

June 13, 2007

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Wednesday, June 13, 2007, in the Board Room of the high school.

Call to Order

President Conway called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. A roll call vote indicated the following members were present: John C. Allen, IV, Jacques A. Conway, Valerie J. Fisher, Dr. Dietra D. Millard (departed at 7:52 p.m.), Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Sharon Patchak-Layman and John P. Rigas. Also present were Dr. Attila J. Weninger, Superintendent-elect, Jason Edgecombe, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Cheryl L. Witham, Chief Financial Officer; Jack Lanenga, Assistant Superintendent for Operations; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Amy Hill, Director of Instruction; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board of Education.

Visitors

Kay Foran, Director of Community Relations and Communications; Monica Swope, Colleen Biggins, Dr. Carl Spight, O.P.R.F.H.S. faculty members; Barbara Nelson, Terry Burke, Burcy Hines, Wyanetta Johnson, and other community members, Kathy Fitzgerald; Terry Dean of the *Wednesday Journal* and Bridgette Kennedy of the *Oak Leaves*.

Visitor Comments

Burcy Hines, resident of Oak Park, addressed the Board of Education

Ms. Hines hoped that the Board of Education was involved in the search for the principal. She hoped everyone would work together collectively.

**Approval of
Check
Distributions
Dated June 13,
2007**

Mr. Rigas moved to approve the check distributions dated June 13, 2007 (attached to and made a part of the minutes of this meeting); seconded by Ms. Fisher. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Ms. Patchak-Layman was informed that the vendor Bream was a special education school. She also learned that if a student taking the in-house test prep program had a 90 percent attendance rate, the student would receive a refund of his/her course fee.

**Approval of
Personnel
Recommendations**

Mr. Rigas moved to approve the personnel recommendations, as presented (attached to and made a part of the minutes of this meeting); seconded by Ms. Fisher. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Ms. Patchak-Layman learned that those teachers who had a teaching load of 50 percent or more were required to have a supervisory assignment.

Transition Update Dr. Weninger stated that he would make some general overall comments about the transition process and wanted to discuss some personnel items in closed session. Ms. Patchak-Layman challenged him about having any discussion in closed session because she had not received any information about personnel performance.

Dr. Weninger stated that he was directed by the Board of Education to hire a new principal and to develop an organizational chart, as well as to meet the needs of the District as he saw them moving forward. He discussed with B.A.T. an organizational chart. The preliminary draft, which he would present in closed session, had position titles attached to it that were easily recognizable. While a draft, he wanted flexibility to discuss it in detail with the Board of Education. Ms. Patchak-Layman reiterated that if the discussion were about job descriptions, and not about performance evaluations, it was not a discussion for closed session. Dr. Weninger responded that job descriptions for the new positions had not been written. Regarding performance evaluations, he did not have that type of access yet. He also felt it inappropriate for, and he was unaccustomed to, the Board of Education reviewing the administrators' performance evaluations, other than that of the superintendent. It would be the responsibility of Mr. Prale to evaluate the positions of Division Head. Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that one of the Board of Education's goals was for the new superintendent to determine a structure for 2007-08; that recommendation would be discussed in open session. Dr. Weninger asked her if she would talk in open session about the elimination of positions. She responded that one of the District Goals for 2006-07 was to initiate the search process and to determine the administrative structure. Dr. Weninger reiterated that the Board of Education had delegated that job to him.

Ms. Fisher noted that the administration would make a recommendation and the Board of Education would approve it. The discussion of the new structure involves specific individuals and it would be inappropriate to discuss that publicly.

Apologizing, Dr. Weninger stated that he was trying to do two jobs at once, as he still worked at Lyons Township, and to do both jobs in a timely way. It is unfortunate that Ms. Patchak-Layman had not receive the information that she wanted but he asked that the

Board of Education consider the short time available and to talk about the organizational structure relative to personnel in closed session.

