

Official Minutes of the  
Oak Park Board of Education District 97  
260 Madison Street, Oak Park  
December 13, 2022 Regular Meeting

This meeting was held in-person and virtually using Livestream. Board members met in person along with Administration.

President Kim called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

Present: Kim, Moore, Ross Dribin, Spurlock, Kearney, Hurd Johnson, Kinhal

ROLL CALL

Absent: None

Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Ushma Shah, Associate Superintendent of Education Dr. Felicia Starks Turner, Interim Senior Director of Human Resources Dr. Tim Kilrea, Senior Director of Technology Michael Arensdorff, Chief Academic and Accountability Officer Dr. Ebony Lofton, Senior Director of Equity Dr. Carrie Kamm, Senior Director of Buildings & Grounds Jeanne Keane, Senior Director of Finance Patrick King, Communications Coordinator Rebecca Bald, and Lonya Boose Board Secretary.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

EXECUTIVE  
SESSION

Spurlock moved, seconded by Kearney 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 6:04 p.m.

**OPEN SESSION**

OPEN  
SESSION

President Kim motioned that the Board move into Open Session at 7:05 p.m. All present members of the Board were in agreement. The Board convened in Open Session at 7:10 p.m.

**3. PUBLIC HEARING – Tax Levy**

PUBLIC  
HEARING

Public Hearing on 2022 Tax Levy

OPENING MOTION: That the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 moves in to Open Session with a public hearing on the District’s 2022 tax levy.

CLOSING MOTION: That the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 moves to close the public hearing on the District’s 2022 tax levy.

\*Note, No Public Comment was received during the districts Public Hearing.

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

PUBLIC  
COMMENT

From: Gregg Rosen

Good evening. My name is Gregg Rosen. I have two children at Longfellow Elementary School. I am representing two classrooms of parents & students on behalf of Ms. Kerr & Ms. Schwabenbauer, many of those parents are attending tonight and others who could not make it due to the Julian band

concert, but also expressed their concern. Yesterday on 12/12 we were notified that Ms. Kerr was resigning and not returning after holiday break. Today on 12/13 we were then notified of Ms. Schwabenbauer's resignation with similar terms. Being the son of a retired elementary school teacher, I fully understand the commitment and responsibility teachers undertake at the beginning of each school year. I also understand how much passion and pride those same teachers take in the learning and development of every single student.

For a single teacher to resign for personal reasons mid-year could theoretically be understood. But for two in the same grade class to resign for what we are being told is personal decisions, draws immediate red flag concerns. To an outsider looking in, it appears those teachers chose mental health over being in an unhealthy work environment. Unfortunately, this is following a consistent turnover trend within Longfellow. From what we the parents understand, both the school and district-level administration are creating a less than suitable and at times unproductive working environment for our teachers. Again, community conversation will tell you that the Longfellow teachers are not happy within their working environment.

Our teachers are the fabric of our community, and they deserve better. We, the tax paying parents deserve better. Most of all, our children deserve better. Teachers do not quit on children. They quit on bad leadership.

We are asking the Board to conduct exit interviews with both Ms. Kerr and Ms. Schwabenbauer without the participation of the administration of Longfellow or the School District. Essentially making this an independent discussion. The board should look to identify and understand the underlying issues leading up to and ultimately resulting in their resignations. Why were they not willing to commit to finishing out the remainder of the school year? What was their experience with Ms. Jefferson and the school district as a whole? What else should we know about?

We also ask that the Board present an action plan in creating a more positive working environment for our Longfellow teachers based on the findings. This should be inclusive of a new exit interview protocol for teachers and staff members who leave Longfellow conducted by a Board member(s) going forward. We are also requesting that the board address this with the parent group after this meeting.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this concern.

Sincerely, concerned parents of Ms. Kerr and Ms. Schwabenbauer's students.

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From: Ranga Bodla

Superintendent Dr. Shah and Board of Education Members,

We share a common goal of being safe and healthy. Our kids learn best when they are in good health and in school. The current winter's tridemic of flu, RSV, and COVID threatens our abilities to create such an environment. Pediatric ICU beds are almost full in Illinois. There is a nationwide shortage of amoxicillin. Oak Park's parents are tracking down antibiotics and meds for their kids on Facebook. The same groups are working together to check emergency room wait times, make air filter boxes for each other, and share rapid tests. The CDC recently elevated Cook County's Community Level to Medium status. Absences and COVID-19 cases are also high in our schools. Yet since my last public comment to this board months ago, COVID has barely been mentioned at this board table. A recent D97 video about winter illnesses failed to mention testing for COVID and the only mention of masks is to be kind to those wearing them.

