

**Official Minutes of the  
Oak Park Board of Education District 97,  
260 Madison Street, Oak Park, Cook County, Illinois  
Meeting January 24, 2017**

President Gates called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Gates, O'Connor, Spatz, Spurlock, Felton, Brisben, and Datta (by phone for part of the meeting)  
Absent: Datta (for part of the meeting)  
Also Present: Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations Dr. Alicia Evans, Assistant Superintendent of HR Laurie Campbell, Chief Academic and Accountability Officer Dr. Amy Warke, Senior Director of Special Services Mike Padavic, Senior Director of Policy, Procedures and Communication Chris Jасulca, Sr. Director of Administrative Services Dr. Felicia Starks Turner, Senior Director of Technology Michael Arensdorff, Director of Curriculum and Instruction Carrie Kamm, and Board Secretary Sheryl Marinier

ROLL CALL

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Felton moved, seconded by O'Connor, that the Board of Education move into Executive Session at 6:00 p.m. to discuss (Appointment, Employment, Compensation, Discipline, Performance or Dismissal of Specific Employees or Legal Counsel for the District 5 ILCS 120/2(C)(1), Pending or Probable Litigation 5 ILCS 120/2/(C)(11)). Roll call vote.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ayes: Felton, O'Connor, Brisben, Spatz, Spurlock, Gates, and Datta (by phone)  
Nays: None  
Motion passed.

**OPEN SESSION**

O'Connor moved, seconded by Spurlock, that the Board of Education move into Open Session at 7:02 p.m. All members of the Board were in agreement. The meeting reconvened at 7:10 p.m. Member Datta was not in attendance by phone at this time.

OPEN SESSION

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Michelle Michael, an Oak Park resident, shared a petition containing 400 signatures requesting that the district keep Cathy Hamilton as the Principal of Lincoln School. The petition included 100 individual comments. Michael read several of them aloud.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kathy Madura, from Bensonville, IL and recently retired District 97 teacher, noted that the situation at hand regarding Principal Hamilton requires special consideration. She explained that in 1998, there was a program through the state called the 2.2 upgrade. This program allowed teachers to enhance their retirement benefits by buying into the program. Three teachers who were considering retirement did not turn in their retirement letters because the 2.2 upgrade was still pending. Once it passed, a month after when the retirement letters were due, the three teachers asked the School Board to extend the retirement deadline. The Superintendent at the time said it could be easily changed and allowed the three teachers to turn in their retirement letters. In addition, Madura noted that former Lincoln School Principal, Carol Dudzik requested to rescind her retirement and that request was honored. Madura suggested that there might be other instances that she is unaware of where decisions were made on a case by case basis, and asked the Board to reconsider their decision.

Lynne Zillman, from Maywood, IL and a teacher at Lincoln School, reported that she asked other districts in the state about the ERO issue. She reported that they showed compassion and respect for the teachers. She noted that one principal asked to rescind the retirement request and return to his/her position. Additionally, Zillman reported that districts were proactive and reached out to their employees and offered support to them. She suggested that District 97 has been known to act with compassion in the past.

Veronica Thomas, an Oak Park resident and Lincoln School graduate, shared that she is currently in college and thinking about her background. She shared that she would like to teach in the district some day and carry on the social justice that she learned here. She asked that the Board treat everyone with respect.

**PUBLIC COMMENT** (Continued)

Jennifer Zarosl, an Oak Park resident for her entire life, explained that when she read a letter sent by Dr. Kelley to the Lincoln community regarding Cathy Hamilton's situation, it stated that the Board rejected Hamilton's request, and that the Board directed the administration to begin a new search for a principal. The letter further stated that a search has begun both locally and nationally and that the district would be "working with the faculty, staff, and families from Lincoln to develop a leadership profile for screening candidates, and establish a school-based team that will assist with the interview process". Zarosl expressed concern about the excessive amount of time and money that will be wasted throughout this process. She expressed concern about asking staff to put in extra time on this process and questioned the cost involved in undertaking a nationwide search for a replacement when the staff and community have already expressed what an effective leader Hamilton is.

Zarosl reminded the Board that they are proposing a major referendum be approved by the taxpayers of Oak Park, and noted that as a resident, she needs to know that her hard earned money will not be wasted unnecessarily. She asked the Board to ensure that their decision is fiscally responsible, and noted that she wants the best education that money can buy for her children, but not at the expense of someone's livelihood.

