

OWOSSO PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Board of Education Minutes
November 23, 2020
Report 20-57

Present: Keyes, Krauss, Mowen, Paez, Ochodnicky, Quick, Webster
Absent: None

President Rick Mowen called the Board of Education Meeting to order at 5:31 pm. Due to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Emergency Order, the meeting was held virtually using Zoom video conferencing from the Washington Campus, 645 Alger Street, Owosso MI 48867.

Superintendent Dr. Tuttle provided participants with a few guidelines and procedures for the district's virtual Board Meeting. The host of the meeting was Superintendent Andrea Tuttle, and the co-host was Curriculum Director Steve Brooks.

Pledge of Allegiance

Building Reports

Board of Education Student Representative Tyler Hoag shared that the OHS Drama Club finished their fall production of *She Kills Monsters*. The production was performed virtually, and Mr. Hoag thanked director Jerry Ciarlino. Mr. Hoag notified attendees that a recording of the play will likely be shared on Facebook. He also reported that winter sports teams, such as OHS Boys Swim, have started at-home workouts. Additionally, the OHS choirs are planning a virtual concert. Mr. Hoag noted high school students have been adjusting well to the new online learning schedule. On behalf of OPS students, Mr. Hoag asked everyone to follow guidelines and safety precautions to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 so students can resume in-person instruction and enjoy a normal high school experience.

Board Correspondence

Superintendent Dr. Tuttle shared a clip from the OHS Drama Club's production of *She Kills Monsters*. The play is a drama-comedy by Qui Nguyen that debuted in 2011. After viewing the short clip, Dr. Tuttle congratulated Mr. Ciarlino and the students for their creativity and success in adapting the performance to a safe and virtual setting. On November 11th, OPS celebrated Veterans Day. Dr. Tuttle shared videos created by elementary and secondary students and staff to honor veterans. She commended Ms. Zephie Hillard, Ms. Katie Seibel, and the OHS Individuals and Societies Team for their work on the videos. Dr. Tuttle also thanked each and every veteran who has proudly served our country. The Today's Trojans was mailed to all households in Henderson and Owosso. Dr. Tuttle shared a pdf version of the publication, highlighting the CTE programs and newly planted Owosso orchard and pumpkin patch. The following comments by Nick Krueger, OHS CTE Director, were shared: "The Agri Science program is learning about plants, ecosystems, food production, and food industry while the construction program is learning about project layout, tractor safety, and agricultural fence building. While students were in class this fall, the Agri Science students learned about the different varieties of fruit trees, soil sampling, and proper planting techniques. The Construction students learned about fence design, layout, and installation as well as learning about how to safely and properly use a front-end loader, backhoe, and post hole digger. Soon both groups of students will learn about farming techniques in the fall with rototilling soil. . . All fruits produced by the trees will be sold as a fundraiser or used in our Culinary Arts program in the Farm to Table partnership between our programs." Dr. Tuttle stated that it is wonderful to see different school programs working together on these projects. She also reported that, unfortunately, the

teacher and staff member of the year reception to celebrate Amy Parsons and Karen Michalec is postponed until further notice due to the pandemic. OPS hope to celebrate these two individuals at the close of the school year along with the 2020–2021 Teacher and Staff Member of the Year. The OPS Bond Project is on schedule to be completed by April 1st, 2021. Dr. Tuttle was excited to share the district purchased 1,150 new laptops to replace the high school students' Chromebooks. The laptops can download software and run applications, whereas the Chromebooks are mostly limited to providing internet access. The district is using CARES money for this purchase. 450 iPads were also purchased for lower-level elementary students. Dr. Tuttle informed participants that, at the time of the meeting, 86 OPS students and 44 OPS staff members were in quarantine.

Curriculum Director Steve Brooks thanked OPS teachers for being creative, innovative, and engaging with students. Teachers are learning how to use new technology and have provided many tutorials for parents and students. Mr. Brooks commended OPS staff for their time and effort spent ensuring families are equipped to help their students succeed in online learning. The SAT Test for Shiawassee Scholars originally scheduled for December 5th has been postponed. Mr. Brooks reported the district's consolidated application was approved by the Michigan Department of Education which has awarded professional development funds for Title II, Title IV, and Title V. OPS received positive feedback on their goals and processes in these areas. Mr. Brooks stated that, despite the pandemic, administrators have been doing a great job conducting teacher observations.

