President Broy called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Broy, Kim, Liebl, Kearney, Spurlock, Moore, and Breymaier (arrived at 7:00 p.m.)
Absent: None
Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Carol Kelley, Assistant Superintendents of Human Resources Gina Herrmann, Director of Communications Amanda Siegfried, Chief Academic and Accountability Officer Eboney Lofton, Senior Director of Equity Carrie Kamm, Senior Director of Technology Michael Arensdorff, Senior Director of Buildings and Grounds Jeanne Keane, Consultant Rob Grossi, and Board Secretary Sheryl Marinier.

EXECUTIVE SESSION
Kearney moved, seconded by Spurlock that the Board move into executive session for the purpose of Appointment, Employment, Compensation, Discipline, Performance, or Dismissal of Specific Employees or Legal Counsel for the District 5 ILCS 120/2(C)(1) at 6:30 p.m.

Ayes: Kearney, Spurlock, Liebl, Kim, Moore, and Broy
Nays: None
Absent: Breymaier
Motion passed

OPEN SESSION
Kearney moved, seconded by Spurlock that the Board move into Open Session at 6:38 p.m. All members of the Board in attendance were in agreement. The Board reconvened in Open Session at 7:00 p.m. with Member Breymaier in attendance.

PRESENTATION ON THE TAX LEVY
Rob Grossi shared a summary of the tax levy and timeline. He explained that the tax levy is critical because of the limited amount that the district receives from state revenues. He reminded the Board that two percent of the district’s revenue comes from the TIF rebate. The Grossi told the Board that the TIFs are expiring and the district only has one opportunity to shift those taxes to the schools. This will give the district about $5,000,000 more in taxes. Grossi explained that the tax levy for this year was $72,000,000, and that if the district does not capture the levy this year, the increase for next year would be limited to CPI. By approving the levy now, the district will get CPI and $5,300,000. He told the Board that approval of the levy now is making a commitment to capture the money this year and the opportunity to capture it in the future.

Grossi offered three scenarios;
1. Capture all available new tax dollars from the expiring TIF. This option would be able to pay for the $33,000,000 capital projects and all programs for the students would be able to continue.
2. Capture $3,000,000 from the expiring TIF to offset the loss of the TIF surplus. This option would put the districts reserves below the three month reserve by 2024, and the district would need to convert to borrowing for capital projects, or not complete them.
3. Do not capture any new dollars from the expiring TIF district. This option would see a deficit spending by 2023. The district would be below the three month reserve by 2022 and run out of money by 2025. The district would need to borrow for capital projects or go to referendum.

Grossi explained the assumptions in making this recommendation;
1) Minimal new revenue growth from the state and federal sources.
2) Expense growth at 2.1 percent annual rate after FY2020 (versus 4.2 percent historical growth rate).
3) No property tax cap legislation.
4) $33,500,000 in major non-referendum capital expenses paid with fund balances reserved rather than new bond proceeds.

Grossi reminded the Board that the state representatives indicated that there is a good possibility that there will be a property tax freeze.

He explained that the estimated impact is $7,100,000 in new taxes (9.7 percent), but the loss from the TIF is $2,000,000 to $3,000,000. Therefore, the net increase would be $4,000,000 to $5,000,000, which is only an increase of 1.9 percent for District 97 or about $90 annually for the taxpayers.

Grossi explained that approving the levy would allow the district to maintain fund balance reserve targets through the 2025 fiscal year, significantly delay the need to have to go to referendum, allow the district to address facility needs without issuing additional debt, better position the District to absorb the impact of advance legislation including property tax freeze legislation and pension shift legislation. He reminded the Board that the employee contracts are all tied to CPI.

Board member comments included noting that if the Board wants to maintain what the district already has, it would need to increase the revenue. The Board has a unique opportunity to put the district in a position to address capital projects without incurring debt. That is a long-term saving to the community. It was noted that if the Board were to capture the $3,000,000 and issue DSEB bonds next year, it would incur substantial interest charges.

PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING THE TAX LEVY
President Broy call the Public Hearing regarding the Tax Levy to order and invited the public to address the Board.

