

**Official Minutes of the  
Oak Park Board of Education District 97  
260 Madison Street, Oak Park, Cook County, Illinois  
July 16, 2019 Meeting**

Vice President Kim called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Kim, Breymaier, Spurlock, Liebl (arrived at 5:33 p.m.), Kearney and Moore  
Absent: Broy  
Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Carol Kelley, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources Gina Hermann, Senior Director of Technology Michael Arensdorff, Senior Director of Buildings and Grounds Jeanne Keane, Financial Consultant Rob Grossi, and Board Secretary Sheryl Marinier.

**FINANCE 101**

STUDY SESSION  
ON FINANCE

Rob Grossi led a study session on School District finances and budgets. He explained that 70 percent of revenues comes from taxes, and 9 percent comes from other local revenues. He noted that this is amongst the highest in the state. He went on to explain that 10 percent comes from general state aid, and 7 percent is from grant money from the state for specific uses. Federal funds are 4 percent and used for specific purposes. He said that districts like ours have a safe financial future.

Grossi told the Board that 70 percent of the District's revenue growth is tied to inflation. Over the past seven years, the CPI has been below the historical average of 2.25 percent. He continued by explaining that new taxable property can be charged more money.

Grossi explained that the new Evidenced-Based Funding Formula (EBF) is weighted for low income and English language learners, to provide quality education. The formula requires one nurse per every 750 students, one intervention teacher per every 125 students who are English Learners (EL), etc. He explained that the State takes that amount and calculates it by the EBF formula. Last year, the State calculated that the district should spend about \$11,683 per student. The States goal is to get up to 90 percent of the district's adequacy target. The district is currently at 84 percent of the adequacy target. He explained that most of the districts in the state are in tier 1 and 2. Because of the target, the district will see little new money flowing through the Evidenced-Based Funding model. He shared that the District's funding level has increased by about \$500,000 (approximately \$82 per pupil).

Based on the current funding shortfalls as defined in the EBF formula, the State is still underfunding school districts by \$5-\$8 billion. As the State uses its resources to close this gap, the likelihood of pension shifts and tax increases to attempt to stabilize the State's financial condition will increase. He explained that the passage of an income tax increase raises the probability of the passage of a property tax freeze, which would have a significant adverse impact on future revenue growth to the district. Grossi suggested that it is likely that the only area of revenue growth will come from real estate tax revenues.

Grossi explained that expenditures are separated into specific categories, and identified the percentage of the budget that is used by each.

- Salaries - 62 percent
- Employee benefits – 13 percent
- Purchases Services – 11 percent
- Supplies and materials – 4 percent
- Capital expenses (over \$25,000) - 1 percent
- Out of District tuition – 2 percent
- Debt Payments – 7 percent, Grossi noted that this is a very low percentage.

Grossi explained that the district has a policy of keeping six months' worth of funds on hand. He explained that the district went out for a referendum last time because those funds began to drop too low.

**FINANCE 101** (Continued)

Grossi explained that the major finance decision that the Board will need to consider is to determine how the district will pay for major capital projects beyond the bonds. He explained that the Board will have two options. They may choose to tap into fund balances, or choose to borrow money. Either way, a decision will be necessary in the future.

Grossi explained that another question that will need to be answered is; will the district elect to levy sufficiently to capture the tax revenues? He explained the impact of capturing the TIF growth during the December 2019 levy. He explained that capturing the TIF growth will have a net positive impact of approximately two to three million dollars annually. He explained that the year that it rolls off the books, that money is considered new property, and will generate about \$5.4 million. He shared that the district was only getting \$3.3 million from the TIF, noting a \$2 million difference.

Grossi made the following recommendations.

- 1) Continue to support administrations recommendations within the scope of the district’s financial policies.
- 2) Continue to focus on developing efficiencies in all areas of operations.
- 3) Administration recommendations should be made under the lens of improving the district’s “return on investment” by increasing student learning per dollar spent.
- 4) Continue to consider the long-term impact of major financial recommendations both in terms of academic and fiscal impact.

Grossi reported that he and Dr. Kelley met with each principal with the focus on what they need to improve student learning.

The discussion moved to transportation. It was noted that transportation is not required in Oak Park due to the proximity of the schools, but the community is willing to pay the expense for this service.

