

Osage School Board advances Superintendent search, pilot literacy program

BY SHAELY ODEAN
shaely@nelsonmediacompany.com

The Osage Community School District Board of Directors moved closer to naming new leadership during its regular meeting on Wednesday, March 25, as Superintendent Barb Schwamman provided updates on the search for her successor and the district's transition to a new literacy curriculum.

A significant portion of the session focused on future planning. Bill Carlson, Valarie Berge, and Molly Ferrell presented the Magnetic Library program currently being piloted in K-4 classrooms. The research-based program aligns with state requirements and is intended to replace the district's current literacy curriculum, which no longer meets state standards. A formal proposal for the adoption of the curriculum is expected at the April board meeting.

Superintendent Schwamman also noted that the district is navigating legislative challenges at the state level. She expressed concern about a bill requiring daily physical education, citing a lack of staff and gym space, as well as potential shifts in SAVE funding that could impact the district's future bonding capacity.

The board took action on several items that will affect families in the coming



STAFF PHOTO

Osage High School is shown. During its March 25 meeting, the board advanced the search for a new superintendent and reviewed a pilot literacy program currently being tested in K-4 classrooms.

school year, most notably through the unanimous approval of a \$175 monthly tuition fee for the full-day preschool program starting in the 2026-27 fiscal year. While the full-day program will now carry a fee, the state-funded half-day program will remain free of charge. In other business, the board addressed district infrastructure by awarding the lawn care bid for the upcoming fiscal year as BushBaum Lawn Care.

Members also reviewed a substantial list of open enrollment requests for the next school year, which included 12 students entering the district from surrounding areas such as Riceville, Charles City and St. Ansgar.

The board then cele-

brated a wave of student achievements, headlined by Blake Fox, who was recognized as the State Champion and "Mr. Wrestler of the Year." Fox is the 33rd male athlete in Iowa history to become a four-time state champion.

Additional recognitions included Ainsley Hemman's state wrestling championship and individual All-State Speech nominations for Amaris Haigh and Izzy O'Malley. High School principal Mike Kennedy also highlighted academic efforts, noting that 98% of high school students participated in a two-month math intervention program to prepare for upcoming state assessments.

In administrative reports,

Middle School Principal Greg Adams highlighted community engagement through the "Leader in Me" program. Including students visiting Faith Lutheran residents and participating in archery and National Guard demonstrations.

The board also formally approved the 2026 list of graduates and authorized out-of-state travel for the DECA ICDC Conference in Atlanta, Georgia scheduled for late April.

President Rick Sletten adjourned the meeting at 7:03 p.m. The board is scheduled to meet again for a public budget and its next regular meeting on April 22.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Children pose with the Easter Bunny during the Stacyville Community Nursing Home's Easter egg hunt on March 29, as families gathered for an afternoon of fun and community connection.

Stacyville Community Nursing Home hosts joyful Easter egg hunt

STACYVILLE — Laughter, smiles and a strong sense of community filled the air March 29 as the Stacyville Community Nursing Home hosted its annual Easter egg hunt, drawing a large crowd of families and children.

The event brought together residents, staff and community members for an afternoon centered on connection and celebration. Children eagerly searched for colorful eggs while residents looked on, enjoying the energy and excitement of the day.

Organizers expressed gratitude for the many community members who

contributed, including those who donated candy and helped coordinate the event. Their support helped create a memorable experience for both residents and visiting families.

For many residents, the highlight of the day was simply watching the children interact—running, laughing and sharing in the fun—bringing a sense of joy that extended far beyond the event itself.

Moments like these, staff noted, are a powerful reminder of the importance of community connections and the impact of bringing generations together.



Children and families search for Easter eggs on the grounds of the Stacyville Community Nursing Home during the facility's annual Easter egg hunt March 29.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Osage FFA members who attended the Mason City Ag Breakfast on March 26 pose for a group photo. The students spent the day networking with agricultural professionals, hearing from Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig, and touring SkyView Market to learn more about farm-to-table operations.

Osage FFA students gain hands-on insight at Mason City ag breakfast

Eleven students from Osage's ag foods class stepped outside the classroom March 26 for a day of real-world learning at the Mason City Ag Breakfast, hosted by the Greater Mason City Chamber of Commerce.

The event brought together area agricultural leaders and businesses, giving students the opportunity to connect directly with professionals across the industry. A highlight of the morning included remarks

from Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig, who spoke about the importance of agriculture in Iowa's economy and its future.