Michele Gurgas, a 17 year resident in south Oak Park, shared that she is very active in the schools and community. She voted in support of all of the referenda and asked the Board to seek additional referenda when funds are needed. She suggested that the plan to capture revenue from the expiring TIF would undermine the process. She suggested that the district take the $3,000,000 levy that would offset the TIF and return the rest to the taxpayers. She expressed concern that if the taxes continue to increase, the village will lose diversity and build resentment.

Kitty Conklin, thanked the Board members for their service. She reminded the Board that she shared an online petition during their last meeting, and since then the petition has Grown to 1,408 signatures asking for tax relief. Conklin disagreed with Grossi’s explanation about capturing the TIF funds, and told the Board that funds can be captured at any time by passing referenda. She asked the Board to consider the impact on the entire community. She reminded them that residence are moving, but homes are selling less than they did last year. She indicated that seniors and parents cannot afford to pay more. She told the Board that the $90 annual increase that Grossi predicted does not include the capital levy. The actual increase a family will see is more like $700. She suggested not taking the full amount, which would provide some tax relief.

Peter Prokopowicz, a 31 year resident told the Board that he has been active at both Hatch and Brooks. He explained that he does not support the district raising taxes by nine percent instead of seeking a referendum. He reminded the Board that there is always an opportunity for a referendum. He suggested that the district has the opportunity to provide some tax relief, and suggested that the $90 annual increase referred to by Grossi is not a fair comparison to a non-specific tax cut. He noted that more families are leaving Oak Park after their children leave school.

Cory Gimbel, a 40 year resident has never complained about the taxes, but expressed concern that people are now moving out of town for this reason. He told the Board that his family has put $150,000 into their home in the last few year, but people around him are moving. He noted that there are five empty houses on his block. He told the Board that realtors are not hopeful, and the prices of homes are going down. He asked the Board what can be cut from the expenses to fill the gap, and he asked them to consider combining services with other boards to save money.

Ken Kirsch explained that he worked for corporations and moved every four years. He has now lived in Oak Park for 21 years. He expressed concern about the expiring TIFs and suggested that the district look for ways to combine
services to save money. He suggested that increasing revenues is not always possible and asked the Board to follow the example set by the leadership of the township.

Terrence Roche, expressed his confidence in the leadership of this Board. He understands how difficult decisions are being made in a budgeting process, and he knows that the Board is taking that burden seriously. He noted that equally as serious are the facility needs, maintenance of the resources, and keeping the schools fully staffed and programs strong. He expressed gratitude that the proposed budget supports these things. Roche thanked the Board for their service to the students and families of the district.

Kevin Peppard told the Board that he was born in Oak Park 70 years ago. He explained that this is not a one-time opportunity, that the revenue can be captured via a referendum. He questioned why capital improvements would be paid for with operating levies. He expressed concern that the Board does not trust the voters. He suggested that the Board check the Illinois State Board of elections to see who supported the pool.

Marty Bernstein, a 26 year resident has been involved with boards and is knowledgeable. He noted that most people serving on boards have great passion, but become collegial. They lose sight of half of their responsibilities. He reminded the Board that they have fiscal responsibility to the students, but also to the community. He suggested that people should not have to move out of town because the taxes are too high. He asked the Board members to reflect and see if they can come up with the other part of their duties. He suggested that the community needs to regain their trust in the Board, and suggested that they ask Grossi to offer the taxpayers perspective.

Nichole Donohue, read a statement on behalf of Scott and Susan Caudell that read; “We have lived in Oak Park for over nine year. When we first moved here, we had two very young children and now we have four kids between the ages of four and twelve. We moved to Oak Park with the understanding that taxes were about average, but we willingly made that trade-off for location, diversity, walkability, and overall richness of the community. Since we have lived here, our taxes have increased by 45 percent and the trade-off no longer seems worth it. As we see Oak Park become increasingly unaffordable, the diversity of the community is diminishing. The majority of our friends have expressed that they will leave Oak Park as soon as their children no longer attend the schools because the taxes are too high. This will change the fundamental character of Oak Park for the worst.

