

April 17, 2008

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Thursday, April 17, 2008, in the Board Room of the high school.

Call to Order

Vice President Millard called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. A roll call indicated the following members were present: Valerie J. Fisher, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Sharon Patchak-Layman, and John Rigas. Also, present were Dr. Attila J. Weninger, Superintendent; Don Vogel, Interim Principal, Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Jack Lanenga, Assistant Superintendent for Operations; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board of Education.

Visitors

Kay Foran, Communications/Community Relations Coordinator; Dick Chappell, Executive Director of the River Forest Community Center (RFCC), Karen Byczek and Lia Madonia Garcia of the RFCC Early Childhood Program; Linda Cada, Special Education Director; Neil Weisman, Bonnie Marks, Colleen Biggins, and Andrea Neuman, O.P.R.F.H.S. faculty members; James Paul Hunter, FSEC Chair; Bridgett Kennedy of the *Oak Leaves*; and Terry Dean of the *Wednesday Journal*.

Visitor Comments

Mr. Weisman, referring to the Childcare agenda item, stated that he hoped that parents would be informed about the students involved with caring for the children and that appropriate screening of the students was involved. He did not object to them gaining this experience.

Ms. Patchak-Layman reported that the staff had sent letters to the Board of Education members expressing their feelings about a situation at the school, as well as broader issues including support and collaboration of the District and policy issues. As the letters were addressed to the Board of Education as a sitting body, she wanted the letters entered into the public record. Mr. Hunter explained that the letters were communication between faculty and individual board members and they were not meant to be a dialogue or a public record; this type of communication happens frequently. He noted concern about every communication with a Board of Education becoming a matter of public record. To make the letters public would ruin the trust the faculty is trying to build with the Board members. Ms. Patchak-Layman responded that if a letter comes to her as an individual it is a different consideration than if it comes to the Board of Education. She found it very helpful to be able to read them, as it helped her form her thoughts

about the school; it was another piece of information that helps makes her decision. Mr. Hunter stated that nothing she stated needed to be part of the public record. Her answer to that was that when she has to respond to inquiries as to why she votes a particular way she could reference these letters. Mr. Hunter stated that they were not presented at the board table and he was concerned that she was using them as a means to an end.

Ms. Fisher added that she would not want to breach the trust the faculty conveyed to the Board of Education by communicating with it and she did not want to add these letters to the public record as they addressed a personnel issue in which the faculty was involved. Mr. Rigas stated that it was clearly a personnel issue and he did not understand how the letters, specifically identifying an individual within the building, could be made public. He did not understand Ms. Patchak-Layman's reasoning. Dr. Millard concurred that making the letters individually and collectively a matter of public record would have the strong potential for undermining the Board of Education's communication with the faculty. She also did not believe it was a good idea. The consensus of the majority of the Board of Education members present was not to make the letters a matter of public record, as they did not believe that was the intent and it was a matter of confidentiality. Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that she had received some of those communications outside of the packet the Board of Education had received and at least one person made the direct request that she did not reveal his/her name. Regarding issues of policy, Ms. Fisher noted that any Board of Education member was free to bring up any policy issues at the Policy Committee meeting for discussion. Dr. Millard noted that the Committee would use the information, but the source of the inquiry did not have to be revealed.

Mr. Hunter stated that there were serious liabilities concerning this personnel issue if it took the form in which Ms. Patchak-Layman asked. If she wanted to talk about the building issue, Mr. Hunter offered to do that one-on-one. The purpose of the letters was to express an opinion in the same way that it has been done for twenty-five (25) years. Dr. Millard encouraged Ms. Patchak-Layman to continue that dialogue.

Child Care Program Mr. Edgecombe reminded the Board of Education members of the discussion regarding the day care center in previous weeks. The resignation of the day care center director prompted the administration to think deeper about the center's future. Parents and staff were informed that the school intended to take a two-

prong approach, which included 1) explore going with an outside provider and 2) pursue applications for the day care center director.