For the current school year, the district has recorded twice the number of COVID cases than it did during the same time last year, when we had multiple mitigations in place including masking and SHIELD testing. Maintaining a healthy environment under current conditions requires more from the district. It also means we have to acknowledge that COVID is NOT over and keeping kids safe and healthy means we have to recognize that. I get that the district does not want to be responsible for public health, then bring back the Health Department for regular updates. Acknowledge at the board table that making up learning loss means keeping kids healthy.

We are just now seeing the effects of the Thanksgiving Spike and I fear that the next month will be worse. The district can implement meaningful protections to minimize a spike in cases after the coming Winter Break. D97 can support testing and encourage masking after Winter Break. The district is able to implement a testing program on its own. They have a stockpile of rapid tests and a good relationship with SHIELD testing representatives. D97 should encourage families to test prior to returning from Winter Break. D97 should encourage families to take advantage of testing provided by the health department. D97 can facilitate additional testing by sending rapid tests home before break and by offering SHIELD testing during the first weeks of January. Like the CDC, D97 should acknowledge that masking can help reduce all respiratory illnesses and keep students in school.

We recognize that it takes community collaboration to mitigate the spread of viruses in our village. Given the current tridemic and our strained pediatric healthcare system, we must work together to create a healthy school environment. Taking the requested actions to control the spread of viruses will ensure that kids are healthy and able to attend school. I implore you to acknowledge the very real threat in front of us.

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From: Qiana Banks

I am the mother of a son with Autism. On August 29 he was at Whittier School, and was later found on Chicago Ave by police. I received information from staff that my son was found outside the gates of the school. Why would there be a police report if my son was found outside the gates. Because of his age, I had to FOIA the police report. The staff stated my son ran away at recess. The police report states that neighbors, multiple callers contacted 911 telling them a child was trying to get into the doors of the building after everyone went into inside. I asked administration can I review the video of the playground because what I was being told was not lining up with what is written in the report.

My student is non-verbal. I did not feel comfortable with my son staying at Whittier Elementary. I requested him be moved. I am asking for head counts, when students enter the building, what is the policy on parent review of video when students have gone missing. I have heard multiple stories of what has happened to my son. I was told by DCFS that an altercation happened on the playground around the time that my son went missing. Who was watching my son and other students. How was he allowed to leave the school. In the time that he was found on Chicago Ave and Ridgeland, who knew he was missing? What is the policy in situations like this? If my son can leave off campus, who can get on to campus? I am not mad; I am worried and concerned for the safety of my son. I am asking the board to please provide me with this information.

Thank You.

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## **5. SPECIAL REPORTS**

### **5.1 #D97Joy Culture and Celebration Update**

#### **Student Celebrations**

- Brooks Brings Inclusive Robotics Carnival to Whittier. A group of Brooks Middle School students faced a unique challenge last month when they were asked to build carnival games for real-life clients: three- and four-year-old students at Whittier Elementary School. Eighth graders in Chris Pros' robotics class spent three weeks on the design process for their creations. Their games provided highly-engaging aesthetic and accessible fun for children. Thank you to all the Robotics students, Teacher Chris Pros along with Tim McDonald who serves as the adaptive P.E. teacher, an amazing learning experience for all involved.
- Fifth Graders Face Off at Reading Olympics. Congratulations to all the students who participated in Reading Olympics this Fall. Shout out to Mann Elementary School's Rae Kamenski, Claire Mamola and Keaton Tchang, who took home the top prize at the regional competition on December 6, 2022 which was held at the Oak Park Public Library.
- District 97 Gives Back with Holiday Food and Gift Basket Program. Brooks and Julian Middle school along with Holmes Elementary school all participated in the Holiday Food & Gift Program this year. Put on by the Community of Congregations where Oak Parkers purchase items for other Oak Park Families in need of assistance during the holiday season. Collectively, all three schools sponsored 40 families in the community.