This tax-burden is not sustainable and District 97 is the largest contributor to that burden. District 97 needs to start working within a budget and take affirmative action to reduce their share of that burden. Not taking the $2.3 million dollars in TIF money beyond the $3 million dollar surplus the district has been receiving over the past several years would be a huge step in the right direction, would give everyone a little immediate relief, and will not greatly impact the District 97 budget.

After the 2017 referendum passed, many of the board members spoke of the trust that the voters had put in them. With the tax-burden already outrageously high at the time of that vote, the Board knew that it was a tough ask and expressed gratitude that the voters approved it at such a difficult time. Then, through an error, the Board levied an additional $2.6 million dollars above the referendum amount. A lot of trust has been broken. Returning the $2.3 million dollars of the TIF money to the taxpayers would go a long way toward repairing some of that trust. Since you have already received an unexpected $2.6 million dollar windfall, we do not understand how these $2.3 million dollars could have a significant impact on your long-range planning. The pockets of Oak Parkers are not bottomless and we are at a breaking point.”

Sarah Floyd, a resident with students in the district, told the Board that she moved to Oak Park because of the schools. She suggested that the consultant does not live in Oak Park and does not respond to the Oak Park residents. She reminded the Board that their job is to follow the wants of the taxpayers and find a balance. She told the Board that if they take the TIF funds, it will be a tipping point. She suggested that many young families will have to move out of the village.

Pati Flannery expressed appreciation to the Board, but expressed disappointment that there is not some kind of compromise. She noted that the taxpayers have already incurred a 60 percent tax increase since 2003. She suggested that nobody on the Board could feel the pain of the residents. She told the Board about a friend who had to take out a second mortgage to pay her taxes. Flannery told the Board that she has supported every referenda. She expressed
concern that the Oak Park children have no lobbyists. She suggested that the Board talk to the other taxing bodies to determine a way to work together for the community.

Mary Picul read quotes from the district’s website. She explained that she is a teacher in Cicero. She explained that as a homeowner, she has to make choices, and now she is having to choose between home repairs and paying her taxes. She asked the Board to make wise choices, to move money around to meet the financial needs of the district.

President Broy read the following statement. “First and foremost, the District 97 Board of Education and administration would like to thank everyone who has reached out over the past few weeks to share their thoughts and concerns regarding our 2019 tax levy. We deeply value your feedback and believe it is critical as we make important decisions that directly impact our students, staff, and the Oak Park community.

We want to stress that we do not make these decisions lightly. We have read every email, public comment and editorial, and we want the community to know that we hear you. Our plans for the expiring TIF revenue have been a major component of our financial planning for several years, and we believe it will help the district address major safety and maintenance needs in our buildings without issuing debt, and will allow us to maintain balanced budgets and fund balances consistent with the Board, which means only three to six months of reserves. We also believe that this decision will help us manage the very real possibility of legislative action in Springfield, such as a property tax freeze or a shift in pension liabilities, both of which would negatively impact the school district.

Our goal is to find ways to meet the needs of our more than 6,000 students, while working to be good stewards of public finances. As a Board, we are committed to working with our administration and Financial Oversight and Review Committee to establish a long-term plan for fiscal stabilization, academic excellence, and safe and quality facilities. We are also committed to finding ways to keep the community informed and engaged in this process moving forward.

Again, we want to thank all of you for your feedback, and for your continued support of our schools and the students we serve.”

Seeing that there was no other community members interested in addressing the Board, President Broy closed the public hearing.

PUBLIC COMMENT
Danielle Guralnick, a junior at Oak Park River Forest High School, explained that in her civics class, the students had to research and form a service project around a certain topic, and she chose climate change. She encouraged the Board to support her initiative and suggested several ways for them to take part. She suggested that the best option would be to move toward solar energy, noting that for every 1 kilowatt per hour of solar energy produced, 300 pounds of carbon are kept out of the atmosphere. She told the Board that the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation offers grants and opportunities to turn the schools into “solar schools” with the installation of a 1 kilowatt solar panel. She noted that a panel this size would not help much in cost savings, but would be valuable as an educational tool. She told the Board that the grant would include training for teachers on how to implement renewable energy into their curriculum. Students would learn about technology, the environment, and the math science behind solar energy.

