

**Official Minutes of the
Oak Park Board of Education District 97,
970 Madison Street, Oak Park, Cook County, Illinois
Meeting – March 13, 2012**

President Barber called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Barber, Gates, Felton, Sacks, Traczyk, Spatz, and O'Connor

Absent: None

Also Present: Superintendent Al Roberts, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations Therese O'Neill, Director of Human Resources Trish Carlson, Director of Special Education Mike Padavic, Director of Policy, Planning and Communications Chris Jasculca, and Board Secretary Sheryl Marinier

EXECUTIVE SESSION

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SESSION

Gates moved, seconded by Sacks, that the Board of Education move into executive session at 6:32 p.m. Roll call vote.

Ayes: Gates, Sacks, Traczyk, Felton, Barber, O'Connor, and Spatz

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion passed.

OPEN SESSION

OPEN SESSION

Gates moved, seconded by Felton, that the Board of Education move into open session at 7 p.m. All members of the Board were in agreement.

SPECIAL REPORTS

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REPORTS

C.L.A.I.M. – COMMITTEE INTRODUCTION

Chairperson Anne Desmond Warden, and committee members Greg Smith, and Jassen Strokosch came to the table to introduce themselves as members of the newly established Committee for Legislative Action, Intervention and Monitoring (C.L.A.I.M.) and share the purpose and vision of the committee. They reported on the success of the committee to date and identified the sub-committees that have been formed. They expressed interest in wanting the committee to be well known in the community and the state. They explained that guest speakers are being scheduled during their monthly meetings to discuss issues and help the committee members build relationships. Additionally, experts in various fields are being sought for each committee.

Desmond Warden explained that the next steps for the committee include development and implementation of a work plan, development of public documents, a mission statement, coordinating a lobbying day and creation of a legislative proposal to be presented to the Illinois Association of School Boards.

C.L.A.I.M. – COMMITTEE INTRODUCTION (Continued)

C.L.A.I.M. meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. Sub-committee meetings are held as needed, and the agendas for these meetings, which include the date and time they are being held, are posted on the district Web site. Desmond Warden reminded the Board that the public is welcome to attend their meetings.

It was noted that the committee's work plan for this year should be approved during their April meeting.

Desmond Warden was reminded that the legislative proposal would need to come to the Board prior to implementation.

The Board was delighted to see the committee up and running. Spatz offered his resources to the committee. The Board expressed interest in receiving a formal report from this committee annually, with additional updates as needed. They noted that written updates to the Board would also be welcome. Interest was expressed in the "Lobbying Day."

IRVING SCHOOLYARD UPDATE

Jassen Strokosch and Julianne Kelly came to the table. Strokosch reported that since the last report to the Board, Irving is home to 100 additional students, and averages 125 feet of schoolyard per student. He noted that the footage is 120 feet below the national average. Strokosch reported that the three-area approach is still being considered and sketches were shared. The committee recently presented the plan to the Park District, and requested financial support for the turf portion of the project. The Park District expressed interest in the project, but was reluctant to make a commitment until they discuss the request with the school district.

Strokosch reminded the Board that community support has been developed through years of positive outreach. This support is being nurtured and a master plan that truly reflected the interests of the community has been developed.

Kelly noted that the scope of the project remains the same. The additional costs reported represent firm numbers replacing previous estimates.

It was noted that approximately \$50,000 has been raised for the project to date. Strokosch reported that the solar panels have been installed on the roof of the building. Teachers have been trained about the use of the panels and curriculum projects are being developed.

Strokosch noted that fund raising efforts include multiple sources of private and public support. District 97 and other taxing bodies are among those supporting the project. Federal and state grants, including an Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) grant are being considered. Private foundations and individual donors are also being sought.

IRVING SCHOOLYARD UPDATE (Continued)

Board comments and questions included interest in knowing what the IEPA grant would be spent on, and knowing more about the extent of the Park District's interest in the project. Concern was expressed regarding moving forward with small portions of the project without certainty that the entire project will be funded. It was suggested that the committee set a goal of three years to complete this project, matching the timeline of the other schoolyard renovations in the district. It was suggested that the committee be made a Board committee.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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Sharon Patchak-Laymen, Oak Park resident and District 200 board member, spoke to the Board as a former Longfellow parent. She explained that she is in possession of mosaic columns made by Longfellow students about 10 years ago, and suggested that the district consider using them in the plans for the landscape around the school. She shared the history of the mosaic art project, including the original designs. She expressed the importance of sharing Oak Park history.

