

**Official Minutes of the  
Oak Park Board of Education District 97,  
970 Madison Street, Oak Park, Cook County, Illinois  
Meeting September 11, 2012**

President Barber called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Present: Barber, Gates, Felton, Sacks, Traczyk, Spatz, and O'Connor

Absent: None

Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Al Roberts, Assistant Superintendent of HR and General Counsel Joanne Schochat, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations Therese O'Neill, Director of Policy, Planning and Communications Chris Jasculca, Director of Special Education Mike Padavic, and Board Secretary Sheryl Marinier

ROLL CALL

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

O'Connor moved, seconded by Sacks, that the Board of Education move into executive session at 6:33 p.m. Roll call vote.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ayes: O'Connor, Sacks, Traczyk, Gates, Felton, Barber, and Spatz

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion passed.

**OPEN SESSION**

Traczyk moved, seconded by Gates, that the Board of Education move into open session at 7:02 p.m. All members of the Board were in agreement.

OPEN SESSION

**MOMENT OF SILENCE**

President Barber requested a moment of silence in memory of those lost in the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

**PUBLIC COMMENT – 2012-13 Budget**

O'Neill reported on the timeline for posting the budget and assured the Board that the district is in compliance with the process. The audience was invited to speak on this issue but nobody came forward to give public comment.

PUBLIC COMMENT

**SPECIAL REPORTS**

**BOND DISCUSSION – WM. BLAIR & COMPANY**

O'Neill and Liz Hennessy from Wm. Blair and Company came to the table. O'Neill reported that last year's bond process was broken into three steps. This evening's report is the second part of that process. She reported that the purchase of new furniture at Beye School and the purchase of musical instruments were part of this process.

SPECIAL REPORTS

Hennessy reported that the market continues to be very strong. She then led the Board in a brief discussion on the bond sales and the Debt Service Extension Base.

Hennessy reported that the Board will receive the resolution of intent on September 27, which will be followed by a public hearing on October 30 and a bond resolution on November 13. The district can expect proceeds in early December.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

John Abbott, an Oak Park resident, expressed his concern about the Fast ForWord program. He asked if the Board could present peer reviewed literature that supports the long-term benefits of the program. He noted that the literature currently available can often be traced back to the parent company of the product. He explained that his younger child is Dyslexic and the studies are showing that Fast ForWord is not an appropriate intervention for Dyslexic students. He expressed interest in opting out of the program.

Jeanine Pederson, an Oak Park resident, spoke on behalf of the Longfellow PTO, and expressed thanks to Dr. Roberts and Ms. O'Neill for directing the wonderful process that is taking place regarding the Longfellow Field. She noted that they have been working with the Park District to irrigate the field. She also noted that the PTO has been assured that time after school and some weekends will be made available for the PTO's use of the field.

Kelly Soprych, an Oak Park resident, shared that she has not been able to find documentation on how Fast ForWord will support the advanced child. She questioned why the district is requiring students to participate in the Fast ForWord program. She asked if Dr. Roberts could share growth statistics from the Michigan schools using the program. Soprych referenced the link between Dr. Burns and Scientific Learning and questioned any statistics that Burns might share. She requested proof of how Fast ForWord helps the advanced child, noting that if proof is not available, she would prefer her children opt out of the program.

Tom Zittnan, an Oak Park resident, shared that he is the ex- husband of Kelly Soprych, and he shares her concern. He expressed confusion on who Fast ForWord will help.

Phyllis Walden, an Oak Park resident, had children go through the Oak Park schools. She expressed excitement about the International Baccalaureate program and expressed interest in knowing when the district will incorporate foreign language as part of the core curriculum.

**ACTION ITEMS**

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**4.1.1 Approval of Minutes of August 21, 2012**

Traczyk moved, seconded by Gates, that the Board of Education, District 97, accept the minutes from the August 21, 2012 meeting. Roll call vote.

Ayes: Traczyk, Gates, Sacks, Felton, O'Connor, Barber, and Spatz  
Nays: None  
Motion passed.

**4.1.2 Approval of Minutes of August 28, 2012**

Spatz moved, seconded by Sacks, that the Board of Education, District 97, accept the minutes from the August 28, 2012 meeting. Roll call vote.

