



Oshki Ogimaag Community School

The mission of Oshki Ogimaag Community School is to create a learning environment of excellence based upon traditional teachings. Rooted in Anishinaabe language and culture we will prepare students through hands-on, community-based projects to be lifelong learners that reach their personal and academic potential; preserve the Anishinaabe language and culture; and contribute to the wellness of future generations.

Special School Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: Wednesday, December 18, 2024

1.0 Call Meeting to Order, Roll Call of Board Members, Quorum Declaration:

1.1 Call to Order: 4:39pm

1.2 **Board Members Present:** Patty Winchell-Dahl, John Morrin, Agatha Armstrong, Jeana Van Dyne, Tina Gatzke, ex-officio Cherie James

Board Members Absent: Joanne Czeswik (excused)

Community Members Present: Pam Zahn (OOCs Business Manager), Pat Hartman (Osprey Wilds Representative)

2.0 **Reading of the Mission Statement by:** Cherie James

3.0 **Declaration of Conflict of Interest:** No conflicts declared.

4.0 **Community Comment:** Discussion that there has been positive Community discourse regarding OOCs Holiday Program taking place in the Log School Building.

5.0 **Ms. Armstrong moved to approve the agenda.** Motion seconded by Mr. Morrin. Motion passed unanimously. (Voting aye: Ms. Winchell-Dahl, Mr. Morrin, Ms. Armstrong, Ms. Van Dyne, Ms. Gatzke).

6.0 **Approval Meeting minutes from November 20, 2024 Regular Board Meeting. Ms. Winchell-Dahl moved to approve minutes with the addition of adding Peter James to “Community Members Present.”** Motion seconded by Ms. Van Dyne. Motion passed unanimously. (Voting aye: Ms. Winchell-Dahl, Mr. Morrin, Ms. Armstrong, Ms. Van Dyne, Ms. Gatzke).

7.0 **Discussion of November Financial Reports.** It was discussed that it is difficult to read the Cash Flow Report with small sizing. Business Manager Zahn responded next month the report will be formatted differently for ease of reading. Discussion of high costs of employee benefits with more employees accessing benefits. Currently OOCs covers the 100% of the health and dental premiums for full-time employees. Discussion reflecting back to the November Board Meeting discussion regarding exploring other benefits carriers and possible changes to benefits policy for next year’s budget. Discussion of health insurance options for employees. It was discussed that Impact Aid has currently identified \$195,000.00 as initial aid for OOCs, and that \$97,000.00 of this has been released based on OOCs’s request for early funding.

7.1 **Approval of November Financial Reports. Ms. Van Dyne moved to approve November Financial Reports.** Motion seconded by Ms. Gatzke. Motion passed unanimously. (Voting aye: Ms. Winchell-Dahl, Mr. Morrin, Ms. Armstrong, Ms. Van Dyne, Ms. Gatzke).

- 7.2 Approval of Revised Business Manager Contract.** Business Manager Zahn explained that the currently approved contract included a reduced monthly fee beginning in January 2025 based upon projection of task assignments and more support has been needed than projected. Proposed revision maintains consistent monthly fee through the end of the fiscal year. Discussion of separation of duties and assignment of tasks. **Ms. Gatzke moved to approve Revised Business Manager Contract.** Motion seconded by Mr. Morrin. Motion passed unanimously. (Voting aye: Ms. Winchell-Dahl, Mr. Morrin, Ms. Armstrong, Ms. Van Dyne, Ms. Gatzke).
- 7.3 Approval of Draft Audit Report.** Discussion of audit report and auditors doing a more intensive review including more questions because of change of organizational leadership. Discussion that audit approval is required in December 2024, and that the draft will not be changed but final audit cannot be released until after auditors have received signed financial representation letter back, which Business Manager Zahn received on 12/18/24. **Mr. Morrin moved to approve the Draft Audit Report.** Motion seconded by Ms. Gatzke. Motion passed unanimously. (Voting aye: Ms. Winchell-Dahl, Mr. Morrin, Ms. Armstrong, Ms. Van Dyne, Ms. Gatzke).
- 7.4 Approval of ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorders) Consultant Contract.** Discussion that there are students in the process of comprehensive evaluations to determine eligibility for special education supports and services, some evaluations to include ASD testing. Discussion that current Special Education Coordinator does not have the capacity to be testing for evaluations while teaching 2nd grade. Discussion of the role of the ASD consultant. **Ms. Van Dyne moved to approve ASD Consultant Contract.** Motion seconded by Mr. Morrin. Motion passed unanimously. (Voting aye: Ms. Winchell-Dahl, Mr. Morrin, Ms. Armstrong, Ms. Van Dyne, Ms. Gatzke).
- 8.0 Discussion of Staff Reports.** Discussion of individuals expressing interest in open teaching position. Discussion that if a new teacher is hired this school year that Ms. Gatzke will remain in 2nd grade as a co-teacher to support the new teacher for the remainder of the school year. Discussion of Listening Sessions Ms. James would like to host for families and other Community members in January or February to hear what families and other Community members would like to see at OOCs and what they feel is currently working well and areas of development, etc. Discussion of intentions to resume Reading with Elders and Reading Buddies after winter break. Discussion of high attendance of Parent-Teacher conferences in November.
- 9.0 Policy and Procedure**
- 9.1 Approval of Student Dress Code Policy.** Discussion of Student Dress Code Policy and discussion of extra clothing and outdoor gear available at OOCs. **Ms. Van Dyne moved to approve Student Dress Code Policy.** Motion seconded by Ms. Armstrong. Motion passed unanimously. (Voting aye: Ms. Winchell-Dahl, Mr. Morrin, Ms. Armstrong, Ms. Van Dyne, Ms. Gatzke).

