

OWOSSO PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Board of Education Minutes
Committee of the Whole Meeting
August 9, 2023
Report 23-16

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

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Sinking Fund Millage

Superintendent Dr. Tuttle informed the Board that since the failing of the sinking fund millage vote proposal on August 8, the Board is being asked to consider putting forth the sinking fund millage proposal on the November 7 ballot. Dr. Tuttle explained that this is a direct result of the fact that the district continues to have identified facility needs, inclusive of safety and security needs, in excess of \$37 million dollars. These needs can not be addressed by the general operating fund; typically, 87% of the general operating fund is allocated to salaries and benefits of staff that provide services to students. Dr. Tuttle explained the district is providing three versions of the millage for the Board to consider in recognition of the non-passage of the August election. The options will require Board discussion before moving forward. The first option is 1.9588 mills and the language reflects that this millage is a renewal of the existing mills. Dr. Tuttle noted that even though the millage was originally passed at 2.00 mills because the millage has been rolled back by the Headlee calculation to 1.9588, anything above the 1.9588 is considered additional. Dr. Tuttle also noted that the November election is the last election where the millage would be considered a renewal as the millage will expire after the December 2023 election. The second option for the Board to consider is a millage request for 2.4588. Dr. Tuttle explained it is permissible by law to include renewal language for the current 1.9588 plus language for a maximum increase of .5 mills on the same ballot. Dr. Tuttle noted that under this option, the 'renewal' language may only be included in the body of the language, it may not be included in the title of the ballot. The third option for the Board to consider is a maximum 3 mills ballot language. Dr. Tuttle explained this reflects language that shows the full millage as a complete increase. Under this option, it would not be allowable to include any ballot language that the current 1.9588 is a renewal of an existing millage. Dr. Tuttle said it is allowable to include that the 1.9588 is a renewal of an existing millage in marketing and informational materials. Dr. Tuttle reminded the Board that the State of Michigan does not allocate funds to schools for use in repairing and improving facilities and grounds. School Boards must look to ballot proposals to be considered by the voters for approval either as a sinking fund millage or a bond millage. A sinking fund can only be used for the purposes allowed by law which is to repair

and improve facilities and grounds. Dr. Tuttle also reminded the Board they can choose to do nothing, however this is not her recommendation as it is difficult, near impossible, to keep the buildings in an acceptable condition without a sinking fund. Dr. Tuttle read to the Board the language of Option 1: ‘Owosso Public Schools Sinking Fund Millage Renewal Proposal. Shall the currently authorized millage rate of 1.9588 mills (\$1.9588 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation) which may be assessed against all property in Owosso Public Schools, Shiawassee County, Michigan, be renewed for a period of 5 years, 2024 to 2028, inclusive, to continue to provide for a sinking fund for the construction or repair of school buildings and all other purposes authorized by law; the estimate of the revenue the school district will collect if the millage is approved and levied in 2024 is approximately \$1,338,906 (this is a renewal of millage that expires with the 2023 tax levy)?’ Dr. Tuttle read to the Board the language of Option 2: ‘Shall the currently authorized millage rate limitation on the amount of taxes which may be assessed against all property in Owosso Public Schools, Shiawassee County, Michigan, be renewed by 1.9588 mills (\$1.9588 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation), and also be increased by .5 mill (\$0.50 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation) for a total of 2.4588 mills, for a period of 5 years, 2024 to 2028, inclusive, to continue to provide for a sinking fund for the construction or repair of school buildings and all other purposes authorized by law; the estimate of the revenue the school district will collect if the millage is approved and levied in 2024 is approximately \$1,680,673?’ Dr. Tuttle noted to the Board that these proposals say 5 years, but the Board can choose to increase or decrease the number of years. Treasurer Quick asked if the language can be edited to say ‘repair and construction of’ or ‘repair, maintain and construct’. Dr. Tuttle said she would consult with the attorneys on what language is allowable. Dr. Tuttle read to the Board the language of draft proposal Option 3: ‘Shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be assessed against all property in Owosso Public Schools, Shiawassee County, Michigan, be increased by and the board of education be authorized to levy not to exceed 3 mills (\$3.00 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation) for a period of 5 years, 2024 to 2028, inclusive, to create a sinking fund for the purchase of real estate for sites for, and the construction or repair of, school buildings; for school security improvements; for the acquisition or upgrading of technology; for the acquisition of student transportation vehicles; for the acquisition of parts, supplies, and equipment used for the maintenance of student transportation vehicles; for the acquisition of eligible trucks and vans used to carry parts, equipment, and personnel for or in the maintenance of school buildings; for the acquisition of parts, supplies, and equipment used to maintain such trucks and vans; and for all other purposes authorized by law; the estimate of the revenue the school district will collect if the millage is approved and levied in 2024 is approximately \$2,050,601?’ Vice President Webster asked if the ballot language can be split to give options to voters? Dr. Tuttle responded that yes, the Board can choose to split the ballot language. Vice President Webster remarked that if the Board decides to put another proposal on the November 7 ballot the marketing and information campaign needs improvement. Vice President Webster and Trustee Henne voiced support for showing pictures of the facilities that most need the work. Dr. Tuttle responded the district is open to the idea of informational forums, but the district did send out marketing materials including an informational flyer and the historical uses of the sinking fund. President Mowen commented that this is a safety and security issue for employees, the buildings need a lot of care. Trustee Henne remarked that there were not many voters on August

