

OAK PARK AND RIVER FOREST HIGH SCHOOL  
201 North Scoville Avenue  
Oak Park, IL 60302

**FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**

Tuesday, April 20, 2010

A Finance Committee meeting was held on Tuesday, April 20, 2010. Chair Allen called the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m. in the Board Room. Committee members present were John C. Allen, Terry Finnegan, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Amy McCormack (arrived at 7:45 a.m.), Dr. Dietra D. Millard, and Sharon Patchak-Layman. Also present were Dr. Attila J. Weninger, Superintendent; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction (departed at 9:08 a.m.); Jason Edgecombe, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Cheryl L. Witham, Chief Financial Officer; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors included Kay Foran, Communications and Community Relations Coordinator; Doug Wiley, OPRFHS Supervisor of Finance; James Paul Hunter, OPRFHS Faculty Senate Executive Committee Chair; Robert Zummallen, Director of Buildings and Grounds; Eric Gershenson, Carolyn Newberry Schwartz, Joan White, Peter Traczyk, and Diane Rosenbrock of the Collaboration for Early Childhood Care and Education; Kathy Kern of Parenthesis; Patrick Cermak, CEO, Mark Wight, Chairman and President, LeeAnn Meyers-Smith, Lead, and James Nagle, Lead of Wight and Company; John Williams, Bert Patania and Gavin Morgan of the Oak Park Youth Township; and Terry Dean of the *Wednesday Journal*.

**Approval of March 16, 2010 Finance Committee Minutes**

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee members to accept the minutes as presented of the March 16, 2010 Finance Committee meeting.

**Early Childhood Collaboration Agreement**

Ms. Newberry-Schwartz, director of the Early Childhood Collaboration (Collaboration) reported that the Collaboration now has 1) an address at 320 Lake Street, 2) a director (herself), and 3) an individual donor campaign. Significant process has been made on the Collaboration's strategic plan through the involvement of OPRFHS and the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Phil Prale. She reiterated that the achievement gap starts long before students enter kindergarten. In Oak Park it was found that 650 children starting kindergarten last year were not prepared to be successful learners when they entered school.

Mr. Gershenson, the convener of the Collaboration, stated that because of the District's participation and support, the Collaboration was on a path to give a comprehensive system of providing high quality education for all children in the community. Forty years of seminal, longitudinal research establishes that high quality early learning environments and support for high risk families, lead to higher on-time graduation rates, and lower rates of participation in special education, higher incomes, higher rates of home ownership, and lower rates of involvement with the criminal discipline system. At-risk children not

enrolled in high quality preschool are 70% more likely to be arrested for violent crimes by the age of 18. By age five, a child from a low-income household has 25 million fewer words addressed to him/her than a child from a professional family. Two-thirds of the achievement gap is already evident when children enter through the door on their first day of kindergarten.

The Collaboration is implementing five integrated strategies.

- 1) Early intervention. Over 1200 children have been screened for vision and hearing thus far with 10 to 15 percent having significant hearing or vision problems. Children learn to mask these deficiencies which affects their development. The Collaboration works with over 200 pediatricians and family practitioners to develop a universal screening during well baby visits.
- 2) Professional development. The Collaboration had provided training for low-income childcare providers. Now, because of the Victoria Foundation, it is able to work with the directors of the centers on creating professional development plans for each of the center's employees as well as help to improve each of the center's environments.
- 3) Parent support and engagement. This ranges from the publication of the *Early Childhood Research Directory* to offering intensive home visiting to at-risk parents by skilled social workers.
- 4) The Collaboration put together a list of referral agencies for people to contact, including the Food Pantry, PADS, Sarah's Inn, Head Start Program, Oak Park Health Department, walk-in ministries, Parenthesis, etc. In order to make contact with the neediest of families, outreach is being done by people sitting in nail salons, hair salons, etc., those people who would not go to the library, etc.
- 5) Classroom visitation to ensure that quality programs are being provided at the publicly funded pre-school programs. In-service training to staff and educational workshops for parents involved in the programs are provided. A major accomplishment of the Collaboration has been to get everyone on the same page. It is now looking for consistency in intake, eligibility forms, etc., as well as a criteria eligibility checklist which has been weighted in such a way that the neediest children are identified. A common assessment tool is used as children go through the initial intake in order to better serve the needs of the children. All of the form are supportive for the data collection grant and have been supported through funding from District 97 which has helped to make these forms and programs possible.

