

Official Minutes of the  
Oak Park Board of Education District 97  
260 Madison Street, Oak Park  
February 7, 2023 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 6:07 p.m.

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

Absent: None

Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Ushma Shah, Associate Superintendent of Education Dr. Felicia Starks Turner, Chief Academic and Accountability Officer Dr. Ebony Lofton, Director of Human Resources Dr. Margo Schmitt, Senior Director of Technology Michael Arensdorff, 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.

ROLL CALL

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Spurlock moved, seconded by Ross Dribin that the Board move into executive session for the purpose of Appointment, Employment, Compensation, Discipline, Performance, or Dismissal of Specific Employees, Collective Negotiating and Litigation.5 ILCS 120/2(C)(1)(2)(11) at 6:08 p.m.

EXECUTIVE 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 7:12 p.m.

OPEN SESSION

**3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

From: Brooks M. S. Student

PUBLIC COMMENT

Hello, I am a genderfluid teen at Brooks Middle School. I use any and all pronouns, and I am a member of Rainbow Revolution. I am here to talk to you about why Gender-Neutral bathrooms are needed here at Brooks. This is an important change that could and should be made and I would like to explain some reasons why.

Kids like me want to feel safe here at school, and a way we can do that is by changing the way we see things. If we see things from the perspective of “man and woman,” or “girl and boy,” how safe and happy will the kids really be?

My friend uses all pronouns and gets criticized when they go to the bathroom just because they don’t fit in with the “normal” girl or boy stereotype.

As a trans teen, I would love to be able to use the boy’s bathroom, but because I was assigned female at birth, I need to use the girl’s bathroom. Having a gender-neutral bathroom would make kids at Brooks

feel like they have a safe area that has everything that matches their needs. A school that has gender-neutral bathrooms fosters an inclusive environment that shows that the school district cares about diversity. It also demonstrates that the district doesn't just tolerate student and staff differences, but affirms them. Gender-neutral restrooms provide a safe, private facility for transgender, gender-queer, and gender non-conforming people, families with children, and people with disabilities who may need assistance. Another reason gender-neutral bathrooms are important, is that it may reduce bullying and improve the mental and physical health of kids in the LGBTQ+ community. This would be a change that would be 100% worth the money.

Thank you.

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From Brooks M. S. Student

Hello everyone,

Thank you for having me. I attend Brooks Middle School and am a member of the Rainbow Revolution club. I would like to make a comment about the Gender-Neutral bathroom presentation that you will see later tonight. I use all pronouns so you can call me whatever you feel comfortable with!

Some of the reasons that I would like to have gender-neutral bathrooms for my school are:

1. I don't feel safe in either bathroom because people are always whispering to their friends when they see me go into either bathroom, some people write the F slur on the stalls or the bathroom walls, or laugh at me when I go to the bathroom, or I had one person look at me (I was in the girl's bathroom). She stared at me for ten seconds and just walked out the bathroom.
2. I get misgendered no matter what bathroom I use. About a month ago I walked into the girl's bathroom and someone yelled "Oh My God, you scared me you are in the wrong bathroom." Then I had to explain everything to them. Another time I walked into the boy's bathroom and someone said, "you can't be in here that's not allowed."
3. I know this happens to other people too, so we need to reduce the frequency of these situations for other people in the school's LGBTQIA+ community by getting gender-neutral bathrooms. We need a safe bathroom where we can finally feel comfortable no matter what pronouns we use or the sexuality we identify with. Thank you for letting me tell you about why we need gender-neutral bathrooms at Brooks.

Thank you

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From Ms. Berman

Good evening,

My name is Abby Berman and I am a social worker at Brooks Middle School. I am also the supervisor of the Rainbow Revolution club. I am honored to be invited here to speak with you tonight about the project of bridging Gender-Neutral bathrooms to the middle schools.

This has been a passion project roughly 3-years in the making. The conversations for these bathrooms began back in 2020 when the students were still attending Rainbow Revolution virtually. As conversations began about having gender-neutral bathrooms at the middle schools, we decided to invite Jeanne Keane and Carrie Kamm to our meetings to get the conversation going.

Over the last few years, Jeanne has continued to visit our club to provide updates, share blueprints and even give the students a "tour" for where everything would go and what the bathrooms would look like. Every few weeks the students ask me at the start of club, "what's the update on the gender-neutral

bathrooms?” This is so incredibly important for them as you can tell from the beautiful words of our student reps.

