

**Official Minutes of the
Oak Park Board of Education District 97
260 Madison Street, Oak Park
February 9, 2021 Meeting**

This meeting was held in-person and virtually using Zoom during the time of the Coronavirus pandemic. One or more of the board members met in-person and everyone else were virtual.

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

ROLL CALL

Present: Broy, Spurlock, Kearney, Kim, Breymaier were present. Liebl and Moore participated via Zoom.

Absent: None

Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Carol Kelley, Director of Communications Amanda Siegfried, Senior Director of Technology Michael Arensdorff, Senior Director of Human Resources Gina Herrmann, Chief Academic and Accountability Office Eboney Lofton, Associate Superintendent of Education Felicia Starks Turner, Senior Director of Equity Carrie Kamm, Consultant Rob Grossi, and Board Secretary Sheryl Marinier.

EXECUTIVE
SESSION

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Kearney moved, seconded by Broy that the Board move into executive session for the purpose of Appointment, Employment, Compensation, Discipline, Performance, or Dismissal of Specific Employees 5 ILCS 120/2(C)(1), at 6:05 p.m.

Ayes: Kearney, Broy, Moore, Kim, Spurlock, Breymaier, and Liebl

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion passed

OPEN SESSION

OPEN SESSION

Spurlock moved that the board move into Open Session at 6:31 p.m. The motion was seconded by Breymaier. All members of the Board were in agreement. The Board reconvened in Open Session at 7:01 p.m.

PUBLIC
COMMENT

PUBLIC COMMENT

The agenda indicated that persons wishing to address the board either email their statement to the board prior to the beginning of the meeting, or email the Secretary to the Board of Education by 4:00 PM the day prior to the meeting to be given access to address the board. President Broy read aloud the public comments that were emailed to the board prior to the start of the board meeting.

Monica Sheehan

I appreciate the opportunity to make a public comment this evening. It includes a question to which I respectfully request a timely email response from the District 97 School Board.

In the news recently, Naperville District 203 announced that it experienced an unexpected budget surplus due to the pandemic. As such, District 203 is in the process of returning 10 million dollars to its taxpayers.

Did District 97 experience a budget surplus due to the pandemic? If yes, what is the amount of the surplus and will the District return this money to taxpayers?

Susan Raphael

First of all, I want to thank all of District 97 Staff who have put in so many hours into implementing hybrid learning. While my fourth graders are still at home, my seventh Grader has been so happy to return to school the past two days. I thank you all for this and the sacrifice that so many have made to make this possible. This is of such risk for my family since my DH is of high medical risk, but I am praying that all will be ok since my son really needs to be in school right now.

However, my remarks today are specific to the issue of specials in K-5. My hope is that District 97 can continue to prioritize specials in planning for the third Trimester and the 2021-22 School Year. For many fourth and fifth Graders, these are the last years that they have art, music, chorus and band. Under the current system, if you do not participate in band in fifth grade, it is impossible to join band in middle school. And then you have to make the choice in sixth grade of just one- band, art or chorus. Our kids now only have 20 minutes of art and 20 minutes of music a week, not even mentioning foreign language dwindling from 90 minutes a week to 20 minutes. And band and orchestra lessons have been reduced from in some cases 90 minutes a week to 15 or 20 minutes a week. I have been amazed at how well our instrumental teachers have taught in this Zoom environment. My girls have learned how to play the clarinet and viola and this has brought so much joy to their lives and I do not believe I am alone in this sentiment.

While many Oak Park parents send their kids to private dance, voice, instrument or art lessons-this is not the norm. The one unifying factor is that all kids in K-5 have specials and the chance to participate in the arts. Study after study shows the importance of the arts in one's education. The power of music and the value of learning an instrument. District 97 has received multiple awards for its music program.

District 97 is also the home to incredible, dedicated, professional art, music, library, pe and Spanish teachers that are not having the opportunity to perform their jobs to the fullest right now. We need to value these teachers rather than having them serve as temperature checkers or serve as teacher assistants or in other tasks.

