

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

## **FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**

Tuesday, August 15, 2006

A Finance Committee meeting was held on Tuesday, August 15, 2006. Chair John P. Rigas called the meeting to order at 7:34 a.m. in the Board Room. Committee members present were: Jacques A. Conway, Barbara P. Fernandez, Valerie J. Fisher, Dr. Barry S. Greenwald, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Yasmin A. Ranney and John P. Rigas. Also present were Dr. Susan J. Bridge, Superintendent/Principal; Cheryl L. Witham, Chief Financial Officer; Jack Lanenga, Assistant Superintendent for Operations; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors included: Kay Foran, Director of Community Relations and Communications; Lori Cerceo, Supervisor of Finance; and Tim Keeley, Purchasing Coordinator.

### **Acceptance of the June Minutes**

Hearing no amendments to the June Finance Committee minutes, the Committee accepted them as presented.

### **Finance Committee Calendar**

Mr. Rigas presented the Committee with a list of proposed agenda items for future Committee meetings.

### **Construction Update**

Mr. Lanenga informed the Committee of the following about some of the construction projects throughout the school in written form:

1. Materials have been difficult to procure this year. The new windows were ordered in March, yet will not be delivered until August 18. Mr. Lanenga negotiated with the contractor to do the installation of the windows during after school hours and on Saturdays, working around the high school's schedule at no additional charge. Faculty and staff will be kept informed of any work that might impact their classroom or office. Installation should take approximately two weeks, provided the necessary overtime is made available.
2. As expected, receipt of several HVAC items was delayed. This will affect the area below the West Pool, the Little Theater and the installation of four of the six new boilers. However, this should have little or no effect on school operations.

Mr. Lanenga commented about how he watched in amazement the new boilers being successfully brought into the building through the windows. He had not thought that possible because the size of the boilers appeared so much larger than the windows.

Mr. Lanenga reported that the Field House would be striped during winter break, the rest of the construction was progressing well, and the Buildings and Grounds crew will soon be able to start its cleanup. Committee members who had any questions were asked to direct them to Mr. Lanenga at another time.

### **Skyward Update**

Mr. Lanenga reported that the summer focus regarding Skyward had been on parent access to electronic data. The current plan included rolling out access to parents of freshmen in September, adding access for parents of sophomores in February, and providing a computer kiosk in the Student Center for parents who do not have computer access at home. Parents will receive their user names and passwords in the mail. If they wish to share that information with their children, it will be their choice. Should a parent lose this information, he/she will be able to easily gain access to it by clicking on a hotlink. The procedure for changing a password will be very simple as well, i.e., clicking on "Change Password."

Parent/Teacher conferences will not be scheduled through Skyward. To do so would be more expensive than O.P.R.F.H.S.'s present system; it would be a difference of between \$10 versus \$4 per student. However, a discussion on how to best schedule these conferences occurs every year.

While Mr. Lanenga was not concerned about the parents' ability to navigate the computer, he was concerned about the small percentage of parents that do not have computer access. Mr. Rigas did not believe that there were many parents without computer access. He was concerned, however, about parents knowing that this accessibility is available to them. Mr. Lanenga informed the committee that the school has the capacity to track which parents are and are not accessing the system.

Mr. Lanenga informed the Committee that there was a problem in sending out emails to people and organizations with Comcast email addresses. A similar problem had once occurred with AOL email addresses. While the high school staff continues to work on this issue, it is not a problem that the high school can correct; it is a Comcast issue. He did apologize for the inconvenience, however.

Ms. Fisher asked if a stronger filter could be used to filter the Spam emails touting stock picks and drugs, as there was a preponderance of them lately.

## **Treasurer's Update**

Ms. Witham noted that no progress with the Township Treasurer's Office had been made on the reconciliation of the bank statements since July 2005. She noted Tim Cole, the auditor, is aware of this situation, just as Mr. Sullivan is aware. Ms. Witham has spoken with District 97's new business manager about this situation and he agreed to discuss this further after becoming more instilled in his job.

Ms. Witham noted that the referendum question for dissolution of this entity would not be on ballot this fall. In addition, trustees now have limited fiduciary responsibility because of the enactment of recent law. Mr. Rigas felt that if the trustees were breaching their daily requirements, they could be held personally liable for that.

Ms. Ranney asked for acknowledgment that the Board of Education's response letter to the allegations made by Mr. Burman in his letter of resignation had been received by those persons copied on the letter.

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee members that Dr. Greenwald would contact Mr. Sullivan in an effort to get more clarification. Mr. Rigas reminded the Committee that Mr. Sullivan was a friend to the school and should be treated as such.

## **Superintendent's Search**

The Finance Committee members received five full proposals to the high school's RFP for a search firm (attached to and made a part of the minutes of this meeting). The proposals presented were from: Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates, BWP (formerly the Bickert Group), Proact Search, Ray & Associates, and School ExeConnect. Discussion ensued about the cost of the search and what that cost covered, i.e., advertising, travel, etc.