Deborah Douglas, an Oak Park resident with four grandchildren who were educated at Lincoln School, asked the Board to put themselves in Hamilton's place. She asked them how they would feel if someone gave them something and then took it back. She suggested that Principal Hamilton knows everyone and the community needs her. She suggested that it is not fair for the Board to make Hamilton retire.

Marian Garrigan, an Oak Park resident who sent four children to Lincoln School, shared that she now has grandchildren attending the school. She asked the Board to reconsider their decision regarding Principal Hamilton and reminded them that it is okay for them to change their minds.

Paul Moore, an Oak Park resident, explained interest in getting answers to the community's questions and to voice his disgust regarding the deplorable actions of this superintendent and Board of Education regarding their treatment of Principal Hamilton. He shared that his children (in attendance this evening) attend Lincoln School and they are amazed at this Board's lack of morals and ethics. He quoted the District 97 mission statement and noted that the Board is not living up to that mission.

Moore questioned why the district is spending time and effort on a Lincoln School principal search committee when the community has spoken and wants Hamilton to stay. He noted that going after teachers in this community is a dangerous game. He reported that there is a lot of anger in the Lincoln community about how this situation has been handled. He requested that the Board respond to his comments and work with Ms. Hamilton to resolve this issue and let her stay out her time at Lincoln School, or allow her to retire with dignity. He suggested that the Board's actions have created a massive trust issue with the families of Lincoln, and accused the Board of targeting Hamilton and forcing her out of her job.

Matteline Moore, an Oak Park resident and student at Lincoln School shared that Hamilton is respectful, and responsible. She told the Board that they are not doing the right thing, and suggested that they keep Cathy Hamilton.

Jack Moore, an Oak Park resident and student at Lincoln School shared that he wants Hamilton to stay as principal of Lincoln School, and asked the Board to explain how their decision is fair.

Craig Siegler, an Oak Park resident Lincoln parent, taxpayer, educator and former substitute teacher for District 97, suggested that many school districts do what District 97 is doing with much less. He suggested that the money is buying amazing teachers, and continuity of the staff who work hard. He shared a story about his dealings with Principal Hamilton, noting that he left the meeting with respect for her. He indicated that he knows that she is a good person and cares for the community. He acknowledged the error made by the state regarding Hamilton's retirement and suggested that it is the district's responsibility to make amends. He suggested that the district would not find a better principal than Hamilton.

Cathleen Spillane, an Oak Park resident, emphasized the importance of the community. She noted that the community is made up of many native Oak Parkers. She shared that her family left the community but chose to come back to south Oak Park. Spillane explained that she knows that the Board is caring and represents the community, but she is tired of her vote not being counted. She indicated that Hamilton created a safe area within the community. Spillane suggested that resolution to this issue is not impossible; it will just take some creative thinking. She noted that the time is always right to do what is right.

**PUBLIC COMMENT** (Continued)

Mary Anne Borgmann, an Oak Park resident, expressed that she sees both sides of this issue. She suggested that if someone resigns from their job, they are ready to go and you might struggle to keep them. However, looking at the teachers and staff that want her to stay, Borgmann questioned why the Board would spend the amount of money to do the search knowing that the staff would have at least one transition year to get to know someone new. She noted that Hamilton had to fight to keep this position, therefore, she would do all she could to make this work.

Diane Quinn, an Oak Park resident for 12 years, spoke in support of Principal Hamilton. She explained that Hamilton supports the families when they are in need. She takes care of the children and helps them to be successful. Hamilton is like a family member. She asked the Board how she should tell her children why Principal Hamilton cannot stay.

Diana Shea, an Oak Park resident, explained that she moved to Oak Park from across the country. Before she moved, she contacted all the schools in the district and Hamilton was the first one to return her call. Shea noted that the Lincoln community is something special. Shea shared that she is highly disturbed that Hamilton would find herself in this situation.

Lynn Thomas, an Oak Park resident since 1991, suggested that the Board has a responsibility to treat dedicated employees with the utmost respect, and show them that they are valued. She suggested that the Board has an opportunity to change course. She acknowledged that the issue was not caused by the District and asked them to do the right thing.

Tracy DellAngela Barber, an Oak Park resident and new Executive Director of the Oak Park Education Foundation, announced that Oak Park is doing something radically different to support students and summer learning loss. The Base Camp summer program will get kids moving, and will make them love learning.