Principal Search Update

The Board of Education was presented with a proposed job description of the principal, as well as a principal search timeline (attached to and made a part of the minutes of this meeting).

Mr. Conway thanked Dr. Weninger for all of the time he was giving to O.P.R.F.H.S., even before the start of his contract.

The search involved three phases. The first phase included:

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| June 5 | A committee of various stakeholders met to develop credentials, qualifications, and attributes of a principal.
This committee began to develop its own rubric for evaluating candidates for the interview after reviewing those of other schools. |
| June 21 and 22 | Candidate interviews |
| June 22 | Select three final candidates |

The second phase included:

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| June 25 | Briefing of three committees: students, faculty, staff, and parents |
| June 26 | Finalists Interviews – Round Robin Format. |
| June 26 | Debriefing on Finalists |
| June 26 | District Leadership Team interviews
Finalists |
| June 26 | District Leadership Team debriefs and makes final selection |

The third phase included:

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| June 28 | Recommendation for approval of principal to Board of Education. |
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Dr. Weninger stated that the wide net cast to find a principal included the following:

- Posting on O.P.R.F.H.S.'s website.
- Direct emails sent by both Dr. Weninger and Mr. Edgcombe to human relations groups through out the state
- Posting on A.A.S.A.'s website

- Advertisement in *Education Week*
- Personal conversations with the potential candidates
- Enlistment of close colleagues situated at search firms

Twenty-two candidates have now applied, including candidates of diversity. The deadline date for submitting an application is Friday, June 15. Mr. Edgecombe and Dr. Weninger will review the applications; they hoped to interview nine candidates.

Dr. Weninger pointed out that the job description of the principal had changed from the original draft the Board of Education members had seen. Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that the committee that met on June 5 felt strongly that the principal should evaluate the division heads. Dr. Weninger disagreed with that assessment. Ms. Hill, a member of that committee, concurred with Dr. Weninger. While Ms. Patchak-Layman felt that evaluating division heads was part of the culturally defined responsibility of a principal, Dr. Weninger assured her that after working in his fourth comprehensive high school in the Chicago area there was no culturally defined responsibility for the principal position. It varied depending on the situation, the context of the school, and to a large degree on the history of the school.

Dr. Millard noted that the principal was responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school and staff, i.e., making sure that the operational programs were proceeding as planned. At most schools someone other than the principal is responsible for classroom instruction. Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that the principal should be the supervisor of that responsibility. Dr. Millard noted that administrative structures at high schools are quite different from that of elementary schools. One can see that the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction is not in charge of student activities.

Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that she wanted a student-centered structure. She did not envision the principal sitting down with the curriculum and instruction person or the student activities person. Mr. Conway stated that the top three positions at the high school carry more than a full load. He did not believe the principal would be devoid of having any responsibility in those areas. When the discussion first started about the split, part of that discussion was about not overloading the principal. The principal would not be completely out of the picture in these areas. Dr. Weninger noted that it was important to recognize that no one operated in isolation; the principal would be deeply involved and would lead his/her own leadership team, sit on Instructional Council, and have a very

strong hand in the direction of instruction and curriculum, as well as what happens in classrooms. It was Dr. Weninger's intention to be involved in the evaluation of teachers.

When asked if candidates had the job description, Dr. Weninger stated that it had been posted, albeit the posting was not a complete document because the organizational structure was still being developed. Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that if the principal were not to be involved in the evaluation of division heads, some potential candidates might not be interested in the position. Dr. Weninger disagreed with that assessment after having had conversations with sitting principals as well as candidates.

Ms. Patchak-Layman did not see this structure working for all students. She felt there was a direct relationship between that evaluation of the division heads and what the principal brought to the table. The principal is asked to be involved in discipline hearings and Special Education hearings, etc.

