

Oak Park/Huntington Woods/Royal Oak Twp  
Democratic Club  
April 15, 2021  
Zoom Meeting

Called to order at 7 p.m.

**Chair Mary Ann Fontana began with introductions of speakers**

1. Ellen Lipton State Board of Education spoke about public education in Michigan

Brief overview of what the state board of education does:

- We are a local control state, which means a lot of what we do occurs at the local level.
- Task is to hire and fire superintendent and so forth.
- State Board of Education is governed under Public Act 287 of 1964, which followed the constitutional language. It tracks very clearly the statutory framework of what the State Board of Education can and can't do. In sections 9 and 10 it tracks very similarly the language of the constitution. It's advisory in nature. It has the authority to enact broad policy, but certainly does not have the ability to enact legislation.
- Unless the legislature passes a law, no one has the capacity to enforce that. What they must do under the law as it's passed by the legislature is carry out the law. The State Board of Education has the capacity to hire and fire the superintendent, who is Michael Rice. He is charged with the officer or executive officer of the department, so if the State Board of Education wants to direct the officers to do something, they have to direct Michael Rice to do so. The State Board of Education speaks through its policies, statements, and resolutions. Encouraging the state to wave the testing for this year. Every parent has a right to opt their child out of the state test. The federal government will not punish states for not meeting the requirement of the 95% rate of testing.

**What is going on with the return to school?**

Early research has shown that stay-at-home schooling has been disproportionately distributed among low-income households, having a toll on the emotional and mental health of our students. For many of those students, learning remotely has been a crisis.

We also know that students have been kept remote for fear of the coronavirus. Every district was required to submit a return-to-learn plan. They must revisit that plan every month. They must submit every month to the Department of Education the reports, then go to the State Board of Education for evaluation. These reports list the number of school districts that are fully remote, the number of school districts that are fully in person, the number of districts that are hybrid, meaning partially remote, partially in person. Rather than follow federal guidelines, the state legislature has put their own conditions in place to appropriate the federal funds in their efforts to take control away

from the governor. We cannot return to school now because we are a national hot spot, due to rising cases of coronavirus in our state. Governor Whitmer has asked schools to pause learning. Only the legislature can mandate. The department of Health and Human Services has declined to tell schools to shut down. Local school districts have been left to scramble in terms of deciding whether they stay the course or forego the money, or what they do. The State Board of Education issued a resolution back in December before Ellen Lipton got on the board, reminding schools to adhere to their return-to-school plan.

Q&A follows

Epic website link in chat for more information

### **7:35 Mary Ann Turns over the floor to Councilman Shaun Whitehead**

Presentation by Dr. Jamie Hitchcock Oak Park Superintendent

2020 bond proposal. For information go to [www.oakparkschools.org/bond](http://www.oakparkschools.org/bond)

Lit drops for the bond proposal vote.

### **7:40 Dr Jamii Hitchcock speaker**

Thank you to the city of Oak Park and its residents and our mayor and our Dem Club for their support. The bond proposal is about critical infrastructure. Our bond proposal is about needs. Basics of bond proposal

- Critical infrastructure to keep students warm, safe, and dry
- Facility upgrades
- Technology
- Cost savings

54-million-dollar bond proposal: spent over the next 5-10 years

- Mechanical & plumbing
- Roofing, ceilings, doors, walls, and windows

This is all being done without raising taxes. Needs outweigh budget, which hasn't changed since 2008. Current millage is 5.98. New millage is exactly the same: 5.98. For more information, visit [www.oakparkschools.org/bond](http://www.oakparkschools.org/bond).

### **Q&A**

Al Elvin Oak Park School Board Vice President

Full support of the bond

State Rep Regina Weiss

We have federal money coming in for our title one schools, schools with the highest needs. Most at-risk students who have the most barriers. Districts are mandated to provide these services, whether or not they have the funds to support them. We have been dramatically underfunding our schools for decades. We are the worst state in the

country when it comes to making increase budgets for public education. Yes, there is money coming in to help, however it's temporary and these infrastructure problems are permanent. The way Michigan goes about this funding is pretty weird. It relies on local communities saying we are willing to tax ourselves to make sure the community gets what it needs. We all need to support this bond to make sure these necessary upgrades are made.

### **Regular club business**

Begins at 8 p.m.

Laurie Lisi precinct delegate liaison.

Glenda Steinbeck new precinct delegate liaison.

Phone bank as a group. Started with 900, have 80 calls left.

Thank you, Mona, for making 300 phone calls.

Lit drop 750 doors. Starting at 11 on Saturday. Meet at 1 on Sunday. Meet at the Oak Park Community center parking lot.

### **Update from State Rep Regina Weiss**

There are a number of voter suppression bills in the senate. There has been a huge public outcry. Thank you to everyone who calls to squash that now. Sign off on letters condemning these bills. Keep calling, keep pressure on.

Budget: Still waiting on Republicans to release their version of the budget. We will see next week and it is not looking hopeful.

Still waiting to appropriate funds from the COVID relief fund. Michigan still needs support we are in a hot spot.

Ferndale school district will be building a new elementary school on the Casa/Jackson Park site. Jackson Park has a deed restriction, so to build an elementary school there, they need 50% + 1 of the homeowners to sign off on the deed restriction. If you are interested in volunteering, get in touch with State Rep. Regina Weiss.

### **Commissioner Yolanda Charles**

Parks and Rec needs to fill positions.

### **Commissioner Charlie Cavell**

We want an Oakland County New Deal.

Fair housing incentive. Ending source of income discrimination. For every three section 8 vouchers, two of them go unfulfilled. Proposing to end source of income discrimination in Oakland County.

COVID update:

Michigan has received 7.4 million doses.

Oakland County has received 852,000 doses.

Oakland government has received 241,000 doses.

What that means is 40% of people 16 and up in Oakland County have received at least one COVID vaccine dose. At least 60% of people 65 and up should have received at least one dose. Michigan has the biggest surge right now so be very aware and very careful.

### **Mayor Marian McClellan**

New Librarian Kymberly Shaff.

Oak Park is very deep in budget deliberation. Economic development is really moving. 11 Mile Road is being named the Water Tower District. Two new breweries and a new coffee house, serving coffee and mocktails. Oak Park Coffee is planning on opening soon.

New zoning amendments are being planned. New warehouse district. Coolidge heading towards 8 Mile. Design-based standards, improving the look of outdoor buildings. 9 mile and Coolidge will be called City Center or Four Corners with mixed use zoning making it look like a more downtown appeal. Shared parking. 9 Mile redesign is in the works. We need to match the \$50,000.00 patronage grant. Putting off certain things because of COVID. Landscaped islands.

### **Commissioner Jeff Jenks**

Parks and Rec Tracy Shandy.

5-year master plan.

Budget meeting moved.

### **City Councilman Shaun Whitehead**

Juneteenth Celebration

Essay contest for students and residents.

What does Juneteenth mean to me in 2021?

Winners get gift cards and tablets

### **Judge Apple**

Courts are pushed back to phase 2. Most of the staff have been vaccinated, but cannot open at this moment. All cases are being heard virtually.

### **Good and Welfare**

Commissioner Charlie Cavell

Please email to volunteer. Big and small. We need you.

Meeting ended at 8:42.