

**Official Minutes of the
Oak Park Board of Education District 97
260 Madison Street, Oak Park, Cook County, Illinois
August 11, 2020 Meeting**

This meeting was held virtually using Zoom during the time of the Coronavirus pandemic. Everyone participated via electronic means.

Vice President Kim called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Kim, Spurlock, Breymaier, Liebl, Moore, and Kearney
Absent: Broy
Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Carol Kelley, Associate Superintendent of Education Felicia Starks Turner, Director of Communications Amanda Siegfried, Chief Academic and Accountability Officer Ebony Lofton, Senior Director of Buildings and Grounds Jeanne Keane, Senior Director of Equity Carrie Kamm, Senior Director of Technology Michael Arensdorff, Consultant Rob Grossi, and Board Secretary Sheryl Marinier.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Kim 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), at 6:02 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

OPEN SESSION

Moore moved, seconded by Breymaier that the Board move into Open Session at 7:00 p.m. All members of the Board were in agreement. The Board reconvened in Open Session at 7:00 p.m.

OPEN SESSION

5.1.2 APPROVAL OF THE AMENDED PERSONNEL REPORT

Breymaier moved, seconded by Moore, that the Board of Education, District 97, to accept the personnel report as amended.

APPROVAL OF PERSONNEL

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

INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF

Amanda Siegfried introduced the new District 97 staff members for the 2020-2021 school year by sharing a video that identified each new hire by school/position.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF

PUBLIC COMMENT

Due to the nature of a virtual Board meeting, the public was asked to email their comment to the Board. All comments that were received prior to the beginning of the meeting were read aloud. The Board made it clear that any comments that were received after this portion of the meeting would be included in the minutes, but not read aloud. All comments were received prior to the start of the meeting and were read aloud.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Vice President Kim read the following statements.

Mary Maas

I know everyone in the community wants kids to return to school in person when it is safe to do so. I am commenting tonight to request that district 97 work with public health experts to establish data based criteria for a return to in person learning. Many states and school districts have publicly accessible flow charts that show when and how they would move back and forth between their various learning plans based on trends in positive COVID tests and rates of new cases in their communities. District 97 should do the same. Our decision for school should be driven by data and not perceptions of safety or lack thereof.

Presence or absence of a vaccine should not be the determining factor for opening schools. Even if an effective vaccine becomes available late this year or early next year, it will likely take months or even a year or two to get maximum uptake in the community. It will not be 100% effective, and some members of our community will opt not to be vaccinated. For these reasons, a vaccine will be a tool to decrease spread but will be very unlikely to eliminate COVID-19 entirely.

Having clear, transparent, and evidence based criteria for moving between full remote, blended, and full in person plans will eliminate one of the myriad unknowns families and staff are facing and allow everyone involved to plan better for the weeks and months to come.

Kate O’Keefe

Thank you for all of your hard work this summer. I’ve listened to the meetings and the calls, and I’m grateful for your leadership and dedication. You’ve had to make many difficult decisions, and they just keep coming. Today you have another, and that is to accept or reject the Special Leave Committee’s recommendation to DENY my request for an unpaid leave of absence for the 20-21 school year due to special circumstance. I am among three teachers total who requested leave, one other is one of my colleagues at Brooks.

My name is Kate O’Keefe and I am a newly tenured 6th grade teacher at Julian; I’ve lived in Oak Park for 10 years and my two children attend D97 schools. A few days ago, I emailed the board explaining why I need to take leave, and asked some of my colleagues to write to you attesting to my teaching and commitment to our community.

This morning, I learned of the committee’s recommendation to deny my request. The email states, “While we understand the significant challenges you will be facing, it is our duty to ensure we have the **right people in place** for our students as we begin the 20-21 school year. Each year, we hire an average of 35 new teachers. If you determine that your resignation is best for you and your family, we will guarantee you an interview for a position for the 2021-22 school year.”

So am I the “right person in place” to teach D97 students this year?

I already know that I’m not – this is why I’m asking for a leave. If I stay teaching, I will be stretching myself too thin, and either my 6th grade students, or my own son will suffer. On top of the day to day exhaustion and frustration I will feel, I will know in my heart that I am not valued by our district.

