

**Owosso Public Schools
Board of Education
Committee of the Whole/Board Retreat Minutes
October 11, 2021
Report 21-28**

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

Absent: None

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

Working as an Effective Governance Team: Debbie Stair

Dr. Tuttle began by introducing Debbie Stair. “Well, it’s been a year and a half in coming but we finally have Ms. Debbie Stair, representative from Michigan Association of School Boards and we’ve heard great things about you. I think some of our Board members have seen you in prior presentations, so you were recommended to come and facilitate this. Would you like to tell a little bit about yourself and then we’ll do general introductions?” Ms. Stair responded “I think that would be great. I am the Assistant Director for Leadership Development at MASB and it’s hard to believe but I’ve been on staff now for eight years. Prior to that I worked for the Elementary and Middle School Principal’s association and then the Superintendent’s Association, so I have some good broad experience. Probably more important for the work I do was I was a school board member myself. I served for 15 years, served on the ISD, and then served on the MASB’s Board of Directors as well. I used to be able to say in 15 plus years there isn’t anything I haven’t dealt with. I can’t say that anymore. Before we go any further, I want to share my gratitude and the gratitude from the association for all the work you’ve been doing for the past 18 months. Prior to COVID, Board members and Superintendents rarely got a thank you for the work they do. Since COVID, you have taken a ton of grief. No matter what you do, you are upsetting half of the community. So, thank you all so much for hanging in there and making the decisions that are right for kids. That’s what you must go home with, right? With the information and the facts, you must make the best decision. Before I start with the first activity, I’d like you to look at your Board profile with the MASB and make sure your contact information is correct.” Ms. Stair then displayed a screen with nine pictures of sheep with various expressions and postures and asked each Board member to introduce themselves and pick which sheep most represents their mood today. Debbie thanked the Board for their introductions and then laid her ground rules for the presentation. “I will ask that all of you try to be engaged. You all talked about these outside forces so hopefully you can put that aside for the short time we are together and stay concentrated on our work. I will also ask that you listen with the intention of understanding as opposed to listening with the intention to respond. Humans tend to listen about halfway through before we start to tune out the speaker and we start forming our

response. I will ask that you put yourself in check if notice yourself doing that. I will also ask that you respect other viewpoints. You know school boards were originated and put together in this manner so that there would be different perspectives at the table. But that means we must be respectful of voices that are different than our own. We can disagree, it's how we disagree that is important. Please silence your devices. For many of us we are attached to them and if you must keep it on for emergencies I certainly understand, otherwise I'll ask that you turn it down and set it aside. Lastly, respect others' time. If you hear yourself being the only one that is vocalizing, take a step back. If you're more on the quiet side push yourself to engage. How do those ground rules sound?" All agreed to the ground rules.

Ms. Stair continued "Who would be willing to read this first slide?" Trustee Quick read the first slide. "A team is a group of people with different backgrounds, skills, personalities and styles with a common purpose, who are working together to achieve clearly identified goals." Ms. Stair asked "Does that sound like this group? Anything that stands out to you?" President Mowen responded "Different backgrounds. And the idea that we work together. We do have our disagreements at times but when it comes to an action that must be passed, we work together to get it done." Ms. Stair responded "Good. I used to really like that description, then I came across the second one. Who would like to read that one for us?" President Mowen read the definition "A Team is not a group of people that work together. A Team is a group of people that trust each other." Ms. Stair continued "So there is an extra component. Simon Sinek is all about the 'why' we do things. To me that quote is very insightful. Without trust, this governance team cannot operate at its highest levels. Trust does not come easily. Think about any other relationships you have in your life, whether it is significant others, children, friends, trust takes a long time to build and is very quick to destroy or damage. Unfortunately, once it's been damaged it never goes back to what it was. It can get better, if you think of a wrinkled piece of paper each time it's damaged it gets more and more wrinkled and you can try to smooth it back out, but it won't be the same. Trust is very important. It's the basis for the work you all do. When MASB talks about the governance team it really means the team of eight. The seven elected or appointed officials and the superintendent. They are not two separate entities. They must figure out how to work together. So, trust must exist between colleagues, but also between the individual Board members and between the Board members and the superintendent. In your MASB folders at your place you will see a list of simple activities to help build trust, some of them more structured than others. But it is about trying to find ways to get to know each other, to have good meaningful conversation, not always about education, and building the relationship amongst all of you. I would encourage you at some point in the future to maybe identify a few things from the list that you could use as an opportunity to share the same learning and then have good conversation about that learning." Secretary Webster asked, "So how do we do these things without violating the Open Meetings Act?" Ms. Stair responded "That's always the worry, right? The answer to that is stay away from business. You came into this meeting sharing a meal and for the most part you were interacting as people. That is the best way to go about doing it. Our Board, and every Board is different so this may not work for you, but our Board after meetings would go to one of the neighborhood restaurants' bars. Any one was welcome to join us, and we got together for a drink and a snack, and everybody knew that was what we were doing. If we saw someone, we'd tell them to grab a chair and join us. You are allowed to do social events. Another Board I worked with did a holiday party, other boards have done picnics, sometimes inviting spouses into that mix. Depending on the culture of your district you could invite your

