

**OWOSSO PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**Board of Education Minutes**  
**Committee of the Whole**  
**February 14, 2022**  
**Report 21-90**

Present: Adam Easlick, Ty Krauss, Sarah Keyes, Rick Mowen, Shelly Ochodnicky, Olga Quick, Marlene Webster

Absent:

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**

**ESSER Fund, HVAC at Emerson, Sinking Fund Projects; Darrick Huff**

Dr. Tuttle explained the bids for the HVAC at Emerson came in, each in the \$8 million range; a number that is in excess of what the District has to work with. Dr. Tuttle explained that she, Operations Direct John Klapko, and the Spicer Group have worked together to present a potential full package of ESSER fund and Sinking Fund uses. “As you know, when we conducted the ESSER fund survey the top priorities to the community are safety and security as well as building improvements. You’ll see on page two and three the allowable uses for ESSER funds, and page four is the audit for all the needs in the District for those Sinking Fund dollars. You will note the District has about \$23 million in needs. Obviously, we will have to prioritize what those needs are. Page five shows a proposal of a combination of ESSER fund dollars and Sinking Fund dollars for safety and security issues as well as some repairs needed in the District. The ESSER II funds, as you know, the majority of that amount was spent on Emerson bathrooms, air quality renovations, COVID supplies, new buses and the remaining funds are listed. Of the ESSER III funds, 20% of those funds must be used towards Learning Loss, so that is indicated as well. I wanted Mr. Huff to be here in case you had any questions regarding any of the numbers you are seeing tonight.”

Trustee Quick asked if the Spence Brothers had done any work for the District in the past. Mr. Huff replied no, not that he is aware of. He continued “Spence Brothers was the low bidder. When we put the HVAC package out, we got three bids. We do have a breakdown of bids, but it’s not meant to be broken down ‘a la carte’. Since Spence Brothers was the overall low bidder, we identified a reduced scope of work that the school district could afford, we negotiated with them to come up with an updated price which is what is being recommended; about \$3.25 million for Emerson and some updated building controls at the other schools.”

Trustee Krauss if there are any significant differences in the bids. Mr. Huff replied “There are a lot of numbers here. A lot of the contractors are using the same sub-contractors. I was happy to get three bids and they are competitive numbers. The cost factors are inflated compared to what we would have hoped they would be at just based on the way things are right now. We were happy they were complete and whole bids.”

No further questions were asked by the Board.

Dr. Tuttle continued “Page five shows items that we’ve talked about using the funds for. As I’ve shared with you, we have had significant issues with the roof at Bryant and it’s estimated to cost about \$475,000 to repair. The elementary doors, to have them all lock from the inside, would be about \$700,000. Emerson HVAC is at \$3.1 million and right underneath that is the building

management systems at \$150,000. We still have some wooden windows at the Elementary buildings that are in need of repair for an estimated \$120,000, the Emerson basketball court is estimated to cost about \$50,000 to repair. Our elementary gyms look very similar to the gym we are sitting in now. The bleachers are worn and old, so there would be some cost associated with repairing or replacing those bleachers and the lighting in the gyms. Another item is carpet in classrooms, we've been working on this piecemeal over the years. We'd like to remove carpet in another 14 classrooms at Bryant. We don't think there is asbestos in those carpeted rooms." Mr. Huff added "We don't think there is any asbestos in those classrooms. There could be in some other areas, and we will be doing an audit in the next couple weeks to get that nailed down." Dr. Tuttle continued "We've also talked about additional cameras for the three elementary buildings, therapy dogs as a proactive measure for mental health, the radios for the district, and the Securely system. We'd also like a liaison officer in each building, we currently have two so that would be an additional four officers. We'd like additional monitors, window coverings district-wide, and an employee assistance program to help our employees with mental health issues. The total package is \$6.71 million. You can see what we have available after you take the 20% out for Learning Loss is about \$4.1 million. That's the whole package, and the projects will be completed over time. They won't all be completed at once. Again, you're not deciding on anything tonight. Depending on how the bids come back, you may decide to do or not to do any one of these projects."

