

**Official Minutes of the  
Oak Park Board of Education District 97  
260 Madison Street, Oak Park, Cook County, Illinois  
September 22, 2020 Meeting**

This meeting was held virtually using Zoom during the time of the Coronavirus pandemic. Everyone participated via electronic means.

Vice President Kim called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Broy, Kim, Spurlock, Breymaier, Liebl, Kearney, and Moore (arrived at 6:06 p.m.)  
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, and Consultant Rob Grossi.

EXECUTIVE  
SESSION

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Kim moved, seconded by Spurlock that the Board move into executive session for the purpose of Appointment, Employment, Compensation, Discipline, Performance, or Dismissal of Specific Employees or Legal Counsel for the District 5 ILCS 120/2(C)(1), Other Student Matters ILCS 120/2(C)(9), Probable Litigation 5 ILCS 120/2(C)(11), at 6:02 p.m.

Ayes: Kim, Spurlock, Broy, Breymaier, Liebl, Kearney, and Moore (arrived at 6:06 p.m.)  
Nays: None  
Absent: None  
Motion passed

**OPEN SESSION**

OPEN SESSION

Vice President Kim moved that the Board move into Open Session at 6:59 p.m. All members of the Board were in agreement. The Board reconvened in Open Session at 7:00 p.m.

**PUBLIC HEARING – ADOPTION OF THE 2020-21 FINAL BUDGET**

PUBLIC  
HEARING

A public hearing was held regarding the 2020-21 budget. Consultant Rob Grossi shared a presentation and the public was given an opportunity to speak on this topic. No one expressed interest in addressing the board, so the hearing was closed.

**ADOPTION OF THE 2021 FINAL BUDGET**

ADOPTIN OF  
BUDGET

Breymaier moved, seconded by Moore, that the Board of Education of Oak Park District 97, adopt the SY21 budget as presented to the board.

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

**RECOGNITION OF CUSTODIAL APPRECIATION DAY – October 2, 2020**

Kearney moved, seconded by Breymaier that the Board of Education of Oak Park District 97, adopt the resolution recognizing October 2, 2020 as Custodial Appreciation Day.

**RESOLUTION**  
**Custodial Workers Appreciation Day October 2, 2020**

**WHEREAS**, school district custodians and engineers are on the job long before students and teachers arrive and after they leave; and

**WHEREAS**, school district custodians and engineers ensure that the schools are clean and safe for all who enter; and

**WHEREAS**, school district custodians and engineers work tirelessly to make sure the school grounds are welcoming and inviting; and

**WHEREAS**, school custodians and engineers routinely clean up even the worst messes; and

**WHEREAS**, our community recognizes and supports its school district custodians and engineers in their efforts to make the schools a safe, welcoming environment for all who enter.

**WHEREAS**, school district custodians and engineers have been working tirelessly during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that the buildings are not only cleaned, but sanitized.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Oak Park Elementary School District 97 Board of Education proclaims October 2, 2020, to be CUSTODIAL WORKERS APPRECIATION DAY; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Oak Park Elementary School District 97 Board of Education strongly encourages all members of our community to join with it in personally expressing appreciation to our custodians and engineers for their dedication and devotion to their work.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Member Spurlock read the public comments that were emailed to the board prior to the start of the board meeting.

**William Pearson**

Here are some stylized facts:

1. The probability of covid causing death or serious illness is low and diminishing for all except those with pre-existing conditions, which means, mostly, old people.
2. The corollary of 1 is that most schoolchildren are relatively safe from serious risk, as are most teachers.
3. Remote learning was always likely to be bad, and is proving to be so. It is inferior to in-person school for everybody, but especially for those who are very young (k through 3rd grade, say), those who have parents who would otherwise work out of the house, and those who have teachers who are, for whatever reason, proving less able to get the hang of remote teaching.
4. Learning less because learning is remote will, inevitably, be most harmful for the poor and marginalized, which, in Oak Park, mostly means racial minorities, predominantly black.

