Okemos Board of Education Okemos,
Michigan 48864
REGULAR MEETING DECEMBER 8, 2025

The regular meeting of the Okemos Board of Education was called to order by President Buffett at 6:30 p.m.

Members Present:	Tom Buffett, Jason Burns, Katie Cavanaugh, Shulawn Doxie, Andy Phelps, Leeni Shrestha and Jillian Winn
Administration:	Superintendent John Hood

MOVED by Jason Burns, SUPPORTED by Jillian Winn that the board adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to Section 8(h) and 8(a) of the Open Meetings Act for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations.

Roll Call

Tom Buffett	Yes	Andrew Phelps	Yes
Jason Burns	Yes	Leeni Shrestha	Yes
Katie Cavanaugh	Yes	Jillian Winn	Yes
Shulawn Doxie	Yes		

AYE: 7 NAY:0 ABSENT 0 **MOTION CARRIED**

The board adjourned to executive session at 6:32 p.m.

The board reconvened from executive session at 7:49 p.m.

Members Present:	Tom Buffett, Jason Burns, Katie Cavanaugh, Shulawn Doxie, Andy Phelps, Leeni Shrestha and Jillian Winn
Administration:	Superintendent John Hood; Assistant Superintendent Stacy Bailey; Executive Director of Finance Elizabeth Lentz; Director of Human Resources Jennifer Emmendorfer

At the request of President Buffett and with no objection from trustees, the high school student report was moved up in the agenda.

The high school representative reported on the following: track conditioning, boys basketball competition, and several student-led service efforts including National Honor Society family sponsorships. Action Club participated in the Okemos Cares holiday intiative and prepared gift baskets for district families. There are choir, band, and the philharmonic orchestra concerts coming up before the break. Trustee Phelps added that the Okemos Athletic Boosters 2nd Annual Gala is coming up on January 31.

Human Resources Director Jennifer Emmendorfer provided background information on three new Okemos hires: Samantha Wolfer-Dilno, Louise Henderson, and Jason Brown.

The board engaged in discussion regarding planning for the upcoming organizational meeting, including officer roles, standing committees, ad hoc committee work, and building capacity among trustees. Trustees discussed the importance of transparency, continuity during district leadership transitions, individual interests, time commitments, and the value of providing opportunities for broader board participation.

No one addressed the board for public comment.

Superintendent Hood reported on the announced retirement of Executive Director of Finance Elizabeth Lentz effective August 2026 and outlined a proposed transition plan, including hiring a Director of Finance with overlap to support continuity during budget development, bond program management, audit preparation, and multiple district leader transitions. Trustees discussed timing considerations, succession planning, and the rationale for restructuring the position.

Superintendent Hood also presented a proposal to engage temporary human resources support through the end of the school year to address staffing capacity challenges, compliance needs, onboarding systems and HRIS transition work. The anticipated cost was approximately $38,000-$40,000 and would be offset by current vacancy savings. Trustees requesetd additional information regarding vacancy savings totals.

President Buffett acknowledged correspondence from the following: Cory Gahsman regarding feedback on the current OHS leadership, Cathy Bacile Cunningham regarding scheduling conflicts for the in-person focus group and the 7th grade band concert, Dush Fernando regarding restricted access to outdoor sports facilities at OHS, Steve Vagnozzi regarding feedback for the superintendent's contributions to Okemos Public Schools, Federica Brandizzi regarding restricted access to outdoor sports facilities at OHS, Mary Williams regarding feedback on the exit interview process, and Rob Rapson regarding feedback on district communications.

Trustees reported on a recent "Trust-Teas and Coffee" community engagement event, noting strong attendance, positive feedback and discussion themes including cell phone usage, bond progress, diversity of staff, superintendent hiring, and district growth capacity. President Buffett noted the progress made by the strategic planning committee and Superintendent Hood discussed providing some information to help aid in the transition process.

MOVED by Andy Phelps, SUPPORTED by Katie Cavanaugh that the board approve items 1-4 for immediate implementation and appropriate action. Item 1: Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 24, 2025; Item 2: Approval of the Minutes of the Executve Session Meeting of November 24, 2025; Item 3: Acknowledge receipt of the November financial statement and approve payment of bills for November; Item 4: Approval of employment of Jason M. Brown, Louise Henderson, and Samantha Wolfer-Dilno to Okemos Public Schools.

Trustee Shrestha mentioned that she arrived late to the Executive Session on November 24, 2025 and Secretary Doxie stated that she has a note to add Trustree Shrestha arrival at the Executive Meeting at 6:40 PM.

MOVED by Andy Phelps, SUPPORTED by Jillian Winn to make an amendment to the Minutes of the Executive Meeting of November 24, 2025 to reflect Trustee Shrestha's arrival time at 6:40.

AYE: 7 NAY: 0 ABSENT: 0 MOTION CARRIED

MOVED by Katie Cavanaugh, SUPPORTED by Leeni Shrestha that the board waive the reading and adopt the memorandum of understanding regarding the Meridian Township Senior Center.

AYE: 7 NAY: 0 ABSENT: 0 MOTION CARRIED

MOVED by Andrew Phelps, SUPPORTED by Katie Cavanaugh that the board authorize Superintendent Hood to enter into pre-bond planning contracts with Veritus, The Christman Company, and Tower Pinkster for long-range planning services.

AYE: 7 NAY: 0 ABSENT: 0 MOTION CARRIED

MOVED by Shulawn Doxie, SUPPORTED by Leeni Shrestha that the board waive the reading and adopt the final reading of board policies 4408 Termination, 4409 Nonrenewal, 5202 Unlawful Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation Against Students, 5405 Title I Parent and Family Engagement Policy, and 5406 Title I Funds.

AYE: 7 NAY: 0 ABSENT: 0 MOTION CARRIED

No one addressed the board during the second opportunity for public comment.

President Buffett adjourned the regular meeting at 8:46 p.m. and announced that the board would proceed into a work session to discuss the superintendent search and superintendent profile.

The board engaged in a work session with Michigan Leadership Institute's Andy Ingall. Mr. Ingall discussed potential scheduling and timelines for the posting, 1st and 2nd round interviews, and the board discussed personal and district conflicts. Mr. Ingall will take these dates and create a timeline to be included with the job posting. The board engaged in some introductory discussions on the superintendent profile and will continue these conversations at the December 16, 2025 meeting.

The board confirmed the time of the December 16 meeting. There were no other matters.

President Buffett adjourned the meeting at 10:08 PM.

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Shulawn Doxie, Secretary