

Official Minutes of the  
Oak Park Board of Education District 97  
260 Madison Street, Oak Park  
January 11, 2022 Regular Meeting

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

President Kim called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Kim, Ross Dribin, Hurd Johnson, Kinhal, Spurlock, Moore, Kearney (joined remote)

Absent: None

Also Present: Interim Superintendent Dr. Griff Powell, Associate Superintendent of Education Felicia Starks Turner, Interim Senior Director of Human Resources Cathie Pezanoski, Senior Director of Technology Michael Arensdorff, Senior Director of Communications Amanda Siegfried, Chief Academic and Accountability Officer Eboney Lofton, Senior Director of Equity Carrie Kamm, Senior Director of Buildings & Grounds Jeanne Keane, Senior Director of Finance Patrick King, Oak Park Director of Public Health Dr. Theresa Chapple McGruder, Rob Grossi and Lonya Boose Board Secretary.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

EXECUTIVE  
SESSION

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

**OPEN SESSION**

OPEN  
SESSION

President Kim motioned that the Board move into Open Session at 7:02 p.m. All present members of the Board were in agreement. The Board convened in Open Session at 7:08 p.m.

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

PUBLIC  
COMMENT

As a pediatrician and parent of students in D97, I would love to be able to help every student, teacher and staff member to have well-fitting, better quality masks which are needed right now. I would also love if we could somehow provide HEPA filters for every classroom, although I realize this may be more difficult. Please let me know if we as a community can help with this, and I am happy to help organize donations.

Thank you very much.  
Robin Kalish

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Good morning,

I'm writing to request that the District 97 School Board pass a Safe Firearm Storage Resolution to ensure that parents know about how secure gun storage can prevent school shootings, unintentional shootings and suicide. Local school districts around the US are taking proactive steps to address the safety of students and the school community through awareness about the importance of secure storage practices, and about Illinois' child access prevention law.

More than [2 million students now attend schools with secure firearm storage awareness policies](#), and Oak Park District 97 should join them.

I recognize that your work is challenging under normal circumstances, and that the decision-making around Covid-19 policies are incredibly stressful. I appreciate all that you do as a school board to keep our schools safe and healthy, and encourage the passing of a Safe Storage Resolution for this very reason.

Is it possible to put this item on an upcoming meeting agenda? I can present further evidence and background on this effort, and better explain how providing information to D97 families about secure storage is essential to keeping our schools safe. Please let me know how best to proceed.

In the meantime, [here is a sample draft](#) of a Secure Storage Resolution that can be edited or modified, to give you an idea of what other school districts around the country have passed. An Information sheet is also attached to this email.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration,

Jenna Leving Jacobson, PhD  
MOMS DEMAND ACTION, local lead

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## COVID is AIRBORNE

Dear Board Members and Superintendents,

First and foremost, I'm an advocate for keeping schools open for in-person learning, but as I've advocated to this board before we need to make sure it's done safely. I appreciate all the mitigations that have been put in place thus far, however we can do better. A swiss cheese approach of layering multiple mitigations upon each other is the best way to ensure our children can remain safe and in school. To that end, I'm asking that this board re-look at better masks, air purifiers and CO2 monitoring.

Multiple experts are saying now is the time to upgrade [to Hi-Fi \(KF95/94/N95\) masks](#) and provide them to whomever needs them including both kids and staff. Asking parents and staff to procure Hi-Fi masks is a high burden and we are making it an individual responsibility despite it being a shared benefit. The district should provide better masks to whomever needs them, surgical masks will not stop this variant. The high school has upgraded to N95/KF94 masks, our younger students should be no different.

Second, we need to be continuously filtering the air. There is no way to eat lunch without removing masks and if we want to make sure this is done safely, we should be cleaning the air. This board has discussed air purifiers before and opted out of putting them in every classroom, I ask that you reconsider this decision. Every additional mitigation that we take could be one less student with COVID. Considering the [recent CDC report](#) around increased diabetes risk to kids that have had COVID, our goal should be to minimize kids getting COVID.

Lastly the district should revisit the topic of continuous CO2 monitoring in the classroom. I appreciate the ventilation improvements that have been made. However, continuous CO2 monitoring particularly when classrooms are full will provide a signal if there are adequate ACH (air exchanges) happening.

