

Oak Park River Forest High School  
201 N. Scoville  
Oak Park, IL 60302

MINUTES  
**JOINT MEETING**

Village of River Forest  
River Forest Elementary School District #90  
Oak Park-River Forest High School District #200  
The River Forest Library  
The Park District of River Forest  
The Township of River Forest  
Triton College

Lincoln School  
511 N. Park Avenue  
River Forest, IL 60305  
May 27, 2015

**Present**

Village of River Forest: Catherine Adduci, President, Susan Conti, Carmela Corsini, Michael Gibbs, Thomas Cargie, Tom Dwyer, trustees; and Eric Palm, Manager of River Forest

Elementary School District 90: Dr. Ed Condon, Superintendent; Patrick Meyer, president, Anne Gottlieb, Ralph Martire, Rich Moore, and Barb Hickey, Board of Education members

High School District 200: Superintendent Dr. Steven T. Isoye; Board of Education president Jeff Weissglass, members Fred Arkin, Jennifer Cassell, Thomas F. Cofsky, Dr. Jackie Moore, Dr. Steve Gevinson, Sara Spivy, and Jeff Weissglass and Clerk of the Board Gail Kalmerton.

Park District of River Forest: President Ross Roloff, Peter Kuzmich, and Beth Dunne Commissioners; Members, and Executive Director Michael Sletten.

River Forest Township: Carla Sloan, Supervisor, Mark Kelsey, Mary O'Brien, trustees, and Karen Taubman, clerk.

Triton College: Mark Stevens, Board Chairperson and President Mary Rita Moore.

River Forest Library: Joan O'Connor, Deborah Hill, Thomas Smedinghoff, Claudette Zobel, Katie Brennan, Kevin Crowell, trustees, and Sophia Antos, executive director.

President Weissglass called the OPRFHS Board of Education to order at 7:02 p.m. A roll call indicated that the following members were present: Fred Arkin, Jennifer Cassell, Thomas Cofsky, Dr. Steve Gevinson, Sara Spivy, and Jeff Weissglass.

The other governing bodies called for a roll call and quorums were established for Village of River Forest, River Forest Elementary School District #90, The River Forest Library, the Park District of River Forest, and The Township of River Forest.

Visitors: Dick Chappell of the River Forest Community Center; Gerry Homburg, Al Popowits, and Anna Schaidler, community members.

### **Welcome**

Ms. Adduci welcomed all to the meeting, noting that this historical gathering was to 1) forge better relationships with each other, 2) familiarize each other as to how the entities function, and 3) brainstorm on ideas that will help better serve the community and stabilize taxes. These factors will ensure that River Forest is the place everyone will want to continue to reside. Each of the governmental officials then introduced themselves.

### **Taxing Body Presentations**

#### Village of River Forest

Mr. Palm reported that the main charges of the Village are to provide residents with police, fire, public works services which, includes street maintenance, water and sewer service and it is charged with maintaining building department, overseeing zoning, land use, etc. The top revenue drivers are property tax (42%), sales tax, and income tax. A fluctuation has occurred in this year's revenue because of the income being received for the sewer separation project from Thatcher Avenue to the Priory and from Greenfield to Division. The stores that are occupy the Town Center (Whole Foods, DSW, etc.), as well as Jewel generate most of the sales tax. The State of Illinois provides approximately \$1 million at present. The General Fund incorporates the main operations of the village, i.e., police, fire, etc. The Enterprise Fund is for water and sewer, etc., and is elevated \$15 million because of the sewer project. Seventy percent of the Village's budget is for employees' salaries and benefits, i.e., insurance and pension (IMRF, Policy, and Fire), etc.

The Village is customer-service oriented. Of the 75 full-time employees that work for the village, approximately 32 are police personnel and 20 are fire department personnel. The Village is proud of its Standard & Poors AAA rating, the highest bond rating that can be achieved. The unrestricted fund balance has grown and is running 35% to 40% in unrestricted fund balance against General Fund expenses; it is now approximately \$6 million.

