



# **BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE Minutes**

September 7, 2017

The Board of Education Committee of the Whole met on September 7, 2017 at 5:36 p.m. in the Library at Marie Murphy School, 2921 Illinois Road, Wilmette, Illinois. The President called the meeting to order and asked the Board Recorder to call the roll.

The following members were present:

Louise Dechovitz, Vice President  
Dan Garbis  
Gil Gibori  
Joel Raynes  
Sheryl Swibel  
Jamie Taylor  
Rick Zelinsky, President

Also Present:

Debbie Cotter, Video Recorder  
Beth Dever, Chief School Business Official  
Suzanne Harris, Board Recorder  
Jessica Hutchison, Principal, Avoca West  
Dr. Kevin Jauch, Superintendent/Board Secretary  
Matthew Palcer, Principal, Marie Murphy  
Terry Sofianos, Director of Pupil Services

Visitor:

Carrie Matlock, DLA Architects, Ltd.

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## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **A. Life Safety and Facilities Plan Update (SP Goal 5)**

Chief School Business Official, Beth Dever, and DLA Architects, Ltd. President, Carrie Matlock discussed the update to the life safety and facilities plan for the district's buildings and grounds. The last update was performed four years ago. In order to complete an update, Ms. Dever and Ms. Matlock invite a team of architects and engineers to assess the electrical, plumbing, and mechanical operations in all of the district buildings. This update only included an assessment of the systems at Marie Murphy and Avoca West. This update provides a fresh perspective on the accomplishments achieved toward fulfilling the Board's decision to prioritize and execute the necessary life safety projects over the past four years and shows the areas that still need to be addressed.

Ms. Matlock stated that the document presented to the Board with the recent update is to be used as a planning tool that can guide the district in future decision making in terms of each buildings' needs and how to financially prioritize and plan over the next several years. There are maintenance items that will need to be addressed to prevent larger expenditures in the future. Ms. Matlock suggests using this update as a framework to develop a replacement and maintenance schedule that will be easy to maintain and will allow the district to track progress. Ms. Matlock added that the purpose of this update was functional and did not align the district's facilities goals with curriculum goals, which is something the Board could consider in the future.

Ms. Dever and Ms. Matlock shared information about the process for approval of funding for life safety projects. Life safety items are categorized as capital improvements to mechanical, electrical and plumbing of the buildings and are often related to fire safety, ADA compliance and security. Once a Board decides to focus on making life safety improvements, a list is submitted to the state for approval. The district can then proceed in procuring the funds through bond issuance. The application to the state includes an approximate amount of funding needed to execute the items on the list and upon the state's determination; a district can only seek the approved amount in bonds.

Ms. Dever indicated that there is approximately \$400,000 in bond funds remaining from the issuance four years ago due to projects being completed under budget. Ms. Dever recommends that those funds should be used to replace three uni-vents at Avoca West, an air handler at Marie Murphy and various exhaust fans at both schools. Ms. Dever also recommended doing the asbestos abatement of the upper gym and stairwell at Marie Murphy. The District cannot use life safety bonds for this so it has to be paid out of the Operations and Management Fund Reserves. The approximate expenditures listed for these projects do not include the other unknown fees for the architects, contingencies and contractors. Those fees are determined by the scope of the project. Thus, Ms. Dever believes this work will be enough to account for the remaining bond proceeds.

Mr. Zelinsky inquired as to whether there were other life safety elements that need to be completed to use the remaining bond funds or whether that surplus could be used to pay the debt.

Mr. Raynes inquired as to whether there were any new life safety items that have surfaced since the last survey was complete. Ms. Matlock responded that while nothing inherently new arose, there are items that are now moving to the top of the list due to the passing of time.

Ms. Taylor inquired as to whether or not the district can seek a bond issuance for capital expenditures that are not life safety projects. Ms. Dever replied that is a possibility and that she has invited Tammie Beckwith Schallmo of PMA Securities, Inc. to discuss the district's current financial reality and the options available to address its priorities at the October Committee of the Whole meeting.

