

**Okemos Board of Education  
Okemos, Michigan 48864  
REGULAR MEETING JANUARY 24, 2022**

PAGE 8908  
1-24-2022

The regular meeting of the Okemos Board of Education was called to order by Vice President Lynn at 7:02 p.m.

Members Present: Dean Bolton, Katie Cavanaugh, Melanie Lynn, Vincent Lyon-Callo, Andrew Phelps and Jayme Taylor

Members Absent: Mary Gebara

Administrator: Superintendent John Hood; Assistant Superintendent Stacy Bailey; Assistant Superintendent Stephen Keskes; and Finance Director Elizabeth Lentz; DEI Director Lara Slee

Call To Order

Commented [JT1]: Does Director Slee need to be included in this section?

The board recognized Josh Coty, 7<sup>th</sup> & 8th Grade Montessori Teacher at Chippewa Middle School who has attained 24 years of service.

24 Yr.  
Recognition

Superintendent Hood, DEI Director Slee and representatives from the district mascot committee presented the new mascot name recommendation to the board. Mr. Hood provided a brief history regarding the mascot change, as well as reviewed the process for developing the recommendation, student and district committee membership, selection criteria requirements, and considerations in the decision-making process. Survey results were also summarized. The student committee unanimously voted that Wolves should be the next mascot, and that decision is fully supported by the district committee and administration. Next steps were described including a vote by the board of education at February 14<sup>th</sup>'s meeting.

Mascot  
Recommendation

Members expressed gratitude and pride in both students and the inclusive process.

Superintendent Hood and Christman Company representative Rob Crowe shared a brief 2022 bond update including information regarding the steering committee, its recent meeting, purpose and proposed timelines. Enrollment projections used in planning the 2022 bond were provided.

2022 Bond  
Update

Joe Dzenowagis addressed the board complimenting students, the mascot process and noting the learning experience it has provided. Frank Ochberg and Ambrose Meteyer addressed the board regarding the backpack policy.

Citizens Address  
Agenda & Non-  
Agenda Items

Superintendent Hood reported on the following: board appreciation month; expressed condolences to the Cline family; therapy dog pilot program and upcoming presentation; childcare relief and stabilization grants providing for a childcare employee stipend; and a cleaning update.

Superintendent's  
Report

High School Student Representatives Uma and Amulya reported on the following: final exams; new mascot; Covid cases; and the backpack policy.

Student  
Representative  
Report

Vice President Lynn acknowledged correspondence from the following: Nathan Mahn concerning Covid response, policies, or protocols; Steve Zepf expressing gratitude; Isaac Burkey regarding the backpack policy; Amy Lothamer inquired about summer programming; Laura Stebbins regarding the mascot; Rachel Freeman-Baldwin regarding cleaning at OHS; and Tim Potter regarding Dr. Aaron Payment.

Board Reports &  
Request

Katie Cavanaugh reported on feminine products being provided at the high school and their partnership with Helping Women Period.

MOVED by Andy Phelps SUPPORTED by Katie Cavanaugh that the board approve items 1 and 2 for immediate implementation and appropriate action.

Item 1: Approval of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 10, 2022.

Item 2: Acknowledge receipt of the leave of absence report and approve the intermittent leave of absence for Laura Kampf, Reading Teacher at Kinawa beginning January 10, 2022.

AYE: 6 NAY: 0 ABSENT: 1 **MOTION CARRIED**

MOVED by Dean Bolton, SUPPORTED by Katie Cavanaugh that the board award the purchase of kitchen equipment, submitted by HPS not to exceed \$40,938.69 funded by Food Service Budget.

Kitchen  
Equipment  
Purchases

Roll Call Vote

Dean Bolton	Yes	Vincent Lyon-Callo	Yes
Katie Cavanaugh	Yes	Andrew Phelps	Yes
Mary Gebara	---	Jayne Taylor	Yes
Melanie Lynn	Yes		

AYE: 6 NAY: 0 ABSENT: 1 **MOTION CARRIED**

MOVED by Dean Bolton, SUPPORTED by Katie Cavanaugh that the board employ Emily Swirsky as Food Service Director effective February 7, 2022 in accordance with sections 1230 (2) and 1230 a (2) of the Revised School Code conditioned upon receipt of acceptable criminal history checks and criminal records checks.

Food Service  
Director Hiring

Roll Call Vote

Dean Bolton	Yes	Vincent Lyon-Callo	Yes
Katie Cavanaugh	Yes	Andrew Phelps	Yes
Mary Gebara	---	Jayne Taylor	Yes
Melanie Lynn	Yes		

AYE: 6 NAY: 0 ABSENT: 1 **MOTION CARRIED**

MOVED by Katie Cavanaugh, SUPPORTED by Andy Phelps that the board approve the employment of Jeff Vacha, 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Montessori Teacher at Kinawa at Division III, Step 6 of the teacher salary schedule, effective January 24, 2022 in accordance with sections 1230 (2) and 1230 a (2) of the Revised School Code conditioned upon receipt of acceptable criminal history checks and criminal records checks.

Employment-  
Certified

AYE: 6 NAY: 0 ABSENT: 1 **MOTION CARRIED**

The board discussed potential School of Choice openings to be advertised February 20th for the Pre-K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade Montessori program. The numbers being proposed will reflect available seats, while maintaining the district's ability to accommodate resident students. The number of available spots is as follows: PPK-K – 1 spot; 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade – 1 spot; 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade – 2 spots; 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade – 10 spots; and 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades – 10 spots.

Montessori  
School of Choice

The board discussed the following high school course proposals, which have been approved by the district's advisory committee: *Python* (basic computer science elective); *Beyond Connection* (SEL elective); *Investing 101* (CTE elective); and *Fundamental Music For All* (non-performance music elective). The board also discussed a proposed request to change graduation requirements eliminating the chemistry and/or physics requirement and instead requiring physical/earth science, biology and one other science course to graduate, allowing for greater flexibility and equity. The board will vote at its next meeting on February 14<sup>th</sup>.

Course  
Recommendation

Graduation  
Requirement  
Change

Members inquired about how the proposed changes will impact other classes and staffing; flexibility within the state's framework in other curriculum content areas; could computer programming count as a language or math credit.

DEI Director Slee shared an update on the DEAIC meeting, the district's equity initiatives and the re-writing of the Equity Plan. Dr. Slee defined educational equity as a guide to the development of the Equity Plan; and outlined the Equity Plan rewrite's timeline, the district's approach, guiding questions, and an overview of the process. A planning template was also provided.

Equity Update

Current equity initiatives were described and include the preferred name change procedures, TRAILS grant, monthly cultural overview, and weekly DEI tidbits, SEL curriculum, and reviewing and updating the middle school social studies curriculum.

Members inquired about concrete action steps, and integration of the Equity Plan into the Strategic and other district plans.

No one addressed the board.

Public Comment

A reminder of the January 31<sup>st</sup> special meeting for the purpose of developing superintendent goals. There will be a Board Work Session on February 16<sup>th</sup>.

Other Matters

Jayne Taylor inquired about moving the DEI update to earlier in the meeting.

Vice President Lynn adjourned the regular meeting at 9:28 p.m.

Adjourn

---

Jayne Taylor, Secretary