Interest was expressed in considering charging a fee for transportation, and what it would cost for families to use public transportation. Interest was expressed in knowing if there is a formula to determine when the district needs to go through the exercise of considering when changes need to be made, and the ability to look at everything that the Board could eliminate at one time.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Moore moved, seconded by Kearney 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), Probable Litigation 5 ILCS 120/2(C)(11)) at 6:33 p.m.

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

**OPEN SESSION**

OPEN SESSION

Moore moved, seconded by Spurlock that the Board move into Open Session at 7:01 p.m. All members of the Board in attendance were in agreement. The meeting reconvened at 7:08 p.m.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Cathi Knickrehm, a member of the school green team, talked about the work being done in the schools, and the need for a sustainability policy for the district. She shared that she helped to create the Hatch Patch garden 12 years ago, and she has been the chairperson for the Park District sustainability group. She expressed the need for a formal commitment at the district level, and asked for a policy that adds a green filter to what they are doing. She also suggested a District 97 sustainability advisory committee.

Denise Frank, the District 97 liaison for PlanItgreen, shared that since 2018, she has been meeting with Dr. Kelley about sustainability. She has also had some fruitful meetings with Buildings and Grounds, FAC and Carla Ellis, the district’s food coordinator. In these meetings, they have discussed how to talk about green topics for eighth grade

projects. They proposed a sustainability policy, and have planned, and collaborated with PlanItGreen, along with the help from Jeanne Keane. Franks expressed the need for the Board's support, and asked them to support a sustainability policy. She noted that this effort would put the district in alignment with the Village and the Park District. Frank expressed concern that River Forest and Evanston have already completed this task.

Lauren Smith, from the Beye green team, shared that she realized how passionate the team is about their work. She shared that this was the tenth year of being an award winning zero waste school. The school has installed water filling stations, collected needed funds to repair the dish washer, and currently has volunteers who sort through garbage daily. She shared that the school is providing events for learning about sustainability. She shared that the team is sustained by dedicated hard working volunteers, but both leaders will be moving on at the end of this school year. Smith shared that she is hopeful that a District 97 sustainability plan will guide the districts actions.

Judy Kleim, explained that she is a mom of four, with her youngest in seventh grade at Brooks Middle School. Kleim explained that she runs the green team at the Oak Park temple and is the Brooks Vice President of sustainability. She explained that she tried to connect with the district's director of sustainability, but soon found out that there is no one holding that title within the district, and there is no policy, team, or vision to follow. Kleim encouraged coordination at the district level. She told the Board that lunchroom milk carton recycling was stopped last year because other waste was being tossed into the same container. She noted the need to retrain students on what had become habit. Kleim suggested that having a sustainability policy would lead a good path in these efforts. She asked that the Board open the door for a policy that would put a green filter on everything the district does.

Sylvia Schweri, a member of Bike Walk Oak Park, an advocacy group working to increase biking and walking in our community and to make the streets safe for all, expressed interest in the district's progress in meeting the requirements of the Bike Walk Education in Schools Act. She explained that the act was passed in 2018 and requires that every Illinois public school include instruction, study, and discussion of safe walking and bicycling at every grade level from Kindergarten through eighth. In March, Dr. Amy Warke, the Chief Academic and Accountability Officer, told Bike Walk Oak Park that the District's PE teachers were getting together to do bike/walk curriculum planning. To help the District prepare, Schweri sent her a collection of resources organized by grade level. Schweri checked back with Dr. Warke three times over the summer to see what progress had been made, but received no replay.

We are requesting an update on this initiative. In pursuing this, we want to help the district make the streets safer for our children, and reduce the number of accidents involving cars and students. We also want to contribute to the environmental sustainability of the district and our community by growing the numbers of students who feel safe and confident enough to walk and bike to school.

Munirah Curtis, thanked administration for some of the initiatives that were implemented in regards to special education, and suggested that there are still some opportunities for growth. She noted that she has two third graders at Whittier School, one is special needs, and the other one is gifted. When she sends them to school, she worries about the one child. Will he be blamed for not fitting into the environment, perhaps he cannot learn? She explained that he is in an inclusive classroom, and she expressed the need to empower both teachers. She suggested that special education should be more than 10 percent of the district's budget. She reminded the Board that every child has the ability to excel, and suggested that when the district is budgeting money and time, it needs to be for everyone.

