

Official Minutes of the
Oak Park Board of Education District 97
260 Madison Street, Oak Park
April 11, 2023 Regular Meeting

This meeting was held in-person and virtually using Livestream. Board members met in person along with Administration.

President Kim called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Present: Kim, Moore, Ross Dribin, Kearney, Kinhal, Hurd Johnson

Absent: Spurlock

Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Ushma Shah, Associate Superintendent of Education Dr. Felicia Starks Turner, Chief Academic and Accountability Officer Dr. Ebony Lofton, Director of Human Resources Dr. Margo Schmitt, Senior Director of Technology Michael Arensdorff, Senior Director of Equity Dr. Carrie Kamm, Senior Director of Buildings & Grounds Jeanne Keane, Senior Director of Finance Patrick King, Senior Director of Communications Amanda Siegfried, and Lonya Boose Board Secretary.

ROLL CALL

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ross Dribin moved, seconded by Kearney that the Board move into executive session for the purpose of Appointment, Employment, Compensation, Discipline, Performance, or Dismissal of Specific Employees, Collective Negotiating and Litigation.5 ILCS 120/2(C)(1)(2)(11) at 6:06 p.m.

EXECUTIVE
SESSION

OPEN SESSION

President Kim motioned that the Board move into Open Session at 7:03 p.m. All present members of the Board were in agreement. The Board convened in Open Session at 7:09 p.m.

OPEN
SESSION

3. PUBLIC HEARING – Funds Transfer: Tort Fund to O&M Fund

OPENING MOTION: Kinhal moved, seconded by Ross Dribin that the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 moves in to Open Session with a Public Hearing on the 2022-2023 Tort Fund to Operations & Maintenance Fund Balance Transfer Resolution.

*We received no public comment regarding the Funds Transfer. This notice was also posted in the local newspaper.

CLOSING MOTION: Kearney moved, seconded by Ross Dribin that the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 moves to Close the Public Hearing on the 2022-2023 Tort Fund to Operations & Maintenance Fund Balance Transfer Resolution.

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Ross Dribin, Moore, Hurd Johnson, Kinhal

Nays: None

Absent: Spurlock

Motion passed.

PUBLIC
HEARING

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Judy Gaietto Grace

I am a long-time resident of Oak Park, my kids went to school here and my husband worked for District 97. I am here to speak to the issue of safe gun storage. With such a large presence in the community, I feel the board should consider a safe gun storage policy and communicate this information to the community. Many kid suicides occur by firearms. Storing guns, unloaded and separate from ammunition can save lives. I encourage you to do something about this, Thank you.

Allison Lipsman

I have two children in Lincoln School and here on behalf of Mom's Demand Action. I am asking for a communication plan that goes out to all families and staff around safe gun storage. We know there are firearms in oak park we hope that you will do all that you can to communicate information on importance of safe gun storage every year. Thank you.

Lois Thiessen Love

I raised my children in Oak Park. My grandchildren are attending school in Oak Park, at Irving. Recently my granddaughter said, we don't have mean people here in Oak Park do we? Recently, my grandson wanted to play at a friend's house. For the first time, I had to ask the parents of his friend, do you have a firearm in the home. This was not easy to do. We need a policy that acknowledges, makes people safe and my granddaughter feel safe. This policy is a way for parents to get acquainted with how to properly store their guns. I hope you consider this, Thank you.

Hannah Boudreau

Hi Friends, As the Oak Park Teachers Association Co-President, I am here on behalf of Gina Harris and her un-paid leave of absence. Ms. Harris is a Culture and Climate Coach for Brooks and its feeder schools. As you may know she ran and was elected to a position with IEA in Springfield as Secretary/Treasurer. This is an incredible opportunity, an unprecedented opportunity. Gina is a product of our Oak Park community. This is a direct line to Pritzker from one of our very own Oak Park residents and also a D200 board member. The advocacy she would have would be beneficial for us here in Oak Park, for her and our entire community. I know this is a long three-year leave, you are not contractually obligated but please consider this request so Gina can go down to Springfield to advocate for our schools!

Stacey and Kelly Belmont

My name is Stacey Belmont, and I am a mother of 4 children in school district 97. I'd like to address both statements made by a school board member at the last board meeting as well as in public comment by another parent in the community, regarding the establishment of an LGBTQIA club at Longfellow and the request by parents to be notified in advance for clubs that they feel may be controversial.

To assert that advance notice of an extracurricular club should be provided is a dangerous road to go down. This club is intended to support queer students and their allies and to be a safe space for discussions around gender and sexuality that we very obviously need, judging by the response to its establishment by school board members of this community.