administrative team and their spouses. It's just about what feels right for your district." Treasurer Keyes stated, "I feel that we almost intentionally stay away from that just because we don't want people to assume we're doing something nefarious." Member Krauss agreed. Ms. Stair responded "If you haven't been doing anything like that for the first few times, I would engage and encourage others to feel comfortable that you're not trying to hide anything. Once a Board starts something like that and is open about it, people are more likely to understand you're not doing anything wrong or hiding anything." Secretary Webster added "It is a hot topic in our community right now because our Board of commissioners does it all the time and they do talk business. And they do Round Robin and make decisions. There is a lot of social media attention to this. So, it's a bad climate." Ms. Stair responded "That is unfortunate. It's just like everything else, building trusts takes time. Think about things like the football game. A few of you sitting together at the football game, people are going to see that. Be cautious, monitor yourselves and let colleagues know if you notice they are going down that path because sometimes it happens innocently. It's just thinking about some ways that you can get to know each other better as people. The more you know about each other and interact on a more personal level. The harder it is to be disagreeable. You can still disagree, but if I care about Sara, if I care about you as a person because we've gotten to know each other, I'm going to be a little more cautious about the way I treat you. I'm going to be more careful because I care about you as a person. You're going to disagree all the time, it's how you do it that matters. The Board table is not set up for you to come in and get to know each other. In smaller communities' people may know each other or know of each other but let's face it, the reality is you may not even want to be sitting next to a particular person. It may not have been your choice to work with a certain person, but the community elected all of you and you need to find a way to work together. That is the trust the community put into you by electing you to this seat. So, anything you can do to build that trust is advantageous. Along those same lines I want to give you a minute to read this stage of group development." The stages of group development as presented on the slide:

"Forming: group of individuals, no clear view of purpose, no shared team goals, focused on individual tasks, no clear understanding of contribution into value chain.

Storming: power struggles/conflict, seeking understanding of value of their contribution, seeking clarity on team goals and vision, seeking meaning and purpose.

Norming: understand values and have reached agreement on how we do things, understand their roles in context of the team purpose, understand their individual responsibilities in context of the team whole.

Performing: aligned to team vision and purpose, able to understand individual and team value in context of greater value chain, able to focus on getting things done in a way that aligns to team values and norms, health conflict allows for collaboration."

Ms. Stair asked the board members to share where they feel they land as a Board in the stages of group development. President Mowen said he feels that the Board is somewhere between Norming and Performing. He shared that "We do disagree, but when we have to take action, we vote together." Trustee Krauss stated he believes that the Board is Performing more than anything, because "We do come together for a common purpose when we need to." Secretary Webster said she thinks the Board operates between Storming and Norming. She stated "I've been on the Board for a while. I know when we were at more of a performing level there had been a group of us established for a long time. Then we had some turnover which is not negative

at all. But it does mean two of our Board members joined us not very long before we had this massive crisis. We were probably just getting to Norming and Performing, and now we have the crisis of COVID and the crisis of race conflict that has escalated in our community. Just to be transparent, Adam is an introvert, and I haven't heard a lot of from him. That is not a criticism, it is saying I don't know that we have sought to understand the value of his contribution. We haven't had time to do that. We've been on Zoom, it's been crazy. We've been trying to figure out if school is open or closed, who is mad today, all the mental health issues, all just insanity as everybody knows. We just haven't been in a context where we've had that time to really – I mean I'm sure our newest Board members have contributions to make but there have been so many volatile issues we've had to deal with. I don't feel that cohesion that I know can be there.” Ms. Stair responded, “Interesting that on the way here I was reading *“Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking.”* Secretary Webster said, “And again it's not a criticism, I'm just saying that I'm not sure we all fully understand each person's roles, what they bring to the table.” Ms. Stair said “And you have also been meeting virtually which changes the dynamics. Some people are more comfortable in a virtual environment, some are less comfortable. There is a lot of stuff going on. You've talked about the turnover as well. When new people come to a team, it doesn't matter how much of a benefit that they're going to make, there is still a juxta-positioning as everyone finds their new norm within the group.” President Mowen said “It takes every type of person to make the world go round. We all have ears for a reason but we're not afraid to speak either.” Trustee Quick said “Interesting that I was with Rick and Ty as far as putting our group between Norming and Performing, but hearing Marlene speak I thought more of the storming. I am one of the newer members so it's a different perspective.” President Mowen said “I don't think anybody here devalues any other member of the Board.” Ms. Stair said “This is one of my more unusual presentations because generally when I'm out in a district there are some real problems. I was in a district just a few weeks ago where the Board members can't get along between themselves, the Board and the superintendent aren't getting along, the Board and the community aren't getting along. There is no relationship in that district that is working right now. It's one of the great things about taking classes in person, you leave thinking ‘wow we are so much better off than I thought!’ Because you may not be perfect but at least you are trying. That is better than I can say about some other Boards.” Secretary Webster “I have felt that there have been power struggles and conflict, that we have not had the clarity on our goals and vision because the goal and the vision changes every day.” Ms. Stair responded “Oh it's laughable isn't? Every day, you no sooner think you're on the straight and narrow and up pops another problem.” Dr. Tuttle added “To Marlene's point, I think we were much more Performing when we had a clear vision and a purpose but more, I think of Performing as leading. And now more than ever I feel like we are just trying to manage a crisis and we're not really leading and progressing. I feel like I am constantly asking myself where are we going? We're just trying to manage and tread water. So, I completely understand Marlene's point. We had been very progressive up until COVID.” Ms. Stair said “Absolutely. There isn't any group or superintendent or Board president that I'm talking to these days that doesn't feel that way. All the good things had to be put on pause, all the proactive things you were working towards, just to manage the day-to-day during the pandemic. I think one of the parts that I really liked about these descriptions is under Performing where it says, ‘healthy conflict’. It doesn't say no conflict. I think that is important for all of us to internalize. There will always be differences. People will have different points of view, different priorities, there will always be two sides to everything. But it is how we handle it that matters. So, there are two things that I think help in resolving that

