

January 13, 2015

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on January 13, 2015 in the Board Room of the high school.

Call to Order

President Phelan called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. A roll call indicated the following members were present: Thomas F. Cofsky, Dr. Steve Gevinson, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Dr. Jackie Moore, Sharon Patchak Layman, John Phelan, and Jeff Weissglass. Also in attendance was Steven T. Isoye, Superintendent; Tod Altenburg, Chief School Business Official; David Ruhland, Director of Human Resources; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors

Philip M. Prale, OPRFHS Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction; Nick Samuel of Austin Weekly News; Fred Arkin, Jennifer Cassell, Patty & Nick Henek, Krista & Gary Kaplan, Chris Meister, Kevin Peppard, Sara Spivy, Karen Ury, Reggie Wright, Patrick Brosnan and Rob Wroble of Legat, Kim Allgood, Brian Endless, and John Harris of OPYBS, Jill Buron, Dana and Joe Connell, Julie Elmiger, Dennis Podgoiski, Mary Roberts, Peter Ryan, Steve Shronney, Karin West representing swim, and Mary Case and Ellen Pimentel representing TOPS.

Public Comments

Brian Endless, 1220 N. Columbian, Oak Park, representing Oak Park Youth Baseball, thanked the Board of Education and the Pool Site Committee for its work. Many questions remain with this recommendation. If the new site were the baseball field and if the ground is broken before the new pool is built, it could be good for the community to have great new fields and a new aquatics center. However, land for this field is not available in the Oak Park and River Forest area. OPYBS asked the Board of Education to focus on the sequencing of this project if not done in proper order could be destructive to this community. OPYBS continues to believe the best option is the parking garage with underground parking. He suggested changing the wording of the motion to:

“To build on the garage site unless a site for baseball, softball or tennis is identified.”

Joe Connell, resident of 538 N. Elmwood, Oak Park, was honored to serve on the Pool Site Committee. In the course of the committee work, an opinion was put forth suggesting that the minimum IHSA requirements should be considered when considering the pool. He reminded the Board that minimum standards are rarely appropriate design standards. Doing the least certainly does not aim to satisfy the mission of excellence for all students.

The committee heard some in the community use the “back in my day” argument for throttling opportunities for the students, and a defense for the return of decades-old expectations and solutions.

Also heard was the “average high school does this...or that”. According to the US Dept. of Education (National Center for Education Statistics) reported in September 2013 that there were 19,441 high schools (excluding charter, magnet, vocational, special education and alternative schools) with 15,194,153 students, with an average enrollment of 781.5 students per school. At projected enrollment of 4,000 students, OPRF will be 5.1 times larger than the average US secondary school. School enrollment drives the size and quantity of many personnel and facility decisions. Please do not use “average” models when they do not apply.

In 1976 in Rockford, Illinois the Board of Education concluded that without passage of a referendum ALL extracurricular activities would be cancelled. They came to this option after determining that picking surviving activities would mean also selecting activities for extinction. This culling would be unjust, prejudiced and subjective by any measure. Who’s to say that speech or debate is more important than football or French club? Synchronized swimming or chess? Admiring the Board’s sense of fairness, but not timing, they put the question to the voters: fund all or nothing. It failed. Alas, all extracurricular activities were cancelled. No sports, no clubs, no yearbook, no musicals; as such, no school spirit, no emotional or social attachment to schools by students, parents or teachers. These activities were also gone from college transcripts and applications, gone from scholarship opportunities. In 1977, he was a junior at Rockford West High School and he saw flight by fellow-students, families and faculty and he did not believe the district had yet bounced back.

This experience informed his sense for the importance of a vibrant, diverse student life and that it be as campus-centric as possible. He feared that there would be no back-up plan if a referendum fails. He feared procrastination and an election timetable would unjustly fail the students if the Board fails to exercise the authority granted them by the voters to act on the recommendation.