### **Middle School and FEMA**

Dr. Tuttle explained "As you know, we had an issue trying to sell the old Middle School building as the existing map shows that the building is in the floodplain. In talking with engineers, the building really isn't in the floodplain. There has been a lot of effort to get those maps updated to show the building is not in the floodplain. The problem with that, is if the building really isn't in the floodplain and the maps are as they exist today it is difficult for a company to purchase the building; they utilize historic grants and they can't use those grants if the building is in the floodplain. Spicer has been working with the city and FEMA to get the status of the building update and we've made some progress recently. I'll let Mr. Huff share from an engineer's perspective where we are at with that."

Mr. Huff stated "I'm not a floodplain expert, but we have those experts at Spicer who have been working with FEMA on this issue for the last eighteen months. We've been doing significant modeling up and down the Shiawassee River to show what the floodplain and floodway are along that corridor. We've finally been able to get FEMA to agree with our modeling that shows the Middle School out of that floodplain, and for them to admit the map needs to be updated. Our next step is to submit a letter of map revision. We're still a few months out from anything being finalized but we're making progress and that's a good sign."

Dr. Tuttle added there have been other companies that have shown interest in the Middle School building and hopefully this is a sign the District will be able to move forward.

Vice President Ochodnický asked if the District was still working with Congressman Moolenaar's office regarding this issue. Dr. Tuttle responded that at this time the District and Spicer are working with FEMA only, but the Congressman's representative did express their office is willing to help if there's anything they can do.

Trustee Krauss asked if the costs for the building are back on the district since the Community Housing Network terminated the contract. Dr. Tuttle responded the District is still working CHN on that matter.

Trustee Easlick asked if the lights at the old Middle School building were supposed to be on all night. Dr. Tuttle responded the lights are kept on for security and it was a recommendation made by the Owosso Police Department to help deter break-ins and vandalism.

Dr. Tuttle thanked Mr. Huff for his time and willingness to answer the Board's questions.

Vice President Ochodnický asked if there were any strings attached to the ESSER funds and how the District evaluates those strings. CFO Omer responded "The terms are very similar to the consolidated application when talking about Title I funds and Title II funds. We must submit an application for ESSER II, we've already submitted an initial application for some of the uses indicated in the report. Reporting wise, it's the same as the consolidated application and it's on a reimbursement basis. When we spend the funds, we ask for the reimbursement. They will look back on the application and make sure that we are using the funds as we said we would. ESSER III has more requirements, like the 20% learning loss. We must have a plan to use the funds, and Mr. Brooks and I have been working on that. It must tie back into our meaningful consultation with the public and it must be posted to our website. It's really about the reporting requirements so when auditors are looking through our expenditures, they know we are spending the money on what we said we would spend it on. Those are the same things we do with our other federal funds, but on a slightly larger scale. The strings that you mentioned are that we must have reporting, we must submit the application, we must have a school improvement plan and it has to all tie in together. When auditors go back through our spending, they'll ask, 'Is that what your budget says as well?' The uses for the funds are more open than our consolidated application. That's essentially it."

### **COVID Update**

Mr. Brooks reviewed the District COVID data for the Board. "A couple of things to point out. We started out with a lot of positive cases in November. There was a decline going into December. Then, as predicted, once we returned from the holidays our numbers went back up. We had a spike after the first of the year in both quarantine and isolation cases. Please keep in mind quarantining is only for family contacts. But you can see we've had significant decline in cases over the last couple of weeks, about a 70% decrease. We've been working very closely with the health department. We continue to test, and our positivity rate has declined significantly as well. At the peak of Omicron our positivity rate was 10-15%, and today our positivity rate is 1%." Dr. Tuttle thanked Mr. Brooks and his team for putting the COVID data together. Dr. Tuttle asked if the Board had any questions about the data presented.

Vice President Ochodnický shared that Memorial Hospital has changed their guidelines and they are no longer doing weekly testing of the unvaccinated, they are no longer requiring anything of those who are exposed at home, and only those that show symptoms have to test and then isolate for five days if they are positive. She also shared that it seems like other school districts are getting back to normal and Owosso is the only district with a mask mandate.