The Village's goals and challenges are:

1. Economic development which include Lake and Park Streets, Lake and Lathrop Streets, and Madison Street TIF District
2. Infrastructure 5 year capital plan, including the sewer project (Phases I and II), street resurfacing, water main improvements, sewer lining, sidewalk repair, etc. The 5 year-capital is on its website.
3. Increased efficiencies in organization and community 70% of budget are salaries and benefits).
4. Uncertainty in Springfield. Mr. Palm's recommendation to the Village Board is to budget and plan ahead for status quo and then if changes are necessary, address them in a timely fashion.

#### Park District of River Forest

Mike Sletten, executive director, reported that the Park District's revenue is derived from property taxes (72%), program and rental fees replacement fees, interest income, donations, rental fees, and miscellaneous income (25%). It has \$70,000 limited bonding authority which currently has been issued in a 3-year term for the construction of platform tennis courts.

Among its budgeted expenses are 35% for administration, 9% for West Suburban Recreation membership, 8% for capital improvements, 18% for Parks and 22% for programming. Its fund balance is

increasing and most of the funds are dedicated to the Capital Fund for future programming and finding space.

Registrations are increasing and presently the Park District is working with 11 organizations to use their space, but more is needed.

Mr. Roloff reported on the capital accomplishments in the past 5 years:

- Keystone West Soccer Field Redevelopment
- Keystone West Sled Hill Development
- Keystone West Playground Upgrades and Rubber Safety Surface
- The Depot METRA Waiting Room Improvements
- Memorial Parkway Bocce Ball Courts Development
- Memorial Parkway Landscaping Improvements
- Keystone Tennis Court Re-Surfacing
- Keystone Center Improvements
- Keystone Platform Tennis Courts Development
- Keystone East Playground Redevelopment
- Community Herb Garden Development
- Priory Batting Cages Development
- Priory North Ball Field Redevelopment
- Centennial/Priory/Washington Ornamental Fences Installation
- Filling in the Willard Bowl and Redevelopment of a new Ice Rink at Constitution
- Centennial/Priory Soccer Field Dugouts Development
- Centennial/Keystone/Priory Baseball Dugouts Redevelopment
- Priory Park Playground Redevelopment and Rubber Safety Surface. The old playgrounds were sent to Haiti and Cambodia for repurposing.
- Priory Park North Path Extension (Summer, 2015)
- Keystone Park Tennis Court Wall Redevelopment (Summer, 2015)

The Park District and the Village have entered into an IGA appointing the Parks Foundation as a Village Committee addressing issues in the community.

Its goals and challenges include

- Availability and quality of indoor recreation program space. A 2013 survey revealed that more indoor space was needed.
- Providing quality adult program recreation opportunities.
- Availability of outdoor space for River Forest to accommodate older aged youth athletic programs.
- Expansion of platform tennis facility to 4 courts and a paddle hut.
- Operating the platform tennis facility as an Enterprise Fund and having a warming area.
- Price recreation services at an affordable rate to our residents without being a burden to our taxpayers.

#### Library

Ms. Antos introduced Claudette Zobel who reported on the Library's Financials and Joan O'Connor who reported on the Strategic Plan.

The Library's collects approximately \$1.3 million in revenue: 93.3% comes from taxes, 2% from grants, 2% from its book sale, as well as some interest and monies from the Community Fund Endowment. It has established a River Forest Public Library Foundation.

In 2011, the Library completed a study called the Engberg Anderson Capital Study and subsequently established a reserve fund for anticipated capital and needs where 5% to 7% of the operating budget is earmarked for this fund. In 2011-12, the Library completed the ceiling of the entrance to the library. Next, the Library will embark on renovation of the interior.

The Library's expenditures include 59% for personnel, 15% for materials (books, newspapers, magazine and electronics), 6% for capital improvement, 7% for facility, 2% for supplies, printing, 2% for internet, phones, and equipment, 1% for technical support, 3% for legal, audit, consortium, 4% for programs, and 3% for the reserve fund. The tax revenue trend is discouraging. Previously the library received 3% increases, but this year it was less than 1% and that is what will be budgeted for in the future.

