

**Official Minutes of the  
Oak Park Board of Education District 97,  
260 Madison Street, Oak Park, Cook County, Illinois  
Meeting February 14, 2017**

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

Present: Gates, O'Connor, Spatz, Spurlock (6:47 p.m.), Felton, and Brisben  
Absent: Datta  
Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Carol Kelley, 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 Jasculca, 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**

Spatz moved, seconded by Felton, 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) Setting the Price for Sale or Lease of Real Property 5 ILCS 120/2(C)(5)). Roll call vote.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

**OPEN SESSION**

Spatz moved, seconded by Felton, that the Board of Education move into Open Session at 6:48 p.m. All members of the Board were in agreement. The meeting reconvened at 7:01 p.m.

OPEN SESSION

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Debbie Cooper, a Hometown IL resident and District 97 staff member, shared the history behind the issue regarding Principal Hamilton. She requested more transparency with the Oak Park community. Although the Board indicated that this is a personnel issue, Cooper explained that the community really wants to know why the Board is not listening to them. She noted that the community keeps asking the Board to keep Hamilton in her position as Principal of Lincoln School.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kara Short, an Oak Park parent, explained that both of her children participated in the Spanish Immersion Program at Lincoln School, and she spent several years as a member, and one year as the co-leader of the District 97 World Language Advisory Committee. As a parent and as an educator herself, she has incredible admiration for the teachers and principals in the district. Short expressed her beliefs that the education of the Oak Park children could only be improved by investing in our teachers and principals as referenced the District's Vision Statement. Short recommended that the Board support Hamilton by allowing her to retain her position as Principal of Lincoln School.

Anna Harlan, an Oak Park resident and District 97 staff member, explained that she was the head of a school board once and had to make a difficult decision regarding an administrator. At that time, she and her board decided to retain the administrator in a different role. She wondered if their decision might have been different if they had received the community support like that in support of Principal Hamilton, and decided that the community's voice would have made a difference. Harlan shared that she met with Dr. Kelley recently and they talked about situations having two sides. She shared that she is aware of the other side to this issue, and noted that those voices are small in number.

Harlan told the Board that the rest of Oak Park is watching, and even though we are a diverse and welcoming community, we are also protective of those who have given so much for so long, to so many. She noted that the people of Oak Park support each other, and are there for each other. She suggested that the community is becoming increasingly wary of an administration which currently consists of so many who have come in and are learning to "listen" but show little regard for what they are hearing from so many. She reminded the Board and

## **PUBLIC COMMENT** (Continued)

administration that they are ultimately judged by their actions. She requested that they keep Cathy Hamilton on as principal of Lincoln School.

Caroline Nikolakakis, an Oak Park resident, District 97 teacher and parent, shared that she attended parent/teacher conferences today and felt emotional, and noted that she received a survey this week asking her opinion on the qualifications needed for the new principal at Lincoln School. She reminded the Board that Oak Park is a sanctuary city. She noted that Oak Park is taking a stance, and this situation does not add up to her. Nikolakakis does not understand why we cannot make things work, and suggested that the Board needs to follow what is right, noting that it may not be necessarily easy. Everyone needs the love and support, and this situation does not live up to what the district claims to be. It is time for us to stand up and figure it out. She expressed confusion over how to explain the situation to her son. She offered to help in any way, but hopes that the school can keep Cathy Hamilton.

Amy Vogt, a Downers Grove resident and District 97 teacher, suggested that the Board step back and reevaluate the situation to gain clarity of the opposite point of view.

She noted that in this particular case, the Oak Park community does not see eye to eye in the situation of keeping Cathy Hamilton as principal of Lincoln. The community voiced their opinions, at the November Board meeting it was announced that Hamilton was offered a substitute position. Vogt suggested that the Board was not listening to their voices. So the community came back, and rallied again; this time with 400 signatures of support for Hamilton, and another substitute position was offered to Hamilton. Vogt suggested that again the Board did not listen to their voices. So the community is back this evening and suggested that the disregard for the many voices in support of Hamilton is hurting their relationship and suggested that it has broken down the level of trust that she believes Dr. Kelley wants to maintain. She suggested that the Board and Dr. Kelley fix the problem by listening to the voices.

Michelle Michael, an Oak Park resident, reminded the Board that the position of Principal at Lincoln School is not being cut and the school needs a leader. She questioned why the Board is not allowing her to remain principal of the school. Michael shared a story about how Dr. Kelley has shown support for a teacher at Hatch School, and she encouraged those kinds of actions to foster a positive environment.

