

**League of Women Voters
Observers Report**

Board meeting attended: District 58 School Board

Date and Location of meeting: 5/8/17 Longfellow Center

Meeting started: 7pm

Meeting adjourned: 8:50pm

League Observer(s): Katie Frick

Board Members/Trustees present (P) not present (NP) tardy (T):

Doug Purcell Present
Elizabeth Sigale Present
Gregory Harris Present
Darren Hughes Present
John Miller Present
Jill Samonte Present
Beth Taylor Present

Estimated Number Attending (excluding Board and Staff):

25

Meetings are Streamed and Archived at:

<http://dg58.org/blog/category/board-briefs/>

Agenda can be found at:

<http://www.boarddocs.com/il/dg58/Board.nsf/Public>

PUBLIC COMMENT:

First reception of visitors (agenda items)

Marla had three points to make:

1. She suggested next year the 58 Board meetings alternate between one Northside school and one Southside school and arrive a half hour early to spend time with the staff. The two selected schools should have air conditioning.
2. In response to the budget concern: she is a teacher and said “we (teachers) can not educate with a curriculum that is 13 years old.” She reported teachers are paying out of pocket to make up for what the district is not supplying.

3. She suggested the board review the Teacher's Union Appendix D that says the district should provide a current curriculum and materials for teachers to do his/her job.

Craig Young "We have a revenue problem, not an expense problem." He said the budget does not contain any irresponsible spending. Downers Grove maintains a less efficient neighborhood school model of 15 school and 5000 students. He said there are more efficient ways to run this district and if people like the neighborhood model then perhaps they should pay more for it.

Noelle Schwartz is a parent of a 2nd grader. She reported not seeing technology but did see a 14 year old text book her child was using and was appalled. She said it was upsetting to think the board may consider not purchasing the full new curriculum for the district.

Patty Esslinger is head of the Lester new playground committee. She asked the board to please move forward with their decision on the expansion of Lester. Plans for the new playground cannot be made until they know the plans for Lester's expansion first.

Second reception of visitors (non-agenda items)

Three fathers stood up and spoke all on the same topic. They all currently live in the Highland school district. The school is overcrowded and one option that has been up for discussion is to redistrict a specific area and move it to the Belle Aire district. These fathers said they would like the board to consider a different option saying "there's got to be other solutions". It would split up families and perhaps cause disruption for student and teacher relationships. One father said he didn't think this would be a long-term solution as populations fluctuate and in a few years it could lead to Belle Aire becoming over crowded. The men wanted clarity on this and said "let's make the right choice the first time so we don't have to fix things later."

REPORTS (board members, staff, administrators)

Report Card Committee:

The committee surveyed parents to see what kind of communication they need from report cards and from teachers. The committee reviewed samples from other schools, reviewed current learning standards and went to PTA meetings. They concluded they need to keep report cards simple and easy to digest but to make sure parents know report cards are not the only or primary communication between teachers and parents. The new report cards will have three grades: (for the primary school aged children)

1. proficient
2. progressing
3. area of concern

Descriptions of each will be supplied for teachers to help grade and for parents to help interoperate. They are not sure if these will be supplied online or paper copies.

*Jill Samonte asked if these will be available in different languages. The answer is yes, after the final English draft is complete.

Superintendent Report:

Planning for next school year is well under way and they are waiting for registration to close to have final enrollment numbers. (Deadline is May 12, 2017).

Summer learning is partnering with Downers Grove Public Library for Summer Book club. Summer school is also offered as well as summer orchestra and band.

New ideas for next year District 58 Board meeting locations:

1. Village Hall
2. Rotate different schools to coordinate with the "Spotlight on our Schools"
This option is tricky because it may cause more work for the school to get the meeting space set up for the board meetings. Another thing to consider: not all schools have air conditioning and could result in very hot meetings. The board will consider these options for next year. The June meeting is expected to be crowded and will take place at Village Hall.

Lester School needs some direction from the Board on which option to take for expansion.

Doug Purcell asked for more details on how it will be funded.

Darren Hughes asked for feedback from Lester faculty to make sure the plan that is chosen addresses all the needs of the building as seen by the people that are in the building every day.

The community advisory committee to the superintendent welcomes the board to join the next meeting May 15 and will focus on community questions for the superintendent.

Monthly Business Report:

The State of IL made a payment! District 58 is still owed \$1.6 million from the State. The district was low on cash and had to liquidate some long-term investments to make property tax payments. Springfield is still discussing pension reform and school funding.

At this time in the meeting member John Miller expressed his dismay over having an unbalanced budget going into next year. The budget is \$600,000 over for the 2017-2018 school year. He said something along the lines of "I can't spend money I don't have. If I want a new car but don't have the money, I will have to keep driving my old car." He is referring to the district's need to purchase a new curriculum. The one currently being used is around 13 years old. A new curriculum has been piloted now for about two years and it is time to purchase it in full for the entire district. Superintendent Cremascoli asked the board to please allow the hiring of new faculty to begin soon, as scheduled because it is critical to secure teachers for the upcoming year. She vowed to have her team "scrub" the budget again for cuts but warned it will not be easy as there will not be any easy cuts to make. The board seemed to be okay with her response.

PRESENTATIONS

Herrick Middle School Student Counsel did Flag salute and Pledge of Allegiance
They Discussed what fund raisers were being held:

“Fallgrams” sold to fund Student Counsel

Spirit weeks

Collecting Boxtops to raise money for Herrick Green Team- they hope to buy a tree and bench or picnic table

Candy grams were sold to fund the dance

Canned food was collected and donated to Downers Grove Food Pantry

Snacks sold at sports games and \$416 was donated to the National Kidney Foundation

Sold ‘Ride Janie Ride’ bracelets to fund local families dealing with cancer

Herrick PTA

Had surplus of money last year and asked teacher for wish list. The PTA was able to provide:

-New Furniture for sensory learning

-ellipticals, speakers and heart rate monitors for P.E.

-calculators

-3D molecular models, stem kits, pocket lab sensors, hot plates for science

-1 book, 1 school books

-school supply kits for next year

-cross town classic sports event: boys volleyball and girls basketball

-7th grade grandparent’s day

-8th grade dance and etiquette class

Next year they are doing a fun raiser called Raise Craze to do kindness fun raising where the kids will get sponsors to go do good deeds.

Comments/Concerns:

The point that struck me the most at this meeting was the topic of purchasing a new curriculum. Many people move to Downers Grove for the good schools. It is alarming that the district is using such an old curriculum and that member Miller seemed to think it was not a priority to update it.

General Features

	Yes	No	Comments
Did the meeting start on time?	x		
Were members attentive and prepared?	x		
Were members courteous to each other?	x		
Were members attentive to the publics' comments?	x		
Was the facility adequate?	x		
Could the audience see and hear?	x		
Were visual aids easily visible to the audience	x		
Were the meeting facilities handicapped accessible	x		

FOIA (Complete once, unless information changes.

<http://dg58.org/school-board/foia-information/>

Illinois Open Meetings Act requirements

	Yes	No	Comments
Was the agenda posted 48 hours before the meeting? If yes, note where	x		
Did the agenda items clearly describe what was to be discussed?	x		
Were background materials made available to the public?			They will be posted in official minutes
Was there adequate discussion of the issues?	x		

Was there a closed session before, during or after the meeting?	x		Closed session after the meeting
If there was a closed meeting, was any action taken after the closed session? If so, what action?	x		The board was to decide on some employment specifics and special education.

Date Submitted: 5/10/17

By: Katie Frick