ACTION ITEMS

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2.1.1 Approval of Minutes of February 28, 2012

Traczyk moved, seconded by Felton, that the Board of Education, District 97, accept the minutes from the February 28, 2012 meeting. Roll call vote.

Ayes: Traczyk, Felton, Gates, Sacks, O'Connor, Barber, and Spatz

Nays: None

Motion passed.

2.3.1 Approval of Consent Agenda

President Barber read the items on the consent agenda. Spatz moved, seconded by Sacks, that the following items be approved on the consent agenda. Roll call vote.

2.3.1 Bill Lists and Related Reports

2.2.1 Personnel Action as presented are revised

Ayes: Spatz, Sacks, Felton, Traczyk, Gates, O'Connor, and Barber

Nays: None

Motion passed.

2.4.1 Approval of Prep for Success

Felton moved, seconded by Traczyk, that the Board of Education, District 97, Approve the Prep for Success Program scheduled to run from July 18, 2012 through August 14, 2012. Roll call vote.

Dr. Roberts explained that the program was intentionally named Prep for Success because the program will be held at the end of the summer, which will help the students be ready for a successful beginning of the new school year.

Ayes: Felton, Traczyk, Sacks, Gates, Spatz, Gates, and O'Connor
Nays: None
Abstain: Barber
Motion passed.

2.4.2 Approval of Donation to Ed Foundation to Support Vex Robotics Competition

Traczyk moved, seconded by Gates, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve a donation of \$500 to the Oak Park Education Foundation to assist in the funding for the Vex Robotics National Competition expenses. Roll call vote.

Ayes: Traczyk, Gates, Felton, Sacks, Barber, Spatz, and O'Connor
Nays: None
Motion passed.

2.4.3 Approval of Vex Robotics National Competition Field Trip

Gates moved, seconded by Traczyk, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the Vex Robotics trip to Omaha, Nebraska on March 15 to 16, 2012. Roll call vote.

Ayes: Gates, Traczyk, Felton, Sacks, O'Connor, Spatz, and Barber
Nays: None
Motion passed.

2.4.4 Approval of Hatch Overnight Field Trip

Sacks moved, seconded by O'Connor, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the Hatch fifth grade field trip to White Pines Dude Ranch, located near Oregon, Illinois, May 21 to May 23, 2012. Roll call vote.

Ayes: Sacks, O'Connor, Gates, Traczyk, Felton, Spatz, and Barber
Nays: None
Motion passed.

TOPIC REPORTS

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APPROVAL OF ENGAGEMENT LETTER FOR FISCAL YEAR AUDIT

O'Neill reported that a year and a half ago the district entered into a three-year agreement with McGladrey and Pullen to supply an update to the district on an annual basis. The internal business office audit was recommended as part of the initial contract and would cost about \$8,000. O'Neill recommended that the district pursue this opportunity. This topic will be presented for review on April 10 and submitted for approval on April 24.

POLICY – FIRST READING

Jasculca presented policies 2440 - Summer School, 5200 – Attendance and 8500 – Food Services for first reading. After a brief discussion, additional changes were identified. These policies will return to the Board for approval on April 10.

POLICY SERVICE PROVIDER

Jasculca reported that the policy committee and legal counsel have been working together on many policy revisions. He reported that the district's policies adhere to the law, but sometimes do not closely align with the state code. The committee is recommending that the district switch over to the Illinois State Board of Education policy provider, PRESS. He noted that the district's current provider NEOLA sends updates using its own template. He explained that the district is serviced by several representatives at NEOLA, which has created communication issues and disruptions in service. Additional concerns with the current provider included a delay in posting updated policies and repetition of information. For example, Jasculca explained that NEOLA recommends that the district maintain three sections of the policy manual for staff.

With PRESS, the district will receive district-specific updates; have one point of contact, two-week turn around and one section of policies for employees. Jasculca reported that PRESS is currently supporting 810 of the 864 public school districts in Illinois. In addition, PRESS documents will include footnotes identifying the laws that are referenced in each policy.

Jasculca reported that the district spent \$13,011 in legal fees the last three years on policy-related expenses. Legal recommends switching to PRESS to save on legal fees associated with policy changes. He noted that board members from other districts speak highly of PRESS.

Dr. Roberts explained that he worked with NEOLA many times, but he supports this recommendation as NEOLA is not as efficient here. He noted that legal counsel will need to be sought on occasion, and explained that some policies were written from scratch and will not be rewritten.

