

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

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, February 13, 2007

A Finance Committee meeting was held on Tuesday, February 13, 2007. Chair John P. Rigas called the meeting to order at 7:41 a.m. in the Board Room. Committee members present were: Jacques A. Conway, Valerie J. Fisher (arrived at 8:15 a.m.), Dr. Barry S. Greenwald, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Yasmin A. Ranney, and John P. Rigas. Also present were: Susan J. Bridge, Superintendent/ Principal; Cheryl L. Witham, Chief Financial Officer; Jack Lanenga, Assistant Superintendent for Operations; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors included: Kay Foran, Director of Community Relations and Communications; James Paul Hunter, F.S.E.C. Chair; Pam Van Natter, Director of O.P.R.F.H.S.'s Childcare Center; Erica Cohen, Supervisor of Finance; Tim Keeley, Accounts Payable Clerk, John Steltzer, Assistant Athletic Director, Fred Galluzzo, Dean Counselor; and Joe Kostal, Faculty Member.

Acceptance of the January Finance Committee Minutes

The Finance Committee members accepted the minutes of the January Finance Committee with the following enhancement:

Page 6, Para 3., Line 9: Add a new sentence to the end: "An objection was made to the rehiring of the former Township Treasurer at that meeting."

Childcare

Pam Van Natter spoke about her background, her reasons for pursuing an early childhood education career, and her own philosophy as to how to stimulate children. She possesses a Masters Degree from Concordia University and a teaching certificate. She has instituted a play-based curriculum with materials from the Creative Curriculum model. She spoke about her semi-project approach with the preschoolers. The current project is called "Monday at the Movies." It began by taking a field trip to the Lake Theatre for a backstage tour. Now once a week, the preschoolers print their own movie tickets, pop their own popcorn, and sell movie tickets to the "toddlers" for the showing of their own movie. This project provides many activity centers. Ms. Van Natter tries to present the toddlers with different environments, i.e., correctly sized toys, blocks, manipulatives and art projects. Ms. Van Natter has the philosophy that infants cry for a reason and, thus, the staff is very attentive to them. The biggest change this year has been working with the parents and gaining their trust. The childcare staff wants parents to come into the center to witness how their children are being cared for in that environment.

Ms. Van Natter is also working with the child development classes, which have been charged with reviewing and redesigning the center.

Ms. Van Natter is observing how and what the children are learning and their interaction. Another area of the school she has tied into is with John Condne's students who are making a CD of the children playing and learning. This will be presented to the parents. She has also made a grant application to Wal-Mart for the building of a reading loft.

Presently, there are eight infants, six toddlers, and nine preschoolers. That includes three TAPP children, one Dominican teacher's child, and one DePaul teacher's child. A waiting list of parents who want their children enrolled in the program exists.

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee members to recommend that the Board of Education approve the childcare fees for the 2007-08 school year at its regular March Board of Education meeting, as follows:

Infant and Toddler \$235 per week

Preschool \$200 per week

Food Services

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee members to recommend that the Board of Education approve the recommendations presented by the Northern Illinois Independent Purchasing Cooperative to roll over the Request for Proposals (attached to and made a part of the minutes of this meeting) from the 2006-07 school year to the 2007-08 school year at its regular March Board of Education meeting.

Ms. Ranney was informed that because the high school cooks its own food, there would be no additional electrical or gas usage providing food to District 97. However, Ms. Witham noted that 11 cents had been added to the cost of each meal for equipment replacement

Student Fees

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee members to recommend that the Board of Education approve the Student Fees for the 2007-08 School Year as follows: Freshman \$85; Sophomore \$220; Junior \$75; Senior \$90; and Pay to Play \$50; at its regular March Board of Education meeting.

In reviewing the student fees, the areas for suggested increases included technology and setting up an additional computer lab. Because there is a definite need for more coaches in athletic area and the Five Year Plan does not include additional stipends for athletics, increasing the Pay-to-Play fee would be a way to fill this need.

As an example of how other schools charge, Ms. Ranney noted that Wheaton imposes a fee for a course change. She felt O.P.R.F.H.S. might be too flexible in that area. She was

also informed that the students who do not take the high school's Drivers' Education Course are returned this portion of their fees.

Dr. Greenwald questioned whether there would be a hardship if the fees were not raised next year. Ms. Witham responded that there was no doubt about the need for another computer lab or the coaches. If there was concern about the high school being criticized for raising this fee, these items could be deferred a year. Dr. Bridge stated that the school has held lean on the coaching levels. Dr. Greenwald suggested finding the money in another area. Mr. Rigas explained that this fee is a pay-to-play fee—a user tax. To take this money from other funds would then be a general tax on everyone. Dr. Greenwald was concerned about the high school's image. Mr. Rigas did not believe the parents who have students at the high school would fee this fee was an infringement upon the high school. Taxpayers would rather see the people using the high school pay the fee. If they did not, then \$40,000 would have to be taken away from academics. Mr. Rigas continued that the school's budget is zero-based. Every dollar is justified. To take \$40,000 from another area would be saying that \$40,000 was not well spent. Mr. Rigas noted that the Board of Education had rejected hiring new coaches for years because it did not want to take funds from somewhere else. Mr. Rigas supported an increase in the Pay-to-Play fee.