I truly am so excited for the students at Brooks, and eventually Julian, to finally feel safe and comfortable when using the bathroom. As you heard from our two brave and incredible students tonight, this matters. It matters for safety, comfort, feeling of belonging, and it shows commitment to continuing to support our LGBTQ+ community. I am so proud of our students for raising their voices and always advocating for change, and this project is no small exception. It has been a labor of love and we are so grateful for Jeanne Keane and her efforts behind the scenes. I hope you took the time to listen and soak in the words of our students, because there is no one better to tell you tonight why this is so important than them.

Thank you,  
Abby Berman, Brooks Middle School

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#### **4. #D97Joy Culture and Celebration Update**

#D97 JOY

##### **Student Celebrations**

As part of our Be Curious: #D97Joy portion of the board meeting, we will be highlighting our CAST and BRAVO programs at Julian and Brooks middle schools. With all the singing and meeting in front of large groups in an auditorium, CAST and BRAVO were some of the last programs of the middle school experience to return to a post-pandemic new normal. They have been hard at work developing and igniting a life-long love of theater and performance in our middle schoolers this school year. Here are a few recent highlights from their programs.

##### **CAST at Julian - Highlights**

CAST traveled to Beye Elementary School with their production of “Miss Nelson is Missing.” They performed it twice during the school day for students they hope will be joining CAST very soon as middle schoolers. They also presented Xanadu in November, and Number the Stars during their Winter Festival in December. This year marked the return of two very important parts of the program that directly affect the student experience, CAST Crew and the Winter Auditions. Over 50 students are signed up to meet on selected Saturdays and for the final week of play rehearsals to help bring the magic of CAST Crew to our live performances. The return of Winter Auditions means that the 65 student actors from the Fall Auditions can sign up for a second set of activities each year, effectively doubling their opportunities to participate in CAST.

On Feb. 17 and 18, CAST will present “Double Trouble” which is a one-act play about the touching and wacky friendship that develops between the three student actresses that are playing witches in a student production of Macbeth. The crew and Mr. Boyle are also hard at work transforming the new acting classroom into a black box studio performance space to present sketch comedy in the spring. Lastly, sign-ups have also begun for CAST’s 6-week summer 2023 program for current 4th-7th graders which will be presenting “Newsies.”

##### **BRAVO at Brooks - Highlights**

On Saturday, Jan. 21, BRAVO hosted its 13th annual (minus covid) Junior BRAVO one day performing arts workshop for 100 second through fifth-graders from schools in our district and beyond. It was a fun-filled, packed day of singing, dancing, acting, building confidence, making new friends, taking risks, learning the importance of teamwork and the transformative power of musical theater. The participants

were in for a real treat as their student-teachers for the day were 35 seventh and eighth graders from Brooks Middle School's BRAVO Cast.

The day included learning selections from FAME, scenes, songs and choreographed show stopping numbers like the fan favorite 'Can't Stop this Feeling' from Trolls.

"It was beautiful and so fun to watch our 7th and 8th graders teaching, inspiring and infusing their passion for musical theater into all of these little ones, the future BRAVO All Stars!" said Tina Reynolds, Artistic Director of BRAVO and the Director of Junior BRAVO. The workshop culminated in a rousing free performance for a packed auditorium of family, fans and friends.

Just last weekend, BRAVO presented the brand-new musical pilot production of Dot and the Kangaroo. Sixty sixth-graders took part in the productions on Thursday, Feb 2, Friday, Feb 3 and Saturday, Feb 4 in the Brooks Auditorium.

And lastly, we want to congratulate BRAVO for taking home their 11th Freddie G. Outstanding Production award at the Junior Theater Festival, which took place January 13-15 in Atlanta. The annual festival celebrates and empowers student-driven musical theater programs from all over the world.

Each festival group performed 15 minutes of a Broadway Junior musical for the judges. Under the artistic direction of Tina Reynolds, the Brooks Middle School-based musical theater students impressed judges with their 15-minute performance from Fame JR, which led to standing ovations from the five other groups, as well as judges and families.

We plan to invite our students from BRAVO and CAST to an upcoming board meeting to recognize them for their hard work and dedication this school year.

### **Staff Celebrations**

#### **National Board Certification Recognition**

The founding mission of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is to advance the quality of teaching and learning by: maintaining high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do; providing a national voluntary system certifying teachers who meet these standards, and advocating related education reforms to integrate National Board Certification in American education and to capitalize on the expertise of National Board-Certified Teachers.

Recognized as the "gold standard" in teacher certification, the National Board believes higher standards for teachers means better learning for students.

Tonight, District 97 is pleased to recognize teachers who recently earned the title of National Board-Certified Teacher and the Master Teacher designation on the Illinois Professional Educator License, as well as those teachers who committed to renewing their certificate during this time.

