

**MINUTES OF A JOINT SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE BOARDS OF EDUCATION
CITY OF LAKE FOREST SCHOOL DISTRICT 67
LAKE FOREST COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 115
November 9, 2021**

Call to Order and Roll Call

A Special Joint Meeting of the Board of Education of Lake Forest Community High School District 115, County of Lake, State of Illinois, was held on Tuesday, November 9, 2021, and called to order at 4:30 p.m by Ms. Zinser.

Board members present at roll call were:

David Burns, Member	John Venson, Member
John Noble, Member	Marcus Schabacker, Member (virtual)
Jenny Zinser, President	

Absent: Dewey Winebrenner, Secretary (4:31 p.m. arrival)
Sally Davis, Vice President (4:38 p.m. arrival)

Administration Present:

Dr. Matthew Montgomery, Superintendent
Ms. Rebecca Jenkins, Deputy Superintendent
Dr. Jennifer Hermes, Chief Operating Officer
Ms. Melissa Oakley, Chief Communications Officer

Also Present: Mr. Justin Engelland, District 67 Board of Education President
Mrs. Suzanne Sands, District 67 Board of Education Vice President
Mrs. Alice LeVert, District 67 Board of Education Secretary
Mr. Carl Kirar, District 67 Board of Education Member
Mrs. Emily Bernahl, District 67 Board of Education Member
Mr. Richard Chun, District 67 Board of Education Member
Ms. Anne Geraghty Helms, District 67 Board of Education Member
Mr. Michael Sanchez, Business Services Coordinator
Ms. Julia Polszakiewicz, Board Clerk

Guests: Mr. Paul Fallon, President, Fallon Research & Communications

Public Participation:

There was no public participation.

Workshop:

Mr. Fallon presented the results of the September 2021 community satisfaction survey conducted by Fallon Research and Communications.

He reviewed the survey methodology and stated that data was gathered through a combination of secure SMS/text surveys and telephone interviews performed by specially-trained opinion research interviewers. The survey was conducted with 405 randomly-selected voters registered in Lake Forest School Districts 67 and 115 using a combination of valid residential, VOIP, and cellular telephone listings. The survey was conducted between September 20 and September 27, 2021 and there was an overall +/- of 4.86 percent overall estimated margin of error with a confidence interval of 9.72 percent within which the results could vary. He stated that data was stratified and weighed so that the differences in vital characteristics including age, gender, and geography were represented in proportion to their percentages of the Districts' electorate. Due to rounding, not all results would add up to 100 percent and the data was presented in a different order than in which the questions were asked. He also reported that unless otherwise noted, only statistically significant differences that were outside of the confidence interval for the overall estimated margin of sampling error had been reported in the presentation of key findings.

Mr. Fallon reported that the key findings were split into different categories with the first being the opinion environment. When asked how respondents would rate the quality of education being provided by the public schools serving the community in Lake Forest, 76 percent responded excellent or good and 9 percent responded poor or very poor. He displayed the select sub-group results with percentages identified by gender, race, and District. 55 percent of respondents believed that the quality of education was generally about the same throughout all of the schools within the community while 25 percent said it differed greatly and 20 percent were unsure. Regarding educational diversity, 49 percent of respondents rated the jobs that the schools in Lake Forest had done to meet the needs of students from diverse cultures and backgrounds as excellent or good while 11 percent indicated that it was poor or very poor with 24 percent unsure. In regards to responsiveness, 43 percent of the respondents agreed that the school leaders in the community listened to the public and were responsive to its needs and preferences while 33 percent disagreed and 24 percent were unsure.

The second category of questions and responses was finances. Mr. Fallon stated that when asked, generally speaking, whether respondents believed that property taxes in the area were too high, mostly fair, or too low, 64 percent of respondents stated that taxes were too high with 33 percent responding fair. Regarding the "ROI," when asked whether property owners currently received a good value from the schools for the money paid in taxes, 51 percent said yes, 32 percent said no and 17 percent were unsure. Mr. Fallon discussed the age group sub-results for this particular response noting the trendlines differing more significantly for this question. In regards to managing finances, when respondents were asked how they would rate the job that the school districts had done spending their tax money and managing finances, 41 percent responded excellent or good, 19 percent responded poor or very poor, and 15 percent responded that they were unsure.