Mr. Gibori inquired about the big expense associated with installing air conditioning in the buildings. Ms. Matlock indicated that the expense is mainly due to the replacement of an entire mechanical system and the work associated with it. The update includes some air conditioning options the district can consider in determining a long-term goal for the mechanical systems. An architect needs to consider energy efficiency and healthy environment codes and standards, which also impacts the cost and installation. The Board continued to engage in discussing the various air conditioning options at both schools and their physical and financial impact.

Ms. Dechovitz inquired into what Ms. Matlock felt the district is missing or what it would mean to align the facilities plan to the curriculum. Ms. Matlock discussed the connection between curriculum and student learning spaces and that this update focuses on more functional and mechanical upgrades. Ms. Matlock did indicate that if life-safety projects were ancillary to renovating a space, life safety funding can be used in those instances. Ms. Dechovitz also inquired into the prospect of a new building.

Ms. Dever will be putting a prioritized list of building needs to present to the Board, but would like to have more information about the direction the board would like to take in regards to the heating and cooling systems in the schools as that is a crucial decision. Mr. Zelinsky suggested weighing all of the options over again once we have a clear perspective of the financial capacity of the district.

#### **B. Avoca “Brand” Discussion (SP Goal 4)**

Board President, Rick Zelinsky, led the Board through a discussion regarding the message or “brand” that the district is portraying to the public. Mr. Zelinsky indicated the purpose of the discussion is to gain clarity and consistency of the values and priorities of the district and how they are communicated to the public. He would like the Board to synthesize the key messages to anchor communication throughout the district. Ms. Dechovitz added the concept of a brand is more to suggest what people talk or think about when Avoca is mentioned and how determining these key messages can drive that communication in the greater community. Ms. Swibel indicated that the timing is appropriate, due to the state’s current status. Avoca needs to stand alone as a strong district. Mr. Gibori indicated that he thought the Board may be focusing on the wrong aspect of communication at this point. He believes the values are there, but the district does not have the modalities for clear communication and that placing a limited framework around what is being communicated creates too much structure.

Mr. Zelinsky asked the Board whether or not there were messages or elements of their vision, mission and goals for the district that have not been addressed in the existing framework or documentation, i.e. the Board Legacy or the district’s Mission and Vision. To which, Ms. Taylor suggested that she would like to incorporate risk taking. The Board agreed to that element highlighting the fact that 21<sup>st</sup> century learners are no longer only driven to achieve academic excellence, but are challenged to be brave in the light of the current social climate of the world in which they are growing. The discussion continued incorporating the acronym for B.R.A.V.E., which is being used at Avoca West this year to inspire students to be Bold, Respectful, Accountable, Valuable and Empathetic. The Board considered this to be a solid direction to take, veering from a more traditional view of education to a more modern approach and thus considering being B.R.A.V.E. on all levels. The Board agreed to bring their ideas about what B.R.A.V.E. would mean as the school’s governing body and plans to further discuss the topic at the October Committee of the Whole meeting. The Board is facing key decisions concerning financing and Avoca Center and believes that in order to effectively communicate the district’s values through these challenges a common message is necessary. The administration was challenged to formulate the same concept in the Avoca Community Preschool and Marie Murphy School. The hope is to have the entire district using the same vernacular with a memorable concept.

#### **C. 5-Year Financial Projections (SP Goal 5)**

Chief School Business Official, Beth Dever, presented the Board with a broad scope of Avoca’s 5-year financial projections. Ms. Dever presented figures beginning with the preliminary budget presented in August 2017 and projected it out five years to 2023. For 2018, the budget reflects a large deficit, mainly due to expenditures in the Education Fund. The 5-year span captured in this projection analysis will include an additional 0.25% teacher salary increase due to a CPI over 2.1%, which will affect 2019 and 2020. However, the current Collective Bargaining

Agreement will be renegotiated in 2020. Two-thirds of the district's expenditures are in salaries and benefits. Ms. Dever indicated that some of the components of the projection remained the same over five years including non-certified staff salaries, purchase services and supplies. Ms. Dever also included an increase in technology funding for next year to refresh staff computers. Ms. Dever recommends deliberate, thoughtful conversations regarding what should be done to recognize savings and develop a clear plan for the future of our buildings and other capital expenses. In the event the Board decides to seek funding through a bond issuance, the rationale and effort in approaching the taxpayers should be direct, professional and informed. Ms. Dever plans to present an updated 5-year projection with line-item detail and a summary of her assumptions at the October Committee of the Whole meeting.