Peter Ryan, resident of 414 Augusta, Oak Park, thanked the pool committee members and the Board of Education for the work they had done to bring a new pool to OPRFHS. A long course pool was never mentioned or considered in the Stantec report which had been given to the Board of Education in March 2013, as that was not part of Stantec’s job. The report stated that in order to make a good decision, more detailed

information was necessary. This is what the Pool Site Committee and the Board of Education had accomplished and it chose the long-course pool.

Dana Connell, resident of 538 N. Elmwood, Oak Park, regarding recommendation, she concurred with OPYBS leader in its recommendation to flip the language to build on the garage unless a site for baseball, softball or tennis is identified and to add a specific date to the 90 day window, i.e., 90 calendar days, business days, etc. Over the past week, she had surveyed the West Suburban Conference and 10 schools had enthusiastically responded to the survey with many offering assistance with a plan for a pool to meet the District's needs. The recap was:

Only 5 of 10 schools are the same size as the District's projected size. The 2 newest pools in the conference are 50 yard pools.

The school most like OPRFHS's projected enrollment is Lyons Township with 4,000 students. It has 2 pools, 1 50-yard x 6 lanes and 1 25-yard x 6 lanes. The pools are used Monday through Saturday from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. for swimming, diving, kayaking, scuba and more, and the community is welcomed for similar activities. However, that school wishes it had built 1 50-meter x 10 lane pool. OPRFHS should learn from its expertise. She added that 50-meter pool is a classroom, no different than driver education, art, science, English or any other part of the curriculum. The District would not seek a referendum for any other curricular use and doing so for a pool would be bad precedent setting.

Tony Novak, resident of 825 N. Cuyler, Oak Park, was disappointed to see looking at the garage site with underground spaces, disregarded. Mr. Aeschleman, vice president of the Park District Board, expressed that such space for a baseball field could not be found. Triton failed to identify that Trinity and Fenwick High Schools use its softball space.

Gary Kaplan, resident of 1026 Woodbine, Oak Park, supported the change in the recommendation. As a supporter of baseball/softball, his heart went out to the swimmers. No reason exists for this to take years to complete. The cost estimates are not comparing apples to apples. Garage estimates create \$3.5 million for acquisition that may be done anyway or was under consideration separate and apart from the pool issue. No cost is estimated for the improvements of a site for softball, baseball or tennis. The only viable site to get this pool complete for the families, students, and swimmers who have been waiting it for it. He advocated for the garage site.

Mary Roberts, resident of 81 N. Grove Avenue, thanked the Board of Education for her opportunity to be on the Pool Site Committee, as it was enlightening, informing and educational. It took 8 to 12 weeks to educate

the members on whether a pool was needed, how much should be spent, and where it should be built. Reviewing the agenda, an action item was pool funding and bullet point A was to do a referendum with two resolutions and then point C was to do no referendum. She urged the Board of Education to consider building the classroom, building the natatorium for the students, and keeping parking for students and faculty at reasonable cost. She did not believe the community would be informed enough to make an intelligent decision about a referendum in 3 months' time.

Pool Site

Mr. Phelan thanked the Pool Committee members, the Board of Education members who participated, and he and other Board of Education members gave special thanks to Mr. Weissglass for chairing the committee so well. He asked Ms. Hardin to extend thanks to the 2 faculty members who participated and demonstrated the type of trust and relationship building that is being built within the District. He was touched and gratified for their participation. He also thanked the members of the public who had shared their comments tonight and throughout the committee process. Wonderful things were said about the programs at the high school. When the at-risk athletic programs told their histories, it demonstrated to him the tremendous support children have in this community.

Mr. Weissglass thanked Mr. Altenburg who served as member of the committee and gave administrative support and Dr. Isoye who took assignments away from every meeting. He also acknowledged the work of Legat Architects Wroble and Brosnan, who responded with tremendous support as well as Al Steffler of Henry Bros. He provided a summary to the Board of Education at its regular December meeting.