If I resign, I can come back next year and interview for my old job. And if I get it, I will make less money and will have to go through the 4-year evaluation process to get tenure again. I will be back, but will not feel valued.

I could also resign, and start over again at a new district. Many of my colleagues do this each year – especially in our middle schools – where teacher and administrator turnover is high. They leave because it is worth starting over for less pay if you have a chance at feeling valued and respected.

In all honesty, I love my job. I love teaching 6th graders. I love my colleagues. I love working in my community. While working at Julian, I've worked to change things that I think need improvement, and my voice has been valued and respected. My school is moving in the right direction, and I don't want to leave. But I know I'm not the "right person" to be teaching this year.

Teachers – like students – need to feel valued to do their best work. Yes, if you deny our leave, you may have to hire a couple more teachers. But if we resign, you will still have to do that. And, if you honor my request this year, I promise I will be back for the 21-22 school year, grateful to continue my commitment to my students at Julian and my community.

SPECIAL REPORTS

SPECIAL REPORT

PRESENTATION OF FY2021 TENTATIVE BUDGET

Rob Grossi shared the tentative budget and timeline, reminding the board that after reviewing his report this evening, they would be asked to authorize placement of the tentative budget on display for 30 days, and call for a public hearing on the budget during the September 22, 2020 board meeting.

Grossi reminded the board that this budget is the first of many important decision that the board will need to make over the next 24 months, all of which are connected, and all determine the fiscal fate of the district.

Grossi detailed the changes to the revenue and expenses, noting an overall surplus of about \$5,000,000.

He explained that the board will see a jump between 2020 and 2021 costs. This is due to the pandemic and the need to go virtual during the spring of 2020. Grossi reminded the board that the line for childcare and PPE could change if the district continues virtually into the second or third trimesters. Grossi reminded the board that this is a tentative budget, and will change between now and September when the board approves the final budget.

Board comments included suggesting that now might be a good time to start thinking about a re-review of the facilities plan. Grossi told the board that FAC and FORC might combine for a while until the budget has been approved.

FALL TRANSITION PLAN UPDATE

Dr. Kelley read a prepared statement in support of virtual classrooms for the first trimester of the 2020-2021 school year, and asked the board to approve the plan for remote learning. She assured the board that the district will continue to monitor infection rates and move into the hybrid model when it is safe to do so. She noted that administration has created a new improved remote learning program that includes a digital device for every student, parent university, and town halls throughout the trimester. She assured the board that nothing will dampen the district's commitment to produce positive learning environments that are student centered and equitable for the whole child.

Eboney Lofton, Michael Arensdorff and Donna Middleton shared details of the remote learning plan, reporting that the fall remote instruction will differ from what was offered in the spring. The process will include prescribed asynchronous and synchronous learning, daily student schedules, feedback, grading analogous to pre-Covid-19 practices, and regular administration of common assessments.

Middleton explained the process for addressing Individualized Education Plan (IEP) needs, noting that each student's IEP will be reviewed, and a remote learning plan will be developed. Administration will work with the families to identify their experiences in the spring, and work to keep the communication lines open between home and school. Consideration of in-person supports will be given, but will be dependent on the district's ability to mitigate the risk associated with the potential community spread of COVID-19. Data will be used to inform the extension of student participation, always keeping equity rooted in the decision. She noted that in-person supports will not necessarily mimic our notion of school pre-COVID-19. Middleton reported that the parameters for the provision of in-person supports will be finalized by August 17, 2020, and discussions with teachers/teacher assistants who may deliver onsite instruction will follow shortly thereafter.

Lofton shared the components of the Remote Learning 2.0 plan, noting that there will be intentional community building, weekly communication to families, access to printed materials, and a plan for supporting students who struggle with remote engagement.

She noted that class lists will be available next week, and device pick-up dates were shared. Arensdorff noted that in response to numerous requests for keyboards, his team is exploring that option for third – fifth graders.

Dr. Kelley noted that updates from other administrative teams were included in the board packet.