Ms. Newberry-Schwartz reported that the database, funded by the Township, was launched to provide information about how many children may be at risk and what that population looks like. The project supports the work of Ms. Rosenbrock. The Collaboration is actively working on outreach and recruitment; it was important to know how many children are truly at risk and where they are. The Collaboration needs to track the strategies being used to find the children and their families and to determine which are most effective. There is agreement to use the criteria, one weighting system, and the Early Screening Tool (Revised). Ms. Rosenbrock has also been successful in getting everyone to use the Teacher Strategies Goal as well. Thus, a Child Population database has been setup which gives characteristics of the children in the program. ISBE is

assigning an ID number as soon as the children start a state-funded educational program. Hopefully, this will be the first step in creating a P20 system, a national movement to create an integrated database about students for school systems to use. She credited Dennis Roherty of UIC, Mark Piccus of District 97, Jeff Handelman of IAC, and Bob Spaatz of CRISP for creating the database as well as pro bono attorneys from Proscar Rose who have expertise in health information sharing and security around technology and maintaining information in a technological environment.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked about the Collaboration's involvement in preschools for children 0-3. Ms. Newberry-Schwartz stated that a pilot was being launched at First Baptist Church preschool as the programming is early intervention and home visits. The Collaboration wants to expand it and has written two grants to state agencies. While qualifying both times, funding is not available. The Collaboration wants to start programs in early intervention sites, and First Baptist Church is interested in piloting and expanding it. Grant opportunities will continue to be explored. The Collaboration has done much training of preschool teachers.

Ms. Patchak-Layman noting that there were students with babies at the high school, asked what system was in place within the community for these young parents once they move out of the high school setting. Ms. Newberry-Schwartz stated preschool childcare fills up by April of each year. Often families needing these services are not known until the start of school. In working with ISBE, spots have been reserved for them in the preschools.

Dr. Lee named all of the taxing bodies providing support as well as some individuals with special interests. Since 2002, District 200 has provided \$15,000 annually to the Collaboration. Last year it provided an additional \$15,000 for the planning grant with the understanding that the Village of Oak Park would provide \$35,000. He stated that the focus is on the growth of the children in the Oak Park and River Forest area. The greater the extent that the achievement gap is closed before students enter the high school, the easier it will be for the high school. He believed the funds would be some of the most well spent dollars by the Board of Education.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the Collaboration had worked with the childcare center at the high school. The response was yes. Ms. Patchak-Layman continued that previously there was a reference to student volunteers working in childcare centers. Mr. Gershenson reported that the Collaboration has worked diligently within the members of the community, established sites, and involved the Volunteer Center of Oak Park. The shortfall was the interest of high school students in serving in those positions. Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that some students preferred volunteering during the summer when they had more free time.

It was the consensus of the majority of the Finance Committee members to recommend to the Board of Education that it approve contributing \$30,000 per year for the next two years to the Collaboration at the regular April Board of Education meeting.

### **Oak Park Township Youth Services**

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee members to recommend to the Board of Education that it approve the two-year contract with the Oak Park Youth Township (OPYT) for the following year at its regular April Board of Education meeting.

Mr. Williams reviewed the background as to why the organization was formed: it was to address the issue of gangs in these communities. The OPYT has been funded by all of the taxing bodies of Oak Park for the past fourteen years.