Mr. Weissglass moved to construct a new long-course pool facility on the baseball field and to secure a site for the baseball program as first priority or alternatively the softball or tennis program as a second and third priority within 90 days and, if not build, on the parking garage with an estimated 118 spaces; seconded by Dr. Gevinson.

Discussion ensued. An initial suggestion made was to include that the pool facility should be attached to the building but the committee never took a vote on it. The designs that were presented had a connecting coordinator to the pool for every location so that students could access the pool facility from the main building without having to go outside.

Discussion ensued about asking for the taxpayer's permission. Dr. Lee noted that he would vote against the amendment as it was not clear that the District would go for a referendum. Mr. Phelan clarified that a subsequent agenda item would speak to the funding of the facility.

The District has a legal opinion that says this would not be considered a new free standing building and, therefore, a building referendum is not necessary.

Mr. Phelan supported the motion as presented because 1) he wanted to respect the work of the Pool Committee who presented the motion and voted in favor of it 16 to 1; 2) while they thought they knew what the consensus was, it was represented by what came to the Board of Education, 3) it does not make a substantive difference as to what the motion means, as there were faculty, community, neighbor who had significant voices and the motion represents a balance of all of the voices heard; it is the right balance of being concerned.

Mr. Weissglass moved to amend the motion as follows: To construct a new long-course pool facility on the baseball field and secure a site for the baseball program as first priority or alternatively the softball or tennis program as a second and third priority within 90 days of the January 29, 2015, Board of Education meeting, and if not build on the parking garage with an estimated 118 spaces; seconded by Dr. Gevinson. A roll call vote resulted in 5 ayes and 2 nays. Dr. Lee and Dr. Moore voted nay. Motion carried

Mr. Phelan moved to amend the amendment to be as follows: To construct a new long-course pool facility on the baseball field and secure a site for the baseball program as first priority or alternatively the softball or tennis program as a second and third priority by April 23, 2015 Board of Education meeting and if not build on the parking garage with an estimated 118 spaces; seconded by Dr. Gevinson. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried

While a suggestion to shorten the time period from 90 days to 30 days was made, the April 23 date gives those who use the parking garage the opportunity to find another location. Discussion also ensued about what the word “secure” meant. Mr. Weissglass defined it as meaning that the Board of Education would need to have a site under its control by April 23, i.e., under contract or secured with a letter of intent for the sale of a piece of property.

While discussion at the Pool Committee meeting had occurred about working with the Village of River Forest to find another site and/or the legal ability to purchase land within 2 miles of the school, including properties outside of the Oak Park, and River Forest, no discussion occurred about the other requirements, i.e. locations, space, dollar amount, etc. These questions should be answered before April 23, 2015. Is a space being considered? Because baseball, softball, and tennis have

different space requirements, ancillary costs would have to be aligned to space at the school and that should be part of the motion. The response was that the motion was stated in vague terms to give the Board of Education latitude to seek out a variety of options. When the option is identified, the administration and Mr. Phelan will be directly involved to identify, research, and discuss. While a couple of other properties have been identified, they are not ripe for discussion. However, it is within the province of the Board of Education to decide whether a property is appropriate and meets its needs. Anyone can share potential sites with the administration.

Dr. Lee did not support the motion because he proposed building a pool inside the building. Unfortunately, only after the work of the committee had been done, did he find out the reason his option was too expensive. He did not think the school should spend more than \$50 million on a swimming pool before a long-range facility plan was in place. No conclusive evidence exists that using either exterior or interior space for swimming was a higher priority than the cafeteria, English classrooms, chemistry laboratories, etc. He felt the pool had an effective lobbying group and that was the reason for this push. What has been learned is that the District must have to use its space more efficiently. He and Ms. Patchak-Layman were the two people responsible for the school being in this position because they had been on the Board of Education for 7 years, and he apologized for that fact. Delaying the building of the pool would cause considerable pain. Even if the motion passes, it will take 3 years to build. He suggested first developing a long-range plan to determine the priorities for all aspects of the work of the District, not just those things that are believed to be done right now, i.e., building an Olympic swimming pool.

