

**Official Minutes of the  
Oak Park Board of Education District 97,  
970 Madison Street, Oak Park, Cook County, Illinois  
Meeting March 18, 2014**

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

Present: Spatz, Gates, Sacks, Felton, O'Connor, Brisben and Traczyk  
Absent: None  
Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Al Roberts, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations Therese O'Neill, Director of Policy, Planning and Communications Chris Jasculca, Director of Special Education Mike Padavic, Director of HR Steve Cummins and Board Secretary Sheryl Marinier

ROLL CALL

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Sacks moved, seconded by O'Connor, that the Board of Education move into executive session at 6:30 p.m. to discuss (Appointment, Employment, Compensation, Discipline, Performance or Dismissal of Specific Employees, 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1), Purchase or Lease of Real Property, 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(5), Collective Negotiations, 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(2)). Roll call vote.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

OPEN SESSION

**OPEN SESSION**

Traczyk moved, seconded by Sacks, that the Board of Education move into open session at 6:52 p.m. All members of the Board were in agreement.

The meeting was reconvened at 7:00 p.m.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Michael O'Connor, an Oak Park resident and parent of three children at Mann School, reported that Principal LeDeaux is a good man and great leader. He shared that his children are motivated and now come home excited about school. O'Connor, who was a school desegregation lawyer for the United States Department of Justice, suggested that if a pillar like Mr. LeDeaux would be fired in one of the schools, there would be fundraisers, strikes and picketing. He noted how LeDeaux's hard work transformed the community, and shared how the parents are united, and stand in support of Mr. LeDeaux. O'Connor expressed hope that all the Board members spent a day shadowing him. He request in writing from the Board how much time the individual Board members and the superintendent have spent in Mann school during the school day this year.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Michele Golden, an Oak Park resident, and parent of one child at Mann School, and one at Julian Middle School, reported that she is one of the key orange ribbon agitator. She expressed her amazement at how LeDeaux transformed the school into an innovative learning environment and true community. Golden explained that under his leadership, teachers are energized, parents are welcome and children are much more excited to learn. He moved mountains to transform the fifth grade, which was in the past referred to as the "wasted years." LeDeaux offers parent nights, introduces initiatives, and uses social media. Golden expressed understanding that this is a personnel issue and information cannot be divulged. If she knew why his contract was in question, she might withdraw her support, but requested that if it is salvageable, that the Board

**PUBLIC COMMENT** (Continued)

reconsider his employment. She believes that the school and the students would suffer if Mr. LeDeaux's contract was not renewed.

Ann Kreiter, an Oak Park resident, noted that she and her husband are in their third year of ten at Mann School. She feels that Mr. LeDeaux's presents has a huge bearing on the trajectory of the Mann community and the children's education. She explained that Mr. LeDeaux started the year with T-shirts reading "212". She read the posting from Principal LeDeaux's website that explained that 212, which is the boiling point for water, will take them from good to great. She noted that the numbers on the shirts were made up of power words. She shared that in order for Mann School to reach this goal, it need LeDeaux at the helm.

Deb Wolkstein, an Oak Park resident, spoke on behalf of Lisa Collings who is currently out of the country. Collings wrote that,

"Mr. LeDeux has done an amazing job in the past two years at Mann. Might I remind you that Dr. Roberts and the Board had his full confidence when appointing him to take over after the testing incident - difficult time at that. So why was he qualified during that sensitive transition but potentially not now? Additionally Dr. Roberts and the Board also had the confidence to renew his contract this past year. Again I ask the question what in his performance has changed that would potentially lead to a shift in leadership at Mann?"

In fact, change is hard and Mr. LeDeux has handled a very tough part of his job beautifully, taking a school that was in the midst of turmoil and handling a leadership transition with concern for the student body, the teachers and the community. To me, you should be overjoyed with your selection and the collective support for the smart and trustworthy leadership you installed at Mann during this critical time.

So I ask you in a for-profit business (which my husband and I work) when do you disregard the most important stakeholders in the "company", the employees (in your case the teachers), and the customers (in your case the community)? I fear you are forgetting the most important part of your jobs as public servants, which is to work with the community, parents and teachers with the ultimate goal of improving the school system.