Ms. Fisher informed the Committee members of the process used when a search firm was sought for the hiring of Dr. Bridge; the Board of Education interviewed four firms in one evening. Each firm received one-half hour to make its presentation and to answer questions.

Committee members weighed in on the firms that they wanted to interview. They discussed the differences and similarities of the proposals, i.e., the number of references, experience and success both locally and nationally, location of the firm's headquarters, familiarity of the Oak Park and River Forest communities, employment guarantees, etc.

Dr. Millard suggested discussing the idea of having a community person with a committee to lead the search. Committee members expressed some hesitation to this idea. Ms. Fisher added that before the last hiring of the search firm, she spoke to Bernie Abraham, a former trustee of the school and the Village, as he had been a strong proponent of entities conducting their own searches. When the discussion was brought back to the Board, it decided that the disadvantages of conducting its own search

outweighed the advantages. Board members would end up having to do things in which they should not be involved. Mr. Rigas affirmed from his own expertise in his own firm, that the search firm does a lot of weeding out of applications, having telephone conversations, etc. This takes a tremendous amount of time. A volunteer would not have the time to do this as most people in the community have a real job and/or are not the experts at doing searches. Ms. Fisher continued that Mr. Abraham also had not been able to find any community volunteers who would take on the job of the search firm at a reduced charge. He had suggested the Board of Education sift through every resume that was submitted because the search team might miss a “diamond in the rough.” Dr. Millard reported that New Trier had that complaint about Hazard Young; its Board of Education had not seen all of the applications that were submitted and the person that was ultimately hired as the Superintendent was one of the applicants that had not originally been submitted to it by the search team.

Ms. Fernandez was impressed with the thoroughness and the expertise of all who contributed to this process.

Dr. Greenwald shared his own experience of chairing searches and noted that it was a humbling task. Originally, he felt very qualified to do a search, but had to admit to “messing up” at times. He, too, acknowledged that searches absorb quantum amounts of time. He strongly favored turning the search over to professionals.

Ms. Foran offered that the Board of Education could set up parameters for the search, saying that it wanted to see every resume submitted. The Board of Education has much flexibility. Mr. Edgecombe affirmed that the Board of Education should 1) indicate a desire to see all applications; 2) set the parameters of its expectations early; and 3) require that all persons being assigned to the interview team must be present when making a presentation to the Board of Education.

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee members to offer interviews to the following search firms: Hazard Young, Attea & Associates, Ray & Associates, BWP (formerly the Bickert Group); and School Exec Connect. It was the consensus of the Committee members that they would not pay for travel expenses in connection with this first interview.

Committee members were asked to bring their calendars to the next meeting in order to schedule a Special Board Meeting to interview these firms. The Committee members were explicit that whoever was anticipated to be working with the high school should be at the interview. Ms. Kalmerton will relay this information.

Dr. Millard informed the Committee members that she would be out of town from September 8 to September 18.

## **Peters and Associates: Computer Network Upgrade**

The Finance Committee members were reminded that Plante Moran had conducted a major audit survey of the high school's network. Its number one recommendation to the high school was to move from the combined Novell/Microsoft platform to a Microsoft only environment in order to save money and increase efficiency, a procedure that many other high schools had followed. The Committee members were reminded that for approximately nine years only nominal funds had been spent on the high school's network. Staff members were impressed with Peters & Associates evaluation of the network, its proposal, and its expertise. The administration recommended moving forward with this proposal. Mr. Rigas added that Peters & Associates is an established and well-respected firm in the Chicago area.

Mr. Rigas suggested the following amendments to the contract:

- 1) Regular licensing instead of Microsoft licensing;
- 2) No purchase of the Share Point portal, as it is very complex and probably would not be utilized by many in the building. He suggested that this feature could be added in the future.
- 3) Renegotiate the cost of services.

Discussion ensued about the training of school personnel. Mr. Lanenga reported that Christine Daggett, Ron Anderson, and Earl Austria would be in charge of training. Much of the training will be focused on Microsoft Outlook. Groups will be piloted and training sessions will be scheduled for January. Most of the change would be seamless and the majority of training would cover troubleshooting in the back office. Users' desktop changes will include new email and calendar Outlook, which will be more robust and tightly integrated with each other.

Discussion ensued about the physical logistics of this shift. Mr. Lanenga reported that no additional power would be necessary. An upgrade of the cooling system of the servers and routers in the IT area had been completed during the summer. Mr. Lanenga informed Ms. Fernandez that while the school would lose computers if the power went down, there are generators that would help servers to power down properly.

Mr. Lanenga clarified for Ms. Fernandez that this would have no tie-in with Skyward and announced that there has been no down time since January.

Mr. Rigas suggested replacing old computers with Laptops. Committee members learned that some O.P.R.F.H.S. employees have access to the network's virtual private network (VPN). All teachers at Hinsdale High Schools use Tablets. They believe to be the single most powerful staff development tool they have, because it allows them to use technology differently. All Elmwood Park High School teachers have notebooks. If notebooks were provided to teachers at O.P.R.F.H.S., instead of asking teachers for a deposit, Mr. Lanenga suggested providing "LoJack" tracking system for computers at a cost of approximately \$100 per notebook.