Because of discussions regarding the off-campus CITE facilities with the RFCC, there was a natural segway to a conversation about the day care center. The RFCC is an established entity; it provides early childhood care services and programs and gives the institutional-ready expertise, already recognized by many in the community. The District believes this is an appropriate step to take and by having the childcare center operated by the RFCC, the District will be served better over the long run and enable the program to expand. The location would remain the same.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked which process came into play—RFQ or RFP? Is it an RFP because the District is “outsourcing” or an RFQ because the District is considering professional services? Did an RFQ go out on this? Mr. Edgecombe continued that this would be a complete arrangement, as the RFCC would operate the entire center. Any fees, etc. would be paid directly to RFCC. Going out for a RFP or RFQ is not required. There will be agreement on swapping spaces. There will be no expenditure on the District’s part.

Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that the District has a stake to make sure students have first priority and that the funding for those students comes from the District. Ms. Witham explained that the State of Illinois provides the funding for students. Mr. Edgecombe added that, as part of the agreement with RFCC, TAPP students would still receive first priority.

Mr. Edgecombe continued that while the District is providing the RFCC space inside its building to operate the day care program, RFCC is providing space in its building for O.P.R.F.H.S.’s CITE Program.

Recommendation For Social Workers Contractual Services Mr. Edgecombe presented the Board of Education with the following information regarding the administration’s request for additional contractual social workers.

“The District currently employs two social workers on a full-time basis and two social workers on a contractual basis through Family Services. The social workers employed by the District are used primarily to meet the needs of identified students in Special Education. On average during the school year, each employed social worker has a counseling caseload of 72 students, participates

in 96 IEP meetings, conducts 80 re-evaluations, participates in 11 Multi-disciplinary conferences, and completes 80 social histories.

“The contractual social workers work primarily with non-Special Education students through the Pupil Support Service (PSS) Teams and with students who are placed on behavioral contracts. In addition, the contractual social workers work with students who drop-in for counseling sessions of their own volition. In all cases, the contractual social workers are charged with evaluating the needs of these students with short-term counseling services. At present, each contractual social worker has a revolving counseling caseload of about 30 students who are seen, on average, for three counseling sessions.

“The needs of the general student population strongly suggest that additional social work services would be of benefit. As evident in national and local statistics, we have seen an increase in violent behavior among female students and observed students face greater turmoil in their lives due to factors external to the school. Factors such as peer conflicts, parental divorce and separation, parent abandonment, and financial instability of the home increase the demand for social work services at school that we are unable to respond to with the current staff.

“It should also be noted that the PSS Team model has shown promising signs this year of being the kind of wrap-around service model envisioned at its establishment several years ago. However, without additional social work resources to support the service model, the model is in danger of collapsing under the weight of student need. Attached to this memorandum is a rationale for additional social work services as prepared by the Interim Assistant Principals, Richard Deptuch and Richard Perna.”

The Administration recommended employing two additional contractual social workers for the 2008 – 2009 school year.

The Administration is pleased with the progress of the PSS Teams, but believes much more can be done and greater progress can be made. The District is currently spending \$55,000 annually on each of the social workers, and next year that figure could increase by 4 percent.

Dr. Lee believes that the PSS model currently being used has a great deal at stake and, in the long run, it will matter tremendously as to whether that model works well or does not work well. He believed it important to give it every opportunity to work well;

thus, he felt the expenditure was well worth making. Even though the outcome is unknown, the District has an obligation to take that risk. Along with that comes an obligation to develop a means for determining how well this model is working. He did not believe it was a discussion for this meeting, but he hoped that it could be a discussion at the Special Board Meeting on race and student achievement. He fully supported the expenditure.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked if the District could satisfy some of the requirement for more social workers by requiring deans to be social workers as well. The District is trying to reduce the number of discipline activities by having more interventions and it seemed that those people would be able to do both activities or split their time, rather than bring in new people and additional expenses. She continued that the District is rewriting the job descriptions for deans because it does not want them to do the same things. If social work is a big part of what is going to happen within this model, then social work has to be a bigger component of what the deans are doing. Perhaps, the way to do that is to have that as a part of the job description. Mr. Rigas stated that her statement was accurate. Deans do have social work-type backgrounds but they may not be certified in it. The staff is anticipating additional work for social workers. Deans will still have full time jobs. If the District wants to significantly increase interventions, it will require more time on the part of the staff and Mr. Rigas did not believe one could do both. Mr. Prale stated that the deans were becoming more familiar with the intervention model and were being more responsive. The deans and the counselors are working around interventions and there are two separate functions: dean work and social work.