**WAREHOUSE SALE**

Alicia Evans came to the table with broker Theresa Jargus. They reported that the Board received four offers for the purchase of the warehouse located at 541 Madison Street, with offers between \$200,000 and \$800,000. They noted that the highest offer is from a local developer who would use the site for industrial/commercial use. Evans reported that the next step would be for the Board to decide which offer to pursue. She recommended the \$800,000 offer, but explained that this offer contains a contingency asking the seller to protect the buyer from any environmental problems. The Board would need to decide how much protection they would want to provide the buyer. The history of the building was reviewed and options considered. It was agreed that further discussion on this topic would qualify as an exemption for closed session discussion.

**SUMMER CONSTRUCTION 2017**

Alicia Evans came to the table with representatives from Bulley and Andrews, and the bid summary information for summer work 2017 was shared. It was noted that Bulley and Andrews was asked to give a recommendation about the total cost of the projects and keep within the \$6,000,000 limit. Additionally, it was noted that the Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC) has not had an opportunity to review this data.

Bill Truty from Bulley and Andrewes explained that in order to stay within the monetary limitations, they considered life safety and items that need to be addressed first, and then removed all non-life safety items.

It was reported that FAC is scheduled to meet on February 7, 2017, and will review the report at that time. This would give the Board time to review the recommendations made by FAC, and take action on February 28, 2017. It was noted that the liaison report from the last FAC meeting will be forwarded to the Board members this evening.

**SUMMER PROGRAMS 2017**

Amy Warke and Helen Wei came to the table with Libbey Paul and Tracy DellAngela Barber from the Oak Park Education Foundation. They noted that the date of action identified in the memo to the Board needs to be amended to read March 8, 2017. It was noted that the letter of intent is correct.

They reported that everything has been solidified for the summer 2017 programming, and the process on how to move forward with families has been discussed. It was reported that the Reading/Writing Units of Study will be offered to all children at a cost. It was noted that the program will grow by about 45 percent, adding camps and growing unilaterally. The district and the Education Foundation will work together on communications and to coordinate registration nights. They will work with Principals and Social Workers as the Foundations point of contact with the families.

**SUMMER PROGRAMS 2017 (Continued)**

Paul explained that the enrollment process will begin with a letter being sent home from the teachers to the parents, and followed up by outreach from the social worker. Students will have the ability to rank their camp choices, and then a schedule will be created from their choices.

Board comments included satisfaction that an agreement has been resolved. This item will return for action on January 30, 2017.

**2.1.1 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE JANUARY 10, 2017 BOARD MEETING**

ACTION ITEMS

Spatz moved, seconded by Brisben, that the Board of Education of Oak Park District 97, approve the revised minutes from the January 10, 2017 Board meeting. Roll call vote.

Ayes: Spatz, Brisben, Felton, O'Connor, Gates, and Spurlock  
Nays: None  
Absent: Datta  
Motion passed.

**2.2 APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA**

Spatz moved, seconded by Gates, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the consent agenda as presented.

- 3.2.1 Approval of Bill List
- 3.2.2 Approval of Personnel

Ayes: Spatz, Gates, Felton, Brisben, Spurlock, and O'Connor  
Nays: None  
Absent: Datta  
Motion passed.

**2.3.1 ABATE WORKING CASH FUND**

Gates moved, seconded by O'Connor, That the Board of Education of Oak Park District 97, approves the attached resolution abating working cash in the amount of \$6,000,000 to Operations and Maintenance and then ultimately to the Site and Construction Fund for the purpose of completing the mandatory health/life safety work during the summer of 2017. Roll call vote.

It was noted that the district needs to transfer the full amount; however, it can choose to not spend it all this year. Because the bonds were sold as non-taxable bonds, they must be used on appropriate non-taxable items, such as construction.

Ayes: Gates, O'Connor, Brisben, Spatz, Felton, and Spurlock  
Nays: None  
Absent: Datta  
Motion passed.

**2.3.2 APPROVAL OF CHAPMAN AND CUTLER ENGAGEMENT LETTER**

Gates moved, seconded by Spurlock, That the Board of Education of Oak Park School District 97, engage Chapman and Cutler as bond counsel for the purpose of preparing a form and other documents associated with the Election Resolution for the submission to the voters of District 97 the question of increasing the District's limiting rate at the April 4, 2017 consolidated election. Roll call vote.

Ayes: Gates, Spurlock, Spatz, Brisben, Felton, and O'Connor  
Nays: None  
Absent: Datta  
Motion passed.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

This item was tabled.