All of these are investments that will pay dividends post-COVID or even post-Omicron. We don't know what the next variant will bring. Investing in air quality will help all our students.

I appreciate that this district is doing more than other districts around the state and even the country, but why can't this be a race to the top where we strive for the safest in-person environment possible. We will

get through this surge; however, I fear that it will not be the last. We need to be prepared to meet the next one.

Thank you for your service and consideration.

Ranga Bodla  
Parent of Two Holmes Hawks

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Dear Board Members:

My name is David Wells, and I am one of the permanent substitute teachers currently working at Julian Middle School. My question is a technical one, regarding health insurance for those substitute teachers who are working full time in all ten buildings here in the district.

When I was hired for the 2020-21 school year, one of the reasons I took the job was because, due to Covid, the board decided to include the option of medical benefits for the then-new positions of in-building substitute teachers. This fall, I was surprised to learn that these benefits were no longer being offered. I took the job anyway, thinking that maybe this decision would soon be changed, but I now see that was wishful thinking on my part.

I would hope that it would be obvious to everyone in this meeting why a school district would choose to give healthcare benefits to someone working full-time during a pandemic, especially during the changes now present due to the Omicron variant, so I'll limit my comments to three brief questions:

- Is the board aware of the decision not to continue to provide benefits to the permanent substitute teachers currently working in d97?
- If so, would one of you be willing to explain the reasoning behind this decision not to offer these benefits?
- And lastly, given the value that is offered to the district by having teachers who have already developed good teaching relationships with students at all grade levels, and have the professionalism and flexibility to step in and continue instruction seamlessly no matter the subject or level of difficulty, would you be open to reconsidering that decision?

In light of the much more challenging circumstances that are being faced by teachers in other districts, both locally and nationwide, I'd like to thank the board for providing the resources and testing necessary to have this return to instruction, while challenging, to be carried out as safely and rationally as possible. I'd also like to thank the clear support of the Julian administration, my teaching colleagues, and parents in the d97 community. Above all, I'd like to commend the excellent students that I am lucky enough to teach every day, who are showing admirable maturity and strength in keeping in-person learning as safe and productive as possible.

Most sincerely,

David Wells

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#### **4. ACTION ITEMS**

##### **4.1 APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA**

Spurlock moved, seconded by Moore that the Board of Education, of Oak Park Elementary School District 97, approves the consent agenda as presented.

- 4.1.1 Approval of Minutes from December 14, 2021 Board Meeting
- 4.1.2 Approval of Minutes from January 4, 2022 Special Board Meeting
- 4.1.3 Approval of Minutes from January 5, 2022 Special Board Meeting
- 4.1.4 Bill List
- 4.1.5 Personnel
- 4.1.6 Whittier PTO Tree Donation (12/14/2021)
- 4.1.7 IGA: Data Sharing with District 200 (ITEM PULLED FROM CONSENT FOR DISCUSSION 01/25/22)
- 4.1.8 Buildings and Grounds Early Equipment Release

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

## **4.2 DISCUSSION AND ACTION**

### **4.2.1 Food Service and Student Registration Fees (12/14/2021)**

(Available Online)

Ross Dribin moved, seconded by Moore that the Board of Education, of Oak Park Elementary School District 97, approve the 2022-2023 food service and registration fees as presented.

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

### **4.2.2 Budget Authority (12/14/2021)**

(Available Online)

Spurlock moved, seconded by Moore that the Board of Education, of Oak Park Elementary School District 97, authorizes the Superintendent of Schools to commence the preparation of the 2022-2023 budget in accordance with the proposed timeline as presented.

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

### **4.2.3 Adoption of Summer Programming (12/14/2021)**

(Available Online)

Spurlock moved, seconded by Ross Dribin that the Board of Education, of Oak Park Elementary School District 97, approve the 2022 summer programming as presented on December 14, 2021, not to exceed \$301,370.