conflict. The first is assuming positive intent. You listen altogether different if you assume positive intent. I understand that our viewpoints might be different, but I really need to figure out where you are coming from because it does have value. I need to understand that point of view because it will help us in the decision-making process. Has anybody ever participated in one of those exercises where there is a plane crash and there is a list of items, and you can only take ten things with you? You rank the items individually and then you get a score and then they put you in a group. What happens to your score once they put you in a group? It goes up because you get the best thinking of everybody. I would have taken the cheesecake, but Ty might have said '*Hey cheesecake might be nice, but we need the water*'. So, it's important that you pull those viewpoints in because someone at the table might think of something that changes the way we come to the best solution possible. If we don't start off by thinking they have something to add we're going to be sorry for it in the long run. You're going to feel it, they're going to feel it, and one of two things will happen if they don't feel valued. Either they will start causing problems to make you pay attention, or they could potentially give up and just leave and that might also be unfortunate because they may have a lot to offer if you give them a chance. So, the first important rule for conflict resolution is assuming positive intent. The second is giving grace. Especially in these days, when we don't always know what our colleagues are bringing to the table with them. We don't know what's going on behind this façade we bring to the meeting. It is important to make sure when someone steps away from the agreed upon norms, or step away from the way they normally behave, we must find out why. As a team we want to be there to support each other as well. It doesn't mean attacking each other. That won't get us anywhere. Approach that person respectfully and with the intent to find out what happened and how we can fix it. Sometimes, it can be difficult to give grace when you are not getting it. But you get to be the folks that demonstrate good behavior and good will. There is no shortage of places where we can look for dysfunction at any level. Every community has a level, or two or three, where it is just unpleasant to be around because they can't get along and they can't get anything done. Am I hitting close to home? That's the thing – we get the choice to decide if we want to be dysfunctional or if we want to be in the Performing category. The only person you control is yourself. It takes a lot of self-monitoring to get to Performing. You can't control what anyone else says but you can control how you react to what is said. Any comments before we move on?" President Mowen said "Everyone on this Board has grown from working with the community. We have all done our best to be involved. I think that has helped us grow, we get a little bit of a better understanding of our community, and we can bring that understanding to our meetings." Ms. Stair responded "It is important to bring your best self to your meetings. And even when you step away from the table, it is important to be your best self because your behavior is monitored from the minute you walk out the door in the morning to the minute you get back at night. People are judging your behavior at and away from the table. That may be unfair because your only authority is at the table. But you're still being judged because you don't ever get to take your Board hat off. It is what it is. It's important to be role models for your community and for your students. Your community who has placed trust in you, and at some point, in the future you'll need them to support you for something. Sometimes it's monetarily and sometimes it's just about decision and direction. But you need their support. And for your students because you want them to leave better than they came in and part of that is the modeling that the leadership shows."