I go on record that if you make a change you will be held accountable to the students, the teachers, and the community in the form of evaluation of your own leadership ability of our public schools and Mann. Not only do we believe you are potentially reversing a positive decision you made, but you are setting up the school for unnecessary and unproductive change with little regard for students, teachers and parents.

To be quite honest this note underscores our dissatisfaction with Dr. Roberts and the Board as we have been involved in some of the budget issues as well. This latest situation compounded with the air of non-transparency and secrecy just reinforces our uncertainty regarding him and the Board's ability to make smart and productive decisions on behalf of the voters, students, parents and teachers. This has cemented our commitment to actively work for change as the situation at Mann is symptomatic of a potentially larger problem. Ultimately, we will have to vote our conscience when given the opportunity."

Nara Shoenberg, an Oak Park resident, and parent of two children at Mann School, shared a story about Mr. LeDeaux's favorite day, how he dressed up in costume on Halloween, and supported

**PUBLIC COMMENT** (Continued)

Pajama Day. She noted that his actions show that he cares about what he does and the students of Mann School. She reported that the school is livelier and happier than she has ever seen it. She reported that changes have been made that the community thought they would never see. Shoenberg shared the comment, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Additionally, she noted that a friend who could not be in attendance this evening, emailed her about the successes of her son. Shoenberg reported that the kids really love the school, and suggested that a change in leadership would be disruptive.

Nicole Cahill, an Oak Park resident, shared research studies about principal turnover in schools. She noted that when principals leave, math and reading scores drop, and one out of five teachers choose to leave. She noted that a principal turnover has a direct negative impact on the students, and some of the students at Mann School would actually experience this twice. She asked the Board to consider the timing. She reported that Dr. Roberts has said that he will always do the right thing, even if a room full of people disagrees. She suggested that sometimes you have to wait for the right time, and that the right thing at the wrong time is still the wrong thing.

Adrienne Eyer, an Oak Park resident, reported that the teachers feel that their voice is not being heard, and read a letter signed by 35 staff members in support of Mr. LeDeaux. The letter identified how he encourages students, parents and staff alike, and defined how everyone at Mann School has grown as a community. The letter highlighted initiatives and successes during his tenure, and suggested that the 5Essentials survey would not be a good tool for making a decision on his employment, as the staff was in transition when it was administered. The 5essentials survey does not identify the morale of the school. If administered again, it would show support for the leadership. The letter went on to support Mr. LeDeaux and request that this be considered as a collective support for him to remain in a leadership role at Mann School.

Kathleen O'Connor, an Oak Park resident, and has three children at Mann School. O'Connor reported that she was part of the Mann School Improvement Team (SIT), and shared how heartening it is to see how Mr. LeDeaux motivates the staff. She reported that the faculty is united, and suggested that losing him would destroy the force. She encouraged the Board to visit the school; walk the hallways, listen to the staff members, and decide for themselves. She expressed concern that the Board declined to scheduled a special listening session or send a representative to a PTO meeting, which indicated a lack of caring. She requested that the Board take the community seriously, and consider the gravity of their decision, and show parents and staff the respect of acknowledging what they have to say.

Michelle Johnston, an Oak Park resident, and parent of two children at Mann School, reported that she met with Dr. Robert, along with other PTO members, and learned about the contract review process for principals in our district. She explained the process to the Board, noting that two administrators perform two separate evaluations, and Dr. Roberts visited Mann School twice this year, noting that once was when school was not in session. Johnston noted that the Superintendent will make a recommendation to the Board, and historically the Board has not voted against this kind of recommendation. She noted that, in her opinion, the Board does not have enough information to make this kind of decision. She shared an analogy of a restaurant. She asked that the Board vote in the best interest of the children, and renew Mr. LeDeaux's contract.