9.2 Public and Personnel Data Policy. Discussion that policy reflects current statuses. Discussion that Ms. Gatzke will receive and respond to Data Requests. **Ms. Armstrong moved to approve the Public and Personnel Data Policy.** Motion seconded by Ms. Van Dyne. Motion passed unanimously. (Voting aye: Ms. Winchell-Dahl, Mr. Morrin, Ms. Armstrong, Ms. Van Dyne, Ms. Gatzke).

9.3 Assurances: Board Chair Winchell-Dahl and Director James signed required assurances.

- 10.0 Goal Setting and Reflection for Director James.** Discussion that Director James has set as a goal to bring the mission to life in the school, normalizing speaking Ojibwe within the school and extend to the Community, and incorporate Grand Portage history lessons within the school. Ms. James expressed that one of the goals of having Listening Sessions would be not only to hear input but also seek Community support from Elders and other Community members with valuable cultural knowledge to share with our staff and students. Ms. James also expressed that improving academic outcomes for students is a significant goal.

Discussion that the Board decided to have leadership shared between Director and Assistant Director, expectation that the two leaders divide leadership duties based upon respective strengths, and define the two roles including who is doing what, when, etc. It was expressed that in choosing new leaders, that goals from the Board were improved organizational model and culture and commitment to updated effective curriculum leading to improvement of academic outcomes for students. Discussion that before new leadership was in place the Board had concerns regarding communication to families and Community outreach. Discussion that the Board has seen improvements in all areas and there are positive results so far. Discussion that the Board sees as an area of development, training, clear expectations and guidance for support staff, to strengthen the team overall. Discussion of Director James's commitment to the success of and investment in each staff person. Board expressed witnessing significant positive changes so far at OPCS and expressed that Community members have also been vocal about seeing these positive changes.

Discussion that goals Assistant Director Gatzke set include improved school culture, including staff-student interactions, improvements in curriculum planning and delivery of lessons and academic outcomes, increased attendance rates, living our mission every day at school, collaboration amongst staff as a team, and improved, supportive communication to families.

Discussion of challenges this school year in staffing, which has created a struggle to keep up with the paperwork, updating policies, etc., side of things as the top priorities have been serving students and families, family communications, and incorporating a new curriculum.

Discussion of how instrumental Lead Paraprofessional Kat Sherer has been to this year's successes at school as Kat serves to support wherever needed. Discussion of Teacher and Environmental Education Coordinator Jeana Van Dyne's positive leadership in taking on leading all-school Forest Fridays this school year. Discussion that custodian Terrance Lightfeather has also stepped up to support beyond the call of duty to help with many things around the building.

Discussion of the evening and weekend hours Ms. James and Ms. Gatzke have been putting in and while the Board appreciates the commitment and needs of the school, the Board wants to ensure the two leaders have sufficient personal time to avoid burnout.

Discussion that the Board would like to brainstorm staff recognition and comments that Kat Sherer's name continually comes up as someone who has repeatedly stepped up in exceptional ways and should receive recognition of this.

Discussion of high turnover in general in schools, school staffing shortages and the unique challenges OOCs faces with the small size of the school and staff, remote location of the school and challenges in available and affordable housing in Cook County.

Discussion the Board feels positively about the progress this school year and seeks to support in any ways they can.

10.1 Board Development: Review of Draft Strategic Initiative Document from consultant Peter James. The Board responded positively to the document. Strategic planning meetings will resume in April 2025 and January-March Mr. James will focus on supporting school leadership and staff.

11.0 Adjournment: Motion to adjourn made by Ms. Gatzke at 6:10pm. Motion seconded by Ms. Van Dyne. Motion passed unanimously. (Voting aye: Ms. Winchell-Dahl, Mr. Morrin, Ms. Armstrong, Ms. Van Dyne, Ms. Gatzke).

OOCS Board Secretary Signature

Date

Oshki Ogimaag Community School Board Meetings are open to all. Oshki Ogimaag Community School greatly values the voices and perspectives of the families and community we serve. The Board will provide up to 15 minutes at the start of each meeting for public comment. The Board Chair may reduce or extend this time period and/or establish time limits on speakers to facilitate OOCs Board business. OOCs is authorized by Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center:
<https://ospreywilds.org/charter-school-division/>