

District 202 School Board Observer Report

Sept. 10, 2007

Observer: Connie Goddard

Board Present/Absent: Martha Burns (president), Rachel Hayman (vice president); Jane Culleton, Omar Khuri, Aon Hussain (student member). Absent: Mary Wilkerson

Staff Present: Eric Witherspoon, Kim Rapp (secretary to board), Kathy Meihls (PR), Laura Cooper (assistant supt), Bill Stafford, (CFO), Mary Rodino (assistant CFO), Marlene Grossman (new principal at Park School.

Media Present: Evanston Review

Meeting Began. 7:40 pm

Meeting Ended: ca. 9:00 pm

No. of Citizens in Attendance: just me

Significant Discussions, Action Taken: Most of the meeting was a discussion of FT 2008 Budget, which is in balance for the first time in seven years.

Long-time board member Martha Burns is now president; Rachel Hayman is vice president; Burns and others began meeting by noting positive tone set at preceding board meeting (Aug 30) at which new staff were presented.

One of those new staff members is Marlene Grossman, the new principal of the Park School. She came to the district from Elgin, where she had headed special education programs for District U-46 – the largest P-12 district in the state. Grossman, a seasoned classroom teacher, is also completing a doctorate at National-Louis University. In her remarks she noted that the Park School, which is dedicated to meeting the needs of severely handicapped students, is one of the few such schools left in the nation.

Report on the Budget: In his remarks on the budget, CFO Bill Stafford noted that the projected 2007-2008 budget of \$65,818,653 overall – including both operating and non-operating (such as pensions and interest payments) will be the first balanced one in seven years – this is a 0.1% increase over last year. The district's operating budget of \$59,819,933 is a 4% increase over last year.

He noted that the district has the highest possible rating in the state of Illinois, and that the delay in passing a budget for the state led to substantial interest charges the district had to pay – an amount that could be up to \$100,000.

He also noted that roughly 80% of the district's funds come from property taxes and that nearly 75% of its expenditures are for salaries and employee benefits.

Superintendent's Report: District students had the highest average ACT scores in six years – 22.6; this is higher than both state and national average scores. Also, a far greater percentage of students are taking now than then – since 2002, this figure has gone from 75% to nearly 100%.

Evanston's continuing education program has now been taken over by Oakton Community College; ETHS is also looking for ways its students can take college-credit courses through Oakton.

The school now has three vending machines offering "healthy" food; the Evanston Garden Club has contributed \$800 to the school's Nature Center.

Polling the Board: Missy Fleming asked whether ETHS students could grow foods for consumption in the school cafeteria, as is done at some schools in California. She also noted that ETHS intends to hire a grant writer, who would be expected to increase income for the school. Rachel Hayman mentioned the board's outreach activities and noted that efforts are being made to reinvigorate the PTSA