Ayes: Spatz, Sacks, Traczyk, Gates, Felton, O'Connor, and Barber  
Nays: None  
Motion passed.

**4.2.1 Approval of Consent Agenda**

President Barber read the items on the consent agenda. Traczyk moved, seconded by Felton as amended.

- 2.3.1 Bill Lists and Related Reports
- 2.2.1 Personnel Action as revised

Roll call vote.

Ayes: Traczyk, Felton, Spatz, Sacks, Gates, O'Connor, and Barber

Nays: None

Motion passed.

#### **4.4.1 Approval of 2012-13 Grants**

Gates moved, seconded by Traczyk, that the Board of Education, District 97, review and award all grants delineated on the attached two spreadsheets on behalf of District 97 for the 2012-13 school year. Roll call vote.

Ayes: Gates, Traczyk, O'Connor, Felton, Barber, Spatz, and Sacks

Nays: None

Motion passed.

#### **4.4.2 Approval of Musical Instrument Bid**

Traczyk moved, seconded by Sacks, that the Board of Education, District 97, award the musical instrument bid as delineated in the memoranda of August 21 and September 11, 2012. Roll call vote.

Ayes: Traczyk, Sacks, Gates, O'Connor, Felton, Barber, and Spatz

Nays: None

Motion passed.

Gabby Rosenblum, the head of the district's music department, expressed her appreciation.

#### **4.4.3 Approval of Out-of-state/Overnight Field Trips**

Traczyk moved, seconded by Sacks, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the 2012-13 out-of-state / overnight field trip requests for fifth graders to participate in outdoor education programs as identified in the attached table. Roll call vote.

Ayes: Traczyk, Sacks, Gates, O'Connor, Spatz, Barber, and Felton

Nays: None

Motion passed.

#### **4.4.4 Appointment of Election Officials**

Felton moved, seconded by O'Connor, that the Board of Education, District 97, appoint Sheryl Marinier as the election official and Chris Jasculca as the designated representative for elections when needed in her absence. Roll call vote.

Ayes: Felton, O'Connor, Sacks, Traczyk, Gates, Barber, and Spatz

Nays: None

Motion passed.

#### **4.4.5 Approval of Settlement Agreements**

Gates moved, seconded by Traczyk, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the settlement agreements as presented. Roll call vote.

Ayes: Gates, Traczyk, Felton, Sacks, O'Connor, Barber, and Spatz

Nays: None

Motion passed.

**TOPIC REPORTS**

**ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS**

Dr. Roberts introduced Mariel Race who donated \$5,050.35 from the Terry Race Educational Technology Fund to purchase a Smartboard at Irving School. The Board will vote on acceptance of the gift during their next meeting. Race invited everyone to participate in the October 14 fundraiser in River Forest starting and ending at Lincoln School. She will share details of the event with Mr. Hodge.

**FIELD TRIP APPROVAL – BROOKS**

Dr. Roberts shared a request for Brooks’ eighth graders to visit Washington DC in October. He explained that some of the field trips are PTO sponsored trips and others are school sponsored. In an effort to approve field trips in a timely manner, principals are putting together a list of all trips identifying which are district/PTO sponsored.

**SCHOOL RECOGNITION APPLICATIONS**

Dr. Roberts reported that the Board is required to approve the School Recognition Applications annually. This item will return to the Board for approval on September 27.

**NCLB REQUEST**

Dr. Roberts explained that the district annually receives requests from neighboring districts asking that it agree to accept some of their students under the provisions set forth by NCLB. This item will return to the Board on September 27 for action.

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT – LONGFELLOW FIELD**

Dr. Roberts explained that irrigation is being considered for Longfellow Field. A cost of \$37,000 has been estimated for this project and Jan Arnold at the Park District has been asked to consider sharing the cost. Dr. Roberts explained that Board approval would not be necessary as the addition of the irrigation would be considered a change order. He was, however, interested in the Board’s support of the change. The district and Park District are working on an addendum to the current intergovernmental agreement that will outline the irrigation agreement and protect the PTO’s interest in using the field for the first hour after school and some weekends that would be identified at a later date.