I would like everyone to reflect on the times that we are living in and all of the socio-political context that surrounds us when we have a reaction towards an LGBTQIA club. In Florida, teachers cannot say the word "gay" or discuss anything related to the queer community in their classes. In Tennessee, we are seeing the foundations of marriage rights being eroded by recent laws that were just there. All around the country, trans and genderqueer individuals are being targeted and many would like to see their existence erased. At the same time, we are coming out of a pandemic, and suicide rates among adolescents are through the roof. As many as 50% according to recent studies (as reported by NPR) of LGBTQIA teens ages 13-17 in 2022 seriously considered suicide. We are also seeing suicide in younger children in shocking numbers. And by the time a queer-identified kid enters adolescence, they have likely already had several years of feeling alienated, exacerbated by the news all around them of movements to strip them of their rights and protections.

For some of our youth, they cannot get support around sexuality and gender at home for fear of potential emotional or physical abuse. Oak Park is not immune to violence towards children. Prior notification of a club, in the service of reducing some community members' discomfort puts youth potentially at risk, because the next step after notification, is requiring parental permission. What harm does it do to you and your children if a club is established, without your prior knowledge, to support this vulnerable population? On the flipside, what harm does it do to queer youth if they cannot find the support they need as they work through their identities?

It might seem alarmist to assume that this would be a logical next step, but if the past 6 years of politics have taught us anything, it's that dangerous policies are not adopted overnight. We make one policy that doesn't seem too bad to most people, and then we continue to make more and more policies, until eventually we find ourselves in a pretty scary place. We strip rights one by one, that is how it has been done throughout history, and it's just as damaging on a small-scale (like a school district) as it is on a large-scale, because we are talking about individual lives. Our children are autonomous humans too, and they too have rights to safety and community.

It is not only dangerous to assert that schools should notify parents of the establishment of a club intended to support queer students, it is also offensive. The argument is that this information is sensitive. However, the only reason some parents consider it to be so is because of stigma and homophobia in our community as well as society at large. It assumes that there is something inappropriate, or controversial about an LGBTQIA club, which connotes that there is something inappropriate, or controversial about the queer community. The very idea that conversations around the existence of a gay club or the topics discussed therein are "hard conversations," in and of itself is a micro-aggressive statement. We talk about impact vs. intent a lot in this community, and that should be extended to our treatment of the LGBTQIA community as well.

My name is Kelly Belmont, I am a teacher in D97, and the wife of Stacey Belmont. I will be continuing where she left off... Put yourselves in the shoes of a queer 5th grader in this village, excited about this club coming together, and then hearing backlash against it. Imagine how that affects that kid and their own sense of self and identity, how that contributes to their internalized homophobia, regardless of

whether they might have support at home. My concern is for that student, the queer or questioning student who likely came to that club looking for support or to be an ally to their friend. We shouldn't prioritize the personal comfort of adults over the emotional well-being of children because they think this information is a "hard topic." Furthermore; it is our job as members of a progressive community to address the stigma around LGBTQ people, to not further it, and to make sure that our policies are in line with our stated values as a school district and village.

Our kids will face lots of things that they don't necessarily understand, although interestingly, it's typically not kids who have a problem with gay people, it's adults. We as parents have the opportunity at any point to clarify things that our children might not understand, and advance notice is unnecessary, and as previously mentioned, sometimes harmful. Let us not contribute to the growing epidemic depression, anxiety, and potential suicide among our youth and teenagers in this country.

Moving forward, I would like our community to think about these things before they put voice to their reactions. Please recognize that we are discussing a vulnerable population that needs these supports. The conversation we should be having is "how to better support our queer students during these times," not, "should we warn parents about a support group." School is about more than academics. It is about social relationships, a sense of belonging, and finding one's identity as well. Our policies should consider all of these things.

I'd also encourage board members to seriously consider the ways in which they discuss the queer community and how they might be engaging in microaggressions, regardless of their intent. Words like "tolerant," are particularly triggering. When talking about a marginalized group of people, please consider your words, because they do, in fact, have the power to harm. And please thoroughly think through any policies you might wish to consider that 'are related to individuals' identities.

Anna Lesser

Good evening board members, I am a parent of two, one is enrolled in Whitter. I have submitted this in writing, tonight my request is for a comprehensive, actionable and widely publicized plan to proactively reduce the threat of gun violence in our schools- before we return from Spring Break. The lives of our children and school employees depend on it.