Dr. Tuttle explained "Next Monday, it is my intent to recommend the Board rescind the current resolution, we rescind the mask mandate and instead highly recommend masks. Masks will still be required on public transportation and that is a federal mandate, not a decision the district can make. If a student or a staff member tests positive, they will be required to isolate for five days and be symptom free for 24 hours before they return and they must mask on days six through ten. We will continue to provide COVID testing if people are interested. All close contacts have been from family exposure. Can you speak to that a little bit Mr. Brooks?" Mr. Brooks responded, "We have seen that once a family member tests positive, COVID spreads throughout the family quickly." Dr. Tuttle continued "Obviously, we don't want to see those spikes go back

up. Our main goal has been to keep the District open and keep opportunities available for kids. Keeping that in mind, on Monday I would like to recommend that if there is a family exposure, fully vaccinated students and staff would not have to quarantine and we would recommend they wear a mask at school. Positive cases would isolate for five days and then return to school in a mask for days six through ten. If you have had COVID in the last 90 days, whether you are vaccinated or unvaccinated you would not have to quarantine if exposed. We would still keep the three-foot distance for close contacts. We must contact trace and notify parents of close contacts per the health department. We would no longer test our athletes for athletic events or practices. We would recommend masks for spectators at events, but this would not be required. Again, this would all be dependent on our numbers by Monday.”

Treasurer Keyes asked for clarification on “the total separation of a positive family member”. Dr. Tuttle responded that is somewhat at the discretion of the family, but ideally family members would not be in close contact with the positive case. Mr. Brooks added “The health department’s guideline is separate bathrooms, separate bedrooms, no shared living spaces over the course of being sick.” Vice President Ochodnicky asked if the unvaccinated must quarantine and Dr. Tuttle responded “Yes, if the unvaccinated cannot isolate from the positive case they have to quarantine for the full amount of time.” Vice President Ochodnicky stated she doesn’t understand why we are treating the unvaccinated any differently from the vaccinated if the vaccinated are getting sick too. She also added that other school districts are not following any of these guidelines and are back to normal. Dr. Tuttle responded that she believes that isn’t totally accurate, but she does not want to speak out of turn or for those other districts.

Treasurer Keyes asked how often it happens that a student’s quarantine is extended because family members keep testing positive and how long those students are out for. Mr. Brooks responded if a student is diagnosed with COVID, and subsequently spreads it to their siblings, those siblings would be out the five-day isolation period and then can return to school as soon as they are symptom free. If COVID does not spread, the siblings that are unvaccinated and that cannot isolate would have their quarantine extended each time another positive case is diagnosed in the family. Mr. Brooks ended his response by saying that recently, the District has not seen that happen often because COVID has been spreading through families quickly.

Treasurer Keyes voiced that she would like to see Mr. Brooks, as curriculum director, work more on curriculum than COVID-19.

Vice President Ochodnicky proposed the Board take a vote on this recommendation at this meeting. Secretary Webster said that may be unfair to those who are not in attendance that would like their voices heard on this matter and the vote should wait until the regular Board meeting, and Trustee Quick agreed with Secretary’s Websters comment. President Mowen suggested that because votes are not typically taken at Committee of the Whole meetings, it would behoove the Board to wait until we have our full audience at the regular meeting.

Trustee Krauss asked Dr. Tuttle if OPS protocols are consistent with what she is seeing from other superintendents. Dr. Tuttle responded “I wouldn’t say we’re consistent. I would say we are all over the Board. To say all the other districts are doing nothing is not accurate. Different districts are doing different things.”

### **Credit Recovery Program/Alternative Education**

Dr. Tuttle began “For the last few years, I have shared with you that the Lincoln program in its current format is not financially self-sufficient. It is a significant monetary investment above revenue each year from anywhere between \$200-\$500K depending on personnel. During the

program's prime, there were over 180 students enrolled from various districts and the program was not only financially self-sufficient, but it was contributing additional revenue to the district. This was great for kids as they were able to enroll in a unique credit recovery program that offered certified and qualified teachers in each of the core subject areas as well as a special education teacher, administrator, administrative assistant, and support personnel. However, one of the concerns of the program has always been the lack of academic opportunities for Lincoln students as compared to those opportunities offered to Owosso High School students. For example, Lincoln students, by virtue of their location, do not have access to many of the elective courses afforded to OHS students like CTE, the arts, etc. or to be involved in the extensive extracurricular activities offered at Owosso High School."

"Currently there are 67 students, approximately 40 in-person, who attend Lincoln, the majority of who transferred from our high school, not from other districts as in the past. The primary reason for the decline in enrollment is that since Lincoln's inception, many districts, realized that they were losing students and revenue and started their own programs to retain their students. Unlike the Lincoln program, most of the alternative education or credit recovery programs in the state of Michigan offer only on-line learning platforms such as Edgenuity with one teacher monitoring students' progress for the programs to be financially feasible. It should be noted that this format does require a teacher certified in the subject area to be the "teacher of record" to count the students. To be financially self-sufficient with the current staff and cost structure, the Lincoln program would need approximately 109 students enrolled."