## **SPECIAL REPORTS**

### **PlantItGreen**

Greg Cuneen explained that the PlanItGreen is a sustainability planning and implementation project that grew out of the Oak Park River Forest Community Foundation's Community Works initiative, designed to enhance the vibrancy and quality of life of Oak Park and River Forest. PlanItGreen is guided by the OPRF community Foundation's Community Works Advisory Board and the PlanItGreen Core Team, and is led by non-profit organization Seven Generations Ahead. The project is the collective work of many community organizations, external partners, residents, businesses, and institutions. The plan supports the interests of leaders in engaging all levels of community to reduce their environmental footprint and advance common sustainability objectives.

SPECIAL  
REPORTS

**PlantItGreen (Continued)**

He explained that the Oak Park River Forest Community sustainability Report Card provides a snapshot in time of progress against sustainability goals that were created over a ten-month community engagement process in 2010-2011. Baseline metrics, dating back to 2007, were created and are being used as a basis of comparison to 2018 data that has been aggregated around energy and water consumption, waste reduction, and transportation. The report also includes activity highlights over the past year related to each of the plan’s nine topic areas and goals to provide the communities of Oak Park and River Forest with sample strategies and activities in the plan that are currently being implemented. Over time, the Sustainability Report Card will illuminate trends, highlight success and shortcomings, and ultimately help support decisions on future policies, strategies, and resource allocations that will drive achievement of the 10-year plan’s goals.

Cuneen reported on each of the nine topics, and explained that the intention of PlanItGreen, and this 2019 Community Sustainability Report Card is to drive change toward creating a sustainable and healthy Oak Park and River Forest. He suggested that the schools should consider fresh food options in the school lunch programs, explore the feasibility of solar installations, and consider a sustainability team for the district. Cuneen shared that he recommended a \$100,000 grant that would help put solar panels in place, and noted that it is his job to connect funds with the groups to support this initiative. Additionally, he can supply the proper forms needed for funding, bring in private sector experts, and make the connections to the financial resources or the technical expertise.

Board comments including noting that the district is supportive of kids knowing about climate change, but noted that the district has limited resources. Interest was expressed in hearing about other districts that are further down the path on this kind of initiative.

**ACTION ITEMS**

ACTION ITEMS

**3.1.1 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE JUNE 11, 2019 BOARD MEETING**

Moore moved, seconded by Kearney, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the minutes from the June 11, 2019 as presented.

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

**3.2 APPROVAL OF THE REVISED CONSENT AGENDA**

Breymaier moved, seconded by Moore, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the revised consent agenda.

- 3.2.1 Approval of Bill List (revised)
- 3.2.2 Personnel (revised)
- 3.2.3 Approval of SELF Renewal
- 3.2.4 Disposal of Property (revised)

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

**3.3.1 APPROVAL OF ROLE FOR DIVERSITY COUNCIL POSITION FOR SY20**

Moore moved, seconded by Breymaier, that the Board of Education of Oak Park District 97, approve an additional Diversity Council member for SY19-20 at a cost of \$1,500.00.

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

**3.3.2 APPROVAL OF ASBESTOS CONSULTING SERVICES AT LINCOLN AND LONGFELLOW**

Spurlock moved, seconded by Kearney, that the Board of Education of Oak Park District 97, approve the Asbestos Consulting services bid for Lincoln and Longfellow that was presented on June 6, 2019 in the amount of \$85,020.

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

**3.4.1 APPOINTMENT OF ADMINISTRATORS**

Kearney moved, seconded by Breymaier, that the Board of Education of Oak Park District 97, appoint Cheryl Sullivan as the Interim Principal at Mann School at an annual salary of \$117,375, effective July 1, 2019.

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

Breymaier moved, seconded by Liebl, that the Board of Education of Oak Park District 97, appoint Faith Cole as the Director of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support at an annual salary of \$132,470, effective July 1, 2019.

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

Liebl moved, seconded by Moore, that the Board of Education of Oak Park District 97, appoint Tracy Hamm as the Director of Special Education at an annual salary of \$108,042, effective July 1, 2019.

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

Moore moved, seconded by Breymaier, that the Board of Education of Oak Park District 97, appoint Jerome Green as the Assistant Principal of Longfellow School at an annual salary of \$82,111 effective July 1, 2019.

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

Kearney moved, seconded by Moore, that the Board of Education of Oak Park District 97, appoint Mark Sheahan as the Interim Chief School Business Official at a daily rate of \$800.00 effective July 16, 2019.