Further discussion continued regarding the three phases.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked when the Board of Education would meet the candidates. She thought Dr. Weninger would want the Board of Education's perspective on the candidates, as the Board of Education has an overarching goal/view of the committees and might have insight as to how the person in the position would respond to a particular set of members. Dr. Weninger understood that concern, but he was comfortable with the process as outlined. One of Dr. Weninger's direct reports would be the principal and he will have to work with that individual. That individual must fit with him and the needs of the school. It is not a matter of not wanting Board of Education input. Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that previously the District 97 board was able to meet and was able to develop a relationship with that person as well. That is a piece of information that none of the other groups would have knowledge. She felt it important. She knew that other Board of Education members had not done that in the past and she felt that was an omission. The new Board of Education members have not talked with Dr. Weninger about his direction and they wanted more information. They have different ideas not reflected in this process. They are now sitting on the Board of Education and they wanted an opportunity to bring their thoughts forward. The principal is a key point in this school.

Dr. Millard suggesting submitting a list the concerns to Dr. Weninger or the committee chairs. She encouraged all Board of

Education members to do this. Ms. Patchak-Layman reiterated her desire to meet the candidates. Dr. Millard asked if she had been involved in hiring the District 97 administrators. Ms. Patchak-Layman's response was yes and that it had been valuable to the superintendent and to the other Board of Education members. The Board of Education needs to interact with the whole cadre of administration at the school. Dr. Millard stated that the Board of Education's job is to hire the superintendent and to trust that person so that he/she feels empowered to choose the people with whom he/she feels comfortable. The Board of Education has said it wanted Dr. Weninger to make the ultimate choice. Unless the Board of Education found something extraordinary out of line, it would not oppose the selection. The rules of the Board of Education include only hiring and firing one person—the superintendent. Mr. Conway fully trusted the community groups' and administrators' input. He felt no need to interview the candidates. Dr. Weninger offered Ms. Patchak-Layman an opportunity to audit those committees and he would gladly receive her questions.

Dr. Lee reported that this was a different subject to him and it had to do more with public or community relations than the principal's job itself. He just learned where the responsibility lies for the academic program. While understanding that the superintendent had the ultimate responsibility for the academic curriculum, it really lies with the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction. He was comfortable with that, but he was uncomfortable not knowing that and he was uncomfortable finding that out at the table. People tend to think the principal is responsible for curriculum and instruction. He was concerned about getting more information out to the lay people about the superintendent's responsibilities. People would be surprised to learn that the job of the principal is actually the number three job in the school, not number two. He would assign the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction the number two job, based on his values. He believed many in Oak Park shared his values. He was comfortable with what he heard.

Mr. Rigas stated that the community members on the Superintendent/Principal Committee, chaired by Richard Deptuch, helped to evaluate whether the high school should continue with the role of superintendent/principal or separate it. Ms. Fisher offered to meet with any of the new Board of Education members regarding it at another time. She, a member of the Board of Education that hired Dr. Bridge, had seen the process from every stage since the GMOS Committee. The purpose for this meeting

was for the new Board of Education members to hear about the transition process. So rather than going back into the history, she suggested returning to the agenda at hand.

Dr. Millard stated that the Board of Education knew that the restructuring would require an orientation of the community so that the families understood, but this stage is not finished.

Dr. Weninger appreciated Dr. Lee's comments and noted that there were layers of transition. He continued that if a qualified candidate were not found, he had a Plan B and a Plan C. There were three points in the process in which he may abandon the search, depending upon the qualifications of the candidates. If the desired attributes, qualifications, and credentials were not found in the candidates, then the search will be stalled.

Board members were invited to observe the groups that would meet on June 26 from 8:00 to 11:00 a.m. In order to meet all of the candidates, the Board of Education members were instructed to stay in one group. Anyone interested in observing should inform Gail Kalmerton. Dr. Weninger suggested that Ms. Patchak-Layman sit with the student group because of her concern about the structure being student centered.