5. Remote learning has additional costs that will materialize down the road. The social and individual costs to children of being stuck inside looking at a screen are unknown. Again, these additional costs will be worst for the poor and marginalized.

6. Private schools have been operating hybrid and wholly in-person models without suffering disaster so far.

7. Some kids, including kids in child-care, have been in our schools, with no problems so far.

So, Members of the Board,

8. Please keep the administrations' feet to the fire. Communication has never been the administration's strong point, and recently it has, to my knowledge, been silent on its plan for re-opening for trimester two – or earlier. Questions include:

- a. Hybrid or full-time?
- b. Spacing while in school?
- c. Daily temperature taking?
- d. Daily (might be feasible by then) testing? Weekly testing?
- e. Who will have the option of remote learning and remote teaching? Everybody?
- f. What will remote learning look like?
- g. What would the budgetary implications be?

9. All these questions were in the process of being answered when the Superintendent made the decision to go remote. They can be answered in plenty of time.

10. There are definitive answers to none of these questions. Don't let the search for perfect answers result in the least perfect outcome – continuing with remote learning a moment longer than is avoidable.

### **Arthur and Lauren Pero**

Our two elementary school age children are drastically falling behind, even with us helping them as much as we can. This remote learning is totally unsustainable. If other school districts in the area are able to figure out how to get back in person, we should too. We, the parents of district 97 students, deserve to know how and when you are aggressively pursuing getting our kids back to in person learning.

### **Matt Briesch**

My wife and I appreciate the board's and Dr. Stark's time involved with the grievance report covered this evening. The district has and will not allow us to see the report, so (unfortunately) we can't say whether or not the report is accurate and/or complete.

Please understand that we (like all parents) are trying to do what is best for our kids. We don't believe any child should be left struggling in class with no district support offered.

After almost three months and multiple requests to meet, a district leadership team member has yet to reach out to us to discuss the decision to reverse the agreed upon recommendation by District 97 employees (teachers, specialists and principal), outside professionals and parents.

As district parents and tax payers for 12 years, my wife and I remain surprised by the reversal decision and refusal to meet. This matter could have been resolved through a discussion vs. all the grievance report time and resources. The grievance report process and Dr. Stark's involvement was Dr. Kelley's response and suggestion.

The unsupported district decision was to leave our child struggling and behind in class for another year with no support plan offered. We scrambled in August to find a different school to enroll our child in the appropriate grade.

My wife and I apologize this message is through email. We were not allowed an opportunity to meet with the board.

**Katy Jacob**

I am the parent of a 6th grade student. I implore D97 to communicate to parents and students the plan for phased in reopening. To date, six months into the pandemic, we have seen no plan for return, even if it would mean students would only be in the building one day a week. This is as similar districts are planning phased in approaches as early as October 1, and as private schools in our community meet in person. Other schools and districts are being very upfront about their plans and all of the strategies that the schools and districts are making to ensure a return. To date, in D97, I as a parent do not know if the district's plan actually calls for a return or not.

So far, we have only been told that a vaccine will be necessary for return. A vaccine will not be available for months or even years, and children under 16 will be last to receive it. It will be akin to a seasonal flu vaccine with an expected efficacy rate of about 60 percent. Even regarding the vaccine, D97 has not told us what its plan is--will it be mandatory for return? Will the district subsidize the cost? In the meantime, science tells us that the best recourse against this virus is masking, HVAC upgrades, and testing. Masking is extremely effective, and testing is essential to enable the community to isolate infected persons. And yet I have heard that the district has been unresponsive to a generous request to meet and discuss ways to get regular testing to staff and students. The district has in fact stated that testing "will decrease vigilance." This is antithetical to everything that we know about how to defeat this virus. A lack of testing and masking led the country to this point. Unfortunately, COVID-19 is here to stay. Our district has resources, and it is unacceptable for children to be asked to spend years of their elementary education completely alone and isolated. Please present the community with your plan for return.