Guralnick shared that bigger solar panels would have a significant financial benefit, allowing schools to invest in remodeling and new technology in the classrooms. She suggested that an investment now would yield immeasurable long-term benefits to the students and the schools, while contributing to the global effort to fight climate change.

ACTION ITEMS
3.1.1 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE NOVEMBER 26, 2019 BOARD MEETING
Kim moved, seconded by Kearney, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the minutes from the November 26, 2019.

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Moore, Broy, Spurlock and Breymaier
Nays: None
Abstained: Liebl
Motion passed.

3.1.2 ADOPTION OF CLOSED EXECUTIVE MINUTES FROM JULY 10, 2018 – DECEMBER 11, 2018
Kearney moved, seconded by Breymaier, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the closed meeting minutes from July 10, 2018 through December 11, 2018 as identified below.

Ayes: Kearney, Breymaier, Kim, Broy, Liebl, Moore, and Spurlock
Nays: None
Abstained: None
Motion passed.

3.1.3 RELEASE OF NON-CONFIDENTIAL CLOSED MEETING MINUTES
Moore moved, seconded by Breymaier, that the Board of Education, District 97, having this date conducted the semi-annual review of its closed meeting minutes required by the Open Meetings Act, and determined that for reasons of personal privacy or protection of the public interest, that the need for confidentiality still exists as to all of the closed meeting minutes between July 10, 2018 and December 11, 2018.

Ayes: Moore, Breymaier, Kearney, Broy, Kim, Liebl, and Spurlock
Nays: None
Abstained: None
Motion passed.

3.2 APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA
Breymaier moved, seconded by Kearney, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the consent agenda with the exception of the resignation of Darrin Collins.

3.2.1 Approval of Bill List
3.2.2 Personnel
3.2.3 Disposal of Property

Ayes: Breymaier, Kearney, Kim, Spurlock, Moore, Broy, and Liebl
Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion passed.

3.3.1 APPROVAL OF BROOKS/JULIAN IL QUALITY SUPPORTING RUBRIC
Moore moved, seconded by Kim, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve Brooks and Julian Middle Schools Illinois Balanced Accountability Framework Rubrics for submittal to the Illinois State Board of Education.

Ayes: Moore, Kim, Broy, Liebl, Kearney, Spurlock and Breymaier
Nays: None
Abstained: None
Motion passed.

3.3.2 APPROVAL OF THE TAX LEVY
Breymaier moved, seconded by Kearney, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the attached Certificate of Levy and associated resolutions providing for adoption of the 2019 levy.

Board comments included noting that if the Board did not take the levy and took DSEB next year, it would be a bigger burden on the taxpayers. One Board member reminded the community that the Board members also live in the community, and noted that this decision was a hard one to make.

Grossi reminded the Board that this is a unique opportunity to lower taxes for the community. After this year, the district would be talking about historically below average CPI increases moving forward.

Ayes: Breymaier, Kearney, Liebl, Broy, and Spurlock
Nays: Moore and Kim
Abstained: None
Motion passed.

3.3.3 APPROVAL OF STAGE CURTAIN BID
Kearney moved, seconded by Spurlock, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve of the Stage Curtain Bid in the amount of $151,259.00 that was presented on November 26, 2019.

Ayes: Kearney, Spurlock, Kim, Moore, Broy, Liebl, and Breymaier
Nays: None
Abstained: None
Motion passed.

3.3.4 APPROVAL OF SUPPORT FOR THE COMMUNITY WORKS SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT
Spurlock moved, seconded by Kearney, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the letter of commitment to join the PlanItGreen Initiative in pursuing 100 percent renewable electricity that was presented on November 26, 2019.

Ayes: Spurlock, Kearney, Kim, Moore, Broy, Liebl, and Breymaier
Nays: None
Abstained: None
Motion passed.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

BUDGET AUTHORITY

Grossi explained that this is an annual process that the district follows to start the budget planning for the next year. This process authorizes the superintendent to set the budget timeline. Ultimately the Board has to approve the budget by the end of September, with a tentative budget approval in August. He explained that he will meet with Dr. Kelley and department heads to discuss their budgets. This step is a formal way to start the budget process.