Ms. Stair next introduced the topic of The Four Dimensions of a Governance Framework. "We're going to spend the rest of our time on what I call The Four Dimensions of a Governance

Framework. I didn't make this stuff up by myself. For some of you that come to MASB events you may have heard facilitators talk about the Iowa Lighthouse research study. Imagine that in early 2000s there has never been a study done on the impact of school boards on student achievement. Lots of studies about principals, teachers, superintendents but never anything on boards on their impact. So, our colleagues the School Board Association of Iowa undertook this work and partnered with their Superintendent's Association their State Department of Education and Iowa university to take on this huge study. What they came out with was pretty powerful. They readdressed it in 2012 to make sure it was still reliable. So, these are four things they found to be most useful for Boards and helpful for them to achieve at high levels. And for Boards working at their highest levels the likelihood of students performing at high levels increases. The first one is about a *Unity of Purpose*, and we'll go through each one of these. The second one is *Roles and Responsibility*. The third is *Positive Governing Body Culture*, most of us call it norms or codes of conduct, and then the fourth is *Protocols* or structures that you put in place to support the work that you are doing together. So, who is going to read Unity of Purpose that hasn't read something already?" Trustee Krauss read the definition for Unity of Purpose. "Unity of Purpose is a common focus, super-ordinate goals, the values and beliefs governing body members share in common about children, the school district and public education that help them transcend their individual differences to fulfill a greater purpose." Ms. Stair asked, "How do you feel about that statement?" Dr. Tuttle said "I think this Board does a great job with that. Although we have our differences, we recognize our greater purpose which is what is good for kids." Ms. Stair said "So being able to set aside your own personal desires, wants, preferences because you have a common purpose in place is very helpful. Having that and using that as your guidepost for decision making. Ask yourself, is what I'm about to do or say (either at the table or away from it) going to help us move in the directions we've identified or is this something that might harm our relationship or that Unity of Purpose that we're working towards? That's really for everyone at all levels. Having a Unity of Purpose in a district and having it be very clear what it is we aim to be – you've all said you've stepped away from that during this pandemic but reengaging in it as we sort of find our way onto the other side of this COVID thing is one of the most important things you can do. Who wants to read the second slide?" Trustee Easlick read the second slide. "Roles and Responsibilities – Effective teams value and respect their essential roles, come to common understand on the roles of the board and superintendent, and strive to operate within them." Ms. Stair asked "How do you all feel about your roles? Did you have a clear understand of what you were getting yourself into? What the work was?" Trustee Easlick responded "For me I am just learning. I had never been to a school board meeting before." Ms. Stair said "What I find is that is a struggle for a lot of board members. We're talking about the governance team, and you know superintendents have a lot to learn especially newer superintendents, but their responsibilities are delineated. Board members, on the other hand, we tend to run because we're passionate about something. And then we have this platform that we run on of things we want to fix when we come to the table, and then we get to the table and find out that isn't really our job. Our job is one of governance. Oversight. Boy that is hard for some folks. In our everyday lives we are used to doing and managing. Rolling up our sleeves, getting the work done, or at the higher levels at least managing something. So that oversight thing is tough for some folks." Secretary Webster said "So I actually had a challenging situation here during COVID. I feel like I'm a big picture person, just in life. When I came to the Board of education, I really respected the chain of command, and not necessarily having a lot of conversations with teachers about their issues or principals about their issues and trying to let all that filter through Andrea and come

down to us. Then during COVID there were some issues going on and some teachers contacted me, and they wanted me to...sort of not do what I've always done. They were upset that I wasn't engaging with them at a certain level because that's what they wanted to have happened and I was trying to say I want to stay in my lane as a Board member. Talk to your principal, the principal will talk to the Superintendent and the Superintendent will talk to us. And you know, I said I'm the same person I've always been. I'm trying to function as what I understand my role as a Board member to be. I don't want to get sucked into that, but it's been difficult because passions are so high, and people are so upset about so many things they want to pull us into different roles. It's been more difficult to stay in this role of Big Picture when everyone wants to bring all the nitty gritty to us." Ms. Stair responded "And not only them. Because legislation threw you in it. They made you get involved in a lot of detail, right? That was no place where Board members really belong. And so, a lot of Boards are trying to figure out, ok now that we've been put into those weeds how do we get back out? In a way that shows our community we're doing our due diligence and part of that is reexplaining to them what our roles as Board members are. It is the most useful elevator speech any Board member can memorize. The first thing that Board members get hit with is "Fix My Problem"; what it shows is that the community doesn't really understand the roles of Board members either. The sooner Board members can explain what their role is and how to help them address whatever their concern is in the right way, the better off a Board member will be. Write it down. Try different things. Your elevator speech will be different than the Board member next to you. But you will be guiding them in the right place. That's what really helps. They'll still try to pull you in. Your friends and families are usually the worst." Secretary Webster asked Ms. Stair what her elevator speech was. Ms. Stair responded "It has been a long time since I had to give my elevator speech. I have been off the Board for twelve years. My speech went something like *"I appreciate you sharing your concern with me. I want you to know I do take it seriously. But I need you to understand that my roles as a Board member is to help you get your problems addressed in the best way possible and that means I need to send you to the appropriate person. If you don't get your challenge addressed at that point, there are other places to take it to. But that is where you need to start because that is likely where you will get your best solution.* Something along those lines." Dr. Tuttle added "I think the most interesting thing I've seen from my position, and I've seen it happen to the Board too, but especially through COVID people have absolutely jumped that chain of command. So, they are coming right to me, right to the Board, so there is some retraining of asking them have you talked to the teacher? Have you talked to the principal? Have you done anything besides talk to us? And the more you solve their problems the more they come to you. I've found when you push it back to the chain of command it is more helpful." Ms. Stair said "Absolutely. If they find one person they can come to, it will be never ending because it won't only be them it will be others as well. It knocks the feet out from the people in that chain when you allow it to happen. The Board works best when you allow the professional educator to manage the district and you all have an important role in that process and that is her evaluation. That's where you have those conversations, in that evaluation process. Not just at the end of the year but at those checkpoints along the way. Because we're not professional educators. I can work for umpteenth educational associations and work principals and superintendents, but it doesn't mean I know how to do their jobs. I can support them in their work, but it doesn't mean I know their work. We have a lot of retired educators running for boards now and they struggle with that concept a lot. Because they were in the weeds, and they do have those kinds of connections in the district. So, it is hard for those folks to create separation. And that's what it must be. Not only is it the best thing for those

