Board Briefs

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October 10, 2023 Committee of the Whole Meeting

Board Meeting Videos

Approval of Agenda
The Board voted to approve the October 10 agenda as presented.

Recognition
School Bus Driver Appreciation
In honor of School Bus Driver Appreciation month, Chief Transportation Officer Brandon Hayes shared some facts and accomplishments of the District 113 Transportation Department. Of note, the team has 512 years of collective experience and in the last year, they drove 73 vehicles, including 38 buses on 1,622 trips which totaled over 359,000 miles, or about 14 times around the Earth’s circumference. The Board thanked Mr. Hayes and his department for their service, adding that the District could not function without them and emphasizing their importance because for some students, the drivers from the Transportation Department are the first and last people a student sees during their school day.

Principal Appreciation
Superintendent Dr. Bruce Law shared a resolution thanking Principals Dr. Kathryn Anderson and Deborah Finn for their hard work in honor of Principal Appreciation Week, which runs from October 15-21. Dr. Law said that he knows of no job that is easy in education but he knows the job of a principal is crucial. He said District 113 is lucky to have two principals who display a great deal of skill, grace and caring for students and staff.

Board Reports
President
Board President Dan Struck said that he had originally hoped that the focus of his report would be the good news from the student liaisons later in the meeting but he knew that changed with the violence in Israel that began over the weekend. He then shared the following statement.

Our communities have close ties to Israel: whether we have family members or friends living there; whether we have visited once or multiple times; or whether our children or grandchildren have visited through camp, through Birthright or a similar program, or have spent a gap year or a year of studies. Some of us have journeyed to Israel to celebrate important life events… There are so many connections. … As a parent, it is unthinkable that among the fallen, nearly 300 young adults were purposefully and methodically slaughtered while attending a music festival. Given the close connection that our communities have to Israel, there is a good chance that we know someone, or at the very least know someone
who knows someone, who has suffered due to the barbaric and cowardly acts of hatred and brutality by the Hamas terror organization.

There is no doubt that these incomprehensible acts of evil have resulted in pain, in anxiety and in considerable uncertainty for students, staff, and families. This is a time to come together as a school community, as families, and as a broader community to provide support for each other. This is a time for all of us to embrace those we hold dear. This is a time to model the thirst for justice, to model dignity, and to hold fast to that which we hold dear.

We add our collective voices in the unequivocal condemnation of the horrific attacks on the people of Israel and visitors to Israel. There is absolutely no place within the human community for purposefully hateful and terroristic attacks that brutalize innocent civilians – attacks that were motivated by hatred for the very presence and existence of the victims. These were the acts of a hateful cult of violence.

We offer our deepest condolences and solicitude to all who are mourning and we hope for the safety of all who are sheltering from brutality. May all who are held captive be safely returned to their communities and families. May we someday all respect and value each other in our shared humanity.

We also know that many students, staff, and families within the 113 community have been impacted by the tragic events in Israel. As a school community, our first responsibility is to come together in order to support each other during this trying time. This is a time to listen closely to the concerns and uncertainties felt by our students and staff and to respond to their needs with understanding and generosity. If a student is in crisis or needs support during the school day, please encourage your student to visit their counselor or other social and emotional support resources within Deerfield and Highland Park High Schools.

**Finance Committee**

Finance Committee Chair Rick Heineman provided a report from the committee meeting held just before the Board meeting. Mr. Heineman said the committee discussed the cost of proposed solar panel projects at both schools following the completion of the structural analysis. He said the Facilities Committee will review the plans at their next meeting. Mr. Heineman then moved on to a brief update on the alternative revenue bonds issued by the District for capital projects, noting that the law requires the funds to be expended within three years and that the District will meet that requirement. He closed by reporting that the committee reviewed a report on the tax levy and that item will go to the full Board for discussion at the October 24 meeting.

**Administration Reports**

**Superintendent**

Dr. Law announced publicly that he will retire from public education at the end of the current academic year, no earlier than June 30, 2024, but ahead of his contract expiration on June 30, 2025. He remarked on his love of his job in District 113 and the many great people in it, including the Board and his team.

