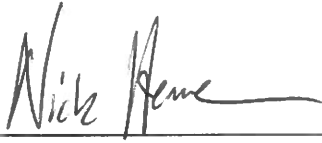
The Board concluded the Round Table discussion by expressing enthusiasm for the start of the school year, the successful bond election, and the district's new staff members. Board President Ochodnický thanked the Board and administration and expressed appreciation for the positive direction of the district as the new school year begins.

Adjournment

Moved by Mowen, supported by Pappas, to adjourn at 6:43 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes recorded by Melissa Buehler

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick Henne". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Nick" is written with a large, prominent "N". The last name "Henne" is written with a large "H" and a long, sweeping horizontal line that extends to the right, ending in a small upward flick.

Nick Henne, Secretary