**Larissa Leibowitz**

I am writing to the Board to reiterate the concerns I raised in my September 2, 2020 letter regarding the District's consideration of a policy that would require enrollment in kindergarten and first grade based solely on a child's birthday:

- Due to differences in the ways boys' brains develop compared to girls, five-year-old boys are less likely to be developmentally ready to sit for longer periods of time or begin learning to read, both of which are required in kindergarten. This means that an inflexible enrollment policy will especially disadvantage boys.
- An inflexible enrollment policy will likely lead to a higher rate of misdiagnosis of ADHD. Numerous studies have found that the number of August birthday children diagnosed with ADHD who attend schools with a September 1 cutoff is more than 30 percent higher than the number of children diagnosed that have September birthdays. This very serious issue could be avoided in some cases by allowing and encouraging parents to enroll their child in kindergarten at the developmentally appropriate time.
- An inflexible enrollment policy creates significant equity issues. Not only will it disproportionately disadvantage boys, but the families hardest hit by the proposed policy are the ones who have children who are not ready for kindergarten who cannot afford to either move to a different school district or enroll their child in a private school.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that District 97 incorporate some flexibility into the enrollment policy so that at least parents of summer birthday children (who are more likely to be disadvantaged by the proposed policy) can make educated decisions regarding kindergarten enrollment with their child's teachers, pediatrician, and the District.

**Brian Pearlman**

Hello, my name is Brian Pearlman. I'm a tutor who works one-on-one with a fifth grade child from Lincoln Elementary School. We are now in Week 4 of Remote Learning, and I am concerned about some of what I have witnessed.

I must respectfully ask: why on Earth are math and writing in the afternoon? By 1-1:30pm, the child I work with is exhausted from spending hours and hours in front of a screen. He sometimes complains of headaches and simply wants to put his head down. Almost every single day, the teacher struggles to maintain the class's focus and complains that the children are averting their eyes and getting distracted. On Monday, September 21, the teacher openly apologized for doing math so late in the day -- she knows this is not conducive to effective learning. Is this a district mandate? Why must the Specials classes -- Music, Art, P.E., etc. -- be first thing in the morning? They are important too, but so are math and writing. Why are the "core" subjects delivered so late in the day, at the point of maximum fatigue for the kids?

Additionally, there is an extraordinary amount of outsourcing taking place; the kids are often told to simply go on Moby Max, Lexia, or Zearn during reading, grammar and math exercises. I believe these tools should be supplementary *to*, not a replacement *for*, actual teaching -- and I suspect many other caregivers and parents agree with me.

Finally, I am concerned about the amount of group work in the Zoom sessions. I strongly feel that the child I work with is not the only one who dreads the Breakout Room sessions, where the teacher splits the kids into sub-groups. Too often, only one or two children are ready to work, while the others goof off. When the task is over, the kids say they don't know what to do, and then mute themselves and look at their phones. Far from teaching kids how to work together, the breakout rooms are a distraction -- an obstacle that gets in the way of the learning. And it seems to be employed in every subject, even where it doesn't make sense -- such as making the kids work in groups on two pages of their math workbook; when the child I work with asked to proceed alone, a small chorus of other students began to chime that they, too, would rather work solo. Group work *can* be useful, but I question its efficacy for K-5 students on Zoom.

**Margaret Nekrosius**

I write as a life longer Oak Parker, graduate of Longfellow, and mother of a first grader attending Longfellow today. I also write to you as a family nurse practitioner in Cook County. I understood and accepted the need to close schools in March. I came to terms with the need for virtual learning this fall. What I cannot understand is the refusal by the board and by Dr. Kelley to present plans of preparation for an eventual return to in person school. It's already decided it will not be this trimester, likely not this year. I hope and pray we return in fall 2021. But, the only way we get these kids off ipads/Chromebooks and back into classrooms is through the development of a strong testing program and other public health measures. It will cost money and will take effort. Oak Park is lucky and privileged to have both. We have access to incredible physicians, hospital systems, public health experts to help guide the district back to in person learning when its time. A vaccine may come -- but it likely won't come soon enough and it won't be taken by enough people and it won't likely be approved for children. The impression that the board is giving to this community is that you are waiting for a miracle vaccine to remove all the worries related to COVID.

