

OWOSSO PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Board of Education Minutes
Special Board Meeting Minutes
February 29, 2024
Report 23-126

Present: Easlick, Henne, Krauss, Mowen, Ochodnicki, Quick, Webster
Absent: None

President Rick Mowen called the Special 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

President Mowen introduced Mr. Dave Moore of MASB. Mr. Moore informed the board of a recommendation at place for the Board members to consider. Mr. Moore recommended the board change the order of the agenda items listed. The second Public Participation (#5) be moved to right after Mr. Brooks interview and before review of the options in the process. If the board chooses to do so, a motion will be required.

Recommendation to move the second opportunity for public participation.

Moved by Webster, support by Ochodnicki to move the second public participation from number five (5) to right after the interview with Mr. Brooks is completed. Motion carried unanimously.

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.

The following participant addressed the board:

Brian Reed business owner, parent and president of Owosso Sports Boosters

Welcome – Mr. Dave Moore – MASB Search Consultant

Mr. Moore went through the outline of the agenda and reviewed the timeline with the Board. Mr. Moore expressed his thanks to board members for putting together their questions. Mr. Moore explained, typically when he puts together questions there are approximately 18 questions and we are at a much higher number of 29 to be thorough. As you go through this process the next step would be the interview process now and you are going to have some time to review the material

and to deliberate. The options will be reviewed with you again. When we come back from deliberations, you will identify those strengths you saw in the candidate and explain the strengths and concerns you have. You will have two options to look at and again we will move through that process with you. Each question has the name of the board member that will be asking the question. When you get to the end of the questions, the floor will be turned over to Mr. Moore.

Review of Timeline

Mr. Moore reviewed the timeline with the Board.

Interview with Mr. Steve Brooks

Internal candidate, Mr. Stephen Brooks was introduced. The board asked Mr. Stephen Brooks a series of interview questions.

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The following participants addressed the board:

Karen Michalec - Retired teacher from Owosso Public Schools

Mike Ash - Lifelong community member

Krista Fedewa - Owosso Public Schools Employee and Bryant PTO

Tom Manke - Owosso Township

Steve DeLong - Owosso resident and Owosso Public Schools employee

Brian Reed - business owner, parent, president of the Owosso Sports Boosters

Review of the options in the process

Mr. Moore provided the board an opportunity to review the materials and asked them to look at the strengths of the candidate.

Mr. Moore reviewed the two options before the board and asked if they had any questions.

- Option 1 – Select the candidate
- Option 2 – Use the services of MASB and do both an internal/external search for a new superintendent

There were no questions on the options.

Mr. Moore remarked, the board has the materials and an opportunity to share the strengths of the candidate as they see it. There has been discussion amongst the board for 10 minutes or could take longer depending on where the board is at and eventually the board will need to come to a decision if you feel you have a consensus. Board members were asked to share their thoughts.

- Treasurer Quick: Love the idea of an Owosso guy, he is a strong candidate. The question is for me the lack of other candidates.
- President Mowen: A concern of a lack of comparison. In January, the board did opt to go with an internal search first. I am personally aware of two other administrators who considered applying for the position and I think respectfully at some time will make a fine Superintendent and gain leadership here. I think out of respect for Mr. Brooks opted not to apply and perhaps they saw with his experience he was more qualified.

Also, we went through what we are looking for and decided to include everything. That piece of paper said this is our Superintendent and Mr. Brooks has filled every option on that page. One comment I would like to make; there was a comment that 83% want a change. The survey itself was of importance to me and the majority of the respondents were long term residents of the district. They are very well versed and have a majority. Also, the majority of the respondents were parents of students. Another was the fact item 12 there were three choices; 64% very comfortable and follow some of those norms and some noted changes. Only 35% wanted change, not 83%.

- Secretary Krauss: We set the criteria to be met. Mr. Brooks has met all of the criteria. There is always room for improvement and continuous improvement. We set the criteria and Mr. Brooks met the criteria and has overwhelming experience. I am putting my support behind Mr. Brooks.
- Vice-President Webster: Mr. Brooks has several strengths. I appreciate the emphasis of relationships in the community and that would really help to build the trust in the building. We have seen him do that and we do not know what he will do in the first chair. In terms of having someone to compare him to, maybe we could find someone who was more creative and you might be able to find another candidate. One of the other things that Steve has that no one has is the depth of relationship of community and staff and that means so much with all the things that need to happen as soon as possible and he already has the social capital to move forward immediately. It is a huge morale booster to say to our current administrators that when you have demonstrated a successful investment in the district for advancement it belongs to you. We expect you to invest in us and when it comes to us we invest in you. They do earn it when they have a track record. Steve has engaged in so many opportunities, he models a lifelong learner. We want to support and encourage that. This board wants to confirm when people demonstrate success and the investment in the district, the opportunity for advancement.
- President Mowen: Recently I was part of a committee of 20 business office administrators and myself to interview for a CFO position six candidates applied. They fit all of our needs and had experience but lived 2.5 hours away and that is kind of rough to do a job. During that same interview, last minute a person with some knowledge and worked at a lot of