#### **D. Northfield Townhome Development**

Superintendent, Kevin Jauch, gave the Board a review of the Northfield Planning and Zoning Commission's meeting regarding the proposal for a 34 unit rental townhome development on the property located at 1725 Winnetka Road. Board members Louise Dechovitz, Gil Gibori, Jamie Taylor and Joel Raynes also attended the meeting. Dr. Jauch shared that the first thing stated at the meeting was that the Commission was not going to take public comments. Instead, they set a continuance to this meeting for November 6, 2017 in order to listen to public comment.

Dr. Jauch gathered that the main concerns of the residents near the property are related to traffic, density and that the units will be rentals. The developer presented a thoughtful and thorough response to these concerns and seemed to be reputable in terms of the quality of their developments.

At this time, the developer is asking Northfield for a zoning variance from commercial to residential. The commission seemed well organized and informed and asked the developer important questions. The commission did bring up the topic of impact fees, which leads Dr. Jauch to believe they had all read and considered the letter he sent to them expressing concern over the financial implications of this development on the school district. Impact fees are intended to offset the increased burden on a school community when there is an influx in student attendance due to new developments. If Avoca is granted impact fees, they must be used for capital expenses to accommodate the new students. The district would need to provide a plan on how the fees would be used to alleviate the impact on the school community. Prior to the meeting, Dr. Jauch engaged in conversation with Steve Guitierrez, Northfield's Director of Community Development, who is seeking more information in regards the village code's requirement for the developer to pay impact fees. Dr. Jauch has discussed the matter with the district's legal counsel, who will pursue the matter with the Village of Northfield's attorney to see if there is a reasonable way to obtain the impact fees in spite of the current restrictions of the village code.

It is evident that the Village of Northfield has challenged and given a lot of consideration to this development. Dr. Jauch believes that regardless of whether this specific development will be approved, a multi-unit development has been recommended by the village's steering committee for that area of Northfield. Dr. Jauch suggested changing the date of the Committee of the Whole meeting from November 6<sup>th</sup> to November 2<sup>nd</sup>, so that he may attend the continuance of the Zoning and Planning Commission meeting. At that time, Dr. Jauch will share a prepared statement regarding Avoca's standpoint on the development.

#### **E. 2017 Kasarda Report**

Superintendent, Kevin Jauch, shared the New Trier Township Demographic Trends and Enrollment Projections Report, prepared by John Kasarda, Ph.D. Dr. Kasarda is a Consulting Demographer who has been working with New Trier for many years. Dr. Kasarda prepares a

report every two years, and includes data from all of the New Trier sender districts. Avoca has reached out to Dr. Kasarda for information pertaining to demographics on a couple of occasions, finding his research to be a helpful and interesting tool. In his report dated January 2017, Dr. Kasarda provides a review of residential patterns, demographics and housing turn over, which he compares and analyzes to show demographic trends and make enrollment projections. He uses a variety of sources including census data, hospital records and real estate records. Dr. Jauch highlighted a few key elements of his report. Of note, Dr. Jauch indicated that the demographics from each school show that with exception of Avoca and Wilmette School District 39, the student populations at the other New Trier schools are 90% Caucasian. Avoca's is the most diverse New Trier district, with a student body that is 61% Caucasian and 10% English Learners.

Dr. Kasarda's report also shows that New Trier township student enrollment kindergarten-fifth grade has dropped in the past four years and total enrollment has also dropped ten out of the past twelve years. Total enrollments for kindergarten-eighth grade districts like Avoca have dropped eight out of the past nine years, and as a result, New Trier's enrollment has been down the four out of the past five years. Interestingly, Avoca's student enrollment has risen steadily over the past six years. This year our enrollment has plateaued. Avoca is the only district projected to experience an increase in student enrollment over the next five years, at which point it may begin to slowly decrease.

Mr. Gibori inquired into the accuracy of Dr. Kasarda's report. Dr. Jauch responded that it has varied, but it is hard to gauge until the actual data is compared to his projections.