#### Staff/District Recognition

- Education Support Professionals Appreciation. We mentioned briefly at our November board meeting, that Educational Support Professionals (ESP) Day was on Wednesday, November 16, 2022. Today we want to celebrate our ESPs for all the hard work, skill, passion and dedication they each bring to our school community. ESPs provide students with the individual attention, care and support necessary to meet their unique learning needs in and outside the classroom. They also assist teachers and administrators in organizing, managing and supporting the classroom and school environment so that all students have a positive learning experience. Our ESPs also keep our schools clean, safe and healthy so that student's families and staff feel welcomed.

## **6. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

ADMINISTRATIVE  
ITEMS

### **6.1 Recommendation for Summer Programming (action 1.10.23)**

Presenter: Dr. Ebony Lofton, Dr. Tawanda Lawrence, Donna Middleton, Tracy Hamm and Emilie Creehan

Re: D97 2022 Summer Program Summary and D97 Summer Program 2023

Purpose of Report: The purpose of this report is to provide the Board of Education with a summary of the district's 2022 summer programs as well as Summer 2023 programming recommendations for students in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. The information in this report is divided into two parts.

- PART ONE: 2022 Summer Program Summary includes the following seven sections:
  - Summer Launch (1-8)
  - EL Summer Boost Program (1-8)
  - Middle School Summer Math Enrichment (6-8)
  - Summer Music Camp (5-8)
  - Extended School Year Program (EC- 7)
  - Summer Boost (Special Education: EC - 7)
- PART TWO: 2023 Summer Program Recommendations includes the following five sections:
  - D97 2023 Summer Program Schedule

- Summer Launch Student Selection Criteria
- 2023 Summer Program Recommendations
- Proposed Timeline
- Proposed Budget

**Introduction:**

District 97 provides a variety of summer programming that reflects our district’s vision to create a positive learning environment for all students that is equitable, inclusive, and focused on the whole child. Our summer programming also contributes to helping all of our students experience or achieve the following goals:

- Known, nurtured, and celebrated LEARNER
- Empowered and passionate SCHOLAR
- Confident and persistent ACHIEVER
- Creative CRITICAL THINKER & GLOBAL CITIZEN

**PART ONE: 2022 Summer Program Summary**

The summer programming offered in 2022 included seven programs:

- Summer Launch (1-8)
- EL Summer Boost Program (1-8)
- Middle School Summer Math Enrichment (6-8)
- Summer Music Camp (5-8)
- Extended School Year Program (EC - 7)
- Summer Boost (special education) (EC-7)

**PART TWO: 2023 Summer Program Recommendations**

The information in this section of the report is divided into the following five sections:

- D97 2023 Summer Program Schedule
- Summer Launch 2023 Student Selection Criteria and Recommendations
- 2023 Summer Program Recommendations
- Proposed Timeline
- Proposed Budget

\*Complete details of this recommendation including program cost can be found by viewing the memo and or meeting recording on the Board of Education website at <https://www.op97.org/boe/board-meetings>

**6.2 SY24 Budget Authority (action 1.10.23)**

Presenter: Patrick King

**Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Authority and Proposed Budget Calendar**

Budget Authority

The Board of Education designates a person to prepare the tentative budget for Fiscal Year 2024.

Pursuant to the Illinois School Code, Section 105, ILCS 5/17-1 the Board of Education shall designate some person or persons to prepare a tentative budget. Therefore, the Superintendent of Schools should be authorized to commence the preparation of the tentative budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023 and ending June 30, 2024; the budget shall be filed with the Secretary of this Board.

Budget Planning

In accordance with Board Policy 4:10 Fiscal and Business Management

Annually, the Board adopts a proposed budget calendar, indicating dates for presentation by the Superintendent of receipts, estimates, preliminary expenditure recommendations by funds, and major Board actions affecting the budget.

The proposed calendar for such preparation, presentation, and adoption will be as follows:

- July 11, 2023: Update Board on preliminary results of prior fiscal year and discuss macro-level issues regarding budget development
- August 8, 2023: present the tentative FY2024 Budget for Board discussion and authorize the tentative budget for public display and the publication of Notice of Public Hearing to be held on September 12, 2023
- August 9, 2023: Tentative budget placed on public display
- September 12, 2023: BOE Meeting to conduct public hearing and adopt the final budget

Based on the information above, it is recommended that the Superintendent of Schools is authorized to commence preparation of the FY2024 annual budget as of the date of this memo.