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

Gina Herrmann introduced Tracy Hamm, Cheryl Sullivan, Jerome Green and congratulated mark and Faith.

**3.4.2 APPROVAL OF SUPERINTENDENT’S COMPENSATION FOR THE 2019-2020 SCHOOL YEAR**

Breymaier moved, seconded by Liebl, that the Board of Education of Oak Park District 97, in the exercise of its discretion, authorizes a 1.9 percent increase in the Superintendent's salary based on her performance evaluation during the 2018-2019 school year. The Board awards this increase in base compensation effective July 1, 2019, and paid retroactively to that date.

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

**ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

**CHANGE OF SIGNATORIES**

No questions or comments were made on this topic. This item will return to the Board for action on August 13, 2019.

**VEHICLE TRADE-IN**

Jeanne Keane reported that two vehicles, a 1999 Jeep, and a 2000 Jeep are in need of replacement. This item will return to the Board for action on August 13, 2019.

**DATA SHARING AGREEMENT WITH DE PAUL UNIVERSITY**

Michael Arensdorff reported that the attorneys have reviewed the data sharing agreement and have signed off on it. The current version will be shared with the Board and they will be asked to take action on the document during the August 13, 2019 Board meeting.

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT WITH THE VILLAGE OF OAK PARK REGARDING THE JOINT FIBER PROJECT**

This item was tabled.

**SALARY INCREASES FOR LUNCHROOM, PLAYGROUND AND SUB-CUSTODIAN PERSONNEL**

Gina Herrmann reported that administration reviewed the pay rates for employees in certain non-contracted positions and is recommending an increase to their hourly rate. She reported that they are hard to fill positions, and administration feels that offering a more competitive salary would be helpful and encourage retention. This item will return to the board for action on August 13, 2019.

**DISCUSSION OF GENERAL STATE AID RECALCULATION PROPOSAL**

Rob Grossi explained that since 2000, the district has had an agreement with Franczek Law firm for them to send appeals to the Illinois State Board of Education, and send the collected funds to us. Due to the retirement of the firms attorney, Franczek is offering a payoff for obligations. The agreement would be terminated at this point and there would be no more fees to Franczek. Grossi explained that with the new formula there is no need to hire someone to perform this task in the future. The Board will be updated on any changes via the weekly report to the Board, and this item will return to the Board for action on August 13, 2019.

**TRANSPORTATION DISCUSSION**

Dr. Kelley reported that Mark Sheahan created an RFP for Special Education transportation. This request was made based on several parental concerns from last year. The building principals and families were notified about the request. Service will not be discontinued with Lakeview until a decision has been reached. Dr. Kelley reported that legal was approached on this topic, and she has another appointment with them in the near future. She told the Board that Lakeview insists that the contract is an all-or-nothing (regular and special education buses), and is requesting that we do not go out to bid. Dr. Kelley reported that she has met with Lakeview to explain the situation, and shared the rationale for the RFP. She expressed concern that school begins in about four weeks, and asked the Board to weigh in.

Board comments included concern that it was the understanding that the two contracts (regular and special education transportation) were not tied to each other, noting that the attorney said that Lakeview could not use one contract against the other. One Board member suggested hiring teacher assistants to ride on the buses. It was suggested that a

## TRANSPORTATION DISCUSSION (Continued)

special Board meeting may be needed for action on this topic. Concern was expressed that if the district is uncomfortable with the special education services, that perhaps they might be uncomfortable with the regular services too, but it was determined that it is too late in the year to go out bid for all of the transportation services.

Rob Grossi shared that the last time the district went out to bid, interest was not favorable. Dr. Kelley told the Board that there is a shortage of bus aides and bus drivers throughout the state. She indicated that this could be part of the problem.

Dr. Kelley will meet with the attorney's tomorrow and will reach out to the Board for a special meeting if necessary.

## **BOARD ASSIGNMENTS**

BOARD ASSIGNMENTS

### **EQUITY POLICY IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE**

Dr. Kelley reported that she met with member Kearney last week, and they talked about Equity Implementation document. She explained that the Equity Policy approve in March, was intended to be a standalone document, and she recommended a standalone visual aid for the community. She explained that she is in the process of created a document for the Board, but recommended that the Board use a different document for the community. She explained that the plan is to continue working with the Board on the four key terms.