Interest was expressed in knowing how administration looks for efficiencies. Dr. Kelley explained that the budget typically comes in under the aggregate CPI. Employee contracts will be reviewed and discussed with administration. If the Board wants to give specific direction to administration, they would need to do that before the end of January.

Interest was expressed in reviewing policy and how the goals are set. It was suggested that something permanent be put in place to set some guidelines. This item will return to the Board for action on January 7, 2020.

TAX RELIEF GRANT
Grossi recommended submitting the Tax Relief grant request again this year. He noted that the state allocated about $50,000,000 for this effort, and that the high school received funds last year. He noted that it is unlikely that district 97 would get the grant, but it shows a good faith effort to abate taxes. If received, the grant would equal about $6,000,000 in tax relief for two years. This item will return to the Board for action on January 7, 2020.

FOOD SERVICE AND STUDENT REGISTRATION FEES
Grossi recommended maintaining the fees at the prior year level. This item will return to the Board for action on January 7, 2020.

Interest was expressed in keeping the fees the same, and knowing how outstanding balances are collected.

DEPOSITORIES AND SIGNATORIES
Grossi explained that with the transition in staff, it is necessary to approve the list of authorized signatories for the district’s financial accounts. This item will return to the Board for action on January 7, 2020. It was noted that the list of accounts will be included at that time.
RECOMMENDATION FOR SUMMER PROGRAMMING 2020
Eboney Lofton, Faith Cole and Tawanda Lawrence provided a summary of the 2019 Summer Launch program and introduced the plan for summer 2020. Although the location is tentative, the goal will remain to cut down on summer loss. Administration is reviewing the way that teachers are trained for the program and what is happening in the classrooms.

It was noted that the dynamics of the program was different this year than ever before. The gains in participants was much higher than students in Tier three who did not participate. Other areas for celebration included – increased enrollment this year for Kindergarten through fourth grade. The Kindergarten through fourth grade curriculum collected a lot of data throughout the program. It was reported that Summer Launch attendees outperformed Tier three students who did not attend the program in reading and math. The team will continue to develop mathematics curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of all students.

For fifth through eighth graders, the program also saw increased summer enrollment and revamped the program for students. The attendees outperformed the Tier three students who did not attend the program.

Board comments included interest in seeing data from previous years to see if grade five was the same in grade four from the previous year.

The team will continue to develop the curriculum to include projects that are relatable to students. The team will begin to recruit staff in January, as well as send invitation letters to the families in January. Invitations will be sent to all students who qualify (about 311 Tier three children) and will continue to work with the community partners to provide wraparound services. They reported that new partners include the E-Team, Beyond Hunger and the Oak Park River Forest High School.

Budgetary needs will be about $117,574, which includes teacher stipends, two coordinators, nurse, social worker and administrative assistant. The financial need may increase depending on the number of students who enroll.

Board comments including recommending that the invitation letters be sent out earlier so parents can make an educated decision regarding their child’s summer activities. A parent survey was suggested to see where parents send their children during the summer months, or a survey asking why they did not send their children to the program. The Collaboration for Early Childhood was suggested as a possible partner, and volunteers were suggested as a way to increase the adult to student ratio.

A video about the program was shared. Cole indicated that there might be a possibility of offering a fee based option for students who are not in Tier three, but would benefit from the program.

This item will return to the Board for action on January 7, 2020.

POLICY REVIEW
It was reported that PRESS submitted 35 policies for review. It was noted that none of the amendments are significant, some simply modified to stay consistent with the state law. A few of the policies needed questions answered in order to customize the policy to the district’s needs. No concerns were expressed regarding the committees recommended responses.

BOARD ASSIGNMENTS
STANDING BOARD COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORT FOLLOW UP (as needed – FAC, FORC, CCE and CLAIM)

Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC)
President Broy explained that Peter from Bulley and Andrews will address the Board during the January 7, 2020 Board meeting to discuss the slate of summer projects. She asked the Board if they would be interested in having members of the Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC) attend a Board meeting. It was agreed that the chairperson from FAC would be invited to address the Board during the February 4, 2020 Board meeting.
Finance Oversight and Review Committee (FORC)
The FORC committee will be meeting in January in anticipation of the bond sale.