The truth is -- even with a 50 percent effective vaccine and a vaccination rate in the 50's we still won't be at a place for herd immunity. Teachers and kids will still be at risk. And that means we need to plan -- our time, our resources, our finances for the gigantic

undertaking that is preparing our schools to go back in person. It means looking at ventilation, it means getting testing front and center like La Grange already has, it means prepping our classrooms and our

stockpiles of soap and hand sanitizer. I fear that come next summer the board will come to the community to say they didn't have enough time to prepare. Now, is the time. Take advantage of the great knowledge and resources in this community. Let's work together to get kids back into school once when it's appropriate.

### **Paul Rubio**

One of the most important reasons why my years at Julian Middle School were so memorable was that it was a time when I came to more deeply appreciate the story of United States history. Through studies in the classroom and on my own, I came to develop a deep love for this country and a strong sense of patriotic pride, which motivated me to do my civic duty as a US citizen.

I read on the District 97 website that "teachers will implement anti-racist curricula and instruction, aligned to the Social Justice Standards from Teaching Tolerance", which is done with the goal of addressing racism in the United States.

I agree that racism is a significant issue that students need to spend time with in the classroom. But I wonder what the end goal of these efforts will be. What will result from students being able to recognize the existence of racism and intolerance throughout the history of our society?

My hope is that any efforts will help students take an honest look at history to see where people of the United States erred in oppressing others, but then motivate them to take appropriate action to heal past wounds. I hope students will feel motivated to fulfill their civic duty as a means of building up the United States to be a better, more righteous country, not just tearing it down because of past wrongs. And I hope they feel a deeper sense of unity with all of their fellow Americans, and a healthy sense of pride for this country, based on an awareness of the goodwill that happened in the past, not just the malice.

George Washington wrote in his Farewell Address, "Citizens, by birth or choice, of a common country has a right to...your affections...The independence and liberty you possess are the work of...common dangers, sufferings, and successes."

Regardless of whether our ancestors were the oppressors or the oppressed, we are all part of this one country, and we all have the opportunity to shape it for the better. We can especially do so when we have a healthy sense of patriotic fervor. How will these efforts of implementing anti-racist curricula and instruction motivate students to feel more deeply connected with their country and fellow countrymen and work toward positive change for the United States?

### **Patrice Moroni**

There are many children who may not thrive at home with remote learning, no matter how much virtual support they have. Several other surrounding districts are prioritizing in person learning for students with IEP/504 plans and grades K-2. Does District 97 have a plan to do the same soon?

In response to the public comments related to remote learning, Amanda Siegfried, Director of Communications shared the current weekly update on the return to in-person learning that was shared with the community last Friday, and reminded everyone that she sends a similar update on a weekly basis.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

#### **9.1.1 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE SEPTEMBER 8, 2020 BOARD MEETING**

Moore moved, seconded by Kearney, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the minutes from the September 8, 2020 board meeting as presented.

ACTION ITEMS

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

## **9.2 APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA**

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

9.2.1 Bill List

9.2.2 Personnel

9.2.3 Disposal of Property

9.2.4 Donation to Brooks Middle School

9.2.5 Adoption of Policy

Policy 2:220 (School Board Meeting Procedure)

Policy 4:180 (Pandemic Preparedness; Management; and Recovery)

Policy 7:40 (Nonpublic School Students, Including Parochial and Home-School Students)

Policy 7:190 (Student Behavior)

Policy 7:340 (Student Records)

Policy 7:345 (Use of Educational Technologies Student Data Privacy and Security)

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

## **9.3.1 ADOPTION OF THE 2020-2021 BUDGET**

Spurlock moved, seconded by Broy, that the Board of Education of Oak Park District 97, adopt the SY21 budget as presented to the board.