I am not an expert in this, but I believe there are so many creative, talented folks in District 97 that can find further ways to reprioritize specials in the third trimester and beyond. One idea I had was why not have each classroom have one live special a week in the am, this would free more time in the special teacher's schedule and allow for more afternoon live specials. Why not have the instrumental teacher provide lessons to only remote kids in the am- again freeing more time in their schedule to offer longer lessons in the pm.

What if District 97 contracted with external specials teachers to take over some of the asynchronous time in the afternoons? This way, full benefits are not paid, but employment is provided and our kids have more live specials time. I hope that a future board meeting can be dedicated to this issue as planning continues for the third trimester and beyond.

Mara Maas

I wanted to thank you and especially the teachers and staff of the district for all the work that went into implementing the district's hybrid plan. So far three of my four children have had the opportunity to be back in the classroom. Their experience has been met with lots of smiles and rave reviews. My sixth grader was thrilled to be inside his school for the first time ever. The five days a week in person with a consistent schedule is tremendously beneficial for my elementary kids, especially my six year old, who is good at many things, but paying attention on Zoom is not one of them. We are truly grateful for this time in person with their teachers and classmates!

I know that you are looking ahead to third trimester, and I hope that as more families inevitably opt in, you will find ways to maintain this consistency. I cannot overstate how great it has been.

SPECIAL REPORTS

RETURN TO SCHOOL PLAN UPDATE

Dr. Kelley explained that this is the first board meeting of the year where students are actually onsite for learning.

Joseph Terry, the Interim Public Health Director reported on the current number of COVID-19 cases in Oak Park. He recommended that everyone continue to stay vigilant and follow the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines. He assured everyone that the schools have the necessary safety equipment in place, and suggested that they reach out to Dr. Kelley and/or her staff if they have concerns.

Amanda Siegfried, Director of Communications, shared a video of students and staff returning to in-person learning. She explained the new dashboard that will be updated every Friday. Siegfried shared the Interim Exclusion Guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), and explained that it is the IDPH guidelines that are being used when students and staff are going in and out of the schools. Siegfried also shared a one page document that will be used as a response to positive COVID-19 tests.

Principals Amy Jefferson and Jeremy Christian shared their back to school experiences, reporting that teachers have embraced this new platform. The teachers have been working on students coming in on time, wearing masks and social distancing. They explained that the schools have implemented staggered arrival times for students and staff, and have put procedures in place to help everyone moved around the buildings safely.

Longfellow student Chitra Bhattacharya and Julian Middle School students Maggy Kitley shared their back to school experiences with the board.

Jim Hackett, the Safety and Security Officer, reported that the goal was to find a way to comply with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) compliance without overwhelming everyone. He acknowledged Michael Arensdorff, Liz Battaglia, the school nurses, and administration for their guidance. He explained that each school day students and staff receive an email at 5:30 AM from CrisisGo. Parents and staff must answer the questions within the email, and based on their responses, students and staff will/or will not be allowed into the building on that day. He assured the board that students and staff will not be allowed into the classroom until they have been certified. Hackett reported that CrisisGo has dashboards to help with the process as well.

Dr. Kelley explained that she engaged the support from the school nurses, administration, local pediatricians, the Chief Executive Officer of Northwestern Medical Group, the 10 principals, and union leadership to review the two surveillance screening options. She recommended that the board approve the use of two surveillance screeners; Northshore and Safeguard. Northshore will be used to screen staff, and Safeguard will be used to screen middle school students. The cost would be about \$25,000 for a six week trial period. Dr. Kelley acknowledged that the plan is a luxury, but would layer the level of testing, and give staff and families reassurance.

Gina Herrmann, Senior Director of Human Resources reported that the district is following the travel guidance of the Oak Park Department of Public Health, which is recommending that travel be avoided during this time. Administration is asking staff and students who travel out of state for more than 24 hours to stay at home for 14 days in order to protect the health and safety of our schools.