Students also participated in a farm-to-table panel discussion, where they heard firsthand how local producers and businesses work together to bring food from the farm to consumers' tables. The experience helped reinforce classroom lessons by showing the full scope of the agricultural supply chain.

Following the breakfast, the group toured SkyView Market, one of the panel participants. During the visit, students learned about the day-to-day operations of a local farm-to-table business, including sourcing products, marketing, and customer engagement.

The trip also included several memorable moments for students, including sampling locally produced maple syrup at SkyView, purchasing ducklings for a supervised agri-

cultural experience (SAE) project, and visiting a fellow classmate working at The Market - Osage to see another example of a farm-to-table operation in action.

The experience provided Osage FFA students with valuable exposure to agricultural careers and reinforced the importance of local food systems, entrepreneurship and industry connections.

St. Ansgar school board approves 2026-27 tax levy following public hearing

ALYCIA DIONEDA SCHNEEDLE
The Osage Oracle

The St. Ansgar Community School District Board of Education set the district's 2026-27 tax levy during its March 23 meeting, following a required public hearing.

The levy was approved at a rate of \$11.80 per \$1,000 of taxable valuation, which is lower than the maximum amount initially presented.

"The levy was approved," Superintendent Tony Hiatt said. "However, we presented for the maximum, and we approved it

to cover the anticipated increases in cost, which was less than what was originally presented."

The district expects the final increase to come in below \$11.90 per \$1,000, as outlined in the board meeting materials.

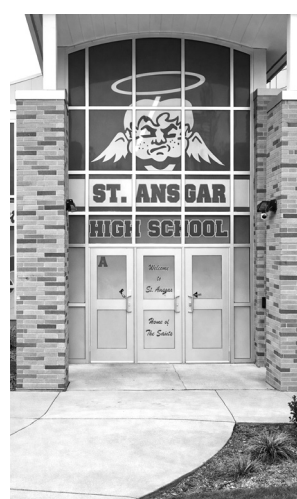
The public hearing, listed as a standalone item on the agenda, gave residents an opportunity to comment on the proposed levy before the board took action. One resident spoke during the hearing, asking clarifying questions about how the levy is calculated and how it may affect taxpayers.

The board moved forward

with approval following the hearing, completing a required step in the district's annual budget process.

The board also approved a resolution related to the redemption of general obligation school bonds originally issued in 2015. General obligation, or GO, bonds are long-term loans used by school districts to fund large projects, such as building improvements or infrastructure. These bonds are repaid over time through property taxes.

ST. ANSGAR to page 7



SUBMITTED PHOTO

St. Ansgar High School, where the March 23 school board meeting was held.

INCIDENT from page 1

assistant membership manager at the CRC. "There are multiple angles, so we can see what's happening in those spaces."

In addition to surveillance, the CRC has installed emergency features designed to quickly alert authorities if needed.

"We have panic buttons tied directly to 911," Dodd said. "If there's ever a situation—whether safety or health related, and the panic button is pushed, dispatch is notified immediately."

Access to the facility is also controlled through a key fob system, which tracks entry and limits unauthorized access. Staff are alerted if someone attempts to allow another individual into the building without proper access.

"If someone tries to let someone in who shouldn't be, we're notified," said Alicia Grimm, Membership Manager at the CRC. "It's all part of making sure our members are safe."

Dodd added that local law enforcement regularly patrols the area and often checks for unlocked doors after hours, reinforcing the overall safety of the facility.

"There's a strong partnership with law enforcement," she said. "They keep an eye on things and help make sure our community is safe and everything at our facility is secure."

While acknowledging the concern generated by

the post, CRC leaders emphasized that both the facility and the Osage community remain safe.

"I don't believe that there should be community-wide fear based on this specific encounter," Dodd said. "Osage is a safe community. While we're not immune to danger, this incident seems to be a misunderstanding."

At the same time, staff encouraged residents to remain aware of their surroundings and take basic precautions, particularly at night.

"If you're uncomfortable exercising/walking outside alone in the evening, buddy up or come at a time that feels safer for you," Dodd said. "And if something doesn't feel right, let authorities know."

Dodd said communication is essential in situations like this and encouraged community members to also bring concerns directly to CRC staff. As the conversation around the incident continues, CRC leaders said their focus remains on transparency, safety and maintaining that sense of community.

"Come to us and talk to us," she said. "We want to help and make sure everything here is great. We're doing everything we can to keep this a safe place," Dodd said. "And we want people to feel confident coming to the CRC."

Like us on Facebook

THE OSAGE ORACLE