Ms. Patchak-Layman assumed that discipline needs would be reduced because of increased interventions and the implementation of PBIS. She did not see them being the same for the next five years or even the next year. There are other interventions to being used to change the position from being discipline to prevention.

Dr. Millard noted that was the reason for hiring contractual staff rather than full time staff was to see if that can be demonstrated. Dr. Lee asked if Ms. Patchak-Layman were accepting or rejecting the Administration's recommendation. Ms. Patchak-Layman suggested that instead of spending \$100,000, the District craft things differently to see if additional social worker services were still needed. Mr. Rigas stated that the goal was to change consequences. Behavior will not change in a six-, twelve- or eighteen-month period. There will still be discipline and

consequences in the building. The consequences is the area in which the District is seeing a change, there is less discipline and it is more therapeutic in nature. However, bad behavior will not drop in six months.

Dr. Weninger stated that the administration believes that addressing the social/emotional issues will have a positive effect in the building. While Ms. Patchak-Layman's theory proposal is interesting, in his thirty-five (35) years of education, he has never seen a dean with a type 75 social worker certificate. He did not believe there would be viable candidates. The District wants to put in place a model from which the deans, the counselors and the social workers work intensely with students. It is an attempt to get to the root of the causes. This recommendation will be on the April 24 Board of Education agenda for consideration.

**Collaboration of
Early Childhood
Care & Education
Agreement**

Ms. Witham reported that Oak Park and River Forest High School has entered into an agreement for consulting services with the Collaboration for Early Childhood annually since August of 2003. Presented for consideration was the agreement for the 2008 – 2009 school year.

This fall the Board of Education discussed and approved an internship program for OPRFHS students in cooperation with the Collaboration for Early Childhood Care and Education. Dr. Weninger worked with Eric Gershenson to develop this program. Cindy Milojevic, Director of Student Activities, will coordinate student participation in the program. In addition, the administration would like to continue the previous annual agreement.

The administration asked that the Board of Education consider approving both of these agreements at its April 24, 2008, regular meeting.

Dr. Lee noted a typo on page 2, No. 8. It should read "2009." Dr. Lee supported both agreements.

Discussion ensued about the internship portion of the agreement. Dr. Weninger provided the background on this portion. Dr. Lee had asked the Board of Education in the fall to support a request for \$15,000, which would be added to funds received from the Village of Oak Park. This would allow the Collaboration to do yearlong research on ways to service the community. As part of that agreement, the District recommended two things: 1) that the Collaboration comes back to the Board of Education annually and identify its process and progress as to how the funds were being

used, and 2) to develop a plan to develop students. Since the fall, Dr. Weninger has been working to develop an internship model with which he has had experience. It includes a specific set of guidelines, skills, etc. Ms. Milojevic is working on developing that program and Peter Hostrawser with Ms. Milojevic are working on a community internship program where O.P.R.F.H.S. students would work in day care centers outside of O.P.R.F.H.S. Ms. Witham was unaware of any internship program where students would go into community. While there have been discussions about students in child development classes going into the day care center on an hourly basis that has not occurred. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked 1) what would happen to the program if no one signed up, 2) what is the measurement of success. Dr. Weninger stated that there is no specific number of students to reach in mind. Ms. Fisher felt this was an opportunity for students and the District needs to see if there is a positive response and whether some students will take the opportunity to get hands-on, early childhood training. Of note, approximately twenty-eight (28) students have signed up for the Community Service Course and a second section was added to the Child Development Program.

This will presented to the Board of Education for approval at its regular April Board of Education meeting.

