

**Official Minutes of the
Oak Park Board of Education District 97
260 Madison Street, Oak Park, Cook County, Illinois
July 30, 2020 Meeting – Special 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 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Broy, Kim, Spurlock, Breymaier, Liebl, Moore, and Kearney
Absent: None
Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Carol Kelley, Associate Superintendent of Education Felicia Starks Turner, Director of Communications Amanda Siegfried, Chief Academic and Accountability Officer Eboney Lofton, Senior Director of Buildings and Grounds Jeanne Keane, Senior Director of Equity Carrie Kamm, Senior Director of Technology Michael Arensdorff, Consultant Rob Grossi, and Board Secretary Sheryl Marinier.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Breymaier moved, seconded by Spurlock that the Board move into executive session for the purpose of Collective Negotiations 5 ILCS 120/2(C)(2), at 6:01 p.m.

EXECUTIVE
SESSION

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

OPEN SESSION

Spurlock moved, seconded by Breymaier that the Board move into Open Session at 8:02 p.m. All members of the Board were in agreement. The Board reconvened in Open Session at 8:04 p.m.

OPEN SESSION

DISCUSSION ABOUT CHILDCARE FINANCIALS

Rob Grossi acknowledged the Park District and Hephzibah for their support in trying to resolve the current childcare concerns due to the upcoming remote learning. He reported that the two partners are currently accommodating about 500 students, and are developing staff to work with the students with recognition of their needs. He noted that since the programs are set up and ready to go, he only has the following questions;

DISCUSSION
ABOUT
CHILDCARE
FINANCIALS

- 1) Will the board supply financial support for families who need financial assistance?
- 2) Can the district expand the programs to other buildings if the need arises?
- 3) Will the district work with the organizations to maximize the programs?
- 4) Will the board recommend forgoing the bond-abatement in an equal cost of the program?

Grossi noted that the board does not need to make a decision on the bond abatement until February, which gives the district time to determine how much is actually needed to support the programs. The board members expressed support for this approach and the following questions/comments were shared.

- It was noted that there are other sources of funding for the families in need. It was suggested that the district try to outsource funding and supplement them as well.
- It was noted that Hephzibah already offers a sliding scale for fees. Interest was expressed in knowing more about that process.

- Interest was expressed in knowing more about how the funds will be used.
- Interest was expressed in knowing if the programs fill up, would the district consider supporting families financially who need to use a different caregiver.
- It was suggested that a survey be sent out to gauge the need.
- It was suggested that families be asked what they can afford and consider a sliding scale to accommodate their needs.

Grossi noted that the capacity of the programs would be limited to 150 students (10-15 students and one caregiver per classroom) in each building. The programs will be using five facilities. Both programs will expand capacity as needed within the maximum capacity that the district will allow, as long as there is enough staff to supervise the students. There would be ongoing communication between the school and the providers about student needs. This would assure that the students are in an environment that supports learning. He assured the board that as long as the demand is there, the district will do whatever it can to build capacity that is safe within its facilities.

Grossi noted that the district saved between \$700,000 to \$1,000,000 last year due to the remote learning requirements. He told the board that the savings this year will be dependent on other decisions that the board will need to make in the near future. He reminded the board that the last time they reviewed projections was pre-Covid. At that time, the district had about four months of reserves, and expenses were stabilizing. Since Covid, there is more concern about the long-term financial status of the district. He recommended saving some of the current savings to address future capital projects.

Grossi reported that he will be meeting with the two programs tomorrow to dive deeper into the details of how to accept students into the program.

Representatives from both organizations assured the board that they will do everything they can to ensure that everyone who needs care will get it. They also told the board that they will go back to the current enrollment, ensuring spots for those currently enrolled, once the pandemic subsidies and schools reopen.

It was noted that there are four other entities that are willing to support this need as well; and lawyers are currently working on an agreement.

Grossi reported that he is meeting with representatives from Hephzibah and the Park District tomorrow, and meeting with Jeanne Keane regarding capacity, and will update the board on the progress.