Michael suggested that teachers may be afraid to approach the administration, and are questioning why teachers in other districts who were also affected by the ERO sunsetting are being allowed to stay in their positions.

Michael asked the following questions:

- Why aren't you looking out for us?
- Why won't you listen to us?
- Why won't you take care of us?

She asked the Board and administration to stand up and help people in need.

Paul Moore, an Oak Park parent with children at Lincoln School, expressed confusion. He asked why the Board has not fixed this, and explained that he does not understand why the Board is not listening to the community. He explained that the community is angry about this. Moore explained that he spoke to the Board two week ago and has not yet received a response. He explained that the issue at Lincoln School is creating a wedge in the community, and shared that many people do not trust that the Board and administration will make the right decisions moving forward.

Rebecca Kaegi, an Oak Park resident shared that she has three children at Whittier School and wanted the district to understand why she chooses to pull her children from the PARCC testing. She expressed concern about the amount of standardized test time, noting that PARCC and MAP are both being used this year. She shared that her daughter would have 855 minutes of testing and she questioned if the data is being used in a punitive way. She suggested that the district cannot abuse data they do not have, so that is why she does not allow her children to take the tests. She questioned if the district is looking at the testing and deciding if it is helpful or useful.

## **REPORTS**

### **REFERENDUM DISCUSSION**

**REPORTS**

Dr. Kelley and Alicia Evans came to the table. They reported that on February 14, 2017, the members of the District 97 Board of Education reviewed and discussed the recommended operating reductions that will be made over a three-year period if the two referenda questions being placed on the ballot on April 4, 2017 do not pass.

REFERENDUM DISCUSSION (Continued)

The district will need to make more than **\$14 million in cuts to staff, programming and overall operations** over the course of those three years to achieve a fund balance of 15 percent (10 percent below what is required by board policy) and balance the budget.

Below is the list of reductions sorted by school year. Any items that include Reduction in Force (RIF) for certified or non-certified staff will require additional Board action. RIF of teachers and certified administrators is scheduled to come before the Board for approval on April 11, 2017, while RIF of non-certified support staff and non-certified administrators is scheduled to come before the Board for approval on April 26, 2017. All staff members who are subject to RIF or release will receive notification in April.

Reductions in 2017-2018

- Eliminate 12 teaching positions
- Eliminate 20 teaching assistant positions
- Eliminate 13 administrative assistant positions
- Eliminate eight administrative positions
- Eliminate three teaching positions and three teaching assistant positions in early childhood (dependent on the availability of state funding)
- Eliminate six custodial and maintenance positions
- Eliminate two additional non-instructional positions
- Eliminate 10 media aides
- Discontinue the work being done on the organizational and data security audits
- Discontinue the vision work being conducted with the assistance of the National Equity Project
- Indefinitely postpone the refresh of student and staff technology devices
- Reduce annual software and computer maintenance
- Reduce supplies for kindergarten and teacher mentoring program
- Reduce professional development for staff

**Total Reductions**

**\$4,328,929**

Reductions in 2018-2019

- Eliminate all 15 positions in the general music program for the elementary schools
- Eliminate all nine positions in the elementary art program
- Eliminate all 11 positions in the elementary school foreign language program (FLES)
- Eliminate all 10 teacher librarian positions
- Eliminate all eight language arts specialist positions in the elementary schools
- Eliminate all three positions in the elementary band program
- Eliminate all four positions in the elementary instrumental music program
- Eliminate the two positions in the elementary orchestra program
- Eliminate all five student support specialist positions
- Eliminate two additional non-instructional positions
- Eliminate the two International Baccalaureate (IB) coordinator positions
- Eliminate the district's academic summer programming
- Reduce the instructional materials available to support the implementation of Eureka Math
- Eliminate team leader stipends
- Reduce resources used in conjunction with the district's Response to Intervention program
- Eliminate the Second Step program
- Eliminate resources used in conjunction with the district's professional learning communities
- Eliminate efforts to maintain the status of IB schools at Brooks and Julian
- Indefinitely postpone textbook adoptions
- Indefinitely postpone the refresh of student and staff technology devices
- Reduce professional development for staff

**Total Reductions**

**\$7,437,821**

Reductions in 2019-2020

- Eliminate 20 positions in conjunction with a complete reorganization of the middle schools
- Eliminate three administrative positions

REFERENDUM DISCUSSION (Continued)

**Total Reductions**

**\$2,134,474**

They noted that this information was based on the five year projections and would balance the budget. The administration will continue to find additional efficiencies with the budget and consider additional grant opportunities. However, the district would need to ask for another referendum in the 2018-2019 school year, and would need be at least half the size of the current referendum to maintain the reduced level, and twice as big to get out of the hole. A restoration referendum would need to be 50 percent more than what the district is asking for now.