The people involved in the 2013-16 Strategic Plan included: Dick Chappell, Kristen Coe, Bob Coleman, Ed Condon, Sue Crothers, Kevin C. Crowell, Tim Hague, Colleen Corrigan, Carlotta Lucchesi, Mary Beth McIntosh, Julie Moller, Emily Paster, Drew Swope, and Dan Watts. They identified the following four initiatives and objectives and benchmarks were set:

1. Create Young Readers with the goal of families with children under the age of five will instill a love of books and reading in their children. As a result, program attendance has increased, pre-school circulation has increased, and the staff has identified ways for children to find books for themselves.
2. Stimulate Imagination with the goals of
  - a. Elementary school age children (ages 5-9) will discover materials and programs that stimulate their imaginations, satisfy their curiosity, and foster a love of reading.
  - b. Adults and teens will enjoy a variety of popular materials to read, listen to, or review.
3. Life Long Learning with the goal of seniors will have the skills they need to support their new and continued interests and their desire for self-directed personal growth.
4. Visit A Comfortable Place

A list of new digital services and materials was provided. Also provided was the services that the Library provides to various groups in the village, i.e., Park District, Community, Township, Businesses, the Village and schools. The results of a March 2015 survey included:

- 88% of parents and caregivers agreed that the library plays an important role in instilling a love of books and reading in their children.
- 75% of middle school students said that they like visiting the library's teen spaces.
- 97% of the older adults who asked a staff member for help said that the assistance they received was "very good" or "excellent"

#### Township of River Forest

Ms. Sloan provided the River Forest Township's mission, structure, FY 2015 highlights, ongoing collaboration, financial review, and FY 2016 goals and initiatives. Its mission is to enhance the well-being of residents by funding, directing and supporting the delivery of necessary human services.

Its structure consists of a supervisor, assessor, clerk and staff who are all part-time employees that total 2 FTE. The trustees are volunteers and they have 3 volunteer appointed committees. It has an IGA with the Oak Park Township: Joint Youth & Senior Services, which is unique, cost effective, and made sense given this joint community and the high school. The supervisor is the administrator and the business manager. With the FY 16 restructuring, the River Forest Community Center Association building

manager position was eliminated from the Township budget. Those funds were reallocated into services and service delivery.

FY 2015 highlights included providing a mental health resource guide, SibShop, a sibling support group for kids, a Youth & family Behavior Health Consortium, and PIAT Conference. In addition, the Township spearheaded a white paper on underage substance use and is looking to implement policy recommendations from the paper. It also participates in IMPACT and SAY. For seniors, the Township promotes Celebrating Seniors All Year Long, a senior health series, senior outreach, and the cab coupon program. The Township provides general assistance and a Prevail Job Program. The Assessor Services were very well used in the last triennial reassessment. There is ongoing collaboration with the village regarding communications, front desk programs, and snow removal program for seniors. The Township collaborates with multiple senior programs, and after school program and communications with the Library. It collaborates with District 90 on the Sibshop Program, the white paper, and scholarships. And it collaborates with the Park District on communications and programs.

The Township receives 100% of its \$600,000 budget in revenue from property taxes which flow into two funds: Town Fund (92%) and the General Fund (8%). The majority of its budget is allocated to the delivery of services.

The intent is for the Township to enhance services and increase awareness as to its purpose. The expense strategy is to enhance services and outreach while slowing reducing the fund balance over time. We are investing in township and the programs.

FY 2016 Goals and Initiatives are as follows:

- Youth - Underage substance use: White Paper, IMPACT, SAY, SAMSHA grant to OP& RF
- Seniors - Enhance River Forest Services, outreach, awareness
- Mental Health - New MH Programming: Sibshop, ETS
- Outreach: New Website
- Continued Collaboration

#### Triton College

Mr. Stevens stated that Triton College just celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, serves 25 communities and has 17,000 students enrolled. When he was elected, Triton was operating with a \$2 million deficit and he spoke of the restructuring that had been done and contributed to today's surplus of \$34 million.

Recently, it received a \$50 million bond issue to renovate the entire campus. Moody's has given Triton its second highest rating. Challenges during his tenure were replacing the chillers and heaters that were still the originals in 1991. Another big project was the resurfacing of the parking lots.