folks but you also must reduce risk, the liability of risk, for the district. Sometimes they are FERPA issues or due process issues because of contracts. Once you get yourself involved you can't get uninvolved. The last thing you want to do is find yourself in a deposition. Part of your responsibility as a Board member is a fiduciary one. That means staying where you belong so that as those things move in along in the process you are in the right place and not sucked into the problem. The more you can verbalize what your place in the chain of command is the more you will feel comfortable with it. Also, understanding that School Board work is a bit of an art. I wish it was a science, but it really isn't. You must know when something rises to the level that even though you've directed the person to the appropriate place, you need to recognize when you need to talk to your superintendent. You approach the talk as *'This is something I've heard that maybe you should take a look into.'* And not *'Hey superintendent this is what I heard, and you better fix it, and this is how you better fix it.'* That statement may sound outlandish coming from a Board member that understands their role, but I see that happen. So NSBA took that work from the Iowa Lighthouse study and packaged it into the important topics Boards need to pay attention to. You'll see that the first is Unity of Purpose and the second is Ensuring Accountability so there are systems in place that support the good work of the district and holding people to high standards. The third one is about policy; the board's major function besides hiring, firing and evaluating the superintendent, is policy. I'm just going to suggest that you don't completely remove yourself from policy just because you have NEOLA. You still must look for nuances to make sure they fit your district. The fourth is community leadership; making sure that those communication conduits are there not only to put information out but to bring it back as well. The fifth one is about relationships and that is primarily about your relationship with the superintendent. I think these five roles are a great way to explain the work of the board versus the work of administration, versus the work of any one of your staff on the ground. The superintendent is the only member that must go back and forth between the board and the folks on the ground. There are very distinct roles in each of these categories. One thing that our board found useful and now I've seen it in a couple of other boards around the state. One way to self-monitor in any one of those topics we've talked about is ask yourself *'Is what I'm about to ask a what question or a how question?'* because *what* is governance and *how* is the administration and their team. So, on the back of our name plates, we had *'We're the what they're the how.'* Nobody could see it but us. So, as we started discussing something, and every one of us has the tendency to stray into the details over something, I'd remind myself is what I'm saying the what or the how? How isn't my role. I need to back up a little. Sometimes there is stuff we need to know in our role of governance and sometimes there is stuff we'd like to know. We've all done it, me included. There is a little bit of a gray area that is hard to manage so reminding yourself of the what and the how can be helpful. The board sets the direction and the how is how the superintendent goes about taking that direction. It hard in the beginning to trust the how for new board members because they haven't built the trust yet. I had been working with a few Boards and one member said to me 'I just need more information, you don't understand.' And I said, 'Do you need more information on every agenda item?', they responded "I just need to know they did their due diligence." I said 'Ok, could you get some of your detailed questions on one agenda item and from that they've proved they've done their due diligence could you transfer that to the other items?' and he said 'Well, I guess I could.' And it was hard for him, but over time it got easier. Once he understood he could trust that he didn't have to second guess everything because all those answers were there then he was able to back out of it and occasionally come back with questions. That was a place they agreed to, but it took time to get

there. You are extremely lucky that your superintendent has been here this long. Do you know what the average tenure of a superintendent is these days? Just over three years. And when superintendents were moving on, what do you think the number one reason was for leaving? The relationship with their Board. It was not about more money or a bigger and better district, it was their relationship with the Board. What we do know about all that other research on superintendents is that superiority and tenure matters. When you can keep a good leader in place that will have an impact on student achievement. The stability is important. It takes work, it's just like any other relationship, there's rough and smooth patches, it just means you all must keep recommitting to the relationship and to your role as a board member. So, a couple of other things you can do to help reinforce the work of the board; the first thing I'd recommended is the MASB board self-assessment. Everybody else in your district has an evaluation. We suggest that Boards do an annual self-assessment, and it is based on the Iowa Lighthouse research study, so the questions come directly from that study. It is free to take, you can do it individually online and the system spits out a report for you. The important part about it though is having some good, rich discussion about the results and then making plans to improve in the areas that are shown you could benefit from. It's a good use of your time and it's a good opportunity to have a workshop setting. It's the ability to have a good, honest conversation, away from the worktable that will strengthen your connections. We suggest Boards do this every year to see how you're progressing over time. It's also one of those membership benefits so it's a good idea to take advantage of it. So, who is going to read the next slide?"

