

Oak Park River Forest League of Women Voters Eyewitness Report

Observed by: Diana Shea

Date: 9/10/2019

Meeting Length: 2 hours 5 minutes

Meeting Name: District 97 Board of Education

D97 Introduces Important Issues Regarding Upcoming 2019 Levy Decision

What did the Board decide?

- There were no significant decisions made at this meeting.

What else did the Board discuss or refer to committee?

- The D97 Board heard a [special report](#) from Rob Grossi, President of Crystal Financial Consultants, on the major issues to be considered for the 2019 Tax Levy. The District has participated in 2 TIFs over the past 24 years. The TIFs will expire at the end of this year. In December, the D97 Board will need to decide whether or not to accept the \$5m in tax dollars that will be available. There are several elements of this decision and more information will be forthcoming.
- The D97 Board heard a [report](#) from Superintendent Kelley on the success of the Culture & Climate work that is being done at the middle schools.
- The D97 Board will vote on 9/24/2019 to approve a contract with KQ Communications to provide support communications services around the Equity Policy through the end of September. The need for this contract work was a result of the vacancy left by the recent resignation of the Communications Director. Here is a [memo](#) from Dr. Kelley describing the work. Board Member Kearney asked about the policy and processes around contracting for professional services. An RFP was not issued for this work. Historically, the Board has entrusted the Superintendent to make her own consulting hires based on culture and fit (below a certain dollar amount).
- The boiler at Hatch needs to be replaced due to lack of ongoing maintenance. The boiler was nearly twenty years old and could potentially have had a longer life with better maintenance. The D97 Board will approve the expense of \$725,000 at the 9/24/19 board meeting.
- The Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC) is working on a plan to create a STEAM lab for Hatch (currently the only elementary school without one). The committee also reported positive feedback on the renovations from the Lincoln and Longfellow communities. Playground equipment at Lincoln will be delivered this week and installed over the next two weeks.

- The Committee for Community Engagement (CCE) requests some communication for the public to better educate the community about the difference between the responsibilities of the Board and that of the Administration, as well as protocols for who to contact for certain issues. On behalf of the Committee, Board Member Moore asked if it would be possible to push back the public release of the implementation plan for the Equity Policy (planned for the 9/24 Board Meeting) in the interest of giving the community more advance notice. Dr. Kelley informed the D97 Board that the plan that will be revealed on 9/24/19 is the District Action Plan, which informs the principal's annual goals and evaluations. Pushing back the release of the District Action Plans would negatively impact the overall evaluation process. Dr. Kelley also reiterated that the implementation of the Equity Policy is inherently embedded in the District Action Plan (and at every level of the District) and is part of the continuous improvement process to meet the District's Excellence Targets. Board Members Kim, Moore and Kearney suggested that it would be nice to see long-range plans with targets for implementation of the Equity Policy with which we can measure progress.
- Prompted by a question from Board Member Moore, the D97 Board had a fruitful conversation around how the Board responds to public comment. Legally, there is no limitation on the Board's right to respond directly to public comments. If a Board Member does comment, it should be made clear that they are not commenting on behalf of the Board. At the same time, sentiment was expressed that the Board does not want to get in to conversations during public comment, nor does it want to set an expectation that the Board responds in the moment every time.