I am aware of the current safety trainings- in fact my 3-year-old who attends the Whittier PreK program came home a few weeks ago and told me "I learned today that when I grow up, I can play with guns. But since I'm a kid you never want to be hurt so I need to check if the gun is locked first and tell a grown up". This is in quotes because I was so shocked, I wrote it down immediately. Two comments on this specifically: we very obviously have wonderful teachers in D97 for a child to retain almost verbatim what is being taught. The second thought is that we are teaching kids to just survive guns. It's no longer an if but a when there is a gun.

I am a member of Moms Demand Action and a parent who has lost a child due to an unknown cause, the official cause of death on her death certificate. I am living the nightmare that people reference and I can attest that it feels impossible most days. I also know that if she had died of something preventable my anger would be even greater. I do not want any more parents to experience this pain and am enraged that there is not an active and public-school safety plan that includes educating gun owners from D97. If there is one, I can tell you as parents we don't know about it. It's most likely buried at the bottom of an email of links sent once or twice a year.

I am asking that the Board immediately researches and takes action on promoting safe gun storage. We know that we have guns in our community. We know that school shootings are happening. We know you have a norm of “no surprises”. I expect you do not want to be surprised when there is an active shooter at one of your campuses.

Jenna Leving Jacobson

In an effort for the district to share information, I am a Hatch parent, and volunteer local lead in Austin with Mom’s Demand Action group. Our group has been asking for over a year for what we take as an essential action. I understand you are working towards engaging in awareness but we want to encourage greater action. We have shared data and evidence. Most effective action is to securely store all guns with ammunition stored separately. We have presented many statistics over and over and have also seen tragedies across the United States and locally even instances in our own community. It should not take an instance of gun violence on one of our campuses to do something. Educate adults in secure firearm storage. Parents, Teachers in this community are scared and anxious. Parents and Teachers are reaching out to me asking what can we do? I appreciate the progress, better than none but I hope this is a reminder for you to take action on secure gun storage. Thank you.

5. #D97Joy Culture and Celebration Update

#D97JOY

Robotics

In celebration of both the Brooks and Julian Robotics team, tonight members of both teams and coaches join us to discuss experience, creating their own league tournament and a look forward to what’s next for Vex Robotics in District 97.

Congratulations Julian Middle School Vex Team, for their first-place win in the Competitive League Tournament. Of the 32-teams, all three tournament champions came from Julian. This was also the first time that the sixth-grade team was crowned champion.

Thank you to families and students at both the Julian and Brooks Middle School whose teams are led by Coach Shinners and Coach Walsh for demonstrating #D97Joy.

Q&A with the students can be viewed by watching the livestream of the meeting on the District 97 YouTube Channel.

Autism Awareness | Irving Elementary Inclusion Story

Principal Mura of Irving Elementary, along with Donna Middleton, Senior Director of Student Services, Mary Kelly, Fourth Grade Teacher and Mary Yocius, Special Education Teacher, are joining the meeting tonight to highlight a story of inclusion with fourth-grader Jadis and his mom, Mrs. Collins.

Both Kelly and Yocius discuss the planning, process and approach for inclusion with Jadis. Mom highlights the open communication, responsiveness and support she receives from the team daily. We also hear by way of video, stories from Jadis peers, and just how cool it is to be his friend and classmate. Jadis you are #D97 Joy.

Q&A with the Team, Student and Mom can be viewed by watching the livestream of the meeting on the District 97 YouTube Channel.

6. DISTRICT PRIORITY UPDATE

Anti-Racism and Inclusion in District 97

Dr. Lofton and team join tonight's Board meeting to present provide context into the journey towards designing an Inclusive and Anti-Racism Curriculum in District 97. An overview of this work from an equity lens is presented. District 97 has held Family University Sessions on K-5 Social Justice and provides an overview tonight on topics addressed in Learning for Justice and work with 6-8 grade students. Additional information including details on units of study and resources can be viewed by visiting the Inclusion and Anti-Racism website at <https://www.op97.org/teach-learn/antiracism>

Much of this work is a collaborative approach, Congratulation to Ashley Kannan, eighth grade teacher at Julian. Kannan was profiled in Chalkbeat Chicago where they profiled Kannan's work on piloting a Black History Course in District 97.

District 97 TEAACH Act Update

Background

The Teaching Equitable Asian American Community History (TEAACH) Act amended Illinois School Code, ensuring that every public elementary and high school student in Illinois learns about the contributions of Asian Americans to the economic, cultural, social, and political development of the United States.