Next, Trustee Keyes read the definition for Positive Governing Body Culture. "Culture is the positive or negative atmosphere created by the way people in an organization treat each other. Teams have unwritten, or written, agreements about how they will behave with each other and others. These behavioral ground rules, often called norms, enable teams to build and maintain a positive culture or shift a negative one." Ms. Stair continued "What do you think about that?" Secretary Webster replied "We have a list of norms. They are listed in the front of our Board packets. We have not talked about them in a very long time." Ms. Stair asked "Could any of you list them? I'm not asking you to I'm just wondering if you'd be able to. I'm not trying to put you on the spot but that demonstrates my point. For norms to be function properly you must live them. It doesn't mean that you have to be able to list read them word for word, but you have to understand them, you have to feel them and you have to use them on a regular basis. It may be time to readdress yours. Boards do all kinds of things. The biggest piece that I think is important is writing them down. Some Boards have norms or unwritten rules that are all dependent on the people sitting at the table. Once those people leave those unwritten norms don't mean much of anything. So, you end up with people that behave anyway they please because without something you've all come to agree to and readopt every so often some people think they can behave however they want to. What I would suggest is that as you readdress your norms, think about what has caused you problems in the way you interact recently and bring it to the table. Have some good conversation around those norms, readopt them publicly, and then find ways to live them and share them with others. That does a couple things. I've seen Boards put it up on the wall, I've seen boards put it on their agendas for meetings, it helps you all remember but it also helps your community see what you say is important about the way we all treat each other. That might not have seemed so important before COVID but I bet it seems pretty important now. If the public sees how you expect to treat each other they are more likely to behave in the same manner. You are setting the expectation for them and helping them understand what the rules of

engagement should look like. I don't mean that they will all follow them but if you can move more people to your side of your table it will help the discussion. You can print them on your agendas, or have your board president read them out, however you want to do it, it helps set the stage. It is easier to stop someone who is not following the rules of engagement if you have your ground rules set at the beginning of the meeting. Sometimes norms withstand the test of time, sometimes norms are listed to address a particular issue at a particular time, so they fall off when something new comes on, but it is good to figure out what regular readopting means to you. It doesn't mean you have to do it every year, it could be at your organizational meetings, or after every election, it's just important to check in occasionally. It should not be dependent on the president or the superintendent to keep the norms alive. The rest of the conversation should be what should we do when someone steps away from the norms? It shouldn't be up the board president every time to address an issue. You all should be comfortable enough with each other that any one of you can take it on, give grace while you do it, and say '*Hey this isn't what we agreed to. What happened?*' Does that make sense? Ok. Last piece. Who is going to read this one?"

Secretary Webster read the last slide. "Supportive Structures and Processes: Effective teams discuss and agree on the formal structures and processes used by the board and superintendent in their functioning as a team. Protocols are the processes followed by the Board and superintendent as they work together to govern the district." Ms. Stair continued "So protocols have a lot of names; operating procedures, there's some real basic protocols in your bylaws from NEOLA. Norms is how we treat each other; protocols are about how we get the work done. One of the good things about having a superintendent in place for a little while is you've probably got protocols in place you probably just haven't formalized them. What I usually find for Boards that don't have a lot of protocols that are written or adopted is that things have been going smoothly for a long time and there hasn't been the need for it. Then they find themselves one election away from something that looks different. These would be my David Letterman Top 10 of what Boards should address. So first is Board orientation and development; putting that in a formalized structure so it doesn't matter who the Board president or superintendent is at any given time the same level of support is going to be offered to new board members whether it is through the election process or appointment process and at any given time. Paired with that is what do we expect or use to support board development? Do we put a budget in place around Board development? I know some of you have been to classes and workshops, but do we value that enough that it's in our protocols? That people know if they join the board this is what they can expect to be able to participate in to further their learning and make sure they are as prepared as possible to do the work. So, think about it in this respect; if Andrea were to win the lottery tomorrow what would happen to the next election cycle? That's what I want you to think about. It shouldn't matter who is in the seat, it should be here is what we do. Communication, you've identified it, but it is probably not in writing. How many of you are up for election next year? Four of you. Regardless of what your choice is to run again or not, my opinion is that we're going to have a lot of single-issue candidates running next year. So, imagine there is turnover. You all know what your level of communication is, and it seems you've all agreed as to what that looks like. But imagine Andrea's predicament if she were to get four new Board members and then you have to figure out what communication looks like all over again. Getting some of this stuff in writing when things are going well is a good idea. It only takes one election cycle for things to change. What I find sometimes in districts is that seven individuals have different levels