Public Participation

President Mowen stated that the Board of Education is a public body and recognizes the value of public comment on educational issues. Time has been included in the meeting's agenda for public participation. Members of the audience were reminded that 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.

There were no comments from the public, and no one notified the district of their intent to speak during public participation prior to the start of the meeting.

For Action

- Moved by Webster, supported by Ochodnický to approve the October 19, 2020 Regular Board Meeting minutes, current bills, and financials as presented. Motion carried unanimously.
- Moved by Quick, supported by Keyes to amend and affirm the OPS COVID-19 Extended Learning Plan. By law, the district must inform the Board of Education of any recommended changes to the plan, and the Board of Education must reaffirm the plan each month. Dr. Tuttle reported the following recommended changes for November:
 - Virtual Days were added to the calendar so teachers can have additional time to dedicate to online students.
 - OMS and OHS moved November 2nd, 2020 to an all online instruction day.
 - All OPS schools moved to all online instruction November 4th–November 13th, 2020.
 - OMS and OHS continued all online instruction November 16th–November 17th, 2020.
 - OHS and LHS, per the MDHHS Emergency Order issued on November 15th, 2020, moved to all online instruction November 18th–December 8th, 2020.

- OMS, in response to limited staff availability, moved to all online instruction November 18th–December 8th, 2020.
- The Extended Day Program option for elementary students ended on November 13th, 2020.
- MHSAA suspended athletic participation until December 8th, 2020.
- Owosso preschool and elementary students will move to all online instruction November 30th–December 4th, 2020.

Dr. Tuttle shared a document outlining two-way interaction rates and in-person and online attendance at each OPS building. Following Dr. Tuttle's comments, Trustee Quick recommended extending all online instruction (at all buildings) through the two weeks following the Thanksgiving holiday. Her reasoning was to allow exposures and possible cases from the holiday to develop before students return to in-person learning. Treasurer Keyes expressed concern over switching back and forth between in-person and online learning. She suggested not returning to in-person instruction until after the Christmas break. Vice President Ochodnický stated that children ages 15 and younger have a high rate of recovery, and many are asymptomatic. She expressed concern for students struggling with technology, finances, and childcare during periods of online learning. Secretary Webster shared that her family recently recovered from COVID-19, and their symptoms were much more serious than those of a cold or the flu. She acknowledged Mrs. Ochodnický's concerns but noted that if families fall ill with the coronavirus, they may not be able to work and get paid, causing financial hardships in addition to health risks. Secretary Webster stated that she is worried about placing OPS teachers at risk during in-person learning and reminded her fellow Board members of the long term effects associated with the virus. In response to the high case count and hospitals being at capacity, Secretary Webster stated more action is needed. Mrs. Keyes supported Mrs. Webster's comments and inquired about the number of teachers in quarantine. Superintendent Tuttle responded 44 teachers are in quarantine or isolation. Mrs. Keyes was worried about teacher exposures and did not want teachers to be in quarantine over Christmas break. While she wished everyone could be in person and recognized the tremendous hardships that accompany online learning for many, Mrs. Keyes thought OPS should be all online until January. Trustee Krauss inquired about the feelings of administrators and staff regarding in-person versus online learning. Dr. Tuttle responded that elementary administrators have requested as much consistency to the schedule as possible for the younger children. She also stated elementary staff are concerned about their possible exposures to the virus. Dr. Tuttle explained that she recommended returning to in-person instruction on December 7th at the elementary level because she has fielded many concerns, notably from single parents, who are unable to secure childcare. She reminded all to consider harmful effects online learning can have on a student's education, though safety and security take precedent. Dr. Tuttle further explained that a return date of December 7th would give time for exposures or positive cases to surface and be tracked. This would help mitigate the number of exposures in schools and still provide two weeks of in-person learning before the Christmas break. In addition, Dr. Tuttle noted the majority of student cases are occurring at the secondary level. Secondary students are more independent than elementary students and generally have an easier time adapting to online learning. Trustee Krauss reiterated his concerns about the increase in cases in the community and people coming together for Thanksgiving. President Mowen also stated concerns about the upcoming holidays, both Thanksgiving and Christmas, in regard to increased exposures. He proposed extending online learning for all grade levels until January 11th, 2021. School resumes January 4th but waiting to resume in-person instruction until the 11th would give exposures that occur over the Christmas and New Year holidays time to surface. Treasurer Keyes agreed with President Mowen, citing her own blended family as an example of the many households