Ms. Moore noted that Triton is one of the 48 community colleges in Illinois. Its territory covers 63 square miles, 25 communities, approximately 250,000 residents, and graduates about 10 to 15 students per year from the River Forest community. In the fall a new science building will be open with a ribbon cutting ceremony. Triton is in the first year of a 7-year strategic plan. Emphasis was placed on college readiness, collaboration with high schools and the K-12 continuum, and upon completion and intention, i.e., graduates are able to get jobs, meet their educational goals, and be ready for college. The website will be updated regularly as to their accomplishments.

#### District 200, Oak Park and River Forest High School

Mr. Altenburg reported that OPRFHS' revenues from fees, property taxes, and the government are affected by 3 main drivers: 1) operating levy reductions, debt service levy abatements and Senate Bill 1. If this Bill were to pass it would cost the District \$450,000 per year for four years. He spoke about in

2013/14, the Board of Education wanted to right-sized fund balance. Its expenses are affected by 3 main drivers: 1) salaries and benefits (73%), and enrollment, 2) Strategic Plan implementation, and 3) Technology initiatives (use of Chromebooks). Currently 8% of the expenses are for students to attend another school because OPRFHS cannot provide the necessary services. The top 3 drivers for reducing OPRFHS fund balance are: 1) the phasing of it down to 100% in 3 years and 40% in 7 years; 2) Operating levy reductions and debt service levy abatements; 3) Swimming pool and long-term facilities investment.

Dr. Isoye reported that approximately 1 ½ years ago, the Board of Education adopted a strategic plan and the following goals were developed:

- 1) Collaborate across the community, horizontally and vertically – Holistic Community Education.
- 2) Strive continuously for student Equity.
- 3) Provide a Supportive Learning Environment to meet the unique strengths and needs of all students.
- 4) Provide engaging learning opportunities that set high standards for all students through Transformative Teaching and Learning.
- 5) Provide support and hold all school leaders to high expectations – Transforma-tional Leadership.
- 6) Make fiscally responsible, student-centered decisions regarding Facilities and Finances.

The action steps were developed and they started with relationships, i.e., building teams. Ideas are now coming to the Board of Education for adoption. It is an awesome responsibility to work with youth in both of these communities. So many programs/opportunities are available to the students. The Strategic Plan talks about focusing on how to do better. The high school is the last experience for the students of these communities. Its responsibility is to make sure students are ready for their future which means collaboration with all of the taxing bodies, i.e., transitioning from River Forest to the high school and working with Triton, as many of the students go to Triton. The Board of Education has decided to be part of the Collaboration of Early Childhood Care and Education. Given that the biggest challenge is the increased enrollment of students, programs, classroom and staff space, the high school must look at that appropriately? Though OPRFHS is an excellent high school, an inequity in terms of experience exists. Thus, a long term commitment has been to focus on that inequity, and a big part of this is based on race. OPRFHS is looking to see how it can better serve all of its students. The challenge will be that enrollment is increasing and that will mean more interactions, more collaboration, and more discussion about the experiences of students.

#### District 90, River Forest Elementary School

Dr. Condon listed District 90's essential goals:

- To continue to support and implementing and programs and curricula focused on the development of the whole child.
- To foster open, transparent communication
  - The communications director, Dawn Simmons, will start august 1 as a full-time employee.
  - Collaborative work is ongoing goal.
- To work collaboratively with the faculty, administration, and community to build on its tradition of academic excellence. Enrollment is expect to remain constant with Roosevelt and Willard decreasing and Lincoln increasing. Three classrooms had been for staff members, but they now sit in hallways, etc., because computer labs are moving into the classrooms because of the implementation of STEM.
- To maintain financial stability and remain good stewards of the taxpayers' investment

District 90's future challenges include:

- Complementing and implementing the District 90 Five-Year Strategic Plan (2015-20)

- Maintaining high quality facilities meeting future needs of the students
- Recruiting and retaining experienced and diverse faculty, staff, and administrators
- Providing prudent management of resources during a time of state financial instability
- Ensuring that all students receive an outstanding education, delivered in a positive, nurturing and equitable manner

Mr. Cozzi reviewed financial information contained on District 90's website located at [www.d90.org](http://www.d90.org). He reviewed the last ten fiscal years operating funds revenue by source, i.e., local revenue, state revenue, and federal revenue. Increases in 2007-2009 were due primarily to the Education Fund tax rate increase referendum passed in March of 2006, while the increase in 2010 is due mainly to the expiration of the TIF, which was offset by the Board's decision not to implement the full amount of the last year of the referendum. The decrease in 2013 is due to the Board's decision to reduce its 2012 tax levy. The total revenues were adjusted for inflation using the seasonal adjusted quarterly employment cost index adjusted to September 30, 2014 dollars.