## **7. ACTION ITEMS**

ACTION  
ITEMS

### **7.1 APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA**

Ross Dribin moved, seconded by Moore that the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 moves to approve the consent agenda as presented.

- 7.1.1 Approval of Minutes from the November 15, 2022 Board Meeting
- 7.1.2 Bill List
- 7.1.3 Personnel
- 7.1.4 Approval : Depositories and Signatories
- 7.1.5 Approval : BRAVO Gift Donation
- 7.1.6 Approval : Curriculum Donation & Recycle Request
- 7.1.7 Approval : Wrestling Program Donation
- 7.1.8 Approval : Mann PTO Donation of Funds for Hi-Low Bottle Filler Station

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Ross Dribin, Moore, Spurlock, Hurd Johnson, Kinhal

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion passed.

### **7.2 DISCUSSION AND ACTION**

#### **7.2.1 Notice of Remedial Warning for Tenure Teacher**

Hurd Johnson moved, seconded by Moore that the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 moves to adopt the Resolution authorizing issuance of the Notice of Remedial Warning to Tenured Teacher.

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Moore, Hurd Johnson, Kinhal, Ross Dribin, Spurlock

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion passed.

### **7.2.2 Approval: Daily Substitute Teacher Compensation Recommendation**

Presenter: Dr. Tim Kilrea

Re: Increase of Substitute Teacher Pay

The building principals continue to share their concerns daily regarding the inability to fill all teacher absences on a daily basis.

To improve the building principal's daily ability to fill all teacher absences regularly each week, Human Resource Senior Directors are recommending to increase the daily substitute teacher rate to \$140 per day with the possibility of having it increase to \$150 per day if the substitute is in this position for more than 20 days.

We are also recommending to increase the number of permanent substitute teachers hired at the middle school level to five for each building rather than four which is what they have currently.

\*Complete memo is available on the Board of Education website at <https://www.op97.org/boe/board-meetings>

#### **Motion:**

Hurd Johnson moved, seconded by Spurlock that the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 moves to approve the recommendation of Administration to increase the daily Substitute Teacher compensation rate not to exceed \$150.

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Moore, Hurd Johnson, Kinhal, Ross Dribin, Spurlock

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion passed.

### **7.2.3 Approval of Tax Levy**

Presenter: Patrick King

Summary of the final 2022 Tax Levy Recommendation was presented to the Board of Education. Complete details of this presentation can be found by visiting <https://www.op97.org/boe/board-meetings>.

Hurd Johnson moved, seconded by Ross Dribin that the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 moves to approve the attached Certificate of Tax Levy and associated resolutions providing for adoption of the 2022 tax levy.

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Moore, Hurd Johnson, Kinhal, Ross Dribin, Spurlock

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion passed.

## **8. BOARD ASSIGNMENTS**

- FAC meets Monday December 19, 2022. FORC recently met to discuss the tax levy information that was presented tonight for action.

- IGOV on February 4, 2023 1:30-3pm will host a Candidates Workshop. Board member Ross Dribin will be the district 97 board representative for this event.
- The Collaboration for Early Childhood recently met in person for an update on programming.

**9. CONCLUDING ITEMS**

CONCLUDING  
ITEMS

9.1 Board Remarks

- Board member Moore: I would like a follow up on Policy related to the public comment shared earlier tonight. I would like to see policy on camera access. Can we be provided with an update on this situation.
- Board President Kim: I would like to know our process on exit interviews.
- Board member Moore: If an employee requests an independent exit interview with someone outside of the district, will this request be honored? Has this request ever been made by staff; I am aware of what parents are requesting.
- Board President Kim: It would be helpful, if there is opportunity for this process.
- Board member Kinhal: I believe if we offer this process to one employee, this option should be provided to all employees.

General Remarks of the Board

Gentle Health reminders, masking reminders and updates on collaborative work with the Oak Park Department of Public Health regarding uptick in Illness. Seems that anxiety levels are rising, with holidays approaching. In the past we have taking a position of being forthcoming. I think informing families that we have things in place and are confident in our response if needed or necessary.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

ADJOURNMENT

All Seven Present Members of the Board were in agreement that the meeting be adjourned. There being no further business to conduct, President Kim declared the meeting adjourned by voice vote at 8:59 p.m.

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Board President

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Board Secretary