

Oak Park River Forest League of Women Voters Eyewitness Report

Observed by: Ameri Klafeta

Date: April 10, 2018

Meeting Length: 3 hours, 50 minutes

Meeting Name: District 97 Board of Education

D97 Hears Public Comment Regarding Suggestion to Eliminate Bus Service

What did the Board decide?

- The Board cancelled the previous PING intergovernmental agreement, and approved a new agreement. It also approved the eRate contract, bids for Holmes projects and life/safety work, and rejected landscaping bids as recommended by the facilities committee and the administration.

What else did the Board discuss or refer to committee?

- There was discussion and significant public comment regarding **a proposal to eliminate bus service.**
 - The meeting began with a presentation from Dr. Evans regarding the transportation bids that were received. Although six companies came to the prebid meeting, only Lakeview and North American submitted bids. **The bids showed that there would be no savings associated with eliminating elementary school routes.** The Board is anticipated to approve a bidder at the April 24, 2018 meeting, and no later than May 8, 2018. Board member Rob Breymaier raised the possibility of entering into a one-year contract, and then beginning the process to better address rising transportation costs over time. The Board discussed setting up a work group to evaluate transportation issues and potential cost savings.
 - There was over an hour of public comment regarding the Board's earlier discussion of the possibility of eliminating bus service to elementary schools. Local news stations were in attendance filming this testimony. Many parents and community members raised concerns about safety, the additional burden that it would impose particularly on working and single parent families, concerns with increased traffic, the environmental impact, the impact to the sense of community, and the potential loss in housing value for homes that are farthest from schools with no bus service. Several members of the

public also expressed concern about the lack of effective communication from the Board advising that it was considering this option and failing to engage the community. During the Board meeting, board member Bob Spatz stated that the Board was only exploring whether there would be any cost savings, and then the Board intended to discuss with the community if those savings were worth it.

- The budget will need to be amended to reflect the delay in bond issuance. The original budget reflected \$10 million in the 2018 fiscal year and will need to be amended to reflect issuance during the 2019 fiscal year for \$7.5 million. Expected action is May 8, 2018.
- The administration recommends that the **last day of school will be June 1** for a half-day to make up for the February 9 half-day school closure due to weather. The administration recommends approval at the May 8 meeting.
- The Board discussed a draft **financial transparency policy**. Board member Katherine Murray-Liebl suggested a calendar that would lay out when during the year the Board can expect certain line items. Keecia Broy of the board expressed a concern that the policy and its implementation addresses when expenses are overbudget by a certain amount. Dr. Evans will advise as to the administrative effort to prepare this report. Expected action is May 8.
- The Board discussed the need to reevaluate **facility usage fees**. There likely will not be time to discuss this with groups and work through the complexity of this issue for the next school year.