8, and there will be more voters at the polls in November. Vice President Webster asked how much the district needs to collect if the Board opted for the renewal language ballot. Dr. Tuttle responded approximately \$1.3 million. Dr. Tuttle also noted that many needs of the buildings are recurring needs; these are not one-time fixes. Vice President Webster said there needs to be clear communication to the public that the sinking fund is the only source of funding for these needs; she said we need to tell the voters that if the district does not have the sinking fund the district can not service any of the buildings' needs. Secretary Krauss voiced support for marketing materials that stress the sinking fund is the only option to repair these facilities. Vice President Webster proposed decreasing the 5-year time period to 3 years, although she remarked there are also pros and cons to that as well. She reiterated her interest in taking photos of the bus garage, and of the facilities that need the most work, to be really transparent with the public about why these funds are needed. President Mowen remarked that this is an old community and the district's buildings have been around for decades. Vice President Webster agreed that for the ages of each building, they are nicely maintained. Trustee Henne commented they are nicely maintained because of the sinking fund. President Mowen asked if there was any other discussion from the Board on this topic. No further discussion was heard and Treasurer Quick motioned to move forward with draft proposal Option 1 for renewal. Dr. Tuttle read into the record "Owosso Public Schools Sinking Fund Millage Renewal Proposal. This proposal will allow the school district to continue to levy the building and site sinking fund millage that expires with the 2023 tax levy. Shall the currently authorized millage rate of 1.9588 mills (\$1.9588 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation) which may be assessed against all property in Owosso Public Schools, Shiawassee County, Michigan, be renewed for a period of 5 years, 2024 to 2028, inclusive, to continue to provide for a sinking fund for the construction or repair of school buildings and all other purposes authorized by law; the estimate of the revenue the school the district will collect if the millage is approved and levied in 2024 is approximately \$1,338, 906 (this is a renewal of millage that expires with the 2023 tax levy)?" Trustee Henne asked if the word 'construction' can be removed from the language? Dr. Tuttle responded she can consult with the attorneys. Vice President Webster suggested changing the order of the language so that 'repair' reads before 'construction'. CFO Omer warned the Board will want to be very careful with language so as to not restrict the potential of the funds. Dr. Tuttle said she is willing to take the proposal back to the attorney and asked the Board to state exactly how they would like the proposal worded. She said if the attorneys approve of the language, the change will be made, however if the attorneys deny the suggested change in language, the proposal will be left as is. Dr. Tuttle read into the record the proposal the Board would like to move forward with, inclusive of the changed language. "Owosso Public Schools Sinking Fund Millage Renewal Proposal. This proposal will allow the school district to continue to levy the building and site sinking fund millage that expires with the 2023 tax levy. Shall the currently authorized millage rate of 1.9588 mills (\$1.9588 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation) which may be assessed against all property in Owosso Public Schools, Shiawassee County, Michigan, be renewed for a period of 5 years, 2024 to 2028, inclusive, to continue to provide for a sinking fund to repair, maintain, or construct school buildings and all other purposes authorized by law; the estimate of the revenue the school the district will collect if the millage is approved and levied in 2024 is approximately \$1,338, 906 (this is a renewal of millage that expires with the 2023 tax levy)?" Treasurer Quick moved