that will be mixed over the holidays. Trustee Paez was worried about students losing in-person class time, but agreed that, with COVID numbers climbing, OPS needs to do their best to keep students and teachers home and safe through the remainder of 2020. Dr. Tuttle provided a sudden and concerning update from the health department– the community reached a 12.7% positivity rate which meets the definition of community spread. She also shared Laingsburg, Morrice, and Durand schools are all online until January 11th. Perry, Owosso, and New Lothrop schools were hoping to return to in-person, at the elementary level, on December 7th or 8th. Corunna Public Schools is aiming to resume in-person instruction on December 14th. Dr. Tuttle noted her concerns for special education and at-risk students during periods of online learning but explained schools have some flexibility with these specific cases. She also shared her hopes to keep daycare open as long as staffing is available. The Board voted to amend the plan to extend all virtual learning, for all buildings, until January 11th with daycare at Bentley Bright Beginnings remaining open. Secretary Webster conducted a roll call vote. Ayes: Quick, Mowen, Ochodnicki, Krauss, Paez, Keyes, Webster. Nays: none. Motion carried unanimously.

- Moved by Quick, supported by Krauss to adopt New Policy 8450.05–Emergency Temporary Telecommuting Policy (ETT) as their first and final reading. Dr. Tuttle shared the policy was presented as a first and final reading because it is required by MIOSHA. The policy states no employee should come into work unless there is reason they cannot complete their work from home. Dr. Tuttle explained OPS could face penalties if they do not comply with the rules. She stated some groups of employees unable to complete their work from home, including custodians, maintenance, and grounds workers, would be required to come into work. For the most part, teachers can and must work remotely during periods of all online learning unless they have issues with Wi-Fi connectivity. Dr. Tuttle shared additional exceptions for employees who assist special education or at-risk students who require targeted support. Finally, Dr. Tuttle referenced stricken language on the policy, noting the stricken language is covered under the ADA Act. Motion carried unanimously.

For Future Action

- Dr. Tuttle stated OPS has two buses with leases soon ending. At the December board meeting, a policy will be presented to authorize the superintendent to sign a lease agreement with Tax Exempt Lease Corporation for two gas 77 passenger Blue Bird buses from Holland Bus Company to replace the two buses coming off lease. Dr. Tuttle reported Holland bus company has served OPS well and provides the lowest bids. She also shared a sample of a typical lease agreement. The recommendation was to lease two in-stock buses for a 42-month period from January 2021–June 2024 at the cost of \$15,173 annually for each bus. President Mowen emphasized Holland Bus Company has given OPS equipment at a reasonable cost.
- Dr. Tuttle excitedly shared the district was awarded \$110,000 of CARES Competitive Equity funding to procure nursing services for students and staff. She noted the district currently has one nurse working with Lincoln High School through a partnership with the health department. Dr. Tuttle thanked Julie Omer for her work on the grant. Dr. Tuttle would like to contract with Memorial Hospital to hire a nurse, noting that Memorial has a large pool of nurses and this route is most cost effective. Secretary Webster echoed Dr. Tuttle’s excitement about the grant.
- Dr. Tuttle explained the district has a 22-year-old bus that can no longer meet the transportation needs of students. The bus has 247,939 miles and is not expected to pass inspection. The bus will be presented as a declaration of obsolete material at the December board meeting.

