

Official Minutes of the  
Oak Park Board of Education District 97  
260 Madison Street, Oak Park  
August 25, 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.

President Kim called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Present: Kim, Duffy, Moore, Ross Dribin, Hurd Johnson, Spurlock, Kearney (left meeting at 9:02pm)

Absent:

Also Present: Dr. Griff Powell Interim Superintendent, Dr. Patricia Wernet Interim Superintendent, Felicia Starks Turner Associate Superintendent of Education, Amanda Siegfried Senior Director of Communications, Jeanne Keane Senior Director of Buildings & Grounds, Lonya Boose Board Secretary

ROLL CALL

OPEN SESSION

OPEN SESSION

Duffy motioned that the board move into Open Session at 6:04 p.m. The motion was seconded by Moore. All members of the Board were in agreement. The Board reconvened in Open Session at 9:49 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

PUBLIC  
COMMENT

Dear D97 School Board,

Thank you, Board Members, for all the work that you do, especially during this difficult time. I doubt any of us expected to be in this situation in early July, but here we are. School started today and Delta is accelerating at an alarming pace. While I appreciate the many mitigations (mask mandates, improved ventilation, regular testing) the district has introduced, these mitigations will likely be insufficient to prevent the transmission of Delta in our children's classrooms given its aerosolized nature. I am writing to ask that the district pursue getting at least 2 HEPA air purifiers per classroom. My understanding is that two purifiers placed properly in the classroom in combination with other mitigations will provide better air cleaning. This is especially critical given that almost all of D97 children are too young to be vaccinated.

Based on documents provided by Precision Control it is estimated that the average exchange rates for D97 classrooms is 3. This is the bare minimum recommended by ASHRAE and goal should be to get to 6. Air purifiers are another layer of additive mitigation which will help clean the air and should be pursued in our classrooms.

Observing school outbreaks and dwindling pediatric hospital capacity across the country, it is clear that schools need to layer as many mitigations as possible. We cannot continue to make decisions based on what worked earlier this year. These decisions are insufficient given that the data from the CDC says the Delta variant is almost as virulent as chicken pox whereas the Alpha variant was nowhere close to this. While I appreciate the mitigations the District plans to implement, there are additional layers of protection that physicians and indoor air experts recommend that the District should introduce as well.

My understanding of the epidemiology is that aerosol transmission is the largest risk in sharing enclosed spaces, and every additional mitigation such as air purifiers will limit aerosol transmission in the classroom setting.

I'm asking as a concerned parent to please put in place this additional mitigation of 2 HEPA purifiers per classroom.

Regards,

Ranga Bodla  
Parent of a Holmes 2nd and 4th Grader

Hello,

My name is Aisha Raees and I am a parent in Oak Park, IL, part of District 97. As Delta is more contagious and is spreading between the unvaccinated, I am writing to urge you to please consider additional mitigations for our children's safety. Our children are less susceptible I realize, but even with those small percentages, the actual number of children that could be spared an awful Fall, is very large.

When we reached out to our board, we were told that their hands are tied and that the Governor's office and ISBE do not allow them to incorporate more rigorous and scientifically informed mitigations. When we reach out to the higher ups we are told that these decisions take place at the local level and the board has power. There seems to be some confusion about who has power to do what. In the meantime we are losing precious time to take small and simple measures to ensure that we are doing our best in the most scientifically informed way.

I am sure I don't need to tell you the numbers but I wanted to add my voice to others asking for a fair solution to families that have a lower risk tolerance for a number of very legitimate reasons. Our children missed over a year of school for everyone else to be vaccinated. Why can't we allow them to make a choice to be safer if they want to for a few more months?

I ask that you:

1. Show solidarity and show that you are actually committed to our wellbeing instead of being defensive and citing that you are in compliance or following the rules/standards etc. Please communicate to folks who do have power and advocate for us. I do not doubt that all standards are met and you will not be liable in case someone does get sick. However, the person who does, will pay dearly for your lack of effort up front and this is unethical. Internalize this obligation and act on it without making excuses and delaying.
2. Please provide schools with instructions on how to acquire portable purifiers in addition to other mitigations (these were deemed unnecessary by our district facilities department). There is literally no downside to having these and they work as I am sure you are aware. Please allow PTOs or individual parents to purchase these if the district cannot afford them. I understand this is an equity issue but there is money, find a way to allocate it. Again, show that you are committed and do everything in your power to make our schools safe, do not deem anything unnecessary simply because it is not required by ISBE. CDC (they didn't even acknowledge the virus was airborne until this year which is not in line with the scientific community at large) has been woefully behind the science and has routinely communicated weak and even incorrect messaging in the past. We are an institution of learning and can make sense of data. We know what we can do to make this year better, we should act on this knowledge.