Beginning with the 2022-23 school year, every public elementary school and high school shall include in its curriculum a unit of instruction studying the events of Asian American history, including the history of Asian Americans in Illinois and the Midwest, as well as the contributions of Asian Americans toward advancing civil rights from the 19th century onward.

Update

At the January 6, 2023 Institute Day, there was districtwide engagement in Professional Learning of the TEAACH Act. Below is an overview of implementation:

K-5:

- Established the K-5 Social Science Committee and introduced the TEAACH Act and Asian American Education Resource Air Table
- Designed lessons from the Asian American Education Resource Air Table and incorporated content into the K-2 and 3-5 Learning for Justice Decks
- Provided all K-5 teachers an overview of the TEAACH Act lessons, activities, and best practices for implementation

6-8:

- Incorporated lessons and activities in the Individuals & Societies unit plan to reflect the three components of the TEAACH Act and updated the scope and sequence to fulfill the requirements of this mandate
- Implemented the components of the TEAACH Act in Unit 1 utilizing various resources (Individuals & Societies Grade 8)

- From a Whisper to a Rallying Cry: The Killing of Vincent Chin and the Trial that Galvanized the Asian American Movement by Paula Yoo
- Asian American Education Resource Air Table
- Integrating Asian American History Into Social Studies
- Stanford History Education Group (SHEG)
- Gilder Lehrman
- Digital History

ASCD Update | Sharing District 97 Work at the National

Dr. Lofton, Dr. Lawrence and Patrick Robinson attended the ASCD Annual Conference this month. While at the conference, our leadership team spoke on Disrupting Societal and Historical Inequities through Inclusion and Anti-Racist Teaching. We are extremely proud of District 97 and our Leaders presenting at the highest stage on the work we are collaboratively doing on behalf of our students.

7. ACTION ITEMS

ACTION ITEMS

7.1 Senior Leader Appointment

Kinhal moved, seconded by Ross Dribin that the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 moves to approve the following Senior Leader Appointments commencing on or before July 1, 2023.

- Chief Legal and Equity Officer – Luis A. Rodriguez
- Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools – Patrick C. Robinson
- Assistant Superintendent of Middle Schools – Dr. Luis F. De Leon

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Ross Dribin, Moore, Hurd Johnson, Kinhal
 Nays: None
 Absent: Spurlock
 Motion passed.

7.2 Consent Agenda

*Consent Motion was amended at the Board table due to revised personnel report.

Amended Consent Motion

Kearney moved, seconded by Moore that the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 moves to approve the Revised Consent Agenda as presented, including amending from Personnel Action Items 7.3.1, 7.3.3 and 7.3.5.

- 7.2.1 Approval of Minutes from the March 14, 2023 Board Meeting
- 7.2.2 Bill List
- 7.2.3 Personnel

- 7.2.4 Approval : Hatch PTO Donation
- 7.2.5 Approval : Mann PTO Donation
- 7.2.6 Approval : Longfellow PTO Donation
- 7.2.7 Approval : Irving Equipment Donation and Recycle Request
- 7.2.8 Approval : Revised SY24 District Calendar

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Ross Dribin, Moore, Hurd Johnson, Kinhal
Nays: None
Absent: Spurlock
Motion passed.

7.3 PERSONNEL ACTION

***7.3.1 Termination of Non-Certificated Employee**

Removed from action based on revised consent agenda.

7.3.2 Resolution Authorizing Non-Reemployment of Non-Tenured Employee

Kearney moved, seconded by Moore that the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 moves to approve the Resolution Authorizing Non-Reemployment of Non-Tenured Employee.

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Ross Dribin, Moore, Hurd Johnson, Kinhal
Nays: None
Absent: Spurlock
Motion passed.

***7.3.3 Resolution Authorizing Dismissal of Full-Time Teacher in Last Year of Probationary Service**

Removed from action based on revised consent agenda.

7.3.4 Resolution Authorizing Non-Reemployment of Full-Time, Non-Tenured Teacher(s) not in Last Year of Probationary Service.

Kearney moved, seconded by Moore That the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 moves to approve the Resolution Authorizing Non-Reemployment of Full-Time, Non-Tenured Teachers (s) not in Last Year of Probationary Service.

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Ross Dribin, Moore, Hurd Johnson, Kinhal
Nays: None
Absent: Spurlock
Motion passed.

***7.3.5 Resolution Authorizing Non-Reemployment of Non-Tenured Administrator**

Removed from action based on revised consent agenda.

8. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

8.1 Funds Transfer | Tort Fund to O&M Fund (action 4.25.23)

Summary

A transfer of \$3,800,000 from the Tort Immunity Fund to the Operations & Maintenance Fund to fund various capital projects was approved as part of the fiscal year 2023 budget by the Board of Education at the September 27, 2022 board meeting. As required by (105 ILCS 5/17-2A), a public hearing and a board resolution is required to execute the transfer. The public hearing is scheduled for the April 11, 2023 Board of Education meeting and proper notice of the public hearing was published in the March 22, 2023 Wednesday Journal (as required by 105ILCS 5/17-2A). Also attached is the resolution to transfer \$3,800,000 from the Tort Fund to the Operations & Maintenance Fund.

Motion

Administration is seeking a motion that the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 approve the attached resolution to transfer \$3,800,000 from the Tort Fund to the Operations & Maintenance Fund.

8.2 Funds Transfer | Working Cash Abatement Transfer (action 4.25.23)

Summary

An abatement transfer of \$1,500,000 from the Working Cash Fund to the Operations & Maintenance Fund to fund various maintenance and capital projects was approved as part of the fiscal year 2023 budget by the Board of Education at the September 27, 2022 board meeting. As required by (105 ILCS 5/20-10), a board resolution is required to execute the transfer. Attached is the resolution to transfer \$1,500,000 from the Working Cash Fund to the Operations & Maintenance Fund.

Motion

Administration is seeking a motion that the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 approve the attached resolution to transfer \$1,500,000 from the Working Cash Fund to the Operations and Maintenance Fund.

8.3 Funds Transfer | O&M Fund to Capital Projects (action 4.25.23)

Summary

A transfer of \$8,000,000 from the Operations & Maintenance Fund to the Capital Projects to fund various capital projects was approved as part of the fiscal year 2023 budget by the Board of Education at the September 27, 2022 board meeting. As required by the Illinois Program Accounting Manual and ISBE Regulation Section 100.50(d)(2), the construction expenditures are required to be recorded in the Capital Projects Fund and a board

resolution is required to execute the transfer. Attached is the resolution to transfer \$8,000,000 from the Operations & Maintenance Fund to the Capital Projects Fund.

Motion

Administration is seeking a motion that the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 approve the attached resolution to transfer \$8,000,000 from the Operations and Maintenance Fund to the Capital Project Fund.

8.4 Funds Transfer | Education Fund to Debt Service Fund (action 4.25.23)

Summary

Annually, the Board of Education approves a transfer from the Educational Fund to the Debt Service Fund to cover the payment of various capital leases the District is obligated on. The Illinois Program Accounting Manual requires that all long-term lease payments be recorded in the Debt Service Fund. The funding source for these expenses is a budgeted transfer from the Educational Fund, which requires Board approval through resolution. The purpose of these transfers is to properly record expenditures and reflect correct balances in each fund.

Attached is the resolution to transfer \$424,636 from the Education Fund to the Debt Service Fund to cover payments under various purchase leases in the following amounts:

- Apple (Student iPads) - \$185,486
- Providence Capital (Chromebooks) - \$114,540
- Cisco (Telephone Communication System) - \$42,140
- Canon (Copiers) - \$82,470

Motion

Administration is seeking a motion that the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 approve the attached transfer resolution to transfer \$424,636 from the Education Fund to the Debt Service Fund to support the payment of lease obligations.

9. BOARD ASSIGNMENTS

No report-out for board assignments. More information to come as provided.

BOARD
ASSIGNMENTS

10. CONCLUDING ITEMS

10.1 Board Remarks

CONCLUDING
ITEMS

- Board member Kearney notes that the Policy Committee will be reviewing information and will look into bringing forward a policy on safe gun storage. Once we gather all the information we will share with the Board.
- Board President Kim notes that once the Board completes its next Retreat, there is plans to discuss who will be assigned to and structure for existing Board Committees.
- Board member Moore notes that during the last board meeting, she made some comments that did not come out as eloquently as she would have liked and wants to apologize for her comments, to the community and students who she may have offended. I am open to a conversation with anyone who would like to further discuss.
- Board member Ross Dribin notes, I have looked over our policy and it is very supportive of LGBTQ and supports for our students.
- Board member Moore also notes in reference to Oak Park and River Forest High School, we are talking about young adults. I want us to be mindful of what they are doing, and the fact that they are growing and learning. The tone and language being used on social media, is not what I would like for us to see/hear as it relates to our students.

8. ADJOURNMENT

ADJOURNMENT

All Six present members of the Board were in agreement that the meeting be adjourned. There being no further business to conduct, President Kim declared the meeting adjourned by voice vote at 9:23p.m.

Board President

Board Secretary