districts but not in Owosso. The interview was awesome, references ok but no personal knowledge. It did not work out. Once you get to know people and some of their abilities it is hard to look at a piece of paper. We did that with a previous superintendent and it did not work out. I think we have the best of both worlds here, his experiences, going through the ranks; teacher, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent. Mr. Brooks mentioned some of the changes. He realized the need for trust. Again, I think if you take a good hard look at what we have the personal knowledge, we know Steve, as a subordinate and you follow the leader, know that you may better become the leader.

- Trustee Easlick: Four things that I really like, loyalty, no one wants to work for a company where there is not opportunity for advancement. Relationships in the community. My favorite; doing the best thing for the kids. He is the best.
- Trustee Henne: I did a little exercise a couple weeks ago of criteria. I tried to find some of those adjectives and there are a lot. You cannot find one that does not correlate. He is a lifelong Trojan and was my 7th grade football coach. Bringing back the sense of urgency. We are without some serious leadership. The timeline to go external; we are a team here and do not have a quarterback.
- Trustee Ochodnický: I had in mind there were other candidates. I was sad that we did not have other candidates to interview and compare. Having said that, we do only have one candidate and we cannot wait until July 1st to have a new leader. We can have in my opinion the best Superintendent and if we do not have the best CFO ever we are in trouble. Shelbi Frayer, financial consultant said we have two months to be ok and to continue without a CFO would be neglectful. Mr. Brooks can bring all that together. We have a contract to negotiate. In a year he will be evaluated. Mr. Brooks can step up to the plate and has the opportunity and with his contract and evaluation within the year he can have time to move forward.

Mr. Moore remarked, each board member has had an opportunity to review the information and give their input. If there is no other discussion, may move forward with the next steps.

Moved by Easlick to appoint Mr. Steve Brooks, pending contract negotiations, Superintendent, support Henne. Secretary Krauss did roll call vote: Henne, Ochodnický, Easlick, Krauss and Mowen voted aye. Quick voted nay. Motion carried six in support and one nay.

President Mowen reported it has been the Executive Committee to negotiate the superintendent contract. He will review the process. He expressed gratitude to Mr. Moore for doing the superintendent search and noted he is from our community and knows the district well. Also thanked Superintendent Schulte from the RESD for stepping up to the plate and keeping things solvent.

Mr. Brooks was brought back to the meeting and there was applause and a standing ovation. President Mowen offered Mr. Brooks the position of Superintendent pending contract negotiations. Mr. Brooks accepted the position of Superintendent pending contract negotiations. Mr. Brooks commented it is an honor to be selected. Mr. Brooks reported, thanks to the research of Mr. Lance Little, Mr. Brooks would be the first Owosso High School graduate to be Superintendent of Owosso Public Schools.

Of all of our students and staff who have started at Owosso and Owosso does a great job of training people and educating them. We look forward for the best of the best.

Board Comments

Treasurer Quick remarked she appreciates the process and looks forward to sitting with Mr. Brooks and moving forward.

Trustee Easlick commented he appreciates the process.

Secretary Krauss thanked Mr. Moore and congratulations to Mr. Brooks.

Vice-President Webster expressed her appreciation of her fellow board members and how we were all over the place and how to go forward. Acknowledged all of the debate and appreciates all.

Trustee Henne echoed all board comments and expressed his gratitude to Mr. Moore and Mr. Schulte. He remarked he is learning every day as a first-time board member. As a board we are always going to have our differences and we stick together in our decisions and I know I am really excited and looking forward to Mr. Brooks leadership here with Owosso.

Trustee Ochodnický acknowledged Mrs. Brooks in the audience, the woman behind the man and congratulated Mr. Brooks, stating we have some work to do.

President Mowen echoed the board comments and what the board has done. He expressed his appreciation for his fellow board members and truly appreciated the process. He commented, we are seven individuals with seven different backgrounds and liked that this board looks at what is best for the district and kids. Thank you for your commitment. Thanks to the media for being here. He also expressed his gratitude for those who have attended the board meetings and to those who completed the survey. The board looked at this very seriously. Thank you all for your attendance.

Moved by Quick to adjourn at 8:19 pm., support by Easlick, motion carried unanimously.

Minutes recorded by Bev White

Respectfully submitted,

Ty Krauss, Secretary