ACTION ITEMS

ACTION ITEMS

6.1 APPROVAL OF AMENDED SCHOOL FEES

Breymaier moved, seconded by Spurlock, that the Board of Education, District 97, amend the SY21 student fees to eliminate the supervision fee for all grades, and the activity fee for the middle school grades for the 2020-2021 school year.

Rob Grossi explained that there are several fees that are charged to students annually that were approved by the board in December. At that time, the board approved fees to stay unchanged from the 2019-2020 school year, but he noted that with the pandemic causing the district to teach remotely, there will be no need for supervision fees in all grades or activity fees for the middle school students. Grossi recommended that the board amend their earlier decision and not charge these fees for the 2020-2021 school year. Grossi noted that technology fees and textbook fees would need to stay in place.

Ayes: Breymaier, Spurlock, Moore, Kearney, Liebl, Broy, and Kim
Nays: None

Absent: None
Motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

PUBLIC
COMMENT

Due to the nature of a virtual Board meeting, the public was asked to email their comments to the Board. All comments that were received prior to 5:30 p.m. were read aloud. The Board made it clear that any comments that were received after that time would be included in the minutes, but not read aloud. All comments were received prior to the start of the meeting and were read aloud.

President Broy read the following statements.

Susan Raphael

Since this meeting is about fees and our district will at least begin the year with remote learning, I hope that you will consider making this as easy as possible for our students to succeed and consider providing each student who has an IPAD a Keyboard. By providing a keyboard, we are providing a tool that will be helpful for writing and completing other remote learning work. The keyboard is also significantly less expensive than providing all students with Chromebooks.

I also wonder if the district could use the fee money towards supporting families with printing needs. Maybe, some of the elementary schools could be set up as carry out printing centers where you could send a document that needs to be printed and then pick up at the center. I do not know what is possible, but I do believe that many families have printing needs that should be considering creatively for remote learning.

Sean Flynn

We have learned that daycare operations will be set up inside District 97 school buildings for the 2020-2021 school year. While this is certainly helpful to those of us, like my family, who need supervision for our children during school hours, it also does not make a whole lot of sense. I think there are many people in this community who wonder why it is not safe enough to send our children to in-person school this year, yet at the same time, the district itself is saying it is safe enough for us to pay, beyond our already ample tax payments to District 97, huge sums to child-care organizations (including the Park District, a tax-funded entity) that will be opening up inside the schools themselves to watch our kids during remote school.

With that in mind:

- Why is it not safe for our teachers to go to school, yet it is safe for both child care workers and our children to be teaching and learning in the same rooms teachers won't enter?
- Why is it better for our children to be supervised by non-teachers instead of being taught by the well-paid teachers we already have in this district?
- Will District 97 be legally responsible for the health risks that daycare workers are taking on in our schools because teachers will not?
- Will District 97 be subsidizing for all district students the extensive costs that so many working parents must shoulder for supplemental child care this year?

Second of all, I recognize that the district is likely using some sort of state-approved guidelines for how public meetings are operated. However, the placement of Public Comment at the very end of these meetings and restricting it pre-submitted emails, has created much of the consternation and distrust that is so evident in so many conversations.

At the July 22 special BOE meeting, the people not affiliated with the District 97 administration who offered their opinions for the board during the official administration presentation included the Park District, the OPTA, some teachers and principals, and several independent child care organizations, some of whom are for-profit. Other than board members and those representing the groups above, not a single district parent was afforded the opportunity to talk until Public Comment, more than two hours later. Unfortunately, after Dr. Kelley announced the bombshell news that there would only be remote school in the first trimester, many if not most of those pre-submitted comments had been rendered embarrassingly moot by the time they were read.

I ask the board to stop hiding behind their arcane rules and reconsider how the public is allowed to have a voice so that they feel like they are actually being heard, rather than merely rattled off at the end of a long meeting. When the school year plays out the way it is going right now, and when there is no authentic opportunity to speak with the decision makers, it is hard to trust that those making these monumental decisions actually have the best interests of our kids in mind.

ADJOURNMENT

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to conduct, Vice President Kim declared the meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Board President

Board Secretary