Mr. Williams reported on OPYT's success: 80% or more of the students the interventionists have been involved with have matriculated on time and have reduced their substance use. The interventions work from a harm-reduction model, e.g., when a student has a test the next day, it is suggested that he/she not get high the night before. The Interventionists track attendance, discipline, grades, etc. As attendance improves, discipline changes. Some of the students have been tracked since being in the seventh grade and they are now in their 20's with some having children of their own.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked to see a data trail of this information. She asked if the high school needed to be more supportive with its staff. Are the services, coordination, etc. being provided now sufficient? Mr. Williams stated that if more interventionists were hired, they would all have full, legitimate caseloads. The OPYT provides breathing room and handles only the top 5 percent of the most extreme cases (50 students), those who are directly involved in gangs, drugs, and/or violence. Reflecting on the community, he said there was a great tolerance for students using alcohol and marijuana and the high school is the hub for both communities. OPYT is the only entity legally allowed to communicate on the issues. Mr. Williams acknowledged Mr. Edgecombe for his support of OPYT working with teen parents and Dick Chappell of the Community Center who works with the TAPP program at the River Forest Community Center.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if there was an academic component to this. Mr. Patania noted anyone could refer a student, e.g., parents, teachers, counselors, etc. When they are referred, the OPYT looks at a student's education, attendance, IEP, achievement, etc., and then connects them with outside services. When referring to mental health services, students are referred to a specific therapist, not a program. OPYT is in contact with the deans and counselors on a weekly basis.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if a designated tutor assigned to the OPYT team would help improve services for students and coordinate the tutoring help tying it with the academic portion. Mr. Williams would like to consider that. Ms. Patchak-Layman wanted to make sure students assigned to ISS or OSS receive sufficient academic support.

Mr. Williams noted that the OPYT had gradually eliminated one staff person over the past few years.

### **Construction Update**

Mr. Wight, Chairman and CEO of Wight & Company, profusely apologized to the District for the cost of the construction being more than predicted. He said that while

Wight does not control costs, it prides itself on how good it can predict costs. In this case, it did a terrible job of predicting. As such, Wight will not bill OPRFHS for the increased cost of \$36,000 and the preconstruction services of \$20,000. He delivered the check directly to Ms. Witham.

Mr. Wight continued that OPRFHS had been Wight's most important client for 15 years. OPRFHS is its flagship school that represents 35 to 40 school districts; this has been the place Wight has been most proud and it let the District down. Mistakes do happen because there are many moving parts in design. Wight will start to build OPRFHS's trust again. In addition, Mr. Nagle and Ms. Smith-Meyers led an internal company meeting to analyze what happened so that it will never happen again to any other client. This has not happened to any other districts represented by Wight in about ten years. Mr. Allen appreciated Mr. Wight's comments. He thanked him for the apology and the reimbursements.

Ms. Patchak-Layman referred to the concern she had expressed earlier in her tenure as a Board of Education member about the same firm doing the life safety review and the construction work. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked when the life safety work would be completed and how much it would cost. Ms. Meyers-Smith stated that Wight is 1) working diligently on this project, 2) estimating the numbers with its current knowledge of the market, 3) going through the master plan, and 4) redeveloping those numbers at Wight's expense. When asked how much of the additional activities were not found in the Life Safety analysis, the response was that, fortunately, next year's work was similar and the discovery that had already occurred will apply to the next couple of years. Ms. Patchak-Layman was grappling with the dollar amounts as the project is close to double what was originally planned and how that would translate into what is spent later. These projects will now be paid for out of the fund balances.

Dr. Lee appreciated Mr. Wight's frankness. Dr. Millard stated that when something goes wrong in medicine, a root cause analysis is performed. Mr. Wight stated that he, Mr. Cermak, Ms. Meyers-Smith, and Mr. Nagel did that to understand what happened. They went to 37 project managers about this situation and everyone wanted to learn. Later in the week, this will be taken to a larger group in more of a presentation-type fashion to revisit what went wrong. This is a complicated business, but what got Wight to this point will not happen again. He added that the District has a hard summer facing it because the work planned is large.

In response to a question as to whether there were still unknowns relative to the replacement of HVAC equipment, it was stated everything might not be known in a vintage building, but that after much diligence and working with the contractors, Wight was more confident in the work. Similar units will be replaced in the future. In terms of the Life Safety projects, the State of Illinois is only interested in things being deleted from the list within a five-year timeframe. Ms. Patchak-Layman added that Wight generated an original dollar amount on what they advised for the summer. Ms. Meyers-Smith stated that the work is a mix of life safety, instructional improvements, and maintenance. Dr. Weninger reported that the request for the Science labs and the addition of air-conditioning came from the District.

