

Oak Park River Forest League of Women Voters Eyewitness Report

Observed by: Ameri Klafeta

Date: August 15, 2017

Meeting Length: 2 hours

Meeting Name: District 97 Board of Education

D97 Board Continues to Focus on Changes to Gifted and Talented Program

What did the Board decide?

- The Board will be **changing the meeting format so that Board meetings will alternate between business meetings and work sessions**. Work session meetings would have fewer action items and would permit the public to ask questions directly of the Board. **Public comment would be moved to the end of the work session meeting**, as participation during the meeting may address some of the comments. The calendar of topics would be published in advance for each trimester. The September 12, 2017 meeting will be a business meeting.
- The Board approved the **preliminary 2017-18 school year budget**, which will be voted on at the September 26, 2017 meeting, and the **2017-2022 employment contract with Superintendent Kelley**.

What else did the Board discuss or refer to committee?

- The administration presented an update on the gifted and talented program. Dr. Kelley stated that the administration wants to look at systemic issues that are preventing students from having access, not to remove services from students. A **gifted and talented ad hoc committee** will meet to make recommendations regarding the program.
- A presentation was made to the Board with the results of a demographics study. The study predicts a **200-student increase district-wide over the next eight years**, after which it will stabilize. Hatch, Lincoln, Longfellow, and Brooks are anticipated to account for most of this increase.

Unexpected Votes, Events, Testimony or Items to Watch for in the Future

- The Board heard public comments from several parents in support of the district's efforts to improve the **gift and talented program to make it more equitable and inclusive**. A statement in support signed by 579 Oak Park residents was read to the Board.
- The Board also heard public comment from the parent of an **African-American boy who was pulled from class on the first day of school last year because his proof of residency as a renter was lacking**. The parent observed that several of the other students who had been pulled were also African-American students. The parent also stated that she had tried repeatedly to provide such proof to the district. She requested that the Board review first-day protocol to prevent this situation.
- The administration presented a proposal to work with the National Equity Project for a year-long engagement to facilitate **cultural competency professional learning and training** to D97 staff. The proposal will be an action item at the next meeting.