of expectations around methods and frequency and level of detail and if that isn't ironed out the superintendent just goes crazy. You can't address seven different desires around everything. The Board hired the superintendent, not seven individuals, so coming together on those things and having a common expectation that you've agreed to will be helpful in pushing you over to the Performing category we talked about earlier. Confidentiality is a big one. Not only a trust breaker but a legal issue. That one usually rears its head shortly after new election cycles. And especially if an election cycle has a former employee or the spouse of an employee. Some of those confidentiality issues came out with zoom meetings, when you're in closed session who else could potentially be in a place where they could hear what you're discussing? So, it is a good idea to have your expectations on confidentiality written out and a protocol established. We talked a little bit about handling complaints or concerns from your community or staff. In some districts that's a single protocol and in other districts it's two separate protocols, it depends on your structure and how you want to address it. But again, it is coming in and knowing what the expectation is. If I were appointed tomorrow, I would understand what that looks like.

Information requests: what happens when a single board member requests information? This one is not such a big concern in districts where you have a seasoned superintendent. Where we have a lot of new superintendents, they can get themselves in trouble when they just give information to one Board member, and everybody is up in arms about it. It is not a bad idea to have a protocol established for information requests; whether that comes down through the Board president or comes directly from the superintendent, different districts handle it differently but whatever your agreed upon method is put it in writing. Public comment; how has that been going for you guys lately? Pretty good? You guys are lucky. One of the key pieces to all of these is that whatever you put in place you remain consistent even when you don't need to. One of the first workshops I went to do when I hired on, I was sitting there watching the meeting and public comment came and went. Nobody said anything. And then they were discussing an agenda item and someone out in the audience raises his hand and the Board president called on him and lets him start talking. I about died. I had never seen that before. I ended up doing some work there long term and I had a conversation with their Board president. I asked him if that happens every time, he told me that 'Frank' was the only one who showed up to Board meetings so if he had something to say they let him say it. I told him that may work well when Frank is the only person in the room, but when you have a large audience that would cause chaos. You must be consistent. I do think there is a place for potential responses for some things that come up. I do caution you on when and how often that happens, and it should only be the Board president and the superintendent who respond. What I have found some superintendents and Boards do is that they do a public comment and then they have the superintendent's report and in that report the superintendent will address some issues that may have been brought up. That way, you're not going to engage back and forth. The danger of responding while the person is at the podium is that it starts and once it starts you can't stop. Placing your public participation and superintendent's comments on the agenda can be strategic. You really want to be consistent, lay out the rules, make sure everyone is clear about them. The more you set the expectations in advance the more people are likely to follow them. You must figure out how you're going to be prepared and manage when you have a lot of public comment. Whatever works for you guys is how you should do it. Things to think about and much better before you need them. Next on the list is Spokesperson and social media; I think this is critical. MASB recommends the superintendent is the spokesperson for the district and the Board president is the spokesperson for the Board unless they delegate that to another member. It's important that when you have an

issue and you know that all of you are going to be contacted, that you have a protocol in place to give you the information that you want shared. A source of information beyond who is delegated to speak to the press will create a crack in your team. Everybody can be misquoted and taken out of context. The social media I'm talking about is the social media of individual board members. That's creating a lot of conflict in districts these days. I must tell you when I left the Board social media was just beginning to rear its ugly head and now it's taken on a life of its own. Many of us have social media accounts that are personal, some of us start them when we run as a candidate. We recommend, the powers that be so the press association and those folks, recommend if you have a personal social media account keep it personal. Do not discuss board business on your personal social media. It's not going to do anything that's going to be good, it takes on its own life and you can't control it once it starts. Copy and paste sounds innocent enough but it's not. You can't control where it goes after you put it out there. Remember to ask yourself, is what I'm about to do or say going to potentially cause harm to the district before you post anything on social media. I suggest that you come to some kind of agreement as to what that looks like and set a protocol in place. My advice to you is to always direct questions back to the district social media site for accurate information and leave it at that. You can't win an argument on social media, no matter how well intentioned you can't control who comments on what or who shares what. You can control committing to saying *'for accurate information, please visit our district site'*. Make sure your superintendent knows about it so that if information about that topic isn't on the district site it can be put on there. That is the quickest way to dispel rumors and the untruths, to not engage in it. If you have a social media page that you started for your campaign, shut it down. At least until you run again. Do not get caught up in discussing board business on your campaign page. It will not serve anybody well and it certainly won't help the team. It's easy for me to say, harder for you to do I get it. But you should have some agreement as to what that should look like for your Board. That also helps you to build followers for what the district is putting out. If you are constantly referring to the district pages for accurate information that is where they will start looking. What you will find is that you will have community ambassadors for that district site that refer others to that accurate information. When I was still a Board member, and I was working for the principal's association someone who didn't like a decision that I had broken the tie on put a post on their social media that it was a conflict of interest for me to work for the principal's association when our principal's pay the memberships for that association. I never had a conversation with one of principals on whether they should join but it took on its own life. I could have said that only four out of sixteen principals belong to that association but what would it have helped? So, I ignored it. It was hard to do. When people approached me about it, I would say I've seen it and it's not true. I left it at that. Whatever it takes for you to take that double check of yourself. Again, ask yourself *is what I'm about to do or say going to potentially put the district or the Board at risk?* So those are my best guidance's of protocols. What I would say is this, you have my contact information, and I am here to support all of you so don't ever hesitate to contact me. The last piece of this is I'd like you to think about what we talked about today and ask yourself, what is something I could stop doing that would improve the work of this board? What is something I start doing? Something I could continue? Or what is something I could change? Some of you might have four things some of you might have one thing but what we know about adult learning is that if you reflect on it and really take the time to think about how it could change your behavior, you're more likely to change your behavior. Thank you for having me tonight, I really appreciate your time this evening."

