

**League of Women Voters
Community High School District 99 Observers Report**

Board meeting attended: Special/Workshop Meeting

Date and Location of meeting: 04 Dec 2017
South High School Cafetorium, 1436 Norfolk Street

Meeting started: 7:04 pm **Meeting adjourned:** 9:22 pm

Closed Session was held **before** the workshop meeting for:

The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the District or legal counsel for the District, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee or against legal counsel for the District to determine its validity. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1), as amended by P.A. 93-0057.

Board Members Absent/Tardy: None

League Observer: Linda Derrig

Estimated Number Attending (excluding Board and Staff): approximately 30 persons in the audience at the start of the meeting including students and staff

Meetings are taped and posted at:

<http://www.csd99.org/boe/meeting-highlightsvideos.cfm>

Agenda can be found at:

<http://www.csd99.org/boe/Meeting-Agendas.cfm>

4) Student Perspectives:

A. Leaders of North High School Direct Action Service discussed their work as a community-based service club at DGN. The group's largest project is the Annual Giving Tree. They also provide support to a local food pantry and Humane Society; and volunteer at local elementary school Fun Fairs and Fun Runs.

Board President Kupka choked up as she commended the group for their service work, telling the students, "don't lose this passion throughout your life it is a really wonderful gift"

B. Student Board Member presentations. The North High board member said the school has been celebrating the fourth-place national finish by the school's cross country team.

5) Recognition- National Merit Semifinalists and Commended Students

6) Reception

A brief reception was held for the National Merit students and their guests.

Following the reception, fewer than 10 audience members remained—including staff

6) Board Workshop

A. 2018-2019 Curriculum Proposals:

The board heard a proposal to change the name of one course and a proposal for a new Fine Arts course.

Advanced Individual Skill Sports is a currently-running, single-section PE course at South High School. There are currently no sections at North High School. The course focuses on gymnastics and tumbling. Gina Ziccardi, Assistant Superintendent for Student Learning, told the board that the full name of the course is not descriptive of the actual content of the course and that this might influence course enrollment. The proposal is to rename the course to **Gymnastics, Tumbling and Fitness**. Ziccardi said it is unknown how the change will affect enrollment.

South Fine Arts Department Member Glen Williams presented a new course proposal: **Rock Band**. Williams said currently the department courses attract students who come through the junior high band, orchestra and choir programs. This course would attempt to reach those students who play music outside school, but were not involved in those programs. “It will be driven by music; not instruments,” he said. It will target individuals who play guitar, piano and bass, as well as singers. Students will be required to have some baseline level of proficiency. It is planned to have one section—accommodating 24 students-- offered at each school. “We believe there are students out there playing/performing. We want to draw them in.”

A vote on the proposals will be at the board’s next regular meeting. The board expressed enthusiasm for the new course.

- B. **2018-2019 Staffing Ratio:** The administration provided the board an early update on what enrollment will look like next year. Action on staffing occurs in two phases. The first action will be taken on the January 29 board meeting.

Preliminary numbers show the current student to teacher ratio of 21.8:1 which the district has had since the 2012/13 school year would remain in the place. The instructional FTE (Full Time Equivalency) for the district is estimated to be 225.6, which is a decrease of 0.4 from the current school year—125 FTE at South High and 100.6 FTE at North High. These numbers are based on enrollment projections from a long-term demographic report commissioned by the board, referred to as the Kasarda Report. Currently, the district estimates are approximately 116 students above the projection.

- C. **Master Facility Plan Community Engagement Update:** The board heard from the independent consultants who conducted and analyzed the mail and the randomized phone poll.

At its December 18 meeting, the board will vote whether to put the question on the Spring primary ballot. The District Superintendent, based on the survey and poll results, recommended the board move forward with putting the full, \$136.6 million facilities upgrade plan to the voters. Thiele emphasized the question for the board will be whether the community should have the opportunity to vote yes or no on the larger plan.

Initial comments indicated Board Members Rick Pavinato and Daniel Nicholas favor putting forward the partial plan-- which is expected to have no tax consequences. Pavinato saying, “At this time, I cannot support a tax increase.” The five other board members said they favored giving residents the opportunity to accept or reject the full plan which is expected to mean a tax increase of \$65/year for a home with a market value of \$300,000 (District 99 approximate average).

The consultants indicated the telephone poll results, because it is a randomized query of likely voters, is more likely to represent a true reading of community support. That poll was conducted with 300 voters, 150 of whom were presented the full facilities plan and 150 of whom were presented the partial plan.

Poll results showed the \$136.6 million plan had strong support: 61% yes; 28 % no; with 11% undecided. Support for the partial plan was similar: 64% yes; 29 % no; with 7% undecided. According to the presentation by Public Opinion Strategies, support is driven by Democratic voters, younger voters, voters with young children, and women. However, both options had greater than 50 percent support among voters age 65 or older.

In addition, the poll showed 70 percent of the respondents would grade the district/schools an A or B. This, according to the pollster, is unusually high. Of those giving the schools a top grade, they overwhelmingly supported the two plans. Respondents were also asked to grade the district facilities. Generally, according to the pollster, high grades means less likelihood of support for facility improvement. Most voters gave the facilities a "B"; however, a full one-third of voters were unsure of how to grade the facilities.

In terms of support for individuals specifics of the program (see Observer Report dated October 13, 2017), the items ranked as extremely or very important by more than 60% of respondents were:

- Update aging classrooms and science labs to allow for new instructional technologies and collaborative, project-based learning
- Create a secure main entrance at both North High and South High
- Address safety and security enhancements at both North High and South High, including installation of secure, entry vestibules
- Improve accessibility for students, teachers, parents, grandparents and other community members with disabilities at both North High and South High

Only three items had less than 30% of respondents identify them as extremely or very important:

- Build a new gym for physical education and athletic programs, similar to what is offered at South High
- Add a second synthetic outdoor field at South High, similar to what is available at North High, allowing students to use the outdoor physical education space more frequently throughout the school year
- Improve the practice field at South High so that it is on par with the practice field at North High

The poll uncovered some confusion around the learning centers as well as the planned outdoor improvements.

In their discussion, administrators and the board agreed they would need to do a better job educating the public if they move forward with a referendum.

The pollster was asked about putting a referendum on the primary ballot as opposed to a general election ballot. Due to the Illinois governor's race, the board was told, in which two Democratic contenders are expected to spend millions, the primary is a unique opportunity.