**Recommendation
for Administrative
Work Year**

Mr. Edgecombe provided the Board of Education members with the following information:

“The administrative re-organization structure which has resulted in the employment of Assistant Principals by the District necessitates a change in the work year for the Assistant Principal for Student Activities. Presently this position is a ten-month position; however, the work year established for the recently hired Assistant Principals is twelve months. We believe it is desirable to have all Assistant Principals work the same work year.

“It is the perspective of administration that the District would be well served to have all Assistant Principals work a twelve-month work year. Such length of service would allow for an appropriate conclusion to the end of the school year and serve as a prelude to the start of the new school year. The ability to engage in extended planning as a Building Leadership Team (BLT) during the summer months when the pace of daily operations is typically significantly less than during the regular school year should not be underestimated. Programs such as the Freshman Orientation Day and the Student Transfer Program should be greatly enhanced by the deliberate evaluation and consideration of the BLT. The

Human Relations Program and programs related to student travel are examples of programs that can be refined during the summer months by moving this position to twelve months. Finally, extending the length of this position's work year allows for insuring that sponsors are in place at the beginning of the school year rather than after the school year begins. A job description is attached for review.

In the area of salary, a recent study by Downers Grove reflects a salary range of \$72,000 - \$124,300 for administrators involved in Student Activities. Administratively, we have established a salary range of \$100,000-\$125,000 for Assistant Principals and Division Heads.

"The administration recommends extending the administrative work year of the Assistant Principal of Student Activities from ten months of service to twelve months of service and to offer a salary of \$107,500 annually."

Mr. Edgecombe expanded on the duties of this position. He explained also that the position is now not a certified position. He stated to Ms. Patchak-Layman that a 12-month position commands vacation time. Ten-month positions have vacation time that must be taken during winter or spring break and any unused time is paid out in the last check in June. Over time, this position would have one additional week of vacation. Ms. Patchak-Layman suggested paying a per diem for the extra work the Assistant Principal is being asked to do. Mr. Edgecombe explained that this position has duties during the regular school day and at events in the evening. There is little time to plan, organize and collaborate with other colleagues. The administration feels that if the principal is to develop an effective team, additional time is needed for planning.

Mr. Edgecombe will provide the Board of Education with a copy of the job description delineating this position's responsibilities, including the Freshman Day and the Transition Program. Part of this position responsibility will be to meet with those students, so the responsibilities will be broader.

Some Board of Education members questioned the increase and asked if there had been comparisons with other schools, i.e., responsibilities and salaries. Ms. Patchak-Layman could not justify the increase in salary. If the Assistant Principal worked twenty percent more, which would equal twenty-percent more salary, it would be a \$15,000 increase, if going from ten (10) to twelve (12) months. She knew that this person was working more

and she questioned whether there should be an expansion of the program or should this person need a different work arrangement with someone else. She was unclear as to how more things could be added to this person's day.

Mr. Rigas added that there was a history to the current salary. At the time this person was hired, an evaluation was completed by people doing this type of job full time. The District decided to hire a person and agreed to re-evaluate it at later time. There was significant discussion about the salary relative to the market. Several people took their names out of consideration because they rejected the salary offered. Part of this is a market rate adjustment. In some respects, the same was done with Dr. Bridge as she was hired at a below-market rate because she did not have superintendency experience.

Ms. Witham stated that from her perspective, the job had changed significantly from what it was six years ago. Mr. Rigas commented that when this full-time position was created, there was no awareness of what the job could entail or become. That was part of the hesitancy to hire someone at the higher rate; it was unfamiliar territory.

Ms. Patchak-Layman asked Mr. Edgecombe to lay out the 12-month year's priorities, specifically those in July, August and September.

This recommendation will be brought to the Board of Education at its regular April meeting for approval. The job description will be included in the packet.

Update on Benefit Consortium

Ms. Witham provided the Board of Education members with the following information.