ACTION ITEMS

ACTION ITEMS

5.1 APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

Breymaier moved, seconded by Moore, that the Board of Education, District 97, to accept the consent agenda as presented

5.1.1 Bill List

5.1.3 Approval of Minutes for the July 9, 2020 Special Meeting

5.1.4 Approval of Minutes for the July 14, 2020 Board Meeting

5.1.5 Approval of Minutes for the July 20, 2020 Special Board Meeting

5.1.6 Approval of Minutes for the July 22, 2020 Special Board Meeting

5.1.7 Approval of Minutes for the July 23, 2020 Special Board Meeting

5.1.8 Approval of Minutes for the July 30, 2020 Special Board Meeting

Ayes: Breymaier, Moore, Spurlock, Kearney, Liebl, and Kim

Nays: None

Absent: Broy

Motion passed.

5.2.1 AUTHORITY TO PUBLISH THE TENTATIVE 20-21 BUDGET

Spurlock moved, seconded by Breymaier, that the Board of Education, District 97, review its Tentative 2020-2021 budget, authorizing placement of such tentative budget (with any subsequent changes) on display for a minimum of 30 days and authorizing a public hearing of said budget on September 22, 2020.

Ayes: Spurlock, Breymaier, Moore, Kearney, Liebl, and Kim

Nays: None

Absent: Broy

Motion passed.

5.2.2 APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION AFFIRMING TRANSITION TO SCHOOL PLAN FOR THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

Kim moved, seconded by Breymaier, that the Board of Education, District 97, to approve the Resolution Affirming Transition to School Plan for the 2020-2021 School year.

**RESOLUTION AFFIRMING
TRANSITION TO SCHOOL PLAN FOR THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR**

WHEREAS, the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 (the “Board”) is empowered to conduct the business of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 (the “District”) pursuant to various provisions of the *Illinois School Code*;

WHEREAS, the District has and continues to navigate how best to meet the educational needs of its students in the midst of the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic;

WHEREAS, the District’s primary objective is to provide for a safe and healthy school environment for students and staff;

WHEREAS, consistent with the June 23, 2020 ISBE/IDPH Joint Guidance “Starting the 2020-21 School Year” (the “Joint Guidance”), the District has created a transition planning team which has reviewed data on student attendance, engagement and academic success in determining the effectiveness of remote learning to inform the District on developing an equity-based learning plan for the 2020-2021 school year;

WHEREAS, consistent with the Joint Guidance, the District has undertaken a review of its facilities and ability to provide for safety restrictions including space capacity and social distancing with the objective to transition back to in-person instruction;

WHEREAS, the District has discretion and flexibility under the Joint Guidance in implementing the recommendations and guidance to return to in-person instruction when such can be done in a safe manner;

WHEREAS, the Joint Guidance recommendation for in-person instruction, the public health of the community and the District’s goal to ensure the safety of students, staff, and their families present competing policy objectives; and

WHEREAS, the District has developed a learning plan with the objective of a transition back to in-person instruction which seeks to achieve the competing policy objectives to the extent possible.

NOW THEREFORE, be it Resolved by the Board as follows:

1. The Board affirms the recommended direction for a broad-based plan for the transition back to school for the 2020-2021 school year (the “Transition Plan”) consistent with the Joint Guidance and with the health and safety protocols issued by IDPH.
2. The Transition Plan provides a summary of the models that may be under consideration for the 2020-21 school year. This includes the fully remote model (that will be implemented for the first trimester) as well as the hybrid learning model. This document also serves as the basis for our remote learning and hybrid learning plans. A copy of the plan can be read [here](#).
3. The Transition Plan will be equitably based, addressing the needs of all students and providing appropriate support for those students who are disadvantaged by societal conditions.

4. The Transition Plan will provide for measures to be undertaken in the event Illinois moves back into Phase 3 and Phase 2 of the Restore Illinois Plan.
5. The District's Superintendent shall have the authority to further develop and implement the plan consistent with the parameters set forth herein; consistent with further guidance from the State of Illinois and consistent with the Illinois School Code.
6. In developing and implementing the plan, the District's Superintendent shall balance the competing policy objectives of returning to in-person instruction, controlling the communication of disease within the community, and the general safety of students, staff, and their families, and consider each policy with respect to efficiency, District resources, and the general welfare of the District's community. Other employees of the District that determine policy or exercise discretion for the District shall also consider these policies and interests when determining which steps or measures to implement to best serve these interests.
7. This Resolution shall be in full force and effect upon its adoption.