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

This item was also approved following the Public Hearing on the budget at the beginning of the meeting.

## **9.3.2 UPHOLD THE UNIFORM GRIEVANCE**

Spurlock moved, seconded by Broy, that the Board of Education, District 97, has reviewed and considered the investigative evidence and findings in the pending Uniform Grievance complaint, which was filed pursuant to Board Policy 2:260, on behalf of Student No. 2020-0922. I move that, based upon and after the Board's consideration of the Complaint Manager's findings, the Administration did not act in violation of Board Policy 6:280. The Board directs the Administration to proceed with the agreed upon next steps, and as part of that process the team shall consider the resolution outlined in Parents' Uniform Grievance complaint.

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

## **ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

### **POLICY UPDATE**

Kearney presented the PRESS 105 policy updates and asked the board to consider adopting these changes during the October 13, 2020 board meeting.

- Policy 2:260 (Uniform Grievance Procedure)
- Policy 2:265 (Title IX Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedure)
- Policy 5:10 (Equal Employment Opportunity and Minority Recruitment)
- Policy 5:20 (Workplace Harassment Prohibited)
- Policy 5:100 (Staff Development Program)
- Policy 5:220 (Substitute Teachers)
- Policy 7:10 (Equal Educational Opportunities)
- Policy 7:20 (Harassment of Students Prohibited)
- Policy 7:180 (Prevention of and Response to Bullying, Intimidation, and Harassment)
- Policy 7:185 (Teen Dating Violence Prohibited)

It was reported that a draft of Policy 7:50 (School Admission and Student Transfer To and From Non District Schools) will be presented during the second board meeting in October for consideration.

### **PUBLIC OFFICIAL BONDS**

Grossi explained that approval of Public Official Bonds is an annual request and will return to the board for action on October 13, 2020. He noted that this year there will be three bonds that will require approval.

## **BOARD ASSIGNMENTS**

BOARD ASSIGNMENTS

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

### **FACILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FAC)**

Spurlock expressed concern that the board has not seen bids for next summer's facilities work. She questioned if FAC has reviewed this information yet. Dr. Kelley offered to reach out to Jeanne Keane, Senior Director of Buildings and Grounds and ask her to update the board on the status via the Friday update.

It was noted that two FAC members may be leaving the committee. Information was requested on the status of this task.

### **COLLABURATION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD**

Liebl reported that the annual Tri-Board meeting is scheduled on November 18, 2020 at 7 p.m. Members Liebl and Spurlock indicated that they will be able to attend. Since this is the tri-board meeting, all board members were encouraged to attend, as a quorum will be required.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL LIAISON REPORT FOLLOW UP (as needed – IGOV, PTO council, CEC, OPEF, Community Council, Tri-Board on Equity, Policy, and Self-Evaluation)

### **IGOV**

Breymaier reported that IGOV met recently, and most of the conversation was around COVID-19 and how it is affecting the community.



## **CONCLUDING ITEMS**

CONCLUDING ITEMS

### **BOARD REMARKS**

Member Breymaier expressed support for the anti-racism curriculum and expressed interest in hearing a presentation on the topic.

President Broy expressed appreciation for the heart felt letters from parents and assured them that the board is listening and appreciates their input.

### **AGENDA MAINTENANCE**

The draft agendas for the October 13, 2020 meeting was reviewed and recommendations were made.

Interest was expressed in hearing a presentation on the anti-racism curriculum and the back-to-school criteria.

Interest was also expressed in hearing an update on the progress that Hanover Research is making and identifying a date when the board might receive an official update from them. Additionally, interest was expressed in answers to the following questions;

- What is the general feedback we are getting from staff on how things are going with remote learning?
- What is the opinion of the childcare providers regarding how things are going with remote learning?

## **ADJOURNMENT**

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to conduct, Vice President Kim declared the meeting adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Board President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Board Secretary