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

**BOARD ASSIGNMENTS**

STANDING BOARD COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORT FOLLOW UP  
FAC

BOARD ASSIGNMENTS

The liaison report from the last FAC meeting was shared with the Board. The next FAC meeting is scheduled for February 7, 2017.

## **BOARD ASSIGNMENTS** (Continued)

### **C.L.A.I.M.**

It was reported that the CLAIM your Voice event is scheduled at Julian Middle School on February 9, 2017.

The C.L.A.I.M. committee considered changing the definition of the “I” in C.L.A.I.M. from intervention to information, but would prefer to keep it as it is. Additionally, the committee recommended removing the periods between the letters of the acronym, noting that the other Board committees do not use periods. The Board agreed to support this change.

Interest in increasing committee meeting attendance was expressed, noting the difficulty in meeting quorum. It was suggested that the Board consider the committee size and attendance requirement. It was suggested that the policy committee discuss the committee sizes and whether or not it would be beneficial for them to be uniform in size. It was suggested that the Board do a better job of making it clear when terms expire and when people resign from committees. The Board was reminded that the original C.L.A.I.M. committee needed a large membership because it was comprised of four different work teams.

### **FORC**

It was reported that the FORC committee met last Thursday. They reviewed the referendum presentation and shared feedback.

It was reported that Bruce Ulrich stepped down as the chairperson and as a member of this committee. Carrie Hanger was elected chairperson, and Willie Mack was elected Vice Chairperson.

It was suggested that the Policy Committee consider changing the charges for all of the Board committees to include a Vice Chairperson.

It was noted that the committees expressed a strong interest in helping with the budget in an earlier phase (during their February meeting). They discussed Policy 4:12 and recommended changing the requirement from 75 percent upper amount for the fund balance to 50 percent. It was noted that the district is targeting 27 percent, but does not expect to exceed 30 percent for the next five years. It was noted that a larger fund balance would be necessary if the county is going to delay payments. It was noted that the state is already delayed by about \$3,000,000 to \$4,000,000 this year. In light of the referendum, this is a very good time to make this change.

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND LIAISON REPORT FOLLOW UP**

### **IGOV**

President Gates sent an email requesting assistance with the five slides that need to be included for the candidate workshop scheduled on February 6, 2017 at Austin Gardens.

### **COG**

The next COG meeting is scheduled for February 1, 2017.

### **Policy**

The Policy Committee is scheduled to meet next Tuesday.

### **ECC**

The Collaboration will be meeting on February 28, 2017. The draft agenda will be distributed shortly and input was requested.

## **COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

It was reported that seven membership applications for the committee have been received, with a goal of identifying the new members and holding the first meeting by the end of January. It was suggested that due to the low response rate, the Board accept applications until February 3, 2017. Additionally, it was noted that the team is considering the questions that would be addressed during the first meeting.

## **REFERENDUM DISCUSSION**

The full referendum PowerPoint deck was shared in the Board packet and on the Website, and a condensed version (15 slides) is being created. The schedule for presentations is being compiled, and each PTO has asked for a presentation in their buildings. It was noted that other organizations have expressed interest in hosting presentations as well. Special presentations of the full PowerPoint were offered to the nine District 97 Board candidates, on January 13, 2017 and January 28, 2017.

## REFERENDUM DISCUSSION (Continued)

During the February 14, 2017 Board meeting, administration is scheduled to share the detailed list of cuts in the event the referendum fails. Interest was expressed in comparing the consequences of a failed referendum to the 2011 referendum.

It was reported that the District needs a \$13,300,000 increase, noting a historically large increase of students and a decline in revenue. Additionally, the district would need to cut \$4,000,000, the 26 retiring teachers for this year would not be replaced, and the Holmes construction would not occur. It was explained that in 2018, the district would need to tap the DSEB funds to pay the operating fund, but that would violate policy and take away any cushion it has. Additionally, it would put the district on the state watch list, which could result in a state takeover. An additional \$9,000,000 (70-80 additional staff reductions) in cuts would be needed to make up for this. The district would need to cut into the bones of the general curriculum. It would need to increase class sizes by about 25 percent over the state average. There would be no funds available for expansion at Longfellow or Lincoln, and trailers would be needed on the playgrounds at Holmes, Longfellow and Lincoln schools.

