

OWOSSO PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Board of Education Committee Meeting Minutes
September 09, 2026 – 5:30 pm
Report 26-28

Board Members Present: Shelly Ochodnicki, President, Adam Easlick, Vice President, Olga Quick, Treasurer, Nick Henne, Secretary and John Pappas, Trustee, Rick Mowen, Trustee and Marlene Webster, Trustee.

Absent: None

The Committee of the Whole Meeting of the Owosso Public Schools Board of Education was called to order by President Ochodnicki at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was held at the Washington Campus Administration Building, 645 Alger St, Owosso, MI 48867.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Superintendent Training with Collins and Blaha

The Board participated in superintendent evaluation training facilitated by Jeremy Chisholm, an attorney with Collins & Blaha. Dave Schulte from Shiawassee RESD provided an introduction and explained that the training was focused on the Collins & Blaha Superintendent Evaluation Tool.

Mr. Chisholm reviewed the statutory requirements for superintendent evaluations in Michigan, including the requirement that superintendents be evaluated annually and the changes to the evaluation process that took effect in 2024. He explained that the state now recognizes three evaluation categories: effective, developing, and needing support. The Collins & Blaha tool retains an additional exemplary category for local use, although the highest rating reported to the state is effective.

The Board was also informed of the statutory requirement for a mid-year progress check-in regarding the superintendent's goals. Mr. Chisholm explained that this does not require the Board to complete the full evaluation twice during the year but does require a documented check-in regarding progress toward goals. He also reviewed the superintendent's right to appeal an evaluation rating and recommended that the Board consider addressing the appeal process through contract language.

The training covered the six components of the evaluation tool, including visionary leadership, policy and governance, instructional leadership, external communication, management of district operations, and professionalism and ethics. Mr. Chisholm explained that Board members evaluate each component as a whole rather than assigning individual numerical scores to each performance indicator. The performance indicators are intended to guide discussion and provide more specific descriptions of the areas being evaluated.

Mr. Chisholm also reviewed the 80/20 weighting of the evaluation, with 80 percent based on the evaluation tool and 20 percent based on student growth data. He emphasized that the Board should reach a consensus regarding the overall evaluation and that the final evaluation rating must be voted on by the Board in the public record.

During the discussion following the training, Board members discussed the mid-year progress report and noted that goals had previously been discussed in July. Superintendent Brooks shared the format he has

used for providing information to the Board and reviewed the updated Friday Letter template, which incorporates the evaluation components. The Board discussed preparing information in advance of the superintendent evaluation and agreed that the updated process appeared to provide a more streamlined way to review the superintendent's performance. The Board discussed having Superintendent Brooks present information in October and completing the evaluation and vote in November.

Mr. Chisholm agreed to provide sample contract language regarding a superintendent evaluation appeal process to the District. Board President Shelly Ochodnický requested that the information be sent to Melissa Buehler.

Public Participation

President Ochodnický 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 to announce their name and group affiliation when applicable and to limit their participation time to three minutes or less. Comments should be directed to the Board and be relevant to the business of the Board of Education. This is not an opportunity for dialogue with the Board of Education. The rules of common courtesy should also be observed.

No members of the public were present to address the Board.

Adding Additional Public Participation

The Board discussed whether an additional public participation period should be added to Committee of the Whole meetings. The discussion followed a previous meeting in which a member of the public questioned why there was not a second opportunity for public comment.

Superintendent Brooks explained that the District is legally required to provide at least one opportunity for public participation and that the Board has traditionally provided two opportunities during regular Board meetings. He also explained that the Board President has the authority to allow additional public participation when appropriate.

The Board discussed moving the public participation opportunity to the end of Committee of the Whole meetings so that individuals who remain throughout the meeting would have an opportunity to comment on matters discussed. The Board also discussed leaving the existing two opportunities in place for regular Board meetings. It was determined that the Board President would use discretion to provide an additional opportunity for public participation at Committee of the Whole meetings when appropriate.

Sound System at Willman Field

The Board discussed the condition and potential replacement of the sound system at Willman Field. Superintendent Brooks explained that the existing system was installed in 2003 and is approximately 23 years old. He noted that an amplifier had previously failed and was replaced with a used amplifier approximately 11 years ago. The existing system has continued to experience reliability and sound-quality issues, including concerns during football games and graduation.