It was explained that coming out of the 2011 referendum, the district hit the perfect storm.

- 1) It was at a 40 year high in enrollment, and the education system in Oak Park is attractive to families moving into the community.
- 2) Declining revenues because of ceilings on the district’s revenue due to tax caps.
- 3) The dysfunction at the state level, noting that the district is currently out \$9,000,000 and the state has no plan to make that up.

Dr. Kelley reported that the administration has taken this exercise very seriously, and noted that this is not a scare tactic or represents the kind of schooling the district wants to offer the children, but it is a realistic situation.

It was explained that in order to make sure that the community is aware, informational events will be planned. On February 27, 2017 a large town hall meeting will be held at Hatch School at 7:00 p.m. On March 1, 2017, a meeting will be held in the Oak Park River Forest High School cafeteria at 7:00 p.m. additionally, meetings will be held with community groups and PTOs.

Board comments including noting that Illinois is the 50<sup>th</sup> of all the states when it comes to school funding. Interest was expressed in knowing how many portable classrooms would be needed and where they would be place if the capital referendum does not pass.

**ACTION ITEMS**

ACTION ITEMS

**2.1.1 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE JANUARY 24, 2017 BOARD MEETING**

Spatz moved, seconded by Gates, that the Board of Education of Oak Park District 97, approve the revised minutes from the January 24, 2017 Board meeting. Roll call vote.

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

**2.1.2 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE JANUARY 30, 2017 BOARD RETREAT**

Spatz moved, seconded by Gates, that the Board of Education of Oak Park District 97, approve the minutes from the January 30, 2017 Board retreat. Roll call vote.

Ayes: Spatz, Gates, Brisben, Felton, O’Connor, 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.

Member Spatz acknowledged Saad Bawany for his service, noting that he is moving on to a new opportunity that is closer to home. Additionally, it was noted that Bawany will be staying on until March 28, 2017 in order to assist with the referendum.

**2.3.1 APPROVAL OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY RFP**

Gates moved, seconded by Spurlock, That the Board of Education of Oak Park District 97, direct administration to issue a RFP for the demographic study. Roll call vote.

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

It was noted that the last demographic study consisted of good data at the district level but the school level data was questionable. It was suggested that the RFP include the need for technology (software) for this purpose.

**2.3.2 APPROVAL OF SURETY BONDS**

Spurlock moved, seconded by Gates, that the Board of Education of Oak Park School District 97, approves the surety bonds as presented. Roll call vote.

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

**2.3.3 APPROVAL SUMMER 2017 WORK BID**

Spurlock moved, seconded by Spatz That the Board of Education of Oak Park School District 97, approves the base bids, alternates, and associates expenses for the 2017 summer work in the amount of \$5,522,260 per STR and Bulley and Andrews recommendations as presented. Roll call vote.

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

It was reported that the bid documents were shared with the FAC committee last week, and the committee signed off on the recommendation. It was noted that the amount was kept to a minimum until the district knows that the capital referendum has passed. It was noted that the majority of the work is life safety and funded with DSEB dollars and revenue from bonds that have already been sold.

**2.3.4 APPROVAL OF TRANSPORTATION RFP**

Spatz moved, seconded by O’Connor, that the Board of Education of Oak Park School District 97, directs administration to issue a RFP for special education and regular education transportation. Roll call vote.

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

It was suggested that the district ensure that bus routes can be modified as needed should the referendum fail.

**BOARD ASSIGNMENTS**

**BOARD  
ASSIGNMENTS**

STANDING BOARD COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORT FOLLOW UP  
FAC

It was noted that member Spurlock covered for President Gates at the last FAC meeting.

C.L.A.I.M.

Vice President Felton acknowledge the students who participated in the CLAIM your voice event last week, noting that it was interesting to learn how everyone experiences education differently.

The liaison report from the last meeting will be forthcoming. It was noted that the committee has had two resignations and one new member will be jointing the committee.

FORC

The FORC committee will be meeting on February 23, 2017. At that time, the committee will discuss the floor and ceiling percentages of the fiscal policy 4:12. This item will return to the Board for consideration on February 28, 2017 with action on March 14, 2017.

FORC (Continued)

It was reported that a resolution is needed related to state funding. The referendum team will review the materials this week. The document will be reviewed by FORC before it returns to the Board for review on February 28, 2017 with action on March 14, 2017.