Mr. Fallon then reported on the next category of questions related to consolidation between the districts. Respondents were asked whether they were aware that some aspects of the Lake Forest School Districts 67 and 115 had consolidated in 2008 and instead of two separate superintendents and administrations, they now had a single superintendent and shared many

services. Of those surveyed, 61 percent said they were aware and 36 percent were not aware. When asked whether respondents were satisfied or dissatisfied with this Shared Services arrangement, 66 percent responded that they were satisfied and 19 percent were dissatisfied. The survey asked respondents about their final disposition towards the consolidation and 35 percent supported leaving the consolidation as it was currently, 30 percent supporting completing the consolidation into a single unit district, 15 percent supported ending the arrangement and completely splitting the districts and 20 percent were unsure.

Mr. Fallon reported the next category of questions related to communications. When asked how respondents got most of their information about Lake Forest schools, overall, 28 percent of respondents indicated they received information through talking with parents and students who attended the schools, 25 percent received information through reading school emails and publications, 12 percent received information through reading online and traditional newspapers, and 9 percent received information through viewing social media posts. Additional respondents stated that they received information through talking with district teachers, visiting the school district website, or other. Respondents were also asked whether, over the past year, they had seen any news, information or posts about the districts on social media accounts of friends, parents or others in the community and 60 percent of respondents said yes, they had, and 34 percent of respondents said no. Mr. Fallon discussed the subgroups of respondents noting the differentiation between gender.

The next category of findings was regarding the LFHS building. When asked whether they believed that the high school building was in good, adequate, or poor condition, 27 percent said good, 25 percent said adequate, 6 percent said poor, 19 percent had no opinion, and 23 percent did not have enough information to have formed an opinion. Regarding modernization of the building, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that even though the LFHS building may have been well-maintained and attractive in appearance, it was important to modernize the facilities and technology infrastructure to ensure students were receiving the level of advanced education that residents had come to expect in the community and 66 percent agreed with this statement, 17 percent disagreed, and 17 percent were unsure.

Mr. Fallon then reviewed the results related to a funding concept test in line with facilities questions. Respondents were asked whether they would vote for or against a \$77 million dollar referendum on the ballot to upgrade and modernize the high school building which would result in an additional annual tax obligation of approximately \$300 dollars for a \$1 million dollar home, 41 percent would vote against it, 40 percent would vote for it, and 19 percent were unsure. The results were further split by subgroup and Mr. Fallon noted the difference between gender, age, political affiliation, and whether respondents were parents to students in the district or not. The survey then drilled into the rationale of respondents who would vote against the referendum. Responding to an open ended question about why, 26 percent of respondents who would vote against it cited that taxes were too high and should not increase, 16 percent believed that the building was in good condition and work was not needed, 14 percent believed that money would not be spent properly or efficiently, 9 percent believed that the dollar amount of the referendum was too high, 9 percent believed that the district should find other ways to fund building needs, and four percent did not support it because they did not have

children enrolled in the public school system. The survey results found additional distinguishing attitudinal characteristics about voters who would vote against a referendum including that a plurality, 36 percent, received information primarily from talking to parents and students who currently attended district schools, a majority, 52 percent, said that the information they saw on social media was unfavorable towards the schools, a robust majority, 64 percent, said that the condition of the LFHS building was good or adequate, a plurality, 39 percent, agreed that it was important to modernize the school, 84 percent said taxes were too high, 22 percent rated the job managing finances as excellent or good, and a robust majority, 66 percent, rated the quality of education as excellent or good.

