

Oak Park River Forest League of Women Voters Eyewitness Report

Observed by

Mary Haley

Date: November 21, 2019

Meeting Length: 4 hrs.

Meeting Name: District 200 School Board

Headline: Board Votes on Estimated Levy

What Did the Board Vote On: At the request of the board, Cyndi Sidon, CFO, presented the board with several options regarding the estimated levy. After a half hour presentation and discussion, the board by a 6-1 vote approved a levy that would include a CPI of 1.9%, TIF funds and less than the full abatement originally presented. If the TIF funds were not taken in this levy, the district's share of the 120M fund would be unavailable for taxing in the future.

While the board said it is committed to managing the spending curve to keep it in line with the CPI, unknown spending increases are of concern to the board. Some spending increases such as tax freezes and a shift in pension responsibility are impossible to forecast said Dr. Moore, board president. Mr. Iseli agreed saying that too much taxpayer relief at this time would leave the district in a financial crisis if an eventual referendum should fail. The estimated levy voted on is less than the amount initially recommended by the administration and the Finance Advisory Board.

What Else Was Discussed: Many questions were asked about accessibility in the new design. The architects were able to reassure the board that ADA requirements were being met.

The Illinois school report card showed a significant drop in the SAT math scores of students of color. It also showed a significant drop in the four -year graduation rate by students of color. Dr. Pruitt-Adams has not signed off on the report. There are errors, she said, in how the state reached those numbers. After those errors are resolved, the graduation rate will be more positive. This information, however, does underscore the need for some changes in the school system.