I wish to extend a heartfelt congratulations to our teachers who have recently achieved National Board Certification for the first time and to our teachers who have successfully completed the process for maintaining their certification. Each of these accomplished educators earned the profession's highest mark of achievement through a rigorous, performance-based, peer-reviewed process, which demonstrated their proven impact on student learning and achievement. All of District 97's National Board Certification

candidates displayed tenacity and tremendous commitment to the certification process over the last two years that have been filled with challenges for educators.

Your accomplishment is a testament to your hard work and expertise, and we are proud to have you serving our District 97 students. Congratulations to this impressive group of educators!

**Board President:** On behalf of the board of education, we would like to congratulate you on this incredible accomplishment and thank you for your dedication to our students and schools!

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## **5.DISTRICT PRIORITY UPDATE**

PRIORITY  
UPDATE

### **5.1 Be a Learning Designer | One Book One District (Elementary)**

(Presented by Dr. Ebony Lofton, Kattie Noonan and Principal Susan Mura)

Pre-K – 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Team Joy and Love!

Goals:

- Every student in pre-kindergarten through second grade is **in love with literacy** and able to read, write, speak and listen at grade level by third grade.
- Use knowledge of what standards need to be mastered to invite new smart partnerships for family- and community-based learning that is grounded in student identity, language and culture affirmation.

We partnered with our school librarians to shift what had been One Book, One School at many of our elementary schools to One Book, One District: Elementary Edition which kicked off on Friday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>.

### **Book Reveal**

#### **“Maya And The Robot”**

From award-winning author **Eve L. Ewing** comes an illustrated middle grade novel about a forgotten homemade robot who comes to life just when aspiring fifth-grade scientist Maya needs a friend – and a science fair project.

**\*Kick off video and additional details can be viewed by visiting the One Book, One District site at <https://sites.google.com/op97.org/mayarobot/home?pli=1>**

**This site is the hub for everything you need to follow along on our reading journey!**

### **5.2 Black History Celebration Update**

(Presented by Lonya Boose)

I am excited to share our cultural celebrations planned district-wide as students and staff celebrate Black History Month. Tonight, we are sharing with you a brief snapshot of celebrations and classroom activities that are already underway, we will come back to this space on February 21 with videos and pictures of students experience throughout the month!

Events Underway Include:

- Amazing African Dance Group Performances
- Affinity space for Black Families
- Artist visit and Workshop for students

- Brondihouse Tribute to Black History
- Exploring Divine Nine Sororities and Fraternities
- Assemblies and Concerts
- Kuumba Kids Harambee Celebration
- Fashion Show and Black Author Showcase
- Daily School Wide Activities

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## **6. ACTION ITEMS**

ACTION ITEMS

### **6.1 APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA**

#### **Consent Motion**

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

- 6.1.1 Approval of Minutes from the January 24, 2023 Board Meeting
- 6.1.2 Bill List
- 6.1.3 Personnel

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

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## **7. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

ADMINISTRATIVE  
ITEMS

### **7.1 Summer (Phase Two) Construction Bids (action 2.21.23)**

**Presented by Jeanne Keane**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board of Education information regarding the Summer 2023 Construction bid opening. At 2:00 PM on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023, sealed bids were publicly opened at the Oak Park Elementary School District 97 Administration Building for the D97 Summer 2023 Life Safety Work. Bid Group 2 included the following trades: General Trades, Plumbing, Mechanical and Electrical.

Based on the review of the bid results and verifying the scope in the bids to be consistent with the contract documents, Bulley & Andrews recommends the award of the following contractors for General Trades, Plumbing, Mechanical and Electrical.

<u>Trade</u>	<u>Proposed Contractor</u>	<u>Actual Award Value</u>
General	Trade Bulley & Andrews	\$512,486
Plumbing	Terry Plumbing	\$113,950
Mechanical	Helm Mechanical	\$684,000
Electrical	ProArc	\$607,409
Totals		\$1,917,845

FAC reviewed the bid summaries on Tuesday January 31, 2023 and recommended awarding of bids in accordance with the presented summaries. We ask that the Board of Education of Oak Park District 97 approve the Summer 2023 Construction Phase 2 bids at its February 21th, 2023 meeting.

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### **7.2 eRate (action 2.21.23)**

**Presented by Willian Brackett**

**Preview of purpose and content of report:** Included below is an overview of the bid process, bid summary and recommendation for the E-rate proposal

**Budgetary impact:** Impact is \$9,398 (one time cost) for renewal of firewall licenses to the technology operating budget.

From our current budget, this is a slight increase from the renewal last year of \$1,400. However, for the 2023-2024 school year we were able to drop the Internet connection at Brooks that will be a cost savings of \$450 per month. This connection will transition to the state DOIT contract that will provide 2gb of bandwidth that will have a \$0 cost for the next five years. This will come to a total approximate savings of \$72,600 over the next six years for the Internet connection at Brooks.