Jasculca outlined the transition timeline. He noted that this item will be brought to the Board for approval on April 10. After approval, the committee will meet with PRESS and share the current manual. The Web master will work to make the current policy manual accessible online during the transition. He explained that the plan is to revise the policy and the procedure manuals simultaneously. Policies that will remain unchanged will be identified. PRESS will draft a new manual based on their current templates and ensure that the documents are in line with the state law. Jasculca estimated that three to five editing sessions will be needed, after which the final drafts will be presented to the Board. Once the Board approves the new documents, the new manual will be placed online. Jasculca estimated completion by August or September.

It was noted that the committee did their due diligence. It was reported that the annual increase to switch to PRESS is \$110, but the district will save money in the end. Jasculca reported that the cost to transition from NEOLA to PRESS would be about \$22,100.

POLICY SERVICE PROVIDER (Continued)

Board comments and suggestions included concern about the daily tasks that staff will not be able to complete due to reviewing documents. It was suggested that the unedited policies be identified as they are submitted, as they will require a different focus. Additionally, it was recommended that the Board refrain from wordsmithing policies under the new service.

COMMUNICATION / TECHNOLOGY JOINT MEETING FOLLOW UP

Jasculca reported that all three districts are interested in joint ventures in technology and looking at opportunities to work on communication initiatives. District 97 is collaborating with District 90 to offer a summer institute leadership academy for common core, and shared services are also being considered.

TECH INTEGRATIONIST / TEACHER LEADER AND TITLE 1 TEACHER / TUTOR RECOMMENDATION

Dr. Roberts recommended replacing the position of technology administrator with a position that focuses on leadership in the use of technology for assessment and instructional purposes, as well as redesigning networks and system management. He recommended placing the technology department under the supervision of the assistant superintendent for finance and operations. He would like to see 10 certified staff, one at each school, hired to coordinate data. He explained that this type of position would strengthen the district's ability to build a data driven work force. Dr. Roberts explained that the cost to implement this plan would be approximately \$616,000 and monies have been identified in the budget to cover this expense.

Carlson reported that the current tech integrationists have teaching degrees, but are members of the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF), not the Oak Park Teachers' Association (OPTA). Because of this, the current staff would need to apply for the new positions. She explained that the principals may be part of the hiring process, but Dr. Roberts will make the ultimate decision on whom to place in these positions. Dr. Roberts ensured the Board that the OPTA understands that these positions will be different, as they will need to work outside of the parameters of the current OPTA contract (i.e., have flexible hours). He spoke to the current teacher leaders and they are interested in more of the data piece and integrating technology in different ways.

Dr. Roberts explained that the Title I grant was significantly decreased. In order to maintain the budget, he recommended using tutors instead of full-time staff members in the Title I program for the 2012-13 school year. Additionally, one full-time staff member would be hired to coordinate the program on a part-time basis and teach the other half of the time. Dr. Roberts explained that this would cut the cost of the Title I program to meet the income from the grant.

TECH INTEGRATIONIST / TEACHER LEADER AND TITLE 1 TEACHER / TUTOR RECOMMENDATION (Continued)

Board comments and suggestions included support for placing the technology department under the assistant superintendent for finance and operations. Concern was expressed in the need to ensure that the 10 data positions are equitable as the schools are not the same size. It was suggested that constructive data analysis could be completed during the summer, and the data positions could be 10 or 10 ½-month positions. The need for 10 data professionals was questioned. Interest in understanding how the data change over will impact instruction was expressed, as well as understanding how the knowledge will change how the district teaches and supports the children. Interest was expressed regarding the principal partnership with the data professional. The need to find a way to keep these people in the positions and not lose them to classrooms was shared. Interest was expressed in knowing where the data dashboard will fall (student data or student information). Concern was expressed regarding the need to have enough data support at the central office for data analysis. It was recommended that the central office data staff create the data plan, not the school-based data staff. It was recommended that the district seek data professionals at other districts to review the data plan and charts. The need to hire data professionals who are enthusiastic with the manipulation of data was suggested. Interest was expressed in hearing about a “day in the life” of one of these staff members. Interest in hearing about the matrix was expressed.

The Board was reminded that staff cuts were made in the past knowing that they would need to be reconsidered in the future, and that the district has an obligation to the community to report accurate data.

Dr. Roberts explained that he is not aware of any other school districts that are this interested in data. The principals know what the expectations are for these positions. If they have that support within their buildings, they can utilize some very talented folks in a very different way. The other piece of this initiative is that the district analyst will not be evaluating the building people, only coordinating them.

Regarding the Title I recommendation, the Board expressed interest in keeping in line with the grant. This topic will return to the Board for approval on April 10.

