

LEAGUE of WOMEN VOTERS™ OAK PARK / RIVER FOREST



**Oak Park District 97 Board of Education
September 8, 2009**

Kathleen Sheehan, Observer

Board Members present: Barber, Clauser, Gates, Reddy, Spatz, and Traczyk

Absent: Harton

Also Present: Superintendent Collins, Secretary Marinier

The two most significant items on the agenda for this meeting were the Oak Park Education Foundation and District 97's Zero Waste initiative.

The meeting began on time at 7:45, and after the approval of previous meetings' minutes, the board heard public comment from the parent of a first grader at Lincoln school. This parent was concerned about the lack of transparency regarding the selection process for the Spanish Immersion program. He felt he had been getting the runaround and no clear answers regarding how selection was made when there are more students than space the program will allow. Eventually, he filed a FOIA request, and in doing so he again ran into problems regarding a lack of clarity w/ this process.

Oak Park Education Foundation

A report from what Member Gates referred to as a "crown jewel" of District 97, the Oak Park Education Foundation, followed public comment. The OPEF accomplishments during 2008-09 include the continuation and installation of five different programs in the schools. These programs include Global Village, now in its 19th year, Art Start, in its 13th year, Vex Robotics, in its 5th year, Architecture Adventure, in its 4th year, and Geared Up, in its second year. Professionals from Oak Park volunteer their time and expertise to make these programs possible, displaying an incredible leveraging of professional services that is unmatched in the district, noted Member Traczyk. Overall, the programs reach approximately 3,000 students. Because all but one of the programs takes place in the classroom, they are able to ensure the diversity that is important to District 97. Vex Robotics is the only program that does not occur during the regular classroom hours, and for this program teachers actively recruit members by speaking to students personally.

Zero Waste Initiative

Therese O'Neill presented to the board a proposal from Seven Generations Ahead to provide consulting services to District 97 with regard to its Zero Waste Initiative. Seven Generations Ahead would coordinate the tasks associated with the Zero Waste Initiative throughout the district. This would come at a cost of \$5,400 for the 09-10 school year. This is cost neutral to the district due to savings accrued as a result of not purchasing disposable items and garbage disposal. Overall, the board supported the proposal, but made it clear that educating children is the district's mission. Zero Waste should be a community wide effort. In addition to the proposal being cost neutral, several members wondered if it was "time" neutral. This is a concern of many principals who feel the program's burden. They would like to see PTO's commit to the program and drive it, as it appears to be done at Holmes School. For this year, the board is comfortable with spending the \$5,400, but feels there needs to be more discussion of the district's role as it relates to this initiative.

As the meeting neared adjournment and board concerns were expressed, reference to the earlier parent public comment was made. Member Clouser asked if the FOIA request process is posted on the district website. Currently it is not posted. Jennifer Reddy also wanted to confirm that the district's goals are posted on the website. They are. Dr. Collins confirmed that after her meeting with the Lincoln School principal, she would meet with the parent who filed the FOIA request.

The meeting adjourned at 10:16.

(www.op97.org)