**Data to be presented:** February 7, 2023, seeking approval on February 21, 2023

### **Category 2**

#### **Network Infrastructure Switch E-rate Proposal**

At the end of the 2022-2023 school both of our firewall licenses will be expiring. As part of the eRate process we completed bids to seek renewal licensing for the existing firewalls, as well as, proposals for two new firewall models. Upon review of the pricing and specifications, we have decided that it is most cost effective to renew the licensing at this time and upgrade the firewalls in future years when the higher capacity firewall(s) will be required with bandwidth speed requirements for D97. The renewal for both of these firewall licenses are \$4,699 each for a total of \$9,398 for one year. There are no services that are needed as they are already in place and operational. Following the same process as above for the evaluations both Will Brackett, Paul Duda and I independently evaluated the proposals and are recommending the award to CDWG.

District 97 will seek reimbursement through the eRate program (40% discount rate, which is identified by our national free and reduced lunch numbers). I anticipate a monthly reimbursement of about \$540 for the Internet services.

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### **7.3 Tax Levy Abatement (action 2.21.23)**

**Presented by Patrick King**

RE: Public Act 102-0519 – Recapture Levy Abatement

The Illinois General Assembly passed Public Act 102-0519 in August 2021, which allows taxing bodies to recapture lost revenues paid for certain property tax appeals paid from district tax collections over the past 12 months. For Oak Park District 97, that figure is \$981,650 in Tax Year 2022.

Without any action taken by the Board, the County will automatically extend these additional taxes to all the taxpayers of the district above the 5.0% tax levy increase that was approved by the Board in December 2022. If the Board elects to abate (eliminate) this additional tax levy, then it will need to approve an abatement resolution and file such resolution with Cook County by April 1, 2023. To provide some historical perspective, the Board of Education abated (eliminated) the 2021 Tax Year Recapture Levy in the amount of \$614,688.

Administration is again recommending that the 2022 Tax Year Recapture Levy be abated for the following reasons:

1. This revenue source is not included in our budget or long-term financial projections
2. This abatement of the tax levy will generate a one-time reduction on the district's revenue stream and will not have a perpetual impact.
3. The additional extension will impose an additional new tax of approximately \$58 (assuming \$400,000 market value home) on local taxpayers as the recapture extends amounts already paid in over the tax base a second time.
4. It is also likely that the process will cause a tax shift to the residential tax base as the largest refunds are typically paid to commercial and industrial taxpayers.

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#### **7.4 Audit Presentation (action 2.21.23)**

**Presented by Patrick King & Audit Firm, Baker Tilly Virchow Krause, LLP**

RE: June 30, 2022 Financial Statement Audit

#### **Summary**

Please find attached the final fiscal year 2022 audit documents. Mr. Nick Cavaliere, from Baker Tilly Virchow Krause, LLP will attend the February 7, 2023 Board meeting to briefly discuss the audit and review the financial information.

The Single Audit report has also been submitted to the Federal Audit Clearinghouse (FAC) and the AFR has been filed with ISBE.

The four audit reports include:

1. Financial Statements as of June 30, 2022
2. Communication to Those Charged with Governance and Management
3. Annual Federal Financial Compliance Report as of June 30, 2022

4. Annual Financial Report (ISBE Form) as of June 30, 2022

Motion

Administration is seeking a motion for the Board to accept the Fiscal Year 2022 audit reports as presented and as prepared by the auditing firm of Baker Tilly Virchow Krause, LLP.

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**DISTRICT PRIORITY UPDATE | Superintendent**

District 97 Superintendent Dr. Shah provided the Board of Education and the public with an update on the Districts Equity Redesign work. The complete presentation can be viewed by going to the district 97 YouTube channel and viewing the livestream of the February 7, 2023 board meeting, or by going to [www.op97.org](http://www.op97.org) and clicking on this presentation.

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**8. BOARD ASSIGNMENTS**

No report-out for board assignments. More information to come as provided.

BOARD  
ASSIGNMENTS

**9. CONCLUDING ITEMS**

9.1 Board Remarks

CONCLUDING  
ITEMS

- Excited about recent conversations with Jan Arnold and the Park District around discipline of black and brown students. Partnership in these spaces, with transportation for program access and cost assistants for families. There is interest in a student lead board that is centered around creation of classes by students for students. More information to come.
- Conversations with the Park District around how age divides program opportunities often leaving out peers whose ages differ, leaving them to join programs outside of peer groups.
- Related to progressive discipline, there is interest in how the Oak Park Police Department is housing and retaining paperwork on students. Update on restorative practices.

**8. 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 9:36 p.m.

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Board President

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Board Secretary