Mr. Cozzi also reviewed the operating funds expenditures by object for the last ten fiscal years. The major expenditures were for salaries and benefits. The total expenditures were adjusted for inflation using the seasonally adjusted quarterly Employment Cost Index (ECI) adjusted to September 30, 2014 dollars. The increase in 2009 was due to mainly the 4.6% salary increase in teachers' collective bargaining agreement (CBA) as well as additional capital expenditures for roofing and other building projects. An increase occurred in 2012 because of the 5.7% salary increase in the teachers' CBA. The salary increase included an increase in the hours in the school day and the number of school days in the year. Expenditures also increased due to large capital building improvements at Willard School. The increase in 2014 was due mainly to the 2.7% salary increase in the teachers CBA. Additionally, the increase in supplies and materials was due to a significant core literacy textbook adoption, while the increase in capital outlay was due to capital expenditures for building projects as well as the completion of the one-to-one IPAD implementation at Roosevelt.

The operating expense per pupil is \$14,123 versus the state average of \$12,045.

### **Brainstorming Session for Further Collaboration**

The participants were asked to think about 3 questions:

- 1) Was anything said that was of a surprise?
- 2) What similarities or trends or opportunities were there for collaboration?
- 3) What are the learning barriers that can be tackled over time?

The responses were as follows:

- 1) How can the taxing bodies provide prudent management of resources during a time of state financial instability?
- 2) District 90 was challenged to collaborate with the Park District on indoor space.
- 3) What has changed inside the high school that has made it smaller, as one participant had graduated in 1980 when the student population was 4400. A response was that both Special Education and Technology had grown much, as well as science labs and music instruments.
- 4) It was interesting to hear the strategies of how the taxing entities collaborate with each other.

Discussion ensued about how to go forward, asking about how Oak Park had pursued this goal. The response was that it had been structured as a conversation among board members with few community members in attendance to hear the discussion. Discussions fed off presentations made by the business and real estate communities, and the governmental roles in economic development.

What more specific kinds of conversations among the districts might be useful?

- 1) A strategic plan for the community. The Village of Oak Park had commissioned a comprehensive community plan. That plan was developed through surveys of community members. Eleven different teams in various areas met over a year to develop specific goals, action steps, and benchmarking measures. An issue yet to be overcome is who is responsible for implementing it. Individual bodies may be asked to discuss it, the Village of Oak Park in particular, and to develop next steps.
- 2) How can the library help the different entities with their programmatic goals in order for them to be more effective and efficient? Sharing resources, ideals, values, etc. is important, as across-the-board prosperity can transform everything.
- 3) Should a more directed/facilitated conversation take place on the barriers? Should a system change be considered?
- 4) How can the Village create a “parent university” or “parent outreach” to teach parents about rising substance abuse issues?
- 5) More communication is needed on the goals and values. Conversations among the various entities is key.

Mr. Weissglass noted that the Village of Oak Park pushed for IGOV, a committee composed of the six governing bodies that primarily serve Oak Park. Each entity assigned 2 members and they meet monthly. Most of the collaboration actually happens at the administrative levels. The idea of relationship building became important and IGOV came together to understand finances, trends, bonding work, work with the school districts about operating referenda circumstances, etc. Collaborative discussions will continue on finances and economic development.

Someone suggested that all of the governing bodies of Oak Park and River Forest meet to have these collaborative discussions. Another participant appreciated the discussion on all of the top level strategies and challenges.

#### **Public Comment**

Gerry Homburg, resident of River Forest, was happy she had attended because she learned much. She felt the Triton should be more involved with River Forest and suggested the residents could take advanced classes or get post degrees, as well as use their facilities.

#### **Future dates**

Once future topics are developed, taxing bodies will be contacted about meeting again.

Submitted by Gail Kalmerton  
Clerk of the OPRFHS Board