Board comments included interest in reviewing disaggregated data that is available for students who chose to work remotely during trimester 2.

Interest was expressed in knowing what outreach is planned for families who are concerned about the safety protocols. Dr. Kelley explained that it is a personal decision for families, and the district will continue to share safety protocols via the district newsletter, PTO meetings, school newsletters, etc.

Interest was also expressed in seeing more outdoor opportunities for the students, and knowing if the 5Essentials survey will be readjusting its metrics due to the pandemic. Concern was expressed that some families were not aware that in-person learning would require the students to still be on Zoom all day.

Concern was expressed about the need to assure families that the safety protocols are in place and that the children are safe. A discussion took place regarding this concern. It was suggested that the protocols may need to change based on the CDC guidelines, but a clear message needs to be sent to the families.

The administrators explained the plan for trimester 2. Dr. Kelley noted that the number of children who choose to return to in-person learning will determine the level of services that the district will be able to provide. The principals are currently exploring the options. They are focusing on the overall student experience by engaging focus groups, surveys, and in-person conversations with students.

It was reported that the E-Team is hosting a parent circle on February 18, 2021 from 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM. The registration date for this event is February 16, 2021. Another session will be scheduled on March 18 and April 29, 2021.

ACTION ITEMS

ACTION ITEMS

3.1.1 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE JANUARY 20, 2021 SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

Spurlock moved, seconded by Moore that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the minutes from the January 20, 2021 special board meeting as presented.

Ayes: Spurlock, Moore, Kim, Kearney, Broy, Breymaier, and Liebl
Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion passed.

3.1.2 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE JANUARY 26, 2021 BOARD MEETING

Spurlock moved, seconded by Moore that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the minutes from the January 26, 2021 board meeting as presented.

Ayes: Spurlock, Moore, Kim, Kearney, Broy, Breymaier, and Liebl
Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion passed.

3.2.1 APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

Spurlock moved, seconded by Moore, that the Board of Education, District 97, accept the consent agenda as presented.

3.2.1 Bill List

3.2.2 Personnel

3.2.3 Policy Adoption

Policy 3:40 (Superintendent)

Policy 4:80 (Accounting and Auditing)
Policy 4:90 (Student Activity and Fiduciary Funds)
Policy 5:270 (Employment At-Will, Compensation, and Assignment)
Policy 6:20 (School Year Calendar and Day)
Policy 6:315 (High School Credit for Students in Grade 7 and 8)
Policy 6:340 (Student Assessment and Testing Program)
Policy 7:100 (Health, Eye, and Dental Examinations; Immunizations; and Excluding of Students)
Policy 7:140 (Search and Seizure)
Policy 7:300 (Extracurricular Activities)

Ayes: Spurlock, Moore, Breymaier, Kim, Liebl, Broy, and Kearney

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion passed.

3.4.1 ACTION ON BOND ABATEMENT

Rob Grossi explained that the board would need to vote this evening on whether to abate the final payment of the \$1,400,000 bonds. He shared the fund balances from 2013 to present and noted that all of the amounts are currently in the middle of the targeted fund balance. He explained that he anticipates that the district will be able to sustain a surplus, excluding the five year facilities cost.

Grossi told the board that they will have two challenges over the next five years. He explained that even after the summer 2021 capital projects are completed there will still be about \$26,000,000 in capital projects remaining. The next 10 year survey will be completed soon and the remaining projects will be prioritized.

Grossi reminded the board that the state is experiencing a major fiscal crisis. In order to address this crisis, the state will need to execute the following actions;

- Pension shift to schools
- Income tax increase paired with a property tax freeze
- Significant reductions in state funding to school districts
- Each of these actions could dramatically harm district's long-term financial condition
- They could also reduce state funding on a per pupil basis

Gross assured the board that the district is in good financial status, and has a good structural surplus to take care of some improvements. He reminded them that after this year there will be no referendum debt, and that the board had voted to abate the two prior year's bonds. He explained that the abatement would equal about \$90 in tax relief on a \$400,000 home.