Christopher Ohlhoff, an Oak Park resident, and parent of one Mann student, and two future students, shared his opinion that it would be a real shame to not renew Principal LeDeaux's contract. He would do whatever is in his power to make this occur. Ohlhoff noted that LeDeaux is approachable, and has had a positive impact on the child and many members of the community. Ohlhoff ask the Board to do what is in the best interest of the community. He suggested that an

**PUBLIC COMMENT** (Continued)

informed person would see the strides LeDeaux has made, and the connection he has made with the parents. He noted that those most impacted by this decision are the children, next the teachers and staff, and third are the parents, who have brought their voices here this evening, and encouraged the Board to listen to them. Ohlhoff noted that the fourth group is the Board, who has been entrusted by this community with the responsibility of this decision. He asked the Board to do what is in the best interest of the children, teachers, staff and parents who will have to live with this decision for the next nine year, in his case. Ohlhoff suggested that the Board listen to the voice of the parents and not of one individual. He recommended that the Board inform themselves; empowering themselves with information.

Wendy Barrett, an Oak Park resident, and parent of two Mann children, and volunteer on the Positive Behavioral Intervention Support Team (PBIS), reported that she has worked with parents and volunteers under the leadership of Mr. LeDeaux. She noted that Mann School was recognized by the PBIS network with emerging school status for initiating PBIS. Since his arrival, she noted that PBIS has been on a strong action plan, teachers have the tools to deal with inappropriate behavior; behavioral problems are controlled, and positive behavior is rewarded. She noted that parent support is strong, and Principal LeDeaux lives the mustang motto. Barrett requested that the Board make a compassionate and good decision, and consider the opinion of the Mann parents before making their decision.

Chris Bollinger, an Oak Park resident, and parent of two children at Mann School, noted that the people were at the meeting to tell the Board about what they think about Principal LeDeaux and Mann School. Bollinger noted that he is a lawyer, and he understands the process. He hopes that whatever turned up in the performance reviews is important and big things. He reported that things are good at Mann. Personally, Bollinger felt that LeDeaux jumped in with both feet, and has lots of heart. He encouraged the Board to listen to everyone and do the right thing.

David Yamashita, an Oak Park resident, and parent of one student at Mann School, shared that he was shocked at the state of Mann school when his child entered the school. As a stakeholder, he has been negligent in his responsibilities as a contributor in the decision making process. After the issues with the last principal, he wondered if the hiring process drove her to her decisions regarding the ISAT testing at Mann School, and he wondered about the other schools. Yamashita questioned how parents can have a more formalized role in this process. He noted that it is not a popularity contest, and suggested a survey be developed that could get an adequate response. He asked if the state precludes this kind of input, and questioned how parents could have a role in the future?

Marianne Owen, an Oak Park resident and parent of one child at Mann School, reported that after the first week of school, the principal was being talked about at home. She shared her amazement at the impact that Mr. LeDeaux had on the students and the staff. She noted the significance and encouraged the Board to see it for themselves. She shared concern over how this decision would affect the student body. Owen reported that she is part of the School Improvement Team (SIT) committee with Mr. LeDeaux, and is impressed with the way he supports the districts initiatives. She shared concerns with him about the way common core was rolled out, and LeDeaux helped her understand the process. She respects him and shared that he is amazing to the spirit of the school.

**ACTION ITEMS**

ACTION ITEMS

**2.1.1 Ratification of the Oak Park Education Support Professionals Collective Bargaining Agreement**

Traczyk moved, seconded by Felton, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the terms of a new three-year collective bargaining agreement between the Board of Education and Oak Park Education Support Professionals (OPESP) Collective Bargaining Agreement.

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

OPESP co- president, Nora Kay came to the table. She expressed encouragement that everything planned will come to fruition, and noted that the OPESP is eager to make it happen. She noted that the agreement is mutually beneficial to both the district and the union members. Member Traczyk noted that the district now has some obligation to make sure that the agreement is implemented as planned. Kay expressed interest in seeing something happen in support of the changes before the end of the year, and noted that the union voted to ratify the agreement 20 to 28. Dr. Roberts reported that there were some touchy topics discussed. He shared that the agreement reflects the future, and suggested that in a year from now everyone will be looking at the agreement very differently. It was noted that the union members will receive retro pay in the first paycheck of May.

Vice President Gates expressed interest in knowing how the negotiation process went, asking if there were any problems and what might make the process easier. He noted that this information would be helpful in all future negotiations. Kay noted that the process took longer than anticipated and recommended speeding up the process in the future. She explained that it would have been easier if the team could have shared some information with the members through the process.