For Information

- Dr. Tuttle shared the COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan. She stated the plan is primarily for OPS employees and does not require approval. The newly approved MIOSHA policy will be added to the plan.
- Superintendent Dr. Tuttle reported the following personnel changes:
 - **Accepted Positions**
 - Brenda Tomlinson has accepted the Paraprofessional position at Bryant Elementary.
 - Marleigh Flagg has accepted the Paraprofessional position at Owosso Middle School.
 - Amanda VanHuylenbrouck has accepted the Paraprofessional position at Owosso Middle School.
 - Brittne Dailey has accepted the Paraprofessional position at Bentley Bright Beginnings.
 - Richard Hird has accepted the Maintenance/Grounds position.
 - Cory Lepley has accepted the Custodian II position at Owosso Middle School.
 - Catheryn Leader has accepted the Custodian II position at Washington/Emerson Elementary Schools.
 - **Resignations**
 - Cloe Kregger, Paraprofessional at Owosso Middle School has submitted her letter of resignation effective November 5, 2020.
 - Megan Yando, Paraprofessional at Bentley Bright Beginnings has submitted her letter of resignation effective October 16, 2020.

Public Participation

There were no comments from the public.

Board Member Comments/Updates

- Secretary Webster stated although there is no easy answer regarding the learning environments during a pandemic, she appreciates the Board's dialogue. She feels certainty is better than uncertainty and is glad families can begin to plan how the next month will look. She thanked everyone for adapting to the circumstances and noted her appreciation for OPS administrators and teachers.
- Trustee Quick agreed with Secretary Webster's comments and thanked Dr. Tuttle. She stated her support of the Superintendent and the work put forth balancing needs during these difficult times. Trustee Quick also expressed excitement for the grant award to hire a district nurse. In closing, Trustee Quick reminded all to value every day, to continue working together and respecting one another.
- Treasurer Keyes echoed her fellow Board members' remarks. She hopes the decision to extend online learning through January 11th mitigates some anxiety that can follow uncertainty. Treasurer Keyes also congratulated and welcomed newly elected Board member Adam Easlick who will begin his term in January 2021.
- Vice President Ochodnicky reiterated that she is concerned for many OPS students and families but is thankful for the Board's thoughtful dialogue and efforts to move forward during this difficult time.
- Trustee Paez appreciated the discussion and thoughtfulness put into the Extended COVID-19 Learning Plan. She wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.
- Trustee Krauss extended his thanks to his fellow Board members for their candidness and openness with the community. He believes moving in a safe direction is the right path.

He stated his respect for Dr. Tuttle and the work of OPS administrators. He thanked all OPS staff, teachers, and frontline workers. Trustee Krauss also commented on the impressiveness of the CTE and Bond Project updates.

- President Mowen enjoyed seeing the Veteran's Day videos students made, sharing students are the highlight of any Board meeting. President Mowen read the Board of Education norms, thanking members for their thoughtful discussion. He reminded the Board that the decisions they make have a lasting impact. President Mowen wished everyone a happy and safe Thanksgiving.

Upcoming Board Meeting Dates

December 14: Regular Board of Education Meeting, 5:30 pm (Note: meeting to be held virtually due to pandemic and on 2nd Monday of the month due to holidays)

Important Upcoming Dates

November 24: LHS 1st Trimester Ends

November 25-27: No School-Thanksgiving Recess

November 30–January 8: Virtual Learning Days

November 30: LHS 2nd Trimester Begins

Adjournment

Moved by Ochodnicky, supported by Quick to move into closed session at 6:51 pm for the purpose of discussing the superintendent's evaluation. Secretary Webster conducted a roll call vote. Ayes: Webster, Keyes, Kruass, Paez, Ochodnicky, Mowen, Quick. Nays: None. Motion carried unanimously.

Moved by Ochodnicky, supported Keyes by to return to open session at 7:02 pm. Motion carried unanimously.

Moved by Ochodnicky, supported by Paez to adjourn at 7:04 pm. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes recorded by Alexa Stechschulte.

Respectfully submitted,

Marlene Webster
Marlene Webster, Secretary