Transition Update

The discussion of transition resumed and Dr. Weninger stated that he planned to develop a District Leadership Team (DLT) with seven administrative positions that would then have administrators and other staff report to them. This structure would shift responsibilities. The principal will have four direct reports. This structure would allow for more effectiveness, accountability and the identification of the primary areas of responsibility. There will be recommendations for a different work year for some. The plan is to have an interim structure for one year and move to a new restructure in 2008-09.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked about the distinction between the title of director and assistant principal. Dr. Weninger responded that they were simply more familiar to him. Assistant superintendent is not a title used at Lyons Township. As the reorganization changes, the titles, roles and responsibilities will change. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked how he viewed assistant principals, because in the elementary and middle schools, they were responsible for students at their grade level. Dr. Weninger stated that assistant principals at Lyons Township High School are deans of discipline. At Lake Park, they have three different responsibilities. Responsibilities

vary widely by school, and O.P.R.F.H.S. will set its own definitions.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if Dr. Weninger had documentation showing the organizational structure proposed had an impact on the success of students and their academic achievement. There is much literature on how schools are organized and their outcomes. Was there a connection on how well students do based on a linear or a circular format? Mr. Prale responded that a significant amount of literature on achievement looks more at the qualities of administrative leadership, the background knowledge of curriculum, etc. not the structure per se. Dr. Weninger added that in addition to a person having a knowledgeable background, expertise, accessibility, and student management skills, a structure must be in place that holds individuals accountable. He was well aware that the Board of Education would hold him accountable to see that the structure works. In order for it to work, it must be efficient and accessible. People within the organization, i.e., parents, students, faculty and staff, must know who is responsible for what. Mr. Edgecombe agreed that structure was less of an issue than the quality of the individuals in the structure. If one looked at a study by *Newsweek* as to what were deemed the most successful schools in America, the one person identified as being critical to any school was the principal. While the role was not fully identified, it got to the point of leadership. Individuals are responsible for what goes on in schools no matter what the structure is. Mr. Prale stated that beyond that there were studies about the unit of principal and the breakdown of communication, etc. Mr. Conway wanted to call it being effective. While not preferring any particular title, he wanted effectiveness. He also did not want it to cost any more to the school district.

Closed Session

At 7:22 p.m. on Wednesday, June 13, Mr. Allen moved to enter closed for the purpose of discussing the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the District or legal counsel for the District, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee or against legal counsel for the District to determine its validity. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1), as amended by PA.93—57; seconded by Ms. Fisher. A roll call vote resulted in all six ayes. Ms. Patchak-Layman voted nay. Motion carried.

The Board of Education reconvened its open session at 8:30 p.m.

**Transition
Update**

Ms. Witham reported that the Board of Education would have to meet to approve a tentative budget for the 2007-08 school year because staffing issues regarding transition have not been completed. Ms. Patchak-Layman suggested having this meeting in the evening to allow the community the opportunity to attend. Being a parent, Mr. Rigas stated that he has more flexibility to meetings in the morning, because of his own parental responsibilities in the evenings. Parents and their students are involved in sports, music, etc., at night. He also noted that in six years, no one has come to view the budget. Ms. Fisher added that the Board of Education has found that many people attend meetings in the morning rather than in the evening. Mr. Conway stated that he too has had to miss activities in the evening because he had to sit at this table. However, throughout the academic year, he would be flexible. It was the consensus of the Board of Education members to schedule this meeting at 7:30 a.m. on Thursday, July 12, 2007 in the Board Room for the purpose of presenting a tentative budget.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked how the goals of the Board of Education were incorporated into the budget. Ms. Witham responded that the budget was basically built on the prior year's goals because the new goals have not been set. The final budget is not voted on until September. She stated that the biggest item was the initiatives and that there were detailed descriptions associated with them. They are evaluated mid-year and again at the end of the year.

Adjournment

Mr. Allen moved to adjourn the Special Board Meeting at 8:59 p.m. on Wednesday, June 13, 2007, seconded by Dr. Lee. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Jacques A. Conway
President

John P. Rigas
Secretary