The proposed system from Digital Age Technologies would include ten speakers positioned throughout the stadium, plaza, tunnel, and concession stand areas. The proposal would also include eight wireless microphones and rewiring of the existing wired microphones to provide a backup system. The Board

discussed the proposed speaker placement and the potential improvement in sound quality for athletic events, band, choir, graduation, and other activities.

The equipment and installation cost discussed was \$62,175, with an additional \$17,180 available for subwoofers and other enhancements. Superintendent Brooks reported that the Sports Boosters had offered a \$25,000 contribution toward the project. The District has funds budgeted for capital improvements, and the sound system would qualify as a capital improvement.

The Board discussed whether the additional equipment should be included with the initial project and whether speaker placement could be adjusted. The Board also discussed the importance of following District purchasing and bidding procedures. The Board agreed to move the sound system proposal forward for action at the next regular Board meeting, with the understanding that the \$25,000 Sports Boosters contribution would allow the District to begin the ordering process.

Health Insurance Updates

Superintendent Brooks provided an update regarding the District's 2027 health insurance rates. The rates increased by 15.95 percent. He explained that the District's current arrangement includes a three percent hard cap, with the remaining increase passed on to employees.

To lessen the impact of the increase on employees, the District changed the way employee insurance contributions are distributed for 52-week employees, moving from 19 payroll deductions to 21 payroll deductions. This reduces the amount deducted from each individual paycheck while maintaining the same annual employee contribution. Superintendent Brooks also reported that a representative from MESSA would meet with the OEA, OESPA, and administrative team on September 21 to review available plans and potential options for reducing costs. The District is also bidding its SET SEG insurance coverage and reviewing opportunities to consolidate insurance programs to obtain additional discounts.

The Board discussed factors contributing to the increase in health insurance costs, including the region in which the District is located, changes in the average age of the District's staff, and utilization, including prescription drug costs. Superintendent Brooks stated that the District would continue reviewing available options before making any changes to the plans offered to employees.

The Board also discussed House Bill 6058 and the potential impact of future legislation that could change the current health insurance hard-cap structure. Superintendent Brooks reported that District representatives have shared the potential financial impact with the District's Region 6 lobbyist and legislators.

Federal Scholarship Tax Credit

Superintendent Brooks presented information regarding the federal scholarship tax credit program. He explained that the program could provide a federal tax credit for individuals who make qualifying contributions and that Michigan had not yet implemented the program at the time of the meeting.

The Board discussed the potential for individuals to contribute up to \$1,700 and receive a corresponding tax benefit. Superintendent Brooks explained that the program was designed to provide funding for qualifying educational expenses and that Shiawassee County had begun preparing the necessary paperwork in anticipation of the program becoming available.

The Board discussed how funds could be administered through the RESD and how the District could potentially manage and allocate funds through a committee consisting of administrators, Board members, and community members. Potential uses discussed included back-to-school supplies, after-school programs, and field-trip expenses, subject to the requirements and restrictions of the program. The potential funding opportunity for a District of Owosso's size was discussed as being approximately \$250,000 annually or potentially more.

Round Table

During Round Table, the Board discussed sponsorships involving local businesses and organizations and the importance of maintaining transparency when organizations that support the District could potentially participate in future contracting opportunities. Board members discussed the distinction between independent booster organizations and the District, as well as the importance of continuing to follow established District bidding and purchasing procedures for future contracts.

The Board further discussed community perception and the importance of clearly communicating that donations or sponsorships do not alter the District's established procurement procedures. Board members agreed that the District should continue to follow its policies and provide equal opportunities through the formal bidding process.

The Board also discussed potential opportunities to maximize available funding, including energy-related rebates and other opportunities that could help the District complete facility improvements while preserving other District resources.

Closed Session

President Ochodnický requested a motion to enter closed session for the purpose of attorney-client privileged communication. Moved by Quick, supported by Mowen, to adjourn at 7:13 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Moved by Henne, supported by Pappas, to move back into open session at 7:41 p.m. for the purpose of adjournment.

Motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment

Moved by Pappas, supported by Easlick, to adjourn at 7:41 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes recorded by Melissa Buehler

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Nick Henne", is written over a horizontal line.

Nick Henne, Secretary