“Financial representatives from the taxing bodies of Oak Park and River Forest have been meeting on a monthly basis for approximately eighteen months. One of the topics of discussion has been the creation of a benefits consortium for the purposes of information sharing, exploration of alternatives and a reduction of administrative costs. A sub-group of primarily Oak Park taxing bodies was formed and has been exploring feasibility of a benefits consortium.

“The group has determined that an opportunity to reduce costs and enhance wellness initiatives in the two communities exists by forming a consortium. The group interviewed several brokers with

expertise in this type of consortium model and has selected the firm of A.J. Gallagher, based on experience and the success of their current consortium pools. The group has met with A.J. Gallagher several times and has now elected Cheryl L. Witham and Sharon Hammer to represent the group in exploring legal counsel and in drafting by-laws. As a part of this process, the group agreed to sign a broker of letter agreement for services connected with Life Insurance, AD & D and Long Term Disability. The group intended to test the market to see if savings can be realized by joining in this way. All of the taxing bodies agreed and signed the letter. However, late last week, D97 withdrew from the consortium. The group meets again on May 7, 2008 to discuss the selection of legal counsel for the group, the by-laws and the withdrawal of D97.”

Discussion ensued.

Q: Is District 97 permanently withdrawing?

A: Unsure.

Q: Has the Board of Education given Ms. Witham voting privileges within this group and, as a Board, is it committed to this?

A: Ms. Witham has just given updates and has asked if the discussions should continue. There has been no agreement. ORPFHS belongs to other insurance co-ops. This is about sharing information at this point. As bylaws are developed, they will be brought before the Board of Education.

Q: Who signed a letter?

A: Dr. Weninger signed the letter, but it binds O.P.R.F.H.S. to nothing.

Q: Does District 97's withdrawal reduce the cost effectiveness of this group?

A: It reduces the number of employees in the consortium by one third and it will affect the bargaining power substantially.

Ms. Fisher hoped District 97 would reconsider its decision. The Board of Education encouraged Dr. Weninger to talk with District 97 about reconsidering.

Ridgeland Commons Dr. Weninger presented the information on Ridgeland Commons distributed to the community at the Saturday, April 12 Community Meeting 3 at Beye School. He estimated that excluding Park

District Board, staff, and consultants, about one hundred plus people attended. A detailed presentation about each plan was made, and then public comments were taken from the audience.

Dr. Weninger spoke with Gary Balling about the next steps, which were outlined on Saturday. The intent is to take the current six (6) plans (two (2) each for existing footprint, expanded footprint, and visionary) and narrow them down to three (3) (one (1) each from the above three (3) areas). Then, construction and operational cost estimates will be developed, and one final plan from these will be selected. The timeline is to have the information in hand to make a decision on a final plan in June.

O.P.R.F.H.S. has identified for the Park District the indoor facility and the outdoor field needs relative to a partnership with the Park District (and presumably Fenwick) if the South Field is to be used for the visionary plans.

Discussion ensued. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked for a copy of the information given to the Park District that O.P.R.F.H.S. is using as a baseline. Referring to a statement by Mr. Rigas at another meeting about needing a competitive pool, she asked for that background information, e.g., costs and needs as well. Mr. Lanenga noted that to retrofit O.P.R.F.H.S.'s pools to make them competitive would cost over \$7 million. Ms. Patchak-Layman asked for the written background information. Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that the garage was mentioned and she wondered if any further discussions had ensued about building one or two more levels on top of the garage. If so, what will happen to traffic patterns, etc? Can more parking occur in the garage if more floors are added? Dr. Weninger reported that the Park District counted the parking spaces available and it estimated how many parking spots were needed. The Park District has not yet spoken officially regarding parking. Everything is in the abstract. The Park District also mentioned looking at underground parking, similar to the parking under the Library but no costs have been compiled for that.

Dr. Millard hoped that the emphasis would be on how the Park District could enhance student involvement and not parking.

Adjournment

At 9:10 a.m. on Thursday, April 17, 2008, Dr. Millard moved to adjourn the Special Board Meeting; seconded by Ms. Fisher. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes.

Dietra D. Millard
Vice President

John P. Rigas
Secretary