The difficulty Ms. Patchak-Layman had with the motion was that it included 118 parking places at a cost of \$45 million. She could not support that much money for a swimming pool. The cost of the pool went from \$20 million to \$30 million, then \$35 million, and now \$45 million because of parking. Even at \$35 million, the District is looking for space away from the building, and there would be costs to secure the space and the transporting of students. She would only support \$30 million. In addition, building the pool on the field removes green space from the facility, the neighborhood, and the students. Once lost, it will never return. Green space should be held at a high level because of density. Not discussed by the committee was the student's use of facilities during the years the pool building will be under construction. She had always favored the parking garage site, because schedules would not be disrupted and green space would be maintained. The streets in Oak Park are already

paid for and parking is free. Times have changed since faculty and students were vying for the same parking spaces. The District could get very specific as to what parking will be. With the student spaces and parking in the Pilgrim Lot, the District has the ability to rearrange parking, i.e., visitor parking in Pilgrim and sharing it with day and night staff, designating where each teacher would park on the streets, etc. Students can start to park in the 300 blocks. Elementary teachers now park on the streets. She was very concerned about moving any of the sports offsite because of the cost of transporting students, supervisors, security, etc. More questions arise if a site were chosen that were outside of Oak Park or River Forest. She believed the community needed to weigh in on this and while she would not support the motion, she truly believed a pool was needed.

Mr. Cofsky concurred with Ms. Patchak-Layman's statements and he what he had learned through the process of being a committee participant was: 1) trying to transform the existing pool space into a future pool space would be cost prohibitive and disruptive to the students, 2) a clear comprehensive long term facility plan is necessary as enrollment growth will require enhanced instruction as well as athletics, and 3) the pool is expensive. He supported the motion, but he wanted to express his opinion. Originally, he supported the parking garage but he saw a need to replace some of the parking spaces. It does not say to replace 118 spaces on other opportunities. The lead line in the motion "to build on the baseball field," was the best alternative because 1) it can be the lowest cost solution, 2) there would be no need to buy and demolish the garage, and 3) currently, the baseball program is scattered and this would be an enhancement to bring students and coaches into one facility. He, too, is and has been concerned about moving additional activities offsite, and the motion is unclear about prioritization.

Dr. Moore previously had voted for the parking garage site. In her opinion, losing green space was not the right solution and she was concerned about the 3 sports mentioned being moved offsite as well as and how football would be affected during construction, i.e., safety issues, etc. The first priorities of the students are PE water safety and athletics. She is concerned that OPRFHS is fiscally attempting to meet the aquatic needs of the community and that differs from instructional needs. An aquatics building for the community is something that should be shared by the local governments. She agreed that adequate parking for staff had to be found. Parking under the pool was a safety concern to her, as well as the additional cost. The parking assessment showed the availability of spots on the street as well as in the Oak Park garage. Utilizing both spaces would reduce the footprint in terms of cost as well as construction time

needed to build a parking garage under a pool. Students have said that more students will have to walk to school as that is the only avenue they have and, if so, that makes it fairer, not less fair. She could not support the motion when a site is available that will not displace no-cut sport programs and serve a great number of students.

It was clarified that the motion of 118 spaces would be built as part of the structure of the pool. Even though the language did not reflect that, it was the intention of the motion. To give clarity, Mr. Weissglass moved to add “within the new facility” after the end of the current motion; seconded by Dr. Gevinson. A roll call vote resulted in 3 yeas and 4 nays. Mr. Weissglass, Dr. Lee and Dr. Gevinson voted aye. Motion failed

Mr. Phelan too was concerned about cost but added that it was the Committee’s intent to include parking in the garage site. Mr. Cofsky believed that specific solution for parking to be a cost prohibitive solution and it takes this project to another level in terms of cost. He did not support the motion. Mr. Weissglass too was concerned about the cost and building under the swimming pool because of the engineering challenge and long-term maintenance. While it may be the only way to solve this problem, he would first like to solve finding an off-campus site for a sport. If that was not possible, he wanted time spent trying to develop a comprehensive parking plan to see if it can be solved without spending money.