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

5.2.3 APPROVAL OF THE MODIFIED 2020-2021 DISTRICT CALENDAR

Breymaier moved, seconded by Moore, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the Modified 2020-21 District Calendar, changing the start of the school year to September 1, 2020.

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

5.2.4 APPROVAL OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE OAK PARK TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Moore moved, seconded by Spurlock, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the Memorandum of Understanding with the Oak Park Teachers Association to prepare and implement a rigorous curriculum of study for students in a remote learning environment.

The teachers and union leadership were recognized, noting that they are a critical part of the community.

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

5.3.1 APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING DISMISSAL OF A TENURED TEACHER

This item was tabled.

BOARD ASSIGNMENTS

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

PTOC

PTOC met recently. Most of the conversation was around the forming of pods, noting the importance of the racial makeup, safety needs, and keeping the groups small.

The following DIVCO statement was shared.

“The District 97 PTO Council (PTOC) & its Diversity Council (DivCo) recently met with Superintendent Carol Kelley, D97 Board Liaisons to PTOC, Principals, and Communications Staff to coordinate our efforts in support of the District’s comprehensive plan for Remote Learning 2.0. The PTO-Council is also keenly aware of feedback shared by families, the district imperatives, and the varying capacities across our ten PTOs. During these unprecedented times, we are especially cognizant of doing what we can to ensure that we act in accordance with the district and our schools’ commitments to centering equity and inclusion when making decisions for our students and families.

Recently there have been requests from parents for PTOs to organize social and learning “pods” for our school communities. After consulting with PTO Presidents and our schools, it became apparent that this undertaking has the potential to create inequities across and within school cohorts which makes it difficult to support, operationalize and manage. Therefore, PTOs and their Diversity Council leaders must use its finite capacities to identify issues and deliver targeted and meaningful programs that affect families with the greatest need while maintaining key efforts that support these programs.”

If parents are considering coordinating these “pods”, here are a few considerations to keep in mind: 1) reduce risk of transmission by keeping small groups small and consistent 2) all, some, but never none...consider the racial make-up of those invited to your circles - reduce all white spaces, 3) kids are great leaders...partner with your child’s teacher on cohorts that include students with different learning styles.

Continue to look for updates from your school Principals and PTO leaders. You will certainly hear about initiatives in the coming weeks and throughout the 2020-21 school year. We will continue to fundraise responsibly for causes that matter and engage in our respective school communities. We look forward to hearing from you and solving problems together.

Collaboration for Early Childhood

It was reported that District 97 is the chair for the IGA Governing Board this year. Member Liebl, Vice President Kim and Board Secretary Marinier will touch base to identify meeting dates.

REVIEW OF THE JULY 20, 2020 BOARD RETREAT

It was noted that the content of the recent board retreat was something that the board had participated in during prior retreats. The board members discussed their opinion of the recent board retreat. Interest was expressed in holding a retreat that is tailored to the needs of this board. It was suggested that a future retreat dive deeper into that subject. Pre-work was also suggested as a way to utilize the time more efficiently. It was noted that communication between board members is important, especially now when meetings are not being held remotely.

BOARD PRIORITIES FOR SY21 AND SY22

This item was tabled until all board members are present and prepared. Some items for consideration included;

- Do a better job of measuring outcomes
- Identify data points to be reviewed during the SY21 school year

Interest was expressed in coordinating the board and district priorities before the next public meeting so they can build on each other and the board can have a more coordinated discussion. It was agreed that this item should return to the board on the September 8, 2020 agenda.

CONCLUDING ITEMS

CONCLUDING ITEMS

BOARD REMARKS

The board members and administrators who participated in the negotiations for the memorandum of understanding with the teachers’ union were recognized for their efforts on the project, as well as the parents in the community for their support. Additionally, appreciation was extended to the administration for their hard work on developing a remote learning program, and teacher professional development plan. It was noted that there is some concern about the student schedules not identifying brakes, but confidence that the teachers are ready to help them navigate the space and work side by side with the students to help them meet their needs and be successful.

Board members supported the remote learning plan for the fall and acknowledged DIVCO and PTOC for leading the community conversations about pods.

AGENDA MAINTENANCE

The draft agendas for the September 8, 2020 meeting was reviewed and recommendations were made.

ADJOURNMENT

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to conduct, Vice President Kim declared the meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

Board President

Board Secretary