3. Please provide details on how exactly we spent the government funds received for COVID measures if in fact we have no money to purchase portable purifiers. I believe this information will definitely help us understand why purifiers are not deemed important in relation to other more important measures taken.
4. If purifiers are not deemed necessary, please specifically say who will be harmed and why and also what steps did you take to mitigate this harm-- did you try to find a way around the problem? What were these steps?

Again, please provide these additional and very doable accommodations for families that may need these options for their well-being. However small, it is our duty to uphold all needs and concerns, not just the loudest. Especially when there are no negatives that result from purifiers or remote learning in the short term. Please acknowledge this virus is airborne. There is information available on what this means and why simply wearing a mask or staying 3 feet apart and only eating for 15 minutes is not enough--these guidelines help but they are not enough. We have seen time and again that purifiers work.

My hope is that you will respond without being defensive and citing that everyone is following rules, I do not doubt that they are. In all of my communications with the board, I have heard a lot about how the requirements are met. My concern is not that I doubt anyone's intention or ability to do their job. So, please understand that I have nothing but respect for everyone involved. Out of this respect I am pushed to hold you accountable and so I am asking you to please clearly and with deliberate care, consider why you think that installing a purifier in each classroom will not be a good thing to do with the money the district has received from the government. With the most contagious and quickly evolving strain of a virus that has caused a global pandemic for a year and a half.

We do not have time to dilly dally in passing around blame. Act now and stop playing around. Our children are too precious-- even if one out of hundreds or thousands is made sick out of our lack of effort, their sickness is our responsibility because we could have done something and chose not to. The science is there, the machines are there, the money is there. Why won't you do this?

Thank you for your time,

Aisha

Dear D97 School Board members,

Thank you for your service, especially in these pandemic times. I am writing to ask that the board take two actions:

1. Please add air purifiers to the classrooms.
2. Please create a carbon dioxide monitoring plan to track its buildings' indoor air quality.

For months epidemiologists, public health policy makers, and indoor air quality experts have stressed the importance of taking a swiss cheese approach to controlling the spread of COVID-19. Because no one mitigation can stop the virus from spreading, a layered approach decreases the virus's chance of making it through every mitigation employed. These same experts have suggested layering ventilation upgrades, masking, vaccine mandates, testing, and air purifiers. I am thankful that the district has employed many of these mitigations. Tonight, I ask that you please add air purifiers to the district's classrooms as well.

Additionally, I am asking the district to monitor the effectiveness of mitigations. Tracking carbon dioxide levels indoors is an inexpensive way to monitor the risk of people getting COVID-19. According to new research from the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences and the University of Colorado Boulder, when the excess carbon dioxide levels double in any indoor environment, the risk of transmission also roughly doubles. The district could track carbon dioxide levels in a sampling of its

classrooms, particularly in its older buildings, to gauge the effectiveness of its mitigations. We can take this step proactively before seeing the impacts of poor air quality in positive COVID test results.

Thank you for your consideration and service.

Alicia Chastain  
Mother to two Holmes Hawks

DISCUSSION

#### SEARCH FIRM DISCUSSION – Superintendent Search

(Tentative Outline Shared) Hazard, Young, Attea, and Associates (HYA)

- Board Liaison, H.Y.A. requests a D97 liaison? President Kim polls the Board for anyone interested.... President Kim has taken on this role.
- District Contact, H.Y.A. is asking who in the district will be the contact for staff? Scheduling, Interview Set-ups, Stakeholder Meetings, also consider do you want the emails coming from H.Y.A. or D97? Board agrees, Interim Superintendents can follow-up with additional information on determining who this will be, Administration will get back to H.Y.A. with a name.
- H.Y.A. wants to schedule 30 - 45 minute individual interviews with the Board, and also schedule additional meetings with other stakeholders. 8/30 - 9/15

#### Engage Phase

- Community Survey 8/30 - 9/15
  - H.Y.A. facilitate Focus Groups 9/13 - 9/27
  - H.Y.A. host Community Forums 9/27 - 9/30
- (Board would like 2 Virtual Meetings 1 held in the Morning & 1 held in the Evening as options for working families)
- H.Y.A. Presentation of Leadership Profile Report tentatively scheduled for the 10/12 Board Meeting

#### Recruit Phase

- National Advertising 8/30 - 10/1
- Applications open 8/30
- Applications close 10/24
- H.Y.A. recruit candidates through 10/24
- H.Y.A. interviews, screens and reference checks candidates (as applications are received)
- Present slate of candidates to BOE on or about 11/9
- Board selects candidates for first round

Additional clarification around the logistics presented by H.Y.A.