to adopt the resolution with the changed language of ‘repair, maintain, or construct’ if allowed, and to adopt the resolution as is if the changed language is not allowed. Trustee Henne supported this motion. Motion carried unanimously.

AI (Artificial Intelligence)

Dr. Tuttle informed the Board that the OPS administrative team attended the Shiawassee Regional Educational Service District’s Welcome Back seminar earlier today. The seminar was focused on Artificial Intelligence in education. She reported that the demonstrations on what AI can accomplish is both exciting and scary. The presenters were well-spoken and kept the audience engaged, and did a great job explaining how AI works and how it is based heavily on predictability. The capabilities of AI are only improving and the results have changed education drastically. Dr. Tuttle noted that it would be in the best interest of educators and students that if instead of turning away from AI, the education community should embrace it. She said teachers should be encouraging students to think beyond what is already known. Curriculum Director Mr. Brooks commented that the presentation was very informative, and that AI is used daily by everyone. He continued that kids should be encouraged to do things AI cannot like build relationships, collaborate and think creatively, but they should also be encouraged to use the tools available them and AI can be a great tool.

Opening Day Full Team

Dr. Tuttle informed the Board that the administrative team met on August 8 at Fortitude Farms and had a full day of preparing for the start of the school year and setting expectations. She also informed the board that on August 22, all district staff will report to the north campus for opening day. This year’s theme is Trojan Trivia; administration has prepared trivia questions related to OPS and its history, and staff will be grouped into teams to try and win the game. The goal is to encourage relationship building, collaborative team work, to learn more about Owosso Public Schools, and to have some fun. August 23 will be a full day of professional development opportunities for staff.

New Teacher Orientation

Dr. Tuttle informed the Board that New Teacher Orientation is scheduled for August 15 at Fortitude Farms. The Board is welcome to have breakfast with the new teachers starting at 8:00am.

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.

Board Comments

Secretary Krauss thanked Dr. Tuttle for sharing what the administrative team learned from the AI seminar, he said that is a technology advancing quickly and it is important for educators not only to keep up but to stay at the forefront of the technology wave.

Treasurer Quick commented that she is looking forward to the start of the school year and she appreciates all the efforts of OPS staff to get kids on track for the beginning of the year.

Trustee Henne said his two daughters are really excited about going back to school and it has been fun to see them so enthusiastic.

Vice President Webster said that on Thursday August 17 the 13th annual 'Back to School Party' will take place at Pleasant Valley Impact Center from 5:00pm-7:00pm. Bryant Principal Mr. Taylor Sergent will be attending and about forty kids are registered for the evening. She thanked the community for being so supportive of the event and the kids.

President Mowen said he is looking forward to the start of the year and seeing kids back on the fields and in the buildings. He thanked the Board for the robust discussion on the sinking fund information.

Upcoming Dates

- August 23: Board of Education Regular Meeting, 5:30PM, Washington Campus Gymnasium
- September 13: Board of Education Committee Meeting, 5:30PM, Washington Campus Gymnasium

Adjournment

Moved by Webster, supported by Henne, to adjourn at 6:22 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes recorded by Brooke Barber.

Respectfully submitted,


Ty Krauss, Secretary