"As you know, over a decade ago, our district was slated to be \$6M in deficit if significant changes did not occur. Even during those most difficult time, a significant investment into the Lincoln program was a priority. Over the past few years, the Board and I have discussed how to maintain the program and be fiscally responsible. We considered moving the program last year but determined that the timing was not ideal given the transition of 6th-8th grade to the new facility. At that time, I told the Board that I would recommend retaining the program at Lincoln for the 2021-2022 school year, but that I would propose a comprehensive transition plan for the 2022-2023 school year. The proposed plan would allow the credit recovery program to continue, albeit in a format that lowered the cost and provided additional opportunities for the students. In conjunction with the administrative team, a potential proposal was developed and presented to the stake holders and to the Board of Education in December 2021 for their thoughts and feedback to be considered. The plan involved moving the program to the wrestling room in the secondary campus. Although change is always challenging, the proposed plan provided the Lincoln students all the opportunities they have been missing over the years such as opportunities to enroll in CTE classes, the arts, and other electives and extra-curricular activities. Additionally, it allowed the Lincoln students to continue to have highly qualified content experts in their classroom although they would be switching to an Edgenuity platform for instruction."

"After extensive brainstorming and discussions with various individuals, the wrestling practice room was selected as the best location for the alternative education/credit recovery program because it was a large space and allowed for the students to maintain a unique identity while representing a school within a school concept. This proposed location allowed for a separate entrance. If both programs were located on the same campus, Lincoln teachers would be better utilized and serve both students in the credit recovery program as well as other students at the secondary campus. The proposal moved the wrestling practice space to the new middle school gymnasium. The thought was there would be more space in the middle school gym, the mats could be hoisted allowing even more space for conditioning, the ventilation is better, and there was some thought that if needed or wanted, the middle school and high school wrestlers could practice together in that space and continue working together to build cohesive program. Although I knew that change would be hard, I thought the proposal would be understood and

accepted by the stake holders given the financial circumstances and the opportunities afforded to students. I started the process early of sharing the proposal to be transparent with everyone involved and listen to their thoughts and concerns. Well, the proposal has not been well-received. Students at Lincoln would rather remain in their current location with limited opportunities as compared to what the high school location could offer. They prefer this location and the direct instruction from in-person teachers. The coaches, wrestlers, and parents associated with the wrestling program were not in favor of moving their practice space.”

“Therefore, if the Board recognizes that there is a significant monetary investment that is being made to continue Lincoln in its current format and that this money is therefore not available for other district use, I recommend leaving the program in its current format for next year with the understanding that the administrative team and I will continue to look for cost saving measures to the program in its existing location. Additionally, it needs to be understood that finding qualified teachers is becoming significantly challenging statewide, so there may need to be some adjustments to Lincoln staffing as time goes on which could result in students transitioning to Edgenuity for certain subject areas. For example, a Science teacher working with Lincoln students has 40 in person students this year where a Science teacher at the HS has over 120 students and therefore, if there are not Science teachers available, we need to ensure that the Owosso High School position is filled first. If the Board recognizes the continued monetary investment in the Lincoln program in lieu of other programs and that this discussion may need to be renewed in some form in the future, I recommend that the Lincoln proposal be removed from further discussion at this time.”

Trustee Krauss asked how much money the District is losing by keeping the Lincoln program in its current format. Dr. Tuttle stated the loss per student in revenue received versus expenditures is roughly \$7,161. The number of students needed to break even at the beginning of the year would be 122 and currently Lincoln has 67 students. Trustee Krauss asked how many students at Lincoln were from out of the District and Dr. Tuttle responded very few. Treasurer Keyes asked if Owosso could market to other districts and Dr. Tuttle responded that OPS does market to other areas. Trustee Krauss asked if the principal would be replaced. Dr. Tuttle said that position depends on what the Board decides to do with the program. Vice President Ochodnick commended Dr. Tuttle and the administrative team for continually revisiting this idea and agrees that the Board should discontinue discussion at this time.