He said he will do everything he can to make the next superintendent successful. He said a lot of processes and procedures have been put in place to allow the District to operate more effectively and efficiently. He cited the contract with the District 113 Education Association (DEA) that is now in place to help recruit the best licensed staff in a tight labor market and he vowed to bring a
balanced budget for fiscal year 2025 so that the next superintendent will not come in having to
balance the budget.

He thanked the Board for placing their confidence in him and he said he is looking forward to
continuing to work with the Board, his team, and the DEA to get things done.

After Dr. Law made his announcement, Board President Dan Struck shared a statement thanking
Dr. Law for leading District 113 through an unprecedented period of time. Mr. Struck
emphasized that the Board did not ask Dr. Law to resign, nor did it encourage or suggest that he
do so. Mr. Struck announced that a Special Meeting will be held October 18 to interview search
firms to select the firm October 24 that will be charged with finding Dr. Law’s successor as well
the Highland Park High School principal position. The full text of Mr. Struck’s comments were
emailed to the community and can also be found online.

2023-23 Student Enrollment and Projections
Administration presented a report that provides the first look at student enrollment for the 2023-
24 school year and compares those numbers to previous years. It also updates projections for
future years using the cohort survival method. Dr. Law underscored that any enrollment figure is
a number from one moment in time as the number fluctuates daily. He noted that the decline in
student enrollment so far has not been as large as the number predicted in the 2021 demography
reports.

FOIA
Dr. Law reported the FOIA requests received since the last meeting and their disposition. The
report is posted in BoardDocs online.

School Reports
Student Liaison Reports
HPHS Student Liaison Stephanie Diaz and DHS Student Liaison Lillian Dowlatshahi provided
reports on the latest happenings at their respective schools to the Board. The reports
included highlights and celebrations of both homecoming weeks, activities, and athletics.
Lillian also shared that DHS had been named an Illinois Democracy School for 2023.

Discussion
Long-Term Facility Planning
Paul Hanley from Beyond Your Base presented a report on the District 113 electorate and the
community outreach program his firm provides to public entities considering raising funds
through a bond proposal. As part of its long-term facility planning and update of its Master
Facilities Plan, the Board has been discussing facility needs, infrastructure and capital projects
and how to fund them. The discussion focused on the path forward for projects beyond the scope
of funding allocated in operations and projects other than those being funded by proceeds from
alternative revenue bonds the Board issued in 2022 and by the operational budget.

Mr. Hanley also provided detailed information on the timing of any such program and explained
how that timeline aligns with election cycles. Dr. Law reminded everyone that it is typical for
school districts to seek additional monies through a referendum because the cost of maintaining
and updating the District’s facilities, which number approximately 1.1 million square feet, go beyond what the District can pay for in its annual budget without negatively impacting the instructional program. Dr. Law added that for the evening’s meeting, timing of any potential referendum is really the key question. After some discussion, Board members expressed wanting to consider the discussion but not move forward with November 2024 as a potential option. They provided a few reasons for waiting, including, conducting a superintendent search to replace Dr. Law upon his retirement, continuing the Board’s due diligence in looking into projects identified in the updated Master Facilities Plan, engaging the community to gather input on future facilities decisions, as well as moving closer to the time when the bonds from the 2013 referendum are paid off.

**Legal Firm for Property Tax Appeals**
The Board discussed Administration’s recommendation to authorize the firm Hodges, Loizzi, Eisenhammer, Rodick & Kohn (HLERK) to provide legal representation on behalf of the District for property tax appeals. Representation would be for appeals seeking a reduction of $500,000 equalized assessed valuation (EAV) or more. An EAV in the amount of $500,000 represents a fair market value of $1.5 million. The item will come back to the Board October 24 for action.

**Consent Agenda**
The Board approved the consent agenda as presented. The consent agenda includes personnel, stipends and board bills.

The meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

**Upcoming Meetings**
October 18, 2023 (Wednesday)
Facilities Committee Meeting
5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Special Meeting
6:00 p.m.
Administration Building

October 24, 2023
Regular Action Meeting
6:00 p.m. Closed Session, 7:00 p.m. Open Session
Administration Building