#### **F. EL Status Update**

Director of Pupil Services, Terry Sofianos, gave the Board an updated regarding the current status of the students receiving English Learner (EL) services at Avoca. Ms. Sofianos shared a chart that showed the number of students kindergarten through fifth grade that have been confirmed to receive services, students that still require screening, the number of those students that are anticipated to need services and the approximate total number of students that will required EL services. At this time, Ms. Sofianos concludes that Avoca West will have approximately 83 students requiring EL services and 10 Marie Murphy students. These numbers are consistent with a report given to the Board in February. Avoca's EL population has steadily increased over the last five years.

#### **G. Avoca Internal Communication Handbook (SP Goal 4)**

Superintendent, Kevin Jauch, gave the Board an overview of the Communication and Engagement Handbook, which is an internal document the district has made available to all staff as a guide to ensure a consistent communication framework and to highlight its importance. The handbook was developed from the work of the Communication and Engagement Committee, and is a component of the Communication Action Plan, which works toward satisfying Goal 4 of the current Strategic Plan.

The handbook is broken down by staffing roles within the district and gives a general outline of when, how, what and to whom each staff member is responsible for in terms of communication. Dr. Jauch presented the handbook to new staff members at their orientation meeting and to all staff during the teacher institute days to make them aware of its existence, purpose and importance.

Ms. Swibel inquired as to whether or not the staff had the ability to contribute to this handbook. Dr. Jauch consulted the administrative team for most of the content, but discussed the handbook specifically with the school nurses as their positions are unique and are often required to communicate confidential, sensitive, urgent and important information. Dr. Jauch intends to have a similar discussion with the business office as well.

#### **H. Release of Closed Session Minutes and Destruction of Closed Session Recordings.**

Assistant to the Superintendent, Suzie Harris, gave the Board a brief overview of the process regarding the Release of Closed Session Minutes and the Destruction of Closed Session Recordings in order to give clarity to the recurrence of this item on future meeting agendas.

The Board will be asked to release the following closed session minutes at the September Board of Education meeting: November 17, 2016; December 15, 2016; January 5, 2017; April 27, 2017; May 8, 2017; June 5, 2017; June 19, 2017; and August 7, 2017. The Board will also be asked to approve the destruction of the following closed session recordings: July 23, 2015; August 3, 2015; August 20, 2015; August 22, 2015; September 17, 2015, October 5, 2015, November 2, 2015; December 7, 2015; December 17, 2015; January 7, 2016; January 21, 2016; and February 1, 2016.

### **ACTION ITEM**

#### **A. APPROVAL OF HIRING NEW AVOCA WEST INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANT**

Mr. Raynes moved that:

THE BOARD APPROVE THE EMPLOYMENT OF MEAGAN DAVIS-COCKERILL AS AN AVOCA WEST INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANT AT THE HOURLY RATE OF \$17.50 FOR THE 2017-2018 SCHOOL YEAR.

Ms. Dechovitz seconded the motion. Upon roll call, members voted as follows: Mr. Garbis, aye; Ms. Taylor, aye; Ms. Swibel, aye; Mr. Gibori, aye; Mr. Raynes, aye; Mr. Zelinsky, aye; and Ms. Dechovitz, aye. Motion carried.

### **CLOSED SESSION**

Ms. Taylor moved that the Board move into Closed Session for the purpose of:

Litigation, when an action against, affecting or on behalf of the particular public body has been filed and is pending before a court or administrative tribunal, or when the public body finds that an action is probable or imminent, in which case the basis for the finding shall be recorded and entered into the minutes of the closed meeting. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11).


Mr. Raynes seconded the motion. Upon roll call, members voted as follows: Ms. Taylor, aye; Ms. Swibel, aye; Mr. Gibori, aye; Mr. Raynes, aye; Mr. Zelinsky, aye; Ms. Dechovitz, aye; Mr. Garbis, aye. Motion carried.

The Board moved into closed session at 8:17 p.m. and reconvened in open session at 8:50 p.m.

Mr. Raynes moved that the Board return into open session, and Ms. Dechovitz seconded the motion. Upon a voice vote, with all members voting aye, the motion was carried.

## **MEETING ADJOURNS**

Mr. Raynes moved to adjourn the meeting, and Ms. Taylor seconded the motion. Upon a voice vote, with all members voting aye, the motion was carried. The Board meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.



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Board President, Rick Zelinsky



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Secretary, Kevin Jauch