#### **2.2.1 Approval of Minutes from the February 25, 2014 meeting**

Traczyk moved, seconded by Sacks, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the revised minutes from the February 25, 2014 meeting.

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

#### **2.2 Approval of Consent Agenda**

Traczyk moved, seconded by Sacks, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the consent agenda as presented to the Board.

- 2.2.1 Bill List
- 2.2.2 Personnel

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

#### **2.4.1 Approval of Summer 2014 Capital Improvements – Whittier Elevator Bid Approval**

Traczyk moved, seconded by Sacks, that the Board of Education, District 97, award a contract to Thyssen Krupp in the total amount of \$58,800 for the pre-purchase of an elevator for Whittier School as described in the memorandum to the superintendent dated February 25, 2014.

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

It was reported that both the Whittier elevator bid and the temperature control units bid were reviewed by the Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC).

**2.4.2 Summer 2014 Capital Improvements – Temperature Control Units – Bid Approval**

Felton, moved, seconded by Sacks, that the Board of Education, District 97, award a contract to Midwest Applied Solutions, Inc., in the total amount of \$244,780, for the pre-purchase of 26 unit ventilators for the approved district wide temperature control project as described in the memorandum to the superintendent dated February 25, 2014.

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

**COMMITTEE / WORK GROUP REPORTS**

COMMITTEE /  
WORK GROUP  
REPORTS

**POLICY REVIEW UPDATE**

None

**FACILITIES UPDATE (FAC)**

The amended FAC charge was discussed. It was noted that the original charge did not ensure staggered terms of office. A paragraph was added and read aloud at the table. It was noted that the same change is recommended for the CLAIM Committee charge.

This item will return to the Board for action on April 8, 2014.

It was reported that FAC discussed the temperature control pilot and how to make the test productive. This discussion will continue in April.

The administration building needs were also discussed by the committee and will be reviewed again. A new study was recommended and the Board agreed to move forward with this recommendation.

It was reported that one of the FAC members, has a contact at Columbia College who does audio assessments for classrooms, and may be able to perform the “noise” studies for a smaller fee. It was noted that the woman would use the process as training for her students. Interest was expressed in knowing what the woman would do with the data she collected. The Board expressed interest in hearing more about this option.

**FINANCIAL UPDATE (FORC)**

It was reported that the RFP process for a district auditor, received one response. The committee agreed that McGladrey, LLP, the current auditors are highly qualified and FORC is fine with the recommendation to continue using their services. It was explained that although the Board may agree to continue with the same firm, the principal from the firm assigned to the District will be changed. Additionally, it was noted that, McGladrey, LLP will alter their fee schedule to stay in line with the District 97 projection model, and a secondary audit of internal controls will be done every two years even though it is not required.

This item will return to the Board for action on April 8, 2014.

It was reported that FORC reviewed Policy 4.3.0 - Revenue and Investments and will send it to the Policy Committee for consideration.

It was reported that the committee will also consider how the district’s cash is invested regarding risk management, and consider setting some rules for DSEB.

Member Traczyk shared two documents regarding DSEB that were discussed.

#### LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE UPDATE (C.L.A.I.M.)

It was noted that the committee charge will need to change as identified under the FAC update above.

It was reported that CLAIM explored some anti-data sharing bills. One committee member discussed this bill with ED-RED and Vice President Gates discussed them with Senator Harmon.

It was reported that District 90 signed off on the data sharing letter. They requested that Senator Lightford receive a copy of it as well as Senator Harmon. District 200 requested that the letter be changed to indicate that all three districts are in support of the change. The next step will be up to the CLAIM committee. The point person for District's 90 and 200 will be contacted to participate. It was noted that the Collaboration for Early Childhood, and Common Core also support data sharing.

#### SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION UPDATE

Information will be available for discussion during the April 8, 2014 meeting.

It was noted that four of the Board members participated in the test of the evaluation tool and reported that it is excellent. The actual process is targeted for mid to late April. Vice President Gates' nephew was acknowledged for his work on this project.

#### MADISION STREET PROPERTIES UPDATE

Interest was expressed in a program evaluation to determine specific space needs, including number of offices, number of cubicles, number of conference rooms, number of filing cabinets, and other information, in order to determine a better square footage estimate.

#### CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PLAN UPDATE

O'Neill came to the table. She explained the furniture replacement process for Holmes, Irving, Longfellow and Whittier. She explained that Lowery McDonnell was the lowest bidder by about \$42,000, and she recommended that the district award the project to them.

O'Neill explained how the process included teacher input, and reported that this item will return to the Board for action on April 8, 2014.

It was noted that the FORC committee has access to the Cap-Ex tools. It was also noted that roof repairs are on the horizon for Julian and Brooks Middle Schools. O'Neill was asked to score the two projects.

#### AD HOC DASHBOARD/BENCHMARK COMMITTEE UPDATE

Member O'Connor reported that he shared the Board's feedback with the committee. The recommendation was to make the report smaller and fit within the framework of the SAY team, trying to keep the indicators down. The committee is hoping to present the dashboard publically by the end of April, 2014. The need to stay coordinated with members who are on other committees was expressed.

#### BOARD SELF-EVALUATION UPDATE / GOALS TIMELINE

It was reported that Vice President Gates, Member Felton and Dr. Roberts are working on a draft agenda. Gates explained that he is having difficulty reaching the person at the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB). The IASB representative has a canned program that will impress the Board, but Gates needs additional information. Gates will share another update as soon as he has more information.

The Board agreed to use Jeff Cohn in the afternoon to facilitate the non-IASB piece. A draft agenda will be presented to the Board on April 8, 2014.

**CONCLUDING ITEMS**

CONCLUDING  
ITEMS

**SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT**

Dr. Roberts reported that he will be meeting with Chapin Hall on the data sharing agreement sometime during the month of April.

Dr. Roberts reported that Prep for Success invitations will be shared with report cards.

Dr. Roberts met with OPTA co-presidents Sue Tresselt and Jen Nelson to discuss getting teachers back into the classroom as early as possible. He noted the summer work that needs to be completed in the schools before teacher can gain access. They shared some clever ideas.

DALI Superintendent Summit handout was shared.

Dr. Roberts reported that in the next couple weeks he will be sharing some needed administrative changes in central office for the 2014-2015 school year.

**BOARD CONCERNS / ANNOUNCEMENTS**

BOARD  
CONCERNS /  
ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Board was reminded that the Oak Park Education Foundation (OPEF) fundraiser will be held in April.

Member Sacks attended a fantastic play at Julian Middle School.

Vice President Gates attended a gathering where the referendum was discussed. He noted that the community appreciates seeing where the money is being spent.

President Spatz attended the Council of Governments (COG) meeting, where the Park District reported they are in a 10-year master plan preparation process. He noted that the district shares some property lines with them and they are receptive in making sure that we are included in those plans. Joint capital planning was also discussed.

Member Brisben attended the Lincoln PTO meeting on March 5, 2014 where concerns were shared. They discussed the Carroll Park strategies.

Vice President Gates attended Julian and Irving PTO meetings.

**BOARD RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENT**

BOARD RESPONSE  
TO PUBLIC  
COMMENT

President Spatz, Dr. Roberts and Chris Jасulca will draft a response.

**PREVIEW AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING**

PREVIEW AGENDA  
FOR NEXT  
MEETING

The draft agenda for April 8, 2014 was reviews and revisions were recommended.

**BOARD TIMELINE**

BOARD TIMELINE

The Board Timeline was reviews and revisions were recommended.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

EXECUTIVE  
SESSION

Traczyk moved, seconded by Gates, that the Board of Education move into executive session at 9:02 p.m. to discuss (Collective Negotiations, 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(2), Appointment, Employment, Compensation, Discipline, Performance, or Dismissal of Specific Employees, 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1)). Roll call vote.

Ayes: Traczyk, Gates, O’Connor, Sacks, Felton, Brisben, and Spatz

Nays: None

Absent: None

Motion passed.

**OPEN SESSION**

OPEN SESSION

Traczyk moved, seconded by Sacks, that the Board of Education move into open session at 11:11 p.m. All members of the Board were in agreement.

**ADJOURNMENT**

ADJOURNMENT

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

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board will be held on Tuesday, April 8, 2014 beginning at 7 p.m. at the Administration building located at 970 Madison Street, Oak Park, Illinois.

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Board President

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Board Secretary