

**Okemos Board of Education
Okemos, Michigan 48864
REGULAR MEETING FEBRUARY 14, 2022**

The regular meeting of the Okemos Board of Education was called to order by President Gebara at 6:33 p.m. Call To Order

Members Present: Dean Bolton, Katie Cavanaugh, Mary Gebara, Melanie Lynn, Andrew Phelps and Jayme Taylor

Members Absent: Vincent Lyon-Callo

Administrators: Superintendent John Hood; Assistant Superintendent Stephen Keskes

MOVED by Dean Bolton, SUPPORTED by Katie Cavanaugh that the board adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to Section 8(a) of the Open Meetings Act for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations. Closed Session

Roll Call Vote

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

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

The board adjourned to executive session at 6:34 p.m.

The board reconvened from executive session at 7:05 p.m. Reconvene

Members Present: Dean Bolton, Katie Cavanaugh, Mary Gebara, Melanie Lynn, Andrew Phelps and Jayme Taylor

Members Absent: Vincent Lyon-Callo

Administrators: Superintendent John Hood; Assistant Superintendent Stacy Bailey; Assistant Superintendent Stephen Keskes; and DEI Director Lara Slee

OHS Teacher Melissa Samluk and Interim principal Andrea Hallead presented information regarding the district’s pilot therapy dog program at Okemos High School. Mrs. Samluk introduced CeCe, the therapy dog who has been serving Okemos High School student and staff as part of the district’s social-emotional learning initiatives. Different types of animal programs were described including crisis response animals, service animals, emotional support, and therapy animals. Goals, rationale and how the dogs will be used throughout the district was explained. Cece’s regular activities and daily schedule was shared. Allergies, fears and cultural considerations were also addressed. Approximate cost, funding sources, liability and insurance considerations were reviewed. Therapy Dog Program

It is administration’s intent that there would be one dog per building, with additional dogs eventually added to the secondary buildings. There are several different ownership approaches that the district is evaluating, as well as partner organizations the district hopes to work with to implement the therapy dog program.

Members discussed the following: assessment of the program; handler responsibilities and selection process; potential for issues; cleaning protocols; and student expectations and instruction.

Wesley VanVleck addressed the board regarding masking.

Citizens Address
Agenda & Non-
Agenda Items

Superintendent Hood reported on the following: possible mass action lawsuit and upcoming discussion regarding participation; thoughts to former board member Ron Styka and family; mascot and logo next steps and process; upcoming policy committee meeting and discussion regarding using a policy service; backpack policy implementation; masking policy and updated Covid and quarantine protocols; bond update including recent listening sessions; and transportation preparedness.

Members inquired about the masking policy.

High School Student Representatives Zainah and Amulya reported on the following: backpack policy implementation; hygiene products supplied; Covid cases; mascot logo submission; recent snow days; deadline for AP class applications; upcoming diversity assembly; and the upcoming Touch of Class fundraiser to benefit Okemos Cares.

Student
Representative
Report

President Gebara acknowledged correspondence from the following: Nathan Mahn and Sheree Jungwirth concerning Covid response protocols; Suzanne Kim regarding enrollment; Jace Harper requesting an interview; Jill VanHof concerning student voice and processes; Char Simons, Ashlyn Beland and Miko Matsumura regarding the mascot; Beth Bowen regarding providing menstruation products; Dray Chase and Sheree Jungwirth regarding spectator limits.

Board Reports &
Request

Members discussed the following: board advocacy committee and legislative advocacy regarding the 75% attendance requirements; ISOA minutes distributed and recent meeting; community forum regarding school funding and input into board priorities; masking policy and decision-making regarding Covid protocols; and a recent parent council meeting.

MOVED by Andy Phelps SUPPORTED by Melanie Lynn that the board approve items 1 through 5 for immediate implementation and appropriate action.

Consent Agenda

Item 1: Approval of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 24, 2022.

Item 2: Approval of the minutes of the Special Meeting of January 31, 2022;

Item 3: Approval of the minutes of the Executive Session Meeting of January 31, 2022;

Item 4: Acknowledge receipt of the leave of absence report and approve the leave of absence request for Christina Abbott, Science Teacher at Okemos High School for the period of January 31st through February 21, 2022; and Deborah Clay, Science Teacher at Kinawa for the period of February 24th through March 24, 2022.

Item 5: Acknowledge receipt of the January financial statement and approve payment of bills for January.

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

MOVED by Katie Cavanaugh, SUPPORTED by Jayme Taylor that the board approve the recommendation for the new mascot and adopt Wolves as the new Okemos Public Schools mascot.

New Mascot

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

MOVED by Jayme Taylor, SUPPORTED by Katie Cavanaugh that the board approve the following recommended number of PPK-8 Public Montessori school-of-choice openings for potential enrollment: Kindergarten-1 opening; Grades 1 and 2- 1 opening; Grades 3 and 4- 2 openings; Grades 5 and 6 - 10 openings; and Grades 7 and 8 - 10 openings.

Montessori
School of Choice

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

The vote to approve first reading of board policies: 1119/4119 Firearms and Weapons; and 5146 Violation of Weapon-Free School Zone is postponed until legal counsel can be consulted and possible additional revisions made.

MOVED by Dean Bolton, SUPPORTED by Melanie Lynn that the board approve the following new high school courses to be offered beginning the 2022-2023 school year: Python (computer science elective); Beyond Connection (SEL elective); Investing 101 (elective); and Fundamental Music for All (elective).

Course
Recommendation

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

MOVED by Katie Cavanaugh, SUPPORTED by Andy Phelps that the board approve the following revision to the high school graduation requirements beginning the 2022-2023 school year: Eliminate the chemistry and/or physics requirement to graduate and allow physical/earth science, biology and one other science course to fulfill the science graduation requirement.

Graduation
Requirement
Change

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

Board members have received information on candidates seeking election to the board of directors of the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB). The election ballot must be completed and returned by March 2, 2022. Okemos may vote on candidates from Region 7, which this year is for one, three-year term. Members discussed their selection on to vote for. Members agreed to vote for Mr. Guillermo Lopez at their February 28th meeting.

MASB Board of
Directors

Frank Ochberg addressed the board regarding weapons.

Public Comment

A reminder of the Board Work Session on February 16th for the purpose of a self-assessment.

Other Matters

Board members received a proposed timeline in the development of the 2022-2023 budget to review.

Melanie Lynn inquired about the board policy recommendation and including a DEI lens in the policy review process.

President Gebara adjourned the regular meeting at 9:02 p.m.

Adjourn

Jayne Taylor, Secretary