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

**5. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS****5.1 New Legislation (Public Act 102-0519)**

(Presented by Rob Grossi and Patrick King)

In the fall of 2021, the Illinois General Assembly passed Public Act 102-0519, which allows taxing bodies to recapture lost revenues paid for certain property tax appeals paid from District tax collections over the past 12 months. The method to recapture the lost revenues is through an additional tax levy above and beyond the tax levy approved by the Board in December 2021.

Cook County recently released the figures which reflect that the District lost \$1,080,022 in tax appeals over the 12-month period. Per the new law, without any action taken by the Board; the County will extend these additional taxes to all the taxpayers of the District above the tax levy that was approved by the Board in December 2021.

If the Board of Education elects to allow the levy, no formal action will be necessary. If the Board elects to abate (eliminate) this additional tax levy, then it will need to adopt an abatement resolution by its March board meeting and file such resolution with Cook County by April 1, 2022.

**6. SPECIAL REPORTS**

SPECIAL REPORT

**6.1 School Update**

Dr. Powell mentions that Administration in consultation with the Oak Park Department of Public Health Director, are looking into an adaptive pause. The adaptive pause is due to the following factors:

- Inability to keep up with contract tracing in a timely manner
- Lack of staff to effectively implement lunchtime mitigations
- An unprecedented number of staff absences including positions critical to safety operations and
- Inability to maintain a clean and healthy school environment of which keeping buildings clean is our first line of defense.

Communication will be sent from Central Office regarding the adaptive pause, to Staff and Families over the next 24 hours. Administration is currently working on the logistics of this process and potential for allowing our most vulnerable student population which includes, Early Childhood, PKP and Multi-needs, the ability to maintain in person instruction during this time.

The School Board then heard from Dr. Theresa Chapple McGruder, Director of Public Health for Oak Park. Dr. Chapple was able to answer questions from the Board around a possible Adaptive Pause. After providing medical insight, the Board decided to go with a pause for 2 days leading into the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Weekend. Thursday January 13 and Friday January 14, 2022.

**Why an Adaptive Pause?**

(The Below Information can be found on District 97 website)

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) allows districts to utilize adaptive pauses when the large number of new cases makes it difficult for schools and local health departments to conduct prompt investigations to identify and to exclude/quarantine close contacts, or if there is an unsafe environment due to lack of masking and/or testing.

We have been in close communication with the Oak Park Department of Public Health regarding the high number of student and staff cases/absences we are currently experiencing as a result of the current surge of COVID-19 in our community. Our staff absences this week totaled 126 on Monday and 113 on

Tuesday (representing more than 10% of staff district-wide). These absences are impacting every level of our organization, from classroom teachers and administrators to lunchroom supervisors, teacher assistants, custodians, nurses and school support staff.

We are also experiencing the highest number of student cases since the start of the pandemic ([click here to view the district dashboard](#)). Per IDPH guidelines, each positive case requires contact tracing by the school nurse, communication with staff and families, and implementation of safety protocols for close contacts. Contact tracing is a core safety mitigation required by IDPH, and the inability to know who is a close contact and to employ these steps could place the school at risk for substantial spread.

Due to the large number of new cases and critical staff absences, all of our schools are struggling to complete contact tracing and implement the required safety protocols for close contacts in a timely manner. The adaptive pause will give the district additional time to complete this work and seek outside resources to support our mitigations moving forward. It will also allow us to review the [updated guidance from IDPH and the Illinois State Board of Education](#) (published Tuesday night) and consult with the local health department about implementation of the updated protocols.

## **7. BOARD ASSIGNMENTS**

(No New Information)

BOARD  
ASSIGNMENTS

## **8. CONCLUDING ITEMS**

### **9.1 BOARD REMARKS**

CONCLUDING  
ITEMS

The Board of Education is looking for your feedback. The Board will be livestreaming a community forum and have invited its two finalist to participate. This will take place on January 12, 2022 beginning at 6:00PM. Additional information on how to view the forum can be found on the Districts website.

## **AGENDA MAINTENANCE**

The draft agenda for the January 25, 2022 meeting was reviewed.

- Add Audit Presentation

ADJOURNMENT

## **10. ADJOURNMENT**

Spurlock moved, seconded by Ross Dribin that the meeting be adjourned. There being no further business to conduct, President Kim declared the meeting adjourned at 10:02 p.m.

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Board President

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Board Secretary