As such, Mr. Weissglass moved to add:

“Within the new facility or with a suitable alternative parking plan; seconded by Ms. Patchak-Layman

It was noted that the Board of Education would have to agree on whether it had a suitable parking plan.

A roll call vote resulted in one yeas and six nays. Mr. Weissglass voted yeas. Motion failed.

Dr. Gevinson moved to construction a new attached long course on the baseball field, as first priority or alternatively the softball or tennis program as second or third priority by the April 23, 2015 Board meeting; seconded by Dr. Lee. Discussion ensued.

If the garage option were eliminated, it would force the Board of Education to make tennis work. Dr. Gevinson thought of PE tennis as a minor piece of the PE program, an elective for juniors and seniors. Practices and matches could be held on either Keystone Park, Euclid Square Park, and, perhaps, Columbus Park in the fall. If the parking garage site was used, OPRFHS would be the only school in the West

Suburban Conference that would not provide faculty and staff parking. Presently the garage is adequate and it will last another 15 to 20 years, and even then it will not take that much to construct. Building a natatorium and losing parking for visitors would not be good. Dr. Gevinson now favored a long-course pool because of the lobbying. Previously he did not feel a bigger facility was needed but he had been persuaded that a long course pool would be a great asset to the community. He did not support using the garage site for it, however.

Mr. Cofsky disagreed with losing PE tennis because it would displace curriculum activities without a solution. Dr. Lee felt that while it would take away high school tennis classes, public courts do exist in the communities.

A roll call vote resulted in 2 yeas and 5 nays. Dr. Gevinson and Dr. Lee voted yea. Motion failed.

Mr. Phelan moved to put a period after “parking garage”; second by Ms. Patchak-Layman.

Dr. Gevinson was resistance to spend money on that few parking spaces, but this motion would allow the parking garage to be torn down and put parkers on the street. The Pool Site Committee and he did not support that.

A roll call vote resulted in 5 nays and 3 yeas. Mr. Cofsky, Mr. Phelan and Ms. Patchak-Layman voted yea. Motion failed.

Dr. Moore moved to construct a new attached long course pool on the parking garage site; no second. Motion failed.

The Board of Education members recessed the meeting at 9:05 p.m. and resumed at 9:15 p.m.

Mr. Weissglass stated that throughout the Committee process, much public comment was received that the Board of Education should build on the parking garage site. It is a great space to put a pool, but as the Committee looked at the parking garage and it became aware of how much it was used during the day: 240 to 280 cars were parked there during the day when the counts were taken. The Committee worked with the Village of Oak Park on a high level analysis of available spots in the surrounding neighborhood and found that 150 cars could be accommodated on the street and, thus, the 118 spaces in the pool building made sense. Mr. Aeschleman felt that providing for 100+ spots was critical to making a plan work. While the 118 spaces will meet the faculty and staff’s needs, event parking was not considered. Some spots would be next to the pool and many spots would be under the pool. If alternative spaces cannot be found, it will be problematic. Mr. Weissglass supported

the motion but he would also try to find a way not to take down the parking garage.

Mr. Cofsky noted that the wording of the motion was based on hope that an alternative baseball site could be found. He hoped for that same approach to find alternative parking. Dr. Moore continued her opposition to losing green space and her feeling that the best option is the parking garage site. Mr. Phelan stated that if the motion passed as presented, either with or without parking spaces and an alternative site was found for one of the 3 programs that could be displaced, that site would replace the green space lost. That was why he was not swayed by the loss of green space argument. Dr. Moore appreciated that information but she was resolute about not displacing a sport, campus green space, or football.

