

# Avoca board decides not to renovate Avoca Central, gives tenants 12 months' notice

By **Kathy Routliffe**

Pioneer Press

DECEMBER 19, 2016, 4:27 PM

**A**voca School District 37 won't be spending money to renovate the aging Avoca Central School that now houses two district tenants. The district school board also plans to give a year's notice to the tenants, according to District Supt. Kevin Jauch.

Jauch said school board members unanimously approved the moves at a Dec. 15 board meeting, and district officials let the tenants – Arlyn School, a private therapeutic day school, and One Hope United daycare center – know on Dec. 16. The two tenants had leases that otherwise would have run until 2020.

Jauch said the estimated \$6.7 million cost of renovating the building at 3013 Illinois Road in [Wilmette](#) was key to the board's decision. The district would have to sell bonds to finance the repairs of a building that is almost 60 years old, replacing its boilers and upgrading mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems, he said.

"We do have projects at our other buildings (Avoca West School in Glenview, and Marie Murphy School in Wilmette) and we would have to borrow to pay for those projects as well," Jauch said.

"The other thing we had to take into consideration was that, if we did renovate Avoca Central, we'd need a 20-year commitment from our tenants, and we didn't think that's fair to them," he said.

District 37 draws students from Wilmette, Winnetka, Northfield, and Glenview.

Costs of maintaining Avoca Central, which opened in 1957 and closed in 1977 after district enrollment plunged, have averaged just under \$231,000 over the past eight years, according to information from the district. The district earns a little more than \$400,000 in rent, netting a little over \$161,000 after maintenance costs, according to Jauch.

At an October public meeting on Avoca Central's future, Beth Dever, the district's chief financial officer, said breaking even on renovations, even with potentially higher rents, could take between 37 and 61 years.

At their Dec. 15 meeting, school board members agreed to invoke a clause in both tenants' leases, giving them 12 months notice of the end of their contracts, Jauch said. However, that doesn't mean District 37 will require its tenants to leave at the end of that period, he said.

He said there could be what he called room to negotiate, possibly on a month-by-month basis. However, he also said the district would want to renegotiate language in the current leases that require District 37 to pay rental

costs its tenants might incur if they had to temporarily relocate from Avoca Central during the span of the lease.

"Currently, if something catastrophic happened to the building and they couldn't stay there, we'd be responsible for paying rent wherever they did end up," he said. "We'd want to renegotiate that, just from the standpoint that we know the building is old and we don't want to be on the hook."

Such a lease could allow Arlyn and One Hope to stay at Avoca Central "until it is more conducive for them to relocate," Jauch said Dec. 9, before the board meeting.

Jauch said that the 12-month period gives the district room to consider its options for Avoca Central, including selling the property for residential development. District officials have also been in contact with elected and administrative officials from the Wilmette Park District, which rents playing fields next to Avoca Central, Jauch said.

"We've had conversations with the park district to see if there is potential for us to have mutually beneficial agreements," he said.

Jauch said he and Dever held separate conference calls with representatives of Arlyn and One Hope United in November, and said both tenants also received emails indicating the potential board decision.

"We made sure that they knew that this was the way the board was most likely to go," Jauch said.

Judy Goldstein, executive director of Arlyn School, said Monday that her office received a letter about the board's decision late the previous Friday. She said she didn't want to talk about the situation until she has had a chance to talk to students' families and to speak with her board.

In late November, Goldstein said she hoped that Arlyn could stay in the building.

Beth Lakier, One Hope United's executive vice president of early learning and child development, said in a Monday email statement, "We at One Hope United were anticipating this outcome and have already begun our search for a different space in Wilmette. We are confident that we will find a new location nearby where we can continue serving our families."

[kroutliffe@pioneerlocal.com](mailto:kroutliffe@pioneerlocal.com)

*Twitter: @pioneer\_kathy*

Copyright © 2016, Chicago Tribune

**This article is related to:** [Wilmette](#)