Mr. Allen thanked the members of Wight for providing this information.

### **Staff Development Budget**

Per a previous discussion, Mr. Prale and Ms. Witham presented the categorical areas as to how funds were spent for staff development. Ms. Patchak-Layman appreciated the list and asked for a secondary list showing how these dollars supported the District goals and the School Improvement Plan, so that the Board of Education knew how professional development was moving the goals forward and if it were equitable. Mr. Prale felt it reasonable to ask how the professional development requested tied to the goals at the time the request is made. Ms. Patchak-Layman also suggested that the Board of Education could divide the professional monies available by the number of goals. That number could then be divided by the number of faculty members. If faculty members wanted to attend a national meeting, it would be at his/her discretion with his/her funds. She also felt that teachers new to the profession should receive fifty percent of the professional development budget. Ms. Patchak-Layman was unable to support the recommendation to continue to support professional development activities as outlined and projected for future years. She asked if the Finance Advisory Council had discussed this item. Ms. Witham responded that it had not. The administration also pointed out that the state and federal government thru IDEA and other grants provide \$112,000 of the funds and restrictions for the use of those funds apply.

Dr. Weninger recommended that Mr. Prale and Ms. Hill make a presentation at the May Instruction Committee meeting as to why professional development dollars are spent as they are. Mr. Allen added that some areas needed to change. Being a state employee, he knew that state employees were not allowed to go to out-of-state meetings and to send teams to conferences may not be pragmatic for a while. His own deputy who was scheduled to present at a national conference was not allowed to go. This item was referred to May Instruction Committee agenda.

### **Triton Evening Education Contract**

It was the consensus of the majority of the Finance Committee members to recommend to the Board of Education that it approve the contract with Triton for the use of OPRFHS facilities for its evening school at the regular April Board of Education meeting on the consent agenda.

While it was suggested that a way to transfer dollars to the Village might be to require those attending evening school to park in the garage rather than allowing them free access to Pilgrim's lot, it was noted that OPRFHS has an agreement with the Village of Oak Park that specifically requires the District to pay Pilgrim \$50,000 per year. This might be a discussion point with the Village in the future, as the District was in the first year of a two-year contract with it.

### **Board of Education Discussion of Budget for Board Goals for FY 2010-11**

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee members that Ms. McCormack, Ms. Patchak-Layman, Ms. Witham, and Dr. Weninger meet to discuss the Board of

Education's budget. Ms. Patchak-Layman wanted monies set aside for the Board of Education's goals.

### **FY 2011 Revenue Projections**

Ms. Witham reported that the State of Illinois is having financial difficulty. The average interest rates on the District's long-term investments will decline, decreasing the revenue. Ms. Witham is working on the five-year plan. The District is still on expected to experience a deficit in FY 2014 and she will continue to update the Board of Education as more information is available.

### **Monthly Financial Reports**

The Board of Education will be asked to approve the February 2010 Financial Reports at the regular April Board of Education meeting.

### **Monthly Treasurers Report**

The Board of Education will be asked to approve the February 2010 Treasurer's Reports at the regular April Board of Education meeting.

### **Additional Items**

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the District was legally allowed to lend money to other governmental agencies, as it was reported that the second payment of taxes might not be received until November. Mr. Finnegan cautioned against this as any agreement documenting a transaction of this sort would be expensive to draft and the State wants to capture accounts with lots of money. Dr. Lee concurred with Mr. Finnegan. Ms. Patchak-Layman reported that District 97 had been part of a lending contract with West 40 as it had a shortfall. District 97 lent them the money in order to stay in operation. Mr. Allen suggested that Dr. Weninger ask the legal firm of Pugh Jones to preliminarily explore this idea.

### **Adjournment**

The Finance Committee adjourned 9:21 a.m.