Overall, Mr. Fallon found several key findings in the results of the survey. He stated that the exceptionally high rating indicated that the community was content with the quality of education being provided to students and that sentiment was consistent among the spectrum of subgroups. While the rating for educational diversity was lower, it was largely due to an absence of opinion on the matter, but there was little to suggest dissatisfaction. Managing finances, in contrast, garnered a low rating that suggested disenchantment. He reported that although not exclusively attributable to schools, sensitivity to the rate of property taxes was high and could manifest itself in a variety of ways, including opposition of a prospective bond issue.

In addition, despite the economic “cross-pressures” that existed, a majority of the community believed that they were getting a good value for their tax dollars including non-parents, which was reassuring as they would typically be the likeliest dissenters. Mr. Fallon reported that there was modest awareness of the Shared Services arrangement which meant that an opportunity existed to inculcate key groups and this would be effective given that a majority of those who were aware of the arrangement were satisfied with it, including parents. There was also no clear consensus about the next steps for consolidation but differences in opinion were based on attitudinal characteristics, which suggested that impressions of it could change as more was learned.

He stated that communication with the community represented a particularly daunting challenge due to the bifurcated way in which parents and non-parents indicated that they were getting their information about the schools and pointed to the need for a multi-faceted engagement effort. The complexity of protecting and bolstering the image of public schools appeared to have been compounded by the corrosive effects of information gleaned from the free-wheeling social media sphere which could undermine the confidence of key groups like parents.

Mr. Fallon reported that voters were content with the current condition of the LFHS building which was a key factor cited in opposition to a tax for it as well as the onerousness of the current tax burden. However, even many dissenters exhibited aspirational desires for modernization suggesting immense pride in the schools and their centrality to the social fabric of the community.

Dr. Montgomery asked that due to the availability of time and other agenda items, Board members submit any questions about Mr. Fallon's presentation individually to the Board Clerk.

Adjourn to Executive Session:

Motion: Mr. Winebrenner moved, seconded by Mr. Noble that the Board of Education, Lake Forest Community High School District 115, Lake Forest, Illinois, adjourn to Executive Session to discuss matters related to the appointment, employment, compensation, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body, or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony or a complaint lodged against an employee of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity.

Votes were taken by roll call. Votes were cast as follows:

Ayes: Venson, Noble, Davis, Winebrenner, Zinser, Schabacker, Burns

Nays:

Absent:

The motion carried unanimously.

Adjourn Executive Session:

Motion: Dr. Venson moved, seconded by Mr. Noble, that the Board of Education, Lake Forest Community High School District 115, Lake Forest Illinois, adjourn Executive Session at 7:31 p.m.

Votes were taken by roll call. Votes were cast as follows:

Ayes: Winebrenner, Davis, Noble, Zinser, Burns, Venson, Schabacker

Nays:

Absent:

The motion carried unanimously.

Re-Open Special Meeting:

Ms. Zinser called back to order the joint special meeting of the Lake Forest Community High School District 115 Board of Education, Lake Forest, Illinois at 7:32 p.m.

Board members present at roll call were:

Dewey Winebrenner, Secretary

Sally Davis, Vice President

John Noble, Member

Jenny Zinser, President

David Burns, Member

John Venson, Member

Marcus Schabacker, Member

Absent: None

Administration Present:

Dr. Matthew Montgomery, Superintendent

Also Present: Mr. Justin Engelland, District 67 Board of Education President

Mrs. Suzanne Sands, District 67 Board of Education Vice President

Mrs. Alice LeVert, District 67 Board of Education Secretary
Mr. Carl Kirar, District 67 Board of Education Member
Mrs. Emily Bernahl, District 67 Board of Education Member
Mr. Richard Chun, District 67 Board of Education Member
Ms. Anne Geraghty Helms, District 67 Board of Education Member

Guests: None

Adjournment:

Motion: Mr. Winebrenner moved, seconded by Mr. Noble, that the Board of Education of Lake Forest Community High School District 115, Lake Forest, Illinois, adjourn the meeting.

On Voice Vote, motion carried.

The regular meeting adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

Jenny Zinser, President Date

Dewey Winebrenner, Secretary Date