Dr. Millard asked why soccer coaches cost more than field hockey coaches did. She learned that there were three levels of soccer—level A, Level B, and Level C. Mr. Rigas explained that the stipends were negotiated in the teachers' contract and the amount of stipend was calculated on the basis of how much effort was involved, the number of participants, the length of season, the number of student contacts, etc.

Ms. Fisher supported the continued expansion of the athletic program in terms of what students need. She was happy that there was a demand for more teams and extensive levels of play. The high school cannot provide that activity without participation from the students. For years, the Boosters paid for some levels of coaching. That was not a good system. They now just want to fundraise for physical items and it does not make sense for an employer to accept funding for salaries. It is a necessity and naturally, no one likes to pay fees. Mr. Rigas commented that the fee to play in the Oak Park Pony League is \$120 and it uses volunteer coaches. Thus, it costs three times as much to play Little League as it does to participate in O.P.R.F.H.S. athletics. Ms. Ranney remembered that positions were added last year to meet the demand. The increase of \$5 would allow 1,700 more participants. Dr. Greenwald stated that for some students, athletic involvement is the place where they shine and grow in their self-esteem. For others, it is through self-expression, growth, and development. He was not opposed to expanding the program, but he did not want it looking as if the school were taking more. Dr. Millard felt that \$40,000 to affect the lives of even three or four students would be money well spent, as there is documentation that students entrenched in athletic activities do better academically.

Fall 2007 Athletic Team Uniforms

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee members to recommend that the Board of Education award the bid proposals for Field Hockey shirts, Girls' Cross Country Uniforms and Boys' Golf Wind Shirts to Salkeld Sports and the bid proposal for Field Hockey Warm-ups and Boys' Cross Country Warm-ups to Boathouse Sports at its regular March Board of Education meeting.

It was noted that the current Pay-to-Play fee is \$40. This covers the cost of the uniforms being inventoried, cleaned, etc. If a student does not return the uniform, he/she is obligated to pay for its replacement. Students who qualify for the Free Lunch Program get a waiver. Students who qualify for the Reduced Lunch Program do not get a waiver.

Ms. Fisher was informed that these uniforms would be purchased from vendors who sell sweatshop-free made materials.

Construction Update

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee members to recommend that the Board of Education approve an \$80,000 contract with Wight & Company to do the Ten-Year Life Safety Inspection, at its regular March Board of Education meeting.

This inspection will include the building and infrastructure, building conditions, and educational adequacy, as well as a decennial inspection.

Mr. Lanenga reported that O.P.R.F.H.S. is required by The Illinois School Board of Education (I.S.B.E.) to do a ten-year life safety inspection. This inspection is to be performed by a licensed architect, who is to look for areas of the school that might violate current I.S.B.E. standards. The last Decennial Health/Life Safety survey occurred in 1996. That survey led to the 10-year master facilities plan presented in 1998. Mr. Lanenga proposed conducting a similar extension of the Decennial survey this year by using the survey as a springboard for a five-year plan. He included a proposal from Wight that would accomplish the following:

1. The required Decennial survey
2. A study of the existing infrastructure and recommendations for repair, upgrades and replacement;
3. A study of building conditions and recommendations for repair, upgrade or replacement; and
4. An inclusive study of utility of the current structure and recommendations for changes that would support effective teaching and learning.

Researching the cost of a Decennial project, he found that the going rate was between \$.12-\$.15 per square foot and more. The fixed cost Wight proposed was \$80,000 and included the four components noted above. This would be significantly below the \$120,000 anticipated for the Decennial study alone.

Mr. Lanenga had continued his discussions with Wight about the personnel assigned to the project. He felt it was very important that the architects, engineers, construction managers and principals most familiar with the building be involved in this project. He was assured that would be the case and that O.P.R.F.H.S. would have the final approval on those assigned to the project. Funds for this project will be available July 1, 2007 from Life Safety accounts. Wight has agreed to do the study in April and May with payment in fiscal 2008.

Stadium Lights

Mr. Lanenga reported that he had met with the people from the Village and found that half of the Stadium Field is zoned R7 (multifamily) and the other half R2 (residential), which limits how tall the towers can be without permission from the village. One third of the football field is in the Historic District; it is not the Stadium building, just the grass.

He explained that the high school had two options:

- 1) Get a variance. The process would include presenting a request to the Zoning Board of Appeals, not the Village Board. This would allow options. However, it would be better to get a zoning ordinance. If the high school wanted to put up 45' lights, it could be considered a hardship and it could go to Zoning Board.
- 2) Petition to change the ordinance to allow lights on the Stadium on Lake Street, allowing for a certain height. This was how the installation of lights was handled on the South Field—a text amendment was made and a special use permit was issued. This is a more time consuming process.

