

Official Minutes of the
Oak Park Board of Education District 97
260 Madison Street, Oak Park
September 27, 2021 Special 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 Hurd Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

Present: Hurd Johnson, Moore, Ross Dribin, Spurlock (joined remote), Kearney (joined remote)
Absent: Kim
Also Present: Dr. Griff Powell Interim Superintendent, Michael Arensdorff Senior Director of Technology, Amanda Siegfried Senior Director of Communications, Lonya Boose Board Secretary, Board Candidates Brian Hoppe, Kerri Joy, Shyla Kinhal, Jennifer Kovar and Gabriel Salazar

ROLL CALL

OPEN SESSION

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Hurd Johnson motioned that the board move into Open Session at 5:33 p.m. The motion was seconded by Moore. All members of the Board were in agreement. The Board reconvened in Open Session at 5:33 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

PUBLIC COMMENT

-No Public Comment

BOARD VACANCY INTERVIEWS

(RECORDING AVAILABLE ONLINE)

VACANCY INTERVIEWS

Candidates:

1. Brian Hoppe
2. Kerri Joy
3. Shyla Kinhal
4. Jennifer Kovar
5. Gabriel Salazar

Candidates engaged in a forum style interview process, where the Board facilitated a panel discussion. All the Candidates were given two minutes each for Opening and Closing Remarks, and three minutes each for content related to the following questions:

1. What are the biggest challenges currently facing District 97 and what are you looking for in a new superintendent to address them?
2. How do you define equity, and what do you see as the short and long term goals for the district in relation to equity and inclusion?
3. How effective do you think district policies and programs have been in bridging the opportunity gap? As a board member, how will you determine the success or failure of the district efforts?
4. How will you balance the community's desire to decrease the property tax burden with the need to create and support an equitable, high quality learning environment and address ongoing facilities issues?

Opening/Closing Candidate Remarks

(Summary of remarks are noted below)

Brian Hoppe **Opening Remarks;** tackling complexed issues, leaders are being called upon. School Board leaders work to develop student achievement, maintain relationships with union leadership, and community. District 97's vision statement is to create a positive learning environment for all students that is equitable, inclusive and focused on the whole child. Boards responsibility is to serve the whole child in this climate. **Closing Remarks;** Thank you Board and those that joined this meeting. Also thank you for the opportunity to potentially serve this board and the community. As a father I never thought I would want to do this, but as I interact with parents in the community, I saw this opportunity as something I was called to do. A career in public service, as with my work as an Attorney. I am also a counselor for a retirement facility. Board members are mediators, safety officers but also serve by listening, and training while leading the community through this process.

Kerri Joy **Opening Remarks;** I would like to thank the Board and the Administration for this opportunity and this forum. I am excited to be here. Born and raised in Oak Park, I have a degree from Columbia and have also traveled abroad. I always knew Oak Park was where I would want to raise my children. Learning and Development at corporate level, founding member of a Black Employee Resource Group. I also work with Professional Advancement for Black Talent. Racial and Educational Equality is pivotal as you search for a new Superintendent. Inclusive, and authentic representation. **Closing Remarks;** Thank you for your dedication. Teaching and volunteering are thankless. I am excited about what's to come. I welcome the opportunity. There is a divide, it is important to have a safe space, its intimidating to step up. I made it a priority to grow my network. I want to be a part of what's happening under the surface, eager to be more formally involved.

Shyla Kinhal **Opening Remarks;** Over the next two to three years, biggest topics will be response to COVID, equitable outcomes, fostering health dialog across all stakeholders and the Superintendent search. I have built my career on equity. Over eight years in Primary Grades, I've worked to design curriculum that included equity. Equity gaps that most impact students are a huge part of my work. Education is at the forefront; I have a vested interest in students attending equitable schools. **Closing Remarks;** I want to support the institution I care most about, schools' families and Staff. I believe all students can succeed. I want to help this Board with bridging the achievement gap, I have a vested interest as a future Lincoln Parent and also a deep love for Oak Park.

Jennifer Kovar **Opening Remarks;** fourteen years in Oak Park, background includes over 20 years in Education. First, education reform in Washington, DC, Masters in Teaching, Boston. Now in Oak Park, I would like to bring this knowledge to the Oak Park School Board. I'm involved with the Disability Access Commission, have experience in working collaboratively with Boards as such with this School Board. The issues at hand are important to me, looking for a new Superintendent and furthering the equity policy. **Closing Remarks;** I ran for the School Board last Spring. I have shown through my campaigning, my commitment and engagement to this community. This is reflected by the ballot petitions needed to run for the Board seat. I have been interested for years in pursuing community service and also work with Lincoln school so I know what it takes to collaborate, be a team player and make effective decisions. I have a deep knowledge base of Teaching and Learning, National Board Certification, efforts around technology and curriculum.

Gabriel Salazar **Opening Remarks;** I appreciate your time; it's coming up on seven years I've been in Oak Park. I have seen this opportunity as a way to give back, I currently work two jobs and also served this Country, with tours in the Air Force. I see this as an opportunity to serve our students and the community we live in; I feel my work as an Engineer will serve me well as an addition to this School Board. **Closing Remarks;** Thank you for this opportunity. Never thought I would apply or potentially be

a School Board Member. I want to give back, I want students to have what they need to be successful, and make sure everyone in this district has what it takes. I have a lot to learn about how to be a good Board Member, building on my experience in the Armed Services, I am willing and want to work with the Board to achieve its goals.

Board Remarks

Vice President Hurd Johnson thanked each of the candidates for engaging in this process and also for “putting themselves out there” and heeding the call to serve when needed. Understanding this process is not easy, but the willingness to take this on is appreciated.

Candidate Questions

(This portion of the meeting, candidates were allowed to ask the Board questions)

Brian Hoppe; I haven’t been to many Board meetings, what do you think is the biggest challenge being faced by the Board?

Board Member Kearney; logistics and adaptations around the pandemic as we were not expecting to be where we are now at this point. We have a better sense of measures needed, early on we did not have a lot of data. We are hoping what we have done so far is working as we continue to be flexible and adaptable towards getting to a place where we can ease restrictions, quarantine and testing. There is a lot that goes into representing a School District, and to add, the pandemic as we continue to effectively educate students.

Board Member Spurlock; the pandemic is unique. There is also never a shortage of other things the board is faced with. There is so much involved in a School District, layering the pandemic on top of everything else. We are always looking for ways to impact Staff, Students and the Community.

Kerri Joy; I understand the tremendous work of the Board. Congratulations Venus on your Vice President appointment. What’s missing from former board member Jeremy Duffy’s departure, top two – three objectives?

Board Member Moore; Jeremy was a wealth of knowledge. Having been on this Board over two years prioritizing while also providing a safe environment while also creating a safe space for people to be safe in school. Questions around COVID, informing your school aged students of the realities, regaining community trust. There is a lot that has happened, taxes, are we doing the right thing, gaining input. We are in this with you, we are all home owners.

ADJOURNMENT

Moore moved, seconded by Ross Dribin that the meeting be adjourned. There being no further business to conduct, Vice President Hurd Johnson declared the meeting adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

Board President

Board Secretary