Committee for Community Engagement (CCE)
It was reported that CCE has a new chairperson. Ami Novoryta. Member Breymaier will return to the committee starting in January. It was noted that the committee’s targeted focus has been successful.

CLAIM
The CLAIM committee is scheduled to meet this coming Thursday and will hold a discussion on data sharing. The committee always reviews what is going on in Springfield. It was suggested that the district always look at Springfield and how they fund the districts, suggesting that it might be a good way to find common ground with the community concerns about the tax burden.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL LIAISON REPORT FOLLOW UP (as needed – IGOV, PTO council, CEC, OPEF, Community Council, Tri-Board on Equity, Policy, and Self-Evaluation)

IGOV
It was reported that IGOV will be meeting this coming Saturday. They will be talking about the taxes and preparing for the February seminar where the conversation will focus on how assessments will change due to the taxes and levies.

Collaboration for Early Childhood (CEC)
The Collaboration meeting was the joint meeting with District 200 and the Village of Oak Park’s boards.

Community Council
The Community Council will be meeting on Thursday, December 19, 2019 at 7:30 a.m. at the Oak Park River Forest High School. The focus of the meeting will be to discuss student culture and climate. Member Breymaier will not be able to attend the meeting.

Tri-Board on Equity
It was reported that Ralph Martire from District 200 spoke to member Breymaier about District 97’s interest in this committee. Member Breymaier was asked to let Martire know that the District 97 Board is interested in continuing this work. Breymaier shared that the district might have completed the three goals identified by the committee and suggested that the committee might begin a conversation on data sharing.

Policy Committee
The Policy committee met on December 17. They reviewed PRESS updates and section 8 of the Policy Manual.

President Broy expressed interest in a discussion on keeping the budget at CPI, or limiting overages without Board approval. She suggested that the transparency policy be considered. Dr. Kelley explained that if the budget is limited by CPI, the services would need to shift. Member Spurlock commented that we should limit budget increases to CPI and discuss the resulting major service changes if we can't find ways to identify offsetting savings through efficiencies and other expense reduction strategies.

Interest was expressed in knowing when the threat assessment regulations need to be in place.

DATES FOR MONICA RETREAT
The Board members were asked to review their schedules to confirm the upcoming retreat days of January 24 – 25 and April 3 – 4, 2020, and asked if any of them would have a conflict with meeting for a full-day on each of those Fridays and for the mornings on those Saturdays. After a brief discussion, the Board members indicated that they prefer to meeting from 6 p.m. – 9 p.m. on Friday evenings and from 9 a.m. until noon on those Saturdays.
Member Moore asked if a communication would be sent out to the community regarding the Board’s decision to approve the levy. She explained that she voted the way she did because she feels that the Board has lost a lot of trust and she feels that the communications could be the cause. She noted that most of the audience this evening were white and/or older community members, and she expressed concern that the communications might be missing the average person. She expressed interest in sending out targeted messages to renters in an attempt to rebuild their trust. Moore also expressed interest in addressing the wrong information that was spreading amongst the community members. Moore expressed the need to communicate with the families of color and help them to feel confident in the Board’s decisions.

Vice President Kim shared that she finally understands that the budget was built on the expectation of the levy funds, and wished that she understood sooner.

The Board was reminded that stewardship is one of its charges. Concern was expressed that falsehoods continue to be spread within the community and the Board needs information to counter those falsehoods. The Board members were encouraged to bring up concerns during their one on one meetings with Dr. Kelley.

It was suggested that the Committee for Community Engagement be asked for a solution on how to share information with the community and address their concerns.

President Broy offered to reach out to the individual Board members, asking them for suggestions on moving forwards.

Amanda Siegfried, Director of Communications was acknowledged for her efforts with communications regarding the levy.

**AGENDA MAINTENANCE**
The draft agenda for January 7, 2020 meeting was reviewed.

**ADJOURNMENT**
There being no further business to conduct, President Broy declared the meeting adjourned at 10:10 p.m.