Mr. Phelan moved to construct a new, attached, long course pool facility on the baseball field and to secure a site for the baseball program as first priority or alternatively the softball or tennis program as second and third priority by the April 23, 2015 Board meeting and if not build on the parking garage with a parking plan determined to be suitable at the April 23, 2015 Board meeting or build on the parking garage with an estimated 118 spaces within the building; seconded by Dr. Gevinson. Discussion ensued.

It was clarified that four Board of Education members must vote to secure an on-campus site. If not, the fallback option would be to build on the parking garage site. The Board of Education will have an option to trigger the first of the 3 alternatives of this motion. Prioritization means 1) a baseball field site had the highest possibility of a win/win with softball being second. The parking garage site was the fourth priority to Mr. Weissglass because of the impact on the neighborhood and the employees. The motion was designed to give the Board of Education time to do the work.

Dr. Lee was resigned to the fact that a pool would be built on green space or the parking garage site. That means something will be built before consideration is given for any additional classroom or cafeteria space. He felt that the eventual cost would be far greater than the cost of taking time to consider all issues.

A roll call vote resulted in 5 yeas and 2 nays. Ms. Patchak-Layman and Dr. Lee voted nay. Motion carried.

**Pool Facility
Funding Option**

Discussion ensued about how a referendum question would be formed based on the motion that had just passed because of the many contingencies. Ms. Patchak-Layman suggested that if the District were spending \$35 million, the Board of Education must affirm this with the

community to make sure that is what they want. There was urgency to putting a referendum question together that evening because if not, no referendum question would appear on the April 2015 ballot. If no referendum, how would the District pay for the pool? FAC had suggested spending \$20 million on capital projects, which was discussed during its meetings in the likelihood of building a new pool. The bonding limit is approximately \$40 million. The District is estimating the cost on a per-square foot basis and that could be less than stated depending on the design. The alternative is to go for a referendum in 2016, but the costs will escalate by that time. Two members favored going for a referendum in 2016 if the parking garage site were chosen. At this point the District does not know what it needs to repurpose the pools or how to accommodate growth in enrollment. The life safety review will begin next summer and the survey work will be done in 2016. If a decision is made in April and the Board of Education decides to go for a referendum, the next opportunity would be March 2016. The Board of Education will learn as much as it can in the next months and make a decision in April about whether a referendum is needed and how much is needed. Because asking for permission to issue construction bonds when the Board of Education has the bonding authority seemed odd and hard to justify, and, therefore, Mr. Weissglass leaned toward paying for it with the fund balance and non-referendum bonds and then, if necessary, more construction bonds.

Ms. Patchak-Layman's concern with waiting until 2016 was because the District will not be able to do its bidding in the winter and get better pricing. The reason for her alternative resolution states that the Board of Education believes it should build a \$35 million pool. The building can start to be built if the community approves spending \$35 million on a pool. The other costs associated with it are smaller financing costs. She believed the Board of Education had the wherewithal to cover the cost of the pool building and take that out to the community so that the building could start in June. She had submitted language for a binding referendum from the community. This was a proposition on a Rockford ballot and she crafted it to work for this District.

Ms. Patchak-Layman moved to approve the following referendum language: "Shall the Board of Education of Oak Park and River Forest High School District 200 in Cook County, build and equip one school building for the purpose of physical education aquatics and use only funds existing in the Districts Capital Projects Fund for the purpose of paying the costs there of.": No second. Motion failed.

The only option on the table that would absolutely require a bond referendum is the parking spaces because of its costs. In that context, Mr.

Phelan did not feel there was any wisdom in putting it on the ballot this April and it would be misunderstood by most because of the contingencies involved.

It was noted that members of the Long-term Facilities Plan were waiting for a decision on the pool before making any other recommendations for the building.

Adjournment

At 10:21 p.m., Dr. Moore moved to adjourn; seconded by Dr. Gevinson. A voice vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

John Phelan
President

Dr. Jackie Moore
Secretary