Board questions and concerns included interest in hearing about the ongoing maintenance and water costs.

Dr. Roberts expressed interest in reviewing all the intergovernmental agreements with the Park District and combining them all into one agreement.

**FACILITIES UPDATE**

The District 97 Board of Education and the Park District presented a concept to the Village Board last night suggesting a joint building to house the two entities. The Madison Street Coalition is tentatively scheduled to meet with the two governmental bodies on Friday at 2 p.m. A forum will be held at Village Hall on September 19 to explain the concept to the public. A number of communication methods will be put in place to keep the community up to date as the concept progresses. The Board was asked to send their comments and questions to Chris Jasculca or Dr. Roberts.

Forum suggestions included a recommendation to start the forum with a presentation of the concept, clarifying the use of TIF monies and explaining what happens to General State Aid in relationship to the TIF. It was also recommended that the Board make it very clear that no money from the Education Fund will be used for this project.

## FACILITIES UPDATE (Continued)

Additionally, it was recommended that the Board and joint administrative team give direction to the Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC) as to what input might be needed from that group. It was reported that the Finance Oversight and Review Committee (FORC) has been assigned the task of reviewing the matrix and major projects. It was noted that administration will create a timeline. This topic will become a standing topic on future Board agendas.

## SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION DISCUSSION

President Barber reminded the Board that the overall approach on evaluating the superintendent was discussed at the last meeting and it was found to be quite effective. Member O'Connor shared a sample document and a discussion took place.

Board comments and suggestions included noting that it would be helpful to keep the superintendent's evaluation in line with the teacher evaluations. The need for a succession plan was recommended. The need to have multiple areas that demonstrate student growth was expressed.

Member Spatz and Dr. Roberts shared their idea for six standards with sub points. It was noted that the sub points were included for clarity, but the Board would only evaluate on the standards. Dr. Roberts express that he would have no objection to being held at the same high standards as the teachers.

A discussion took place regarding the breakdown on weighting of the benchmarks. Looking at students in different percentiles to determine if all students are showing growth was suggested.

The Board agreed to review the evaluation recommendation and send their comments to Member O'Connor. Dr. Roberts will find out if the last four years of ISAT / MAP data is readily available, and 20 minutes will be allocated for discussion at the next Board meeting.

## BOARD GOALS

Vice President Spatz shared a PowerPoint of draft Board goals. A detailed discussion took place. This item will be added to the next Board meeting for additional discussion.

## *MAINTAIN AND INCREASE THE RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, TRAINING, AND IMPACT OF HIGH QUALITY TEACHERS*

Board comments and suggestions included;

- It was suggested that a goal be set requiring a number of informal presentations and/or ensuring that all scheduled evaluations occur in a timely manner
- Diversity needs to be included into the definition of teacher recruitment
- Consider ways to increase the retention of high quality teachers
- Include a baseline retention analysis
- The retention rate should be by rating category

## *IMPROVE INFORMATION FLOW AMONG STAKEHOLDERS*

Board comments and suggestions included;

- Identify a partner district for a comparison study
- The financial list might be different than the academic list

BOARD GOALS (Continued)

*PLAN AND PREPARE FOR COST-EFFECTIVE, SAFE, AND APPROPRIATE FACILITIES*

Air conditioning of the buildings was discussed. It was reported that Norm Lane is doing a study of the facilities to consider air conditioning in all classrooms across the district.

It was noted that a timeline for the warehouse and administration building would be helpful, it was also noted that the move would reduce the district's footprint.

The Board was asked to e-mail their changes to Vice President Spatz and Dr. Roberts. It was noted that several members recommended simplifying the document.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

SUPERINTENDENT'S  
REPORT

The Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC) has been notified of the progress made last night with the Village and Parks.

Upcoming parent forums will focus on the International Baccalaureate Program (IB) and Common Core. The administration is making efforts to reach out to all parents.

Six Those Who Excel nominations were made this year and all will receive awards. Elyse Smith, kindergarten teacher at Longfellow, is a finalist for the Illinois Teacher of the Year award.

The district's insurance carrier recommends that all PTO activities be presented to the Board because they are covered under the district's policy. Dr. Roberts noted that the Holmes Harvest Dinner will be held on September 20, 2012.