It was reported that the 2017 referendum was sized with the assumption that the district would maintain its low growth of 2.5 percent spending; therefore, this referendum is needed to just maintain the status quo.

Member Datta joined the meeting by phone at 9:14 p.m.

It was agreed that for the February 14, 2017 meeting, members Spatz and Datta will draft a document that explains the commitments the Board could make to the community, explaining that it would not use referendum funds to increase spending if the state funding is significantly restored. Other options for transparency would be to instruct FORC on what would need to be done (needed policies) if the referendum passes, and define the definition of what would happen if the state restores funding.

It was noted that time will be needed on the February 14, 2017 agenda for further discussion. A one page information sheet was recommended.

## RETREAT PLANNING UPDATE

The Board retreat on March 13, 2017 was discussed and the start time of this meeting was questioned. Further discussion will occur during the retreat scheduled on January 30, 2017.

## PARKING LOT UPDATE

No update was shared.

## ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

### DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY RFP

Alicia Evans came to the table. She explained that there had been some concern regarding the accuracy of the Ehlers numbers regarding class size and teachers. She asked the Board if they would like to have Ehlers update their numbers or ask another company to complete a separate study. Concern about the numbers at Longfellow, Lincoln and Holmes were expressed.

After a brief discussion, it was agreed that the Board will be asked to take action on giving the administration direction to move forward with a demographic RFPs.

### SURETY BONDS

Alicia Evans explained that the Board annually needs to take action on submission of the Surety Bonds. This item will return to the Board for action on February 14, 2017.

### TSA CONTRACT

Evans explained that the 403 plan administrator contract is up for renewal. She reported that TSA is suggesting that the District switch to a vendor pay model. She noted that if the vendor does not want to pay, the fee will be passed on to the participant. It was suggested that this item be delayed until it can be reviewed by FORC.

### BID FOR AUDITING

Evans explained that the Board does not need to approve the bidding process for the auditing firm. Member O'Connor expressed concern about the length of the current partnership and expressed interest in the advantage of changing vendors. It was suggested that FORC be asked to weigh in and help with the preparation of the RFP.

### RFP TRANSPORTATION

Evans explained that the Board does not need to approve the bidding process for the transportation provider.

ADMINISTRATIVE  
ITEMS

**UNITS OF STUDY READING**

Amy Warke came to the table with Helen Wei. They explained that the Writing Units of Study was implemented this year, and the district is getting ready to consider implementation of the Reading Units of Study. They reported that the district aligned the district goals to the metrics to help all children achieve. Two quotes were shared, noting that one of them includes the library. An inventory of the current libraries would be completed to ensure that duplicate books are not purchased. The motion will be worded stating not to exceed \$1,500,000 , and with the assumption that the referendum passes.

Board comments included delaying the Board decision until after the election. It was suggested that this item be added to the list of cuts should the referendum not pass. It was noted that the program could be phased in, and it was reported that the program is currently being piloted at Hatch. Administration was asked to consider a revised ask.

**CONCLUDING ITEMS**

**CONCLUDING  
ITEMS**

**BOARD REMARKS**

It was noted that Vice President Felton attended the first candidate’s forum along with members Brisben and Spurlock.

**BOARD RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENT**

It was suggested that Dr. Kelley listen to the audio of this evenings meeting and respond to the public comments in a reasonable timeframe. The Board Secretary was asked to email those requesting a response and let them know that the district has an unusual situation and ask for their patience.

**BOARD MEETING AGENDA FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

The draft agenda for the February 14, 2017 Board meeting was reviewed and modifications were recommended.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**EXECUTIVE  
SESSION**

O’Connor moved, seconded by Felton, that the Board of Education move into Executive Session at 9:58 p.m. to discuss (Appointment, Employment, Compensation, Discipline, Performance or Dismissal of Specific Employees or Legal Counsel for the District 5 ILCS 120/2(C)(1), Setting of a price for Sale or Lease of Property 5 ILCS 120/2(C)(6), Pending or Probable Litigation 5 ILCS 120/2(C)(11)). Roll call vote.

Ayes: O’Connor, Felton, Brisben, Spatz, Spurlock, Gates,  
Nays: None  
Absent: Datta  
Motion passed.

**OPEN SESSION**

**OPEN  
SESSION**

Brisben moved, seconded by Spatz, that the Board of Education move into Open Session at 11:28 p.m. All members of the Board were in agreement.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to conduct, President Gates declared the meeting adjourned at 11:28 p.m.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Board President

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