Confidentiality and the importance of keeping candidate names confidential: Board agrees to defer to H.Y.A. on preference as it relates to the candidate pool.

Meetings scheduled with Focus Groups will be virtual per/District 97 Safety Plan and mitigations around large group gatherings.

Board would like questions added to the application packet around Diversity and Equity.

Board would also like candidate to have experience around public comment; How have you used data received from the public to drive decision making? Around Special Education? Discipline?

Board wants to hold back on national advertising, but revisit after looking at the initial candidate pool.

Board has Flexibility with residency for potential candidate.

Community Involvement with Finalists: H.Y.A. wants to know what the Boards thoughts are around finalists meeting with the community? Board will further discuss.

#### **Next steps....**

H.Y.A. will send survey link information, application questions for feedback, and salary comps for the Board to further discuss and determine District 97's compensation package and range for the new Superintendent.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

ACTION ITEMS

#### **5.1 Personnel Report**

Spurlock moved, seconded by Hurd Johnson that the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 moves to approve the Personnel Report as presented.

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion passed.

#### **5.2 Approval of SEIU Contract**

Spurlock moved, seconded by Kearney that the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 moves to approve the ratified SEIU Bargaining Agreement effective July 2021- June 30, 2025.

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion passed.

#### **5.3 Resignation of Board Member**

Ross Dribin moved, seconded by Hurd Johnson that the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 with great regret accepts the resignation of School Board Vice President Jeremy Duffy effective August 31, 2021. The Board would also like to acknowledge Duffy's dedication to the Students and the Community of Oak Park.

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

Nays: None

Abstain: Duffy

Absent: None

Motion passed.

### **SPECIAL REPORT**

(Presentation Available Online)

Ventilation and Air Quality Standards

Our ventilation system is designed to have 3 air changes per hour of clean air:

- We increased this amount by 5 by opening the HVAC dampers and allowing 100% outside air into the spaces as weather allows
- We ran the HVAC systems at a higher outside airflow for 2 hours prior to staff / student arrival and for 2 hours after the last scheduled shift of 11 pm
- Filters are checked and changed monthly and noted in the preventative maintenance records database of School Dude. We had selected MERV ratings that are maximized for equipment capabilities, using MERV 13 when equipment allows
- All HVAC equipment was maintained and inspected for proper airflow.

District 97 will continue to follow industry standards that meet International Mechanical Code following ASHRAE standards, for indoor air quality, and will remain diligent with regular maintenance to ensure that all systems are performing at optimum levels. To increase circulation, we have utilized the following CDC recommendations to improve ventilation:

- Increased introduction of outdoor air by opening outdoor air dampers beyond minimum settings to reduce or eliminate HVAC air recirculation
- Staff has the option to open classroom windows when weather conditions allow
- Rebalanced or adjusted HVAC systems to increase total airflow to occupied spaces when possible
- Turned off any demand-controlled ventilation (DCV) controls that reduce air supply based on occupancy or temperature during occupied hours
- Increased air filtration to as high as possible without significantly reducing design airflow
- Verified that air filters are properly sized and within their recommended service life and inspect filter housing and racks to ensure appropriate filter fit and minimize air that flows around, instead of through, the filter
- Ensure restroom exhaust fans are functional and operating at full capacity when the building is occupied
- Using portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan/filtration systems to enhance air cleaning in higher risk areas such as a nurse's office and / or the isolation room
- Continue running the HVAC system at maximum outside airflow for two hours before and after the building is occupied
- Certain activities, including recess and snack breaks, taking place outdoors, when circumstances allow

### EXECUTIVE SESSION

Moore 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, Collective Negotiations 5 ILCS 120/2(C)(1)(2), at 8:13 p.m.

EXECUTIVE  
SESSION

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

### ADJOURNMENT

Vice President Duffy moved, seconded by Moore that the meeting be adjourned. There being no further business to conduct, President Kim declared the meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

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Board President

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