The staff survey of the opening day activities noted a positive enthusiastic tone and appreciation for teachers leading the discussion on Common Core.

In the next few days, Dr. Roberts will share an update on the strengths of the administration team.

Dr. Roberts has been meeting regularly with the two middle school principals. He reported that the IB training has been very positive, and teachers are eagerly awaiting training. Dr. Roberts will miss the September 27 Board meeting because he will be attending training that week.

**BOARD CONCERNS / ANNOUNCEMENTS**

BOARD CONCERNS /  
ANNOUNCEMENTS

A Google Doc listing the individual school PTO meeting dates has been made available to the Board members. They were asked to review the document and enter their names next to the meetings they wish to attend. It was recommended that they ask the PTO presidents for five minutes on the agenda to share a facilities update.

President Barber attended the Council of Governments (COG) meeting last week. The meeting covered reports from the Police Department and the youth interventionist. Discussion took place on the possibility of two Student Resource Officers instead of one.

It was noted that IB seems to be universally accepted and the Board/community are excited.

Interest was expressed in attending the Those Who Excel Awards Banquet on October 20.

IGOV will be meeting this Saturday at Village Hall.

A compliment was shared for the work being done by the Early Childhood Program at Whittier School and Principal Carol Young.

**BOARD CONCERNS / ANNOUNCEMENTS** (Continued)

It was reported that the conversion from NEOLA to PRESS is almost complete. A one sentence disclaimer was suggested for e-mails.

The Brooks Meet the Principal event held last week was successful. Principal Michowski was complimented on the way he addressed the parent concerns.

The PTO Council meeting is scheduled for September 24 at Whittier School.

The October 10 forum will address questions regarding IB, Common Core, and clustering.

Interest was expressed in seeing what the IB trained teachers are doing in the classrooms with their new knowledge.

Members Sacks and Felton attended a meeting with the elected women of Oak Park. They updated the women on the status of the playgrounds and the IB program. It was reported that early voting will be allowed for two weeks, but extend through the Saturday before the election.

It was reported that the state will be releasing new information on ISATs that include college readiness. The Board was asked if there is something the district should do to be ready for this.

Growth data will be included in the State Report Card.  
A new resource from the Illinois Interactive Report Card (IIRC) was shared.  
A paid site, MYIIRC is now available.

Support for data driven instruction and a multi-year strategic plan were recommended goals for the Board’s consideration.

It was reported that FORC is recommending a change to policy 6100.

Vice President Spatz, who is a member of the Illinois Early Learning Council’s Data Research and Evaluation Committee, will share updates on the KIDS program as they become available.

Dr. Martha Burns will be speaking to the community regarding Fast ForWord on September 24.

**BOARD RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENT**

BOARD RESPONSE  
TO PUBLIC  
COMMENT

Dr. Roberts reported on the implementation plan for Fast ForWord, which was developed by the staff after a pilot held last year. The pilot demonstrated that children at all levels benefitted from the program. He is aware of other districts where the parents of the advanced children were the ones who initiated the interest in the program. He shared that the option of opting out will be worked out with the principals at each building. He also shared that the program has produced growth in very good students and helped children focus better on ACTs and SATs.

President Barber explained that Fast ForWord research was discussed at several meetings. The Board agreed to do an additional test over the summer of 2011. The results indicated some growth and gave the Board enough information to see the program’s potential. The Board made an educated decision to move forward with the program’s implementation.

The floor was opened again to the public speakers who expressed frustration with the information on the district Web site in support of the Fast ForWord program. It was noted that the information can be traced back to Scientific Learning, the studies referenced do not recommend the product, and items are taken out of context.

**BOARD RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENT** (Continued)

In response to the comments regarding foreign language, Dr. Roberts reported that the district offers foreign language beginning in Kindergarten through all grade levels and the amount of time dedicated to foreign language has been increased. It was recommended that a note be sent to Ms. Walden that would explain the history of the World Language Program.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to conduct, President Barber declared the meeting adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board will be held on Thursday, September 27, 2012 beginning at 7 p.m. at the administration building located at 970 Madison Street.

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Board President

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Board Secretary