Grossi reminded the board that they approved the support of childcare needs during the pandemic, but the cost has been significantly less than expected. The program will continue into the second trimester, with the anticipated cost to be about \$400,000 or less. Grossi reminded the board that the Finance Oversight and Review Committee (FORC) made the recommendation to approve the abatement of the \$1,400,000.

Jeanne Keane, Senior Director of Buildings and Grounds explained that delaying repairs will inevitably make them a priority. She told the board that a lot of work has been completed since 2017, so the 10-year projections will be a bit lower than anticipated.

Board comments included suggesting that it is better to use money that does not require repayment of interest. Interest was expressed in seeing the strategy around the administrative expenses.

Broy moved, seconded by Spurlock, approve the resolution abating the tax levied for the year 2020 to pay debt service on the outstanding General Obligation Limited Tax School Bonds, Series 2016, of School District Number 97, Cook County, Illinois.

Ayes: Broy, Spurlock, Kim, Breymaier, Moore, Kearney, and Liebl
Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion passed.

3.4.2 APPROVAL OF WHITTIER AND BEYE TECHNOLOGY BIDS

Broy moved, seconded by Spurlock, that the Board of Education of Oak Park District 97, School District 97, authorize and approve the bid for audio visual equipment and installation for the Beye and Whittier renovation projects that were presented on January 26, 2021 in the amount of \$26,295.

Ayes: Broy, Spurlock, Kim, Breymaier, Moore, Kearney, and Liebl
Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion passed.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEM

DISPOSAL OF PROPERTY

Keane reported that the Whittier and Beye libraries needed to be weeded in preparation for the upcoming renovation projects. This item will return to the board for action on February 23, 2021.

RECOMMENDATION FOR DISTRICT COVID-19 TESTING PLAN

Dr. Kelley explained that the use of COVID-19 testing tools would give the staff and students another layer of security. She explained that the nurses and principals participated in making the decision, and the majority of them felt that focusing on the middle school students was a good idea because they are older and move around more.

The board discussed the request and determined that the majority of the board supported the decision and that board approval was not necessary.

BOARD ASSIGNMENTS

STANDING BOARD COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORT FOLLOW UP (as needed – FAC, FORC, CCE and CLAIM)

BOARD ASSIGNMENTS

Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC)

The next FAC meeting is scheduled for February 22, 2021.

Committee for Legislative Action, Intervention and Monitoring (CLAIM)

The committee is working on the data sharing bill that will be supported by Senator Harmon. Member Kearney drafted a letter of support for the bill on behalf of the board.

The CLAIM committee is considering hosting an elected officials' forum for the local candidates.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL LIAISON REPORT FOLLOW UP (as needed – IGOV, PTO council, CEC, OPEF, and Self-Evaluation)

Collaboration for Early Childhood (CEC)

It was reported that the next IGA governing board meeting is scheduled for February 24, 2021.

CLOSING ITEMS

CLOSING ITEMS

BOARD REMARKS

It was reported that the work of a local artist has been put on a coffee bag, with all proceeds going to Y.E.M.B.A. The artist was a participant in the program.

The staff, students, parents and administration were acknowledged for their relentless work toward the hybrid learning experience.

Concern was expressed about the in-person board meeting this evening, noting that the format did not meet the needs of the board. It made it difficult to interact and the technology caused problems.

Board members shared that their children are having a good experience with the in-person learning experience.

AGENDA MAINTENANCE

The draft agendas for the February 23, 2021 meeting was reviewed.

ADJOURNMENT

Member Breymaier expressed interest in hearing about the data collected by the Hanover Research team.

Dr. Kelley noted that during the personnel action this evening, the board approved the retirement of the board secretary, Sheryl Marinier.

ADJOURNMENT

Liebl moved, seconded by Moore that the meeting be adjourned. There being no further business to conduct, President Broy declared the meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Board President

Board Secretary