Okemos Board of Education Okemos, Michigan 48864
REGULAR MEETING JANUARY 26, 2026

The regular meeting of the Okemos Board of Education was called to order by President Buffett at 7:00 p.m.

Members Present:	Tom Buffett, Jason Burns, Katie Cavanaugh, Shulawn Doxie, Andy Phelps, Leeni Shrestha and Jillian Winn
Members Absent:	None
Administration:	Superintendent John Hood; Assistant Superintendent Stacy Bailey; Executive Director of Finance Elizabeth Lentz; Director of Human Resources Jennifer Emmendorfer; Director of Operations Brian Lieber; Athletic Director Ken Hintze

President Buffett recognized employees for 24 years of service. Those unable to attend included Brian Guggemos, Tom Hopper, Jocelyn Mankowski, Elizabeth McNeil, Kara Stewart, Stacy Trumpie, and Paul Hinze. Recipients Amy Petersburg and Matt Prinz were present and President Buffett shared some information about each of them.

Trustee Winn shared that the Chippewa Middle School swim team competed in a tournament against nine other schools and Boys finished 1st and Girls finished 2nd; Trustee Winn also mentioned a WILX article that highlighted the Tower Garden project at Okemos Public Montessori. Trustee Phelps reported on the Okemos Archery program's first home meet of the season that took place at Kinawa 5-6 School that invited archers from more than 20 schools statewide.

Superintendent Hood provided an update related to athletic facilities and the donation from the Poletes family to benefit the Boys Varsity Baseball program. He noted that if approved, this donation would be the largest Okemos Schools has received.

Operations Director Brian Lieber reviewed cost comparisons between turf and grass fields and explained that the Poletes family donation would cover the turf expense for baseball while bond funds would cover the additional cost for softball. Maintenance costs were discussed.

Athletic Director Ken Hintze discussed playability concerns with grass fields and noted that turf would allow earlier and more consistent use of the facilities.

Superintendent Hood reviewed the schematic design phase of the project and explained that approval would allow the project to advance to the design development phase in March. He also noted that the donation would free up approximately $750,000 in bond funds for other district projects.

MOVED by Andy Phelps, SUPPORTED by Katie Cavanaugh, that the board approve the donation agreement for Boys Varsity Baseball as presented and discussed at the January 12, 2026 meeting.

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

Executive Director of Finance Elizabeth Lentz provided information regarding the district's operating millage, which is levied on non-homestead property and currently generates approximately $10.8 million annually. She explained that the millage expires in December of 2031. Director Lentz also reviewed the sinking fund, which generates approximately $1.7 million annually and is used for large capital projects such as roofs, parking lots, and boilers. Superintendent Hood noted that the sinking fund alone would not provide sufficient funding for a new elementary school and reviewed decisions related to rebuilding

Cornell Elementary on its current site, including associated costs and impacts on technology replacement planning.

Operations Director Lieber reviewed the Cornell abatement project and reported that three bids were received, with Green for Life (GFL) selected at a cost of $36,500.

Bethany Freeman, OHS teacher and Varsity Softball coach, addressed the board to express her support of the donation and the impact it will have on softball, specifically mentioning the addition of restrooms to the softball and baseball fields.

David Atkins, Okemos resident and youth softball coach, explained how improving the softball and baseball fields will improve the programs, and made a pitch to "finish the job", as the fields have remained largely unchanged since 1994.

Harshita and James from Okemos High School shared their high school report remotely. They shared reports about the phone policy, a new onsite therapist, 7th grade camp, new Interim Assistant Principal, SnoCo Dance and Assembly, Rock/Paper/Scissors Tournament, Spring Musical The Addams Family auditions, Band and Orchestra Solo/Ensemble on January 31.

Superintendent Hood mentioned the E3 grant that is funding the therapist at OHS. He also gave a preview of upcoming meeting dates as a result of board availability polls. Superintendent Hood also discussed snow day plans and decision-making, stressing that parents can always choose to keep their child at home. Windchill threshold is -20 below or greater. He also explained some information on the Director of Finance job posting, stating that we have started this early in the hopes we will find a qualified candidate in time to allow overlap with Executive Director Lentz. Superintendent Hood also thanked the Board of Education for their contributions to Okemos Public Schools. Trustees were given the Safety and Securities Report prepared by Director of Safety and Security, Katie Diehl and it was mentioned by Trustee Phelps that it would be great if these reports were made available to the public.

President Buffett acknowledged correspondence from the following: Aislinn Sapp, regarding OHS climate and policy; Dan Kemsley regarding OHS climate and policy; Lindsay Harrod, regarding phone free day at OHS; Yingxin Zhou, regarding the middle school tennis program; and Anne Busse, regarding state funding decisions.

President Buffett noted that the next Trust-Teas and Coffee Event is Thursday, February 3 at 6:00 p.m. at Moka and Co. on Central Park Drive. Superintendent Hood shared some upcoming committee meeting dates and times.

MOVED by Katie Cavanaugh, SUPPORTED by Shulawn Doxie 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 12, 2026; Item 2: Approval of the Minutes of the Executive Session Meeting on January 12, 2026.

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

MOVED by Andy Phelps, SUPPORTED by Leeni Shrestha that the board approve the proposed updates to the Hiawatha Elementary School playground as presented, funded through the 2022 Bond.

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

MOVED by Andy Phelps, SUPPORTED by Jillian Winn, that the board approve the following new high school courses to be offered beginning with the 2026-2027 school year: AP Music Theory; AP Business with Personal Finance; AP Microeconomics, Strength, and Reset; and Trigonometry Through Design.

Trustees discussed how many students would be able to participate in these new courses. Assistant Superintendent Stacy Bailey gave insight on Michigan State Legislature requirements and Michigan virtual learning that plays into students that are taking these courses.

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

MOVED by Katie Cavanaugh, SUPPORTED by Jillian Winn, that the board waive the reading and adopt the 2026 Board Operating Procedures.

Trustees discussed the topic of school visits as outlined in the Board Operating Procedures.

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

Superintendent Hood discussed the Montessori School of Choice process and potential School of Choice openings to be advertised in February in the Lansing State Journal for the PreK through 8th grade Montessori program. The numbers being proposed will reflect available seats while maintaining the district's ability to accommodate resident students and not add staff.

No one addressed the board.

President Buffett shared updates on the superintendent search, including the potential that there may be a gap between when Superintendent Hood's retirement begins and when the new superintendent will be able to start. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction Stacy Bailey will begin as an interim superintendent on April 1, 2026 until the new superintendent will begin. Support for Assistant Superintendent Bailey was shared and contingency plans have been in preparations. Conversations and preparations are underway for more contingency planning in the superintendent's office.

President Buffett adjourned the regular meeting at 9:10 p.m.

_____

Shulawn Doxie, Secretary