The timeline would be for the Plan Commission to make a decision in early May and in early June, the application would go to the Village Board for approval. The Board of Education would need to hire an attorney to write the text amendments and ordinance changes. A title company would be hired and legal notices sent to anyone within 250 feet. Mailing labels would be provided to the title company for anyone within 500 feet of the property.

The process would include one meeting and a hearing. Then the Plan Commission would present it to the Village Board at one of its monthly meetings. Additional costs to the high school have not yet been determined. Dr. Millard asked if the Boosters would be willing to cover the cost of the attorney or the title company. Mr. Lanenga was unsure.

Mr. Lanenga explained that the difference between the variance and a complete change was the issue; if the high school could put lights up that worked, i.e., 45 feet high that would work. However, that cannot be done because the north side of the field is zoned residential and that is not allowed.

Mr. Rigas suggested asking the Village of Oak Park to properly zone the high school's property, as the Village is presently going through a zoning clean up. He expressed a concern about the land on which the parking garage sits. Ridgeland Commons is zoned

R2—residential-single family. Ms. Witham suggested an attorney to contact regarding zoning changes. Mr. Lanenga explained that it would be the Village President's prerogative as to which government body the request for lights would be presented.

Rev Track – On-line Payments

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee members to recommend that the Board of Education approve the REV Track contract for on-line payment of Bookstore, Food Service, Registration Fees, Pay-to-Play Fees, Summer School Registration, Retiree Health Insurance Premium Collection, Childcare Fees, Event Tickets, Yearbooks, and Facility Rentals fees at its regular March Board of Education meeting.

Ms. Witham felt the fee for this service would be well spent, as it would save time and allow more internal control of cash and checks throughout the building. There would be no dollar limit on what a family could pay with this avenue. Booster Club membership fees and reimbursements could also be paid this way.

Ms. Witham continued that this system would allow O.P.R.F.H.S. to charge late fees. This is something that could be discussed later. Mr. Rigas suspected charging late fees would be more of an administrative nightmare than the fees it would generate. Ms. Witham continued that when parents sign a deferral agreement and pay using their credit cards, the high school could charge them monthly. Dr. Millard asked what percentage of students does not pay on time. Ms. Witham responded that the number is growing. The present philosophy is to allow parents to defer their payments so that the students can start their classes. Bookstore revenue is down as well. Solutions are being explored. Presently about 30 percent of the students are on deferral resulting in approximately \$200,000 of deferrals. While it is a growing concern, it has helped get students into class the first day of school, which is in alignment with initiatives. Often when one problem is solved, another arises. The credit card approach would allow the high school to make monthly charges. When the deferral turns into a default, the onus is on the high school to collect. Ms. Ranney commented that education is a business and it has to collect that money.

Dr. Millard asked if there were leverage to include payment. Ms. Witham responded that the high school could withhold student schedules. As parents register for the next year, an attempt is made to collect last year's balance as well as the charges for the new school year. Dr. Bridge noted that the high school chose this problem instead of having so many students lives disrupted because they were not in school. So many students started out behind because they were not in class and did not have their books.

Update on Township Treasurer's office.

Ms. Witham noted that three additional bank accounts had been uncovered in the Township Treasurers' Office.

John C. Swanson Scholar Foundation

In the written material, Ms. Witham provided background information regarding the John C. Swanson Scholar Foundation (attached to and made a part of the minutes of this meeting). Ms. Witham explained that the John C. Swanson Scholar Foundation was outside of the O.P.R.F.H.S. Scholarship Foundation. By December 31, 2003, the balance in the fund had been eroded from the original amount endowed of \$100,000 to a balance of \$80,052.66. At that time, the Trustees decided to suspend awards until the fund could be restored. After looking at the documentation, enlisting Ms. Peterson's help, implementing new bylaws, and talking with Dr. Swanson, the high school desired to resurrect the Scholarship. It is held by the Community Foundation and will continue to be held by it. Dr. Swanson felt there were opportunities for summer enrichment and teacher enrichment programs, so this money will provide teachers additional enrichment opportunities, as well as funds to bring in guest artists or lecturers, etc. to the high school.

Mr. Rigas was informed that the John C. Swanson Scholar Foundation had been established by the Board of Education in the 1980's and had been turned over to the Community Foundation.

Ms. Fisher thanked Ms. Witham, Dr. Bridge, and Ms. Peterson for reestablishing this foundation as a source of professional development for faculty and she looked forward to those opportunities for that work. The last award was given in 2003.

Monthly Financial Statements

Mr. Rigas acknowledged the financial statements that were included in the packet and advised any Committee members with comments to speak with Ms. Witham directly.

Adjournment

The Finance Committee adjourned at 8:55 a.m.