It was reported that 10 applications were received for the open seat on the FORC committee. One candidate will be invited to join the committee, and start his/her tenure on February 23, 2017.

POLICY COMMITTEE

The Policy committee met recently and will have policies for review at the next Board meeting.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND LIAISON REPORT FOLLOW UP  
IGOV

The candidates' forum for all six taxing bodies was held at Austin Gardens. 48 people were in attendance. Lou Anne Johannesson was acknowledged for coordinating this event. The next meeting of IGOV is scheduled for March 18, 2017.

COG

The last meeting of COG was held on March 1, 2017.

COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

It was reported that several great applicants have expressed interest in joining this committee. Invitations were sent out to seven applicants and four of them have confirmed. The kickoff meeting of this group will be held within the next two to four weeks.

RETREAT PLANNING UPDATE

The next Board retreat is scheduled for March 13, 2017. It was noted that the survey sent out after the last retreat still needs to be completed by a couple Board members.

**ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

ADMINISTRATIVE  
ITEMS

2018-2019 DISTRICT CALENDAR

Laurie Campbell came to the table. She reminded the Board that several veteran committee members were not able to voice their opinions during the creation of the calendar, so a special meeting of the committee was held for this purpose. She noted that the parent/teacher winter conferences will move so they do not coincide with MAP testing. Campbell noted that a public hearing will be necessary to waive some of the holidays (Pulaski Day, Lincoln's Birthday, and Veteran's Day). It was noted that Good Friday cannot be changed. This item will return to the Board for action on February 28, 2017.

CUSTODIAL SUPPLY BIDS

Alicia Evans reported that the Board is asked on an annual basis to approve the purchase of custodial supplies (trash bags, paper products, etc.). She noted that the district does a line by line comparison to save money in this area. This item will return for action on February 28, 2017.

DONATION OF LAPTOPS

Evans reported that a company named Salesforce expressed interest in donating and delivering approximately 200 computers to the district. She noted that the computers will be used by the students and the company may actually be interested in donating computers for multiple years. This item will return to the Board for action on February 28, 2017.

It was noted that this gift is a great money saver, but it does not replace the district's usual refresh of computer.

LANDSCAPING BID

Evans reported that the landscaping bid is an annual item that the Board reviews. She noted that there may be some changes to the specifics of this bid as the district is interested in improving the curb appeal of some of our buildings.

It was noted that the district has an IGA with the Park District to maintain some of the field, and perhaps they would consider taking on this work as well.

**INSURANCE CONSULTANT CONTRACT**

Campbell came to the table. She reported that the HUB contract expires on February 28, 2017. She noted that the benefits committee met and reviewed a new agreement with HUB. Because the district is satisfied with the services provided, but is interested in exploring options, the committee is recommending a one year agreement. This item will return to the Board for action on February 28, 2017.

**CONCLUDING ITEMS**

CONCLUDING  
ITEMS

**BOARD REMARKS**

Member Spurlock reported that she spoke with Jan Arnold from the Park District and with the Irving PTO. Spurlock reported that scientific evidence does not support the turf field concerns, and noted that the fill used in the Irving field is rated at the same level as the Niki Grind. She suggested an alternative would be to remove the top layer of fill and replace it with a Cool Play product. Cool Play is a synthetic material made of plastic similar to the plastic used to make toys. She explained that this product is being used more often now and even reflects heat. The price to replace the current fill with Cool Play would be \$18,000. Spurlock will share a side by side comparison of the products with the Board, and offered to meet with the PTO again.

It was noted that FAC does not want to voice an opinion on this topic. Interest was expressed in knowing how long it would take to replace the fill and how long the field would need to be unavailable for use. The Board agreed that this item would require additional discussion.

Member Spatz thanked the Board and Administration for the plant and card sent after his recent surgery. He shared that he is happy to be back.

It was reported that the Vex State Qualifying Tournament was held on February 4, 2017. The Board was reminded that the Oak Park Education Foundation launched the Vex Robotics Invitational 10 years ago and it has grown from three middle schools to 96 schools statewide. After 74 rounds of competition, Theory 4 from Brooks, and the Gladiators from Julian qualified for the Illinois Middle School VEX Robotics State Championship, which will be held at Julian Middle School on March 4, 2017. Additionally, team Kryptonite from Julian earned the Robot Skills award.

**BOARD RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENT**

President Gates expressed the importance of assuring that everyone who requested a response receive one.

**BOARD MEETING AGENDA FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

The draft agenda for the February 28, 2017 Board meeting was reviewed and modifications were recommended.

**ADJOURNMENT**

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to conduct, President Gates declared the meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

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Board President

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Board Secretary