Dr. Kelley proposed special board meetings during the summer to share the plan with the community, using the eight items in the action deliverable to explain what is happening, and what our plans are for the upcoming school year. She suggested that she present at these meetings, but the entire Board would be encouraged to attend. She asked the school leaders to do something similar. Each school will have introductory conversations with their school community, and share progress updates throughout the year.

Member Kearney shared that the policy calls for a transparent community plan, priorities and milestones around the policy. He explained that Dr. Kelley is suggesting that the special meetings would be a way to review what we are doing already and identify needs. The community would be able to ask questions and offer feedback. Dr. Kelley noted the importance of the community conversations, and suggested that the focus should be on what we are learning about ourselves that will help us hold true to ourselves.

Board comments included suggesting that the pillar reports be presented the same as last year. Interest was expressed in hearing about what is being done and the results of these actions. Interest was expressed in knowing how the district expects the interventions to play out, and considering adjustments when needed. Interest was expressed in infusing equity into everything that is done in the district, but the Board and administration need to make sure that they do not lose focus on it. A system message that translates from the implementation plan to the policy was recommended.

Dr. Kelley shared a draft document and explained that the targets for the year will need to be approved. Additionally, she will need to report out on pillar reports and data dives. She indicated the need to think about a design, answering questions about what has been learned about leading for equity that will help us hold true to our aspirations.

Interest was expressed in identifying the items in the Equity Policy that are currently not being addressed. Dr. Kelley indicated that she was unable to find any, and suggested that the draft document should help to identify any that might be in existence. She suggested that this might be a helpful exercise for the community and the Board.

Dr. Kelley offered to share some dates with the Board for the special meetings on equity. She suggested that some be held during the day and others in the evening.

Member Kearney suggested three or four meetings, and explained that the purpose is not to find a final solution, but to follow the timeline in the Equity Policy. He explained that this is the first step, and suggested that some of the meetings should be scheduled before the end of August.

RETREAT FOLLOW UP

Dr. Kelley recommended a one and a half day retreat, suggesting that boards doing this level of work are engaging in this way. The board secretary was asked to poll the Board for this purpose.

The Board discussed the possibility of meeting for one full-day opposed to two half days, noting the difficulty to dedicate a full-day and a half. It was suggested that the substance be flushed out ahead of time, and that teams of two work on the details ahead of time.

**CONCLUDING ITEMS**  
**BOARD REMARKS**

CONCLUDING ITEMS

Member Moore asked Dr. Kelley to share an update on the Social Justice Club. Dr. Kelley explained that during her first two years in the district, the student voice had an advisory panel. Students planned their own town hall meetings, and focused on a sense of belonging. Since then, there has been activities at the PTO level. There was a concept of student led groups under DIVCO, and she thought that was a good idea. The plan got off the ground at Julian last year, and a lot of issues that were discussed at the school level, were really district level issues. Dr. Kelley expressed an interest in having a discussion with Faith Cole, the district’s new MTSS Director, to see if we can do something that is more systemic at the district level. Dr. Kelley indicated that she will need to tell DIVCO that she wants to do something different next year. Her hope is to elevate the social justice club to a district-level committee, and ask Cole and Carrie Kamm to help. The plan would be to combine some of what we saw last year and combine that with some new ideas. She shared that the Lunch and Learns would continue.

Concern was expressed that this plan may not address the need for the groups. It was suggested that each school have their own group and have representatives from each come together as a council. It was noted that the leadership will be very important to the success of the organization. It was suggested that it would be important not to lose the authenticity and become commercial. Concern was expressed that if the district elevates the group to a district level, it might risk of losing a safe place environment. It was suggested that students have a role in the planning of the group.

Dr. Kelley reminded the Board that everyone can offer support outside of the schools. She noted that there are a lot of staff members already doing things for the students. She noted that some of the concerns being raised last year should have been directed to her and the Board.

Interest was expressed in knowing if the sustainability group might be able to compile some sample policies for the Board to consider. It was noted that the handouts shared with the Board do contain such samples.

AGENDA MAINTENANCE

The draft agenda for the August 13, 2019 Board meeting was reviewed and revisions were recommended.

**ADJOURNMENT**

ADJOURNMENT

Moore moved, seconded by Breymaier to adjourn the meeting. There being no further business to conduct, Vice President Kim declared the meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

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

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