### **Delinquent Tax Write Off**

Dr. Tuttle stated this report is asking the Board to authorize the Superintendent to sign the waiver of Notice and Consent pertaining to delinquent personal property taxes. Legally it is not necessary for the District to obtain permission from the Board to proceed with this matter, however, in the interest of full disclosure it is felt appropriate to gain authorization from the Board. Dr. Tuttle stated that as referenced in the report, the personal property taxes amount to approximately \$782 in operating revenues and \$470 in sinking fund revenues for the District.

### **Kindergarten Registration**

Dr. Tuttle said Kindergarten Registration is something the District spends a lot of time on and kudos to Mrs. Thompson for creating the wonderful mailer that goes out with the packet. She said the District put out commercials and parent testimonials that the public can view on the District website. Registration will be from March 7 through March 11.

### **Hall of Fame Inductees**

Hall of Fame Inductees were celebrated on February 11. Dr. Tuttle said it's a great experience for our current students to learn about the athletes that came before them and about Owosso's athletic history.

### **OHS Disney Trip and Choir Chicago Trip**

The OHS Trojan Marching Band will be taking their trip to Disney in March. Dr. Tuttle wanted to bring special attention to some special costs associated with this trip. She explained the district is paying for a separate bus to provide separate transportation for COVID positive students, separate hotel rooms for COVID positive students, and the District is paying for the school nurse to attend the trip and care for any students that fall ill. The cost for these extra measures is approximately \$15,000. The choir trip to Chicago does not have the same protocols as it is not as far of a trip.

### **Interviews for Football and Soccer Coach**

Dr. Tuttle said the second round of interviews for the football coach is tonight, February 14. Then the soccer coach interviews will be scheduled.

### **Bryant Elementary Principal Interview Schedule**

Dr. Tuttle stated the interview team is comprised of seven individuals representing administrative staff, support, and professional staff. She said in the application pool there is only one candidate with administrative experience. There are three internal candidates without administrative experience, but they will be interviewed as they do have knowledge of the District. The interviews begin with an introductory video that is due on February 17.

### **Government Budget Proposal**

Dr. Tuttle stated she included this for information and the Board can read at their leisure. She did want to point out this is the best budget she has seen, and the Governor did a lot to retain and attract teachers.

### **Benchmark Assessment Data**

Mr. Brooks explained when looking at the Benchmark Assessment Data, especially in the areas of reading and math, that all students are expected to gain a year's growth over a year's time. Mr. Brooks was pleased to see the data where it stands today.

### **County School Board Positions**

Dr. Tuttle reminded that at the next Board meeting on February 21, the Board will vote on two County School Board Positions. These are appointments that require a motion, support, and vote of the Board.

### **Board Comments**

Trustee Easlick commented he hopes the community will be active in contacting the Congressman's office to voice support for the budget.

Trustee Quick thanked Dr. Tuttle and the administrative team for their hard work and continued efforts. She will review all the information she was given tonight, and she has a lot to process.

Vice President Ochodnicky thanked CFO Omer for her hard work on the budget and providing her expertise on the subject. She said she struggles with finding a balance between needs versus wants and being responsible with the money given to the District.

Treasurer Keyes said she did not have an opportunity to go to the Hall of Fame Induction, but she appreciates the pamphlets given to the Board that summarizes the events.

Trustee Krauss said he appreciates all the information put together by the administrative team. He said this information helps everyone get prepared for meetings.

President Mowen thanked everyone for their attendance and introduced the Public Participation portion of the meeting.

### **Public Participation**

President Rick Mowen announced the Board of Education is a public body and recognizes the value of public comment on educational issues. Time was included in the meeting's agenda for public participation. Members of the audience should announce their name and group affiliation when applicable and 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 individuals addressed the Board:

- Tom Manke
- Amber Cole-Miller

### **Upcoming Board Meeting Dates**

- February 21, 2022: Board of Education Meeting, 5:30PM, Washington Campus Gymnasium
- March 14, 2022: Board of Education Meeting, 5:30PM, Washington Campus Gymnasium
- April 11, 2022: Committee of the Whole Meeting, 5:30PM, Washington Campus Conference Room

### **Adjournment**

Moved by Quick, supported by Krauss to adjourn at 7:10 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes recorded by Brooke Barber.

Respectfully submitted,

*Marlene Webster*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Marlene Webster, Secretary