It was the consensus of the committee members to recommend to the Board of Education that it approve the contract with Peters & Associates pending the modifications suggested by Mr. Rigas at its regular meeting in August.

### **Triton Contract**

Ms. Witham reported that the Board of Education would be asked to approve the agreement between Triton College and the high school for Triton's evening school at its regular August Board of Education meeting. Triton will pay O.P.R.F.H.S. \$19,500 for the use of its facility. When asked why Triton had to pay for parking at Pilgrim, Ms. Witham responded that the Village of Oak Park owns the garage and the high school's agreement with the Village is that only staff can use the garage twenty-four hours per day at no charge.

Discussion ensued regarding the classes being offered, including sports-type classes. It was noted that the Park District was interested in providing yoga, basketball, etc., and Mr. Lanenga concurred.

Ms. Fisher asked whether there were any other substantive changes to the contract language from the previous contract and whether an evening school director had been hired. Mr. Lanenga reported that a new director had not been hired yet. Ms. Witham reported that there was a change in the contract that allowed an enhancement of the indemnification on both sides. Dr. Greenwald asked whether the funds Triton paid to the high school was at a breakeven amount. Ms. Witham responded negatively, because the revenue did not cover wear and tear on the building, water, electrical, etc.

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee members to recommend that the Board of Education approve this contract with Triton College under its Consent Agenda at its regular August Board of Education meeting.

### **District 97 – Food Services**

Ms. Witham presented the Finance Committee with a draft agreement between District 200 and District 97 allowing District 200 to provide two District 97 schools with breakfast and lunch. District 200 will charge \$.80 for breakfast and \$1.40 for lunch. The major benefit for District 200 to do this will be an economy of scale, which will lower costs to all families. While Food Service revenue will increase by approximately \$60,000, net profit will only increase about \$5,000. One part-time person was added to the staff to assist with this increased responsibility. District 97's Board of Education had taken affirmative action on this agreement. It was the consensus of the Finance Committee members to recommend that the Board of Education approve this agreement at its regularly scheduled August Board of Education meeting.

Ms. Witham clarified for Ms. Ranney that food deliveries are received daily and there would be no concern for food going stale, etc. Ms. Witham responded to Ms. Fernandez that she would explore how Ms. Piekarski planned to physically handle the extra work.

### **Tentative Budget**

Ms. Witham provided the Committee members with a copy of the Tentative Budget. She reported that it would be placed on display for thirty (30) days and that the Board of Education would approve the Budget at its regular Board of Education meeting in September. The budget now included the DVR Grants, \$28,000 for garbage removal, \$98,000 for the superintendent and principal searches, as well as additional funds for 1) a celebration of the building's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, 2) a retirement party for Dr. Bridge, and 3) an upgrade of the computer network.

Dr. Greenwald told David Pope, president of the Village of Oak Park, that the Board of Education had been surprised at the cost of the garbage pickup and had asked Mr. Pope to defer the cost for at least one year. He asked Mr. Pope to speak with Ms. Witham about this, because Dr. Greenwald was not sure these funds were factored into the high school's budget. He also noted that the school's and the Village's fiscal years were not in sync. Ms. Witham noted that she had not spoken to Mr. Pope at this point. The high school has decided to lease garbage compactors at a cost of \$100 per month per compactor.

Ms. Witham continued by asking the Board of Education to carefully read the executive summary in the front of the Budget document. The summary contains a global review of the Budget and a breakdown of the separate funds. One of the most significant budget items is the \$1.5 million dollars for the initiatives. Ms. Witham reviewed the expenditures in the Education Fund, the Operations and Maintenance Fund, the Restricted Building Fund, the Life Safety Fund, the Transportation Fund, and the IMRF Fund. One concern she had was the increase in Special Education costs, a cost that cannot be controlled by the District. The chart on page 9 of the Tentative Budget depicted that Special Education costs had risen from \$6 million to \$10 million since 2002. Also contained in the Budget was an explanation of changes in legislation that will affect the high school, i.e. TRS, limitation rate, statutory rate, etc. A further conversation will occur in the fall about the use of a statutory rate, as it relates to the Life Safety and the Operations and Maintenance Funds.

Ms. Witham informed Ms. Fernandez that the utilities, which had been paid from the Education Fund, would be paid out of the O&M Fund beginning in FY 2009. Any future rebate from the Village of Oak Park would be paid back to the Education Fund.

Ms. Witham noted that the Tentative Budget does not have all of the detail provided in the past per Mr. Rigas' request, but that the details were available. Ms. Ranney noted that she would make an appointment to discuss this with Ms. Witham.

### **Monthly Financials**

It was the consensus of the Committee to approve the monthly financials at its regularly scheduled business meeting in August. No other discussion ensued.

### **Adjournment**

The Finance Committee adjourned at 9:12 a.m.