Lincoln High School Graduation Requirements Policy

Dr. Tuttle stated “There was a conflict in the policy that I recommended you adopt regarding Lincoln graduation. We devised this policy thinking Lincoln was going to go over to the new facility this year and we wanted them to have seven hours so that they were in alignment with the high school and could take electives. Lincoln ended up staying put so it doesn’t make sense for them to have seven hours because they don’t have the opportunities for those electives. So, they can’t even get really seven hours. So, the union had asked if we can go back to six hours. If you look at the third page I would change the first paragraph, and I would bring it to you as a ‘For Action’ Item at the next board meeting to allow us to start this in trimester two. Instead of saying “A student must be enrolled in each trimester in seven subjects” we would go back to six for this year, they would earn three credits and so ultimately instead of the ten and a half credits they would have nine. Due to the Michigan Merit Curriculum, we only have to do eighteen credits so we will still be able to accommodate the kids that thought they were going to graduate because they thought they were getting seven hours. It is a win-win for everybody.”

Test to Stay

Dr. Tuttle stated “Just an update on Test to Stay. I was hoping to talk to you about it today and start it tomorrow, but we were caught between Corunna and Perry districts starting it, so we had to get it started. This is the recommendation sheet from the Health Department, this allows kids who were in close contact at school to test every day and if they test negative, they can return to school in a mask. Just so you know the first day of this was Friday, we had our student nurse there, a volunteer from the health department, several other administrators, we had six students there to test. We’re just trying this on secondary right now because I didn’t know how inundated we’d be. Staff gets there at 7:00am, the doors open at 7:15am, they have to sit there for fifteen minutes to allow the test to work.” Vice President Ochodnick asked “What if they don’t have transport?” Dr. Tuttle responded “They have to be with a parent because the parent has to sign the consent every day they are tested. If they can’t or don’t have transport, they will have to quarantine the full seven days. Some of them are choosing not to get tested on the seventh day because if they test positive on the seventh day now, they are isolated which means they have COVID and they’re out an additional ten days, some of them don’t want to test because they don’t want to wear a mask. These are only kids that are unvaccinated because per the health department those who are vaccinated do not have to quarantine.” Mr. Brooks added “Although vaccinated individuals are not required to quarantine, we are tracking those students if they are close contacts.”

Bond Update

Dr. Tuttle began by saying that the mediation with Kingscott did not go well. “The next step is litigation. I cannot do that without Board authorization so at some point I would like to have the attorneys come and talk to you about the pros and cons of litigation and what our chances are of winning so that you can make an informed decision on whether you’d like to take that risk. Litigation is costly. So, is it worth our time and effort? That is what we must decide. I will keep you informed on the time and date for the attorneys to come and talk to you. Any questions?” No questions were asked by the Board.

Grand Opening

Dr. Tuttle stated “The Grand Opening is November 4. I am meeting with the Choir Director, Band Director, technology department and others this week to solidify the agenda. It is odd, having the Grand Opening after we’ve already had concerts and events there but we’re going through with it. Any questions on the Grand Opening?” No questions were asked by the Board. “That is all I have for you. I’d like to move into closed session for the discussion of student discipline.”

Moved by Quick, supported by Keyes to move into Closed Session at 8:10pm for the purpose of discussing student discipline. President Mowen conducted a roll call vote. Ayes: Easlick, Keyes, Krauss, Mowen, Ochodnicky, Quick, Webster. Nays: None. Motion carried unanimously.

Upcoming Board Meeting Dates

- October 25: Board of Education Meeting, 5:30 pm
- November 8: Committee of the Whole Meeting, 5:30 pm

Adjournment

Moved by Webster , supported by Krauss to adjourn at 8:43 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes recorded by Brooke Barber.

Respectfully submitted,

Marlene Webster

Marlene Webster, Secretary