The tech integrationist/teacher leader topic will return to the Board for more discussion on April 10 with action scheduled for April 24.

IGOV

Member Gates explained that IGOV is an intergovernmental committee that includes two board members from the Village of Oak Park, Township, District 97, District 200, Park District, Library and other taxing bodies.

IGOV (Continued)

The mission of IGOV is to consider joint projects that focus on shared resources. By sharing resources, these initiatives will save the taxpayers money while enhancing the quality of life within the community. A list of suggested initiatives was shared and discussed.

Board comments included an interest in combining resources. It was noted that many of the suggested projects are currently District 97 initiatives.

Board suggestions included utilizing the village newsletter for distribution of district communications. It was suggested that the committee take on one or two ideas at a time. It was noted that shared printing costs was listed as a potential shared resource and the school district already has the print shop. It was suggested that the governments consider sharing the cost of the print shop equipment and utilize the facility.

LONGFELLOW FIELD

O'Neill reported that the architects did a more thorough examination of the Longfellow field on February 29. The report indicates that the field is built over former homes. After the homes were removed, the basement structures were filled in with soil. The field has begun to cave in, causing other areas to push up. O'Neill noted that this issue could be considered a safety hazard. The architects estimated the project to cost between \$125,000 and \$183,600. O'Neill reported that the special education Medicaid fund has a surplus of \$220,000 that can be used for this purpose. Additionally, the auditors identified a repayment to Medicaid from last year of \$145,061. She shared that this issue is separate and apart from the schoolyard projects. She is requesting that the Board approve this project at the next meeting.

It was noted that the field has been deteriorating for decades, and grates and sewer holes are in the middle of the field. O'Neill will be meeting with the architects and the Park District next week. She will discuss the removal of the grates and the possibility of the Park District sharing in the expense. It was suggested that an investment be made in the field now, preventing the need to make repairs again in the future.

Board comments included a concern regarding allocating funds at one school and not another. It was noted that the field has been in bad shape for decades and is long overdue for repairs. It was suggested that the Park District be asked about laying sod in the area, as this might be a cost effective solution. Concern was expressed about the field being a public hazard. It was suggested that the area might be taped off to protect the community from injury until the repairs have been made.

SCHOOL MAINTENANCE GRANT

O'Neill reported that the district can apply for a school maintenance grant of \$50,000 per school district; however, the grant cannot be submitted to the Illinois State Board of Education until it has been approved by the District 97 Board. This topic will return to the Board for approval on April 10.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Roberts attended a mini conference for MSAN in Ohio where the main discussion was how to increase enrollment of students of color in honor classes. He is also arranging a visit to Shaker, Ohio for a team to observe their International Baccalaureate (IB) program. The Oak Park River Forest Community Foundation has set aside funds to support this visit.

Middle school principal candidate screenings are scheduled in early April. Toward the mid to end of April, parents and teacher groups will screen the finalists. Decisions should be made by the beginning of May.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/BOARD CONCERNS

Member Sacks attended the art reception held at the high school on March 7 where District 97 students had their work on display.

Concern was expressed regarding the public comment. It was suggested that the Board share in a conversation about this issue. It was noted that the use of the mosaics are a Longfellow community issue and will be addressed at an upcoming PTO meeting.

Staff was commended for attending the Middle School Climate Forum. It was reported that the forum was also well attended by parents and community.

The Council of Governments discussed the youth interventionist program. Thirty families participated in the program over the last 12 months. It was noted that the number of families could be low as some families do not want it known that they are participating in the program. It was also noted that Oak Park has some gang members living within the community. Dr. Roberts shared that the intergovernmental agreement for the Face-It program is being reviewed. Once approved, the district will be able to participate in the program.

It was reported that the Day In Our Village will position all government bodies together in one area. Member Gates will look into the possibility of a dunk tank.

Everyone was reminded that April 26 is the retirement dinner.

Board members were encouraged to let the Board secretary know when they are available to attend PTO meetings.

BOARD RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENT

None

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Gates moved, seconded by Traczyk, that the Board of Education move into executive session at 10:19 p.m. Roll call vote.

Ayes: Gates, Traczyk, Felton, Sacks, Barber, O'Connor, and Spatz

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion passed.

OPEN SESSION

Gates moved, seconded by Felton, that the Board of Education move into open session at 10:39 p.m. All members of the Board were in agreement.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to conduct, President Barber declared the meeting adjourned at 10:39 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board will be held on Tuesday, April 10, 2012 beginning at 7 p.m. in the administration building located at 970 Madison Street, Oak Park, Illinois.

Board President

Board Secretary