

April 19, 2016

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Tuesday, April 19, 2016 in the Board Room of the high school.

Call to Order President Weissglass called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. A roll call indicated the following members were present: Fred Arkin, Jennifer Cassell, Thomas F. Cofsky, Dr. Steven Gevinson, Dr. Jackie Moore, Sara Dixon Spivy, and Jeff Weissglass. Also in attendance was Dr. Steven T. Isoye, Superintendent; Tod Altenburg, Chief School Business Official; Michael Carioscio, Chief Information Officer; Amy Hill, Director of Research and Assessment; Dr. Gwen Walker-Qualls, Director of Pupil Support Services; Dr. Frank Danes, Interim Director for Sheila Hardin, Faculty Senate Representative and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors Dr. Ralph Lee, Katherine and Larry Christmas, community members; Steven Schering of the Oak Leaves.

Public Comments Dr. Lee read the following statement:

“I want to express my gratitude to the Board for what appears to be an openness to at least consider ideas other than tearing down the parking garage to construct an Olympic-sized swimming pool, and to at least consider one or more twenty-five yard pools inside the existing building.

“I came tonight to begin two processes of trying to convince this Board of two separate things.

“The first idea that I am trying to sell you on is to abandon the idea of tearing down the parking garage, and I assure you that it has absolutely nothing to do with the parking of cars or the loss of parking space. It is based on the loss of something far more valuable: the loss of the ability to construct approximately 44,000 square feet of usable classroom, laboratory, and office space at a cost that would be enormously less expensive than anywhere else that does not involve the loss of green space. (44,000 sq. ft. is the space occupied by about 70 classrooms that are 25 x 25 feet square.) This space is currently available to us, and is available as a third- and fourth-floor addition on top of the existing garage. Because the foundation of this garage was constructed to accommodate a third and fourth level of automobile parking, it already has the strength to support two additional levels of academic space without additional structural support.

“Of course, I would expect you to have the following questions: Where

did these figures come from? Why would we need more classroom, lab, or office space? Don't we have enough already? Why would the construction of this space be less expensive than anywhere else? Obviously, these questions cannot be answered in a three minute presentation, and I therefore ask to have the opportunity to answer them in an item on the Board's agenda.

“The second idea that I want to convince the Board of is that it would be in the District's best long-range interests to invest (and possibly risk) somewhere between \$50,000 and \$250,000 in a detailed engineering study to determine the likely negative effects, if any, of removing a part of the western edge of the foundation and support wall of the East Pool building, and the likely costs of preventing those negative effects, for the purpose of determining the real costs of building a new swimming pool that extends beyond the western boundary of the current East Pool building, and permitting the construction of a pool that provides between twelve and sixteen 25-yard competitive swimming lanes. It would also be helpful to know the additional costs of building the structure with a foundation that would support the future construction of a third and fourth story of classroom, laboratory, and office space which would add about 18,000 sq. ft. of usable space. Again, a more extended discussion would be necessary to answer the obvious questions.

Michele Zurakowski, Executive Director of the Oak Park and River Forest Food Pantry, read the following statement.

“I want to talk to you today not about hunger, but about one of its corollaries: toxic stress, what results from strong, frequent, prolonged adversity- something as dramatic as physical or emotional abuse or as mundane" as the accumulated burdens of poverty. Toxic stress creates a bath of stress hormones in the brain that can disrupt circuits essential for learning, for memory, for following rules, for controlling impulses- and especially for solving problems.

“Anyone can experience toxic stress. But poverty presents the type of chronic adversity that can cause it. It's not simply a lack of money, but the constraints poverty imposes on time and mental resources. Parents may find it necessary to work two or three jobs just to stay afloat. They may work shifts or in workplaces that cause them to miss parent teacher conferences. Research shows that when the mind is focused on anxieties- the rent, the electric bill, finding food- cognitive resources are depleted, leaving less mental energy and cognitive control to think strategically, or to consider the long-term consequences of decisions.

Seen through this lens, we can begin to see how parenting in the context of poverty might be rendered more difficult. It is no wonder, then, that low-income parents experience depression at rates much higher than the average.

“While most of the root causes of poverty and toxic stress lie well beyond the purview of this committee, you do have control over one arena found to be crucial to parental resilience in the face of toxic stress: the formation of a caring environment that promotes empathy and inclusion. I'm sure you know that studies have found children feel more connected to inclusive schools. Predictability and trust reduce stress. Simply providing high levels of informational support has been shown to lower levels of anxiety and depression in parents. How we communicate and apply policies, then, can be a powerful tool for creating--or destroying--trust and empathy.

“Policies should support, not impede, at-risk families working towards stability and security. The fewer barriers we place in front of families who need services, the more bandwidth they will have for their children. And they will feel more connected to and supported by their school.

“So I invite you to take this opportunity to reach out to at-risk families with some simple changes that could have a profound impact on their perception of OPRF as a caring and empathetic institution: a place that truly cares about connecting them to services they need instead of one that views their participation with suspicion and distrust.

1. Allow the application for Free or Reduced meals to automatically qualify all families at 185% Federal Poverty Level or below for free services/fees/programming at OPRFHS.
 - a. One application per family will allow free access to ALL services.

2. Make minor changes to the current application process to promote a culture of inclusivity and empathy.
 - a. Wait until the income guidelines are available and send them out to all families along with the application.
 - i. Currently families are told to check a website or come to the school to pick up an application.
 - ii. Many low-income families do not have in-home Wi-Fi access.
 - iii. Would you want to come to the Welcome Center and tell everyone there you needed an application for free meals? It's a small humiliation. But a deeply felt one.
 - b. The actual letter/application has what I think is an overall welcoming tone (I like the O/A format and the responses are humane), but some small things inadvertently undermine those good intentions.

- i. In an effort to keep it to 1 page, the font is so small as to be nearly illegible. Message: I am not worth another piece of paper.
 - ii. Item #8 indicates if your application is rejected you "should ask school officials" though none are listed, and "You also may ask for a hearing by calling or writing to the person listed above." Again, no one is listed.
 - iii. Item #15 regarding more help, lists a national toll-free number, nothing local.
 - 1. We could list OPRF Food Pantry here with our Benefits. Coordinator's contact information for a more personal approach.
 - iv. There is no signature on this letter
 - 1. Coming from a faceless, nameless entity undermines the generally empathetic tone of the letter.
3. Send a letter to all families newly listed on ISBE's monthly direct certification list informing them of support available (waived fees in future, local resources, etc.).
- i. I would be happy to create a list of local social service agencies and the services available to low-income families locally.

Toxic stress and depression can make it harder to provide the nurturing relationship so vital for children's development. It can make onerous tasks like deciphering and completing complicated forms beyond the levels of exhaustion. Please enact these simple, common-sense suggestions to help connect families to the resources they need-and deserve.”

Closed Session

Mr. Weissglass moved to enter closed session 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. Cassell. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Culture, Climate and Behavior Committee Membership

Mr. Weissglass moved to approve the membership of the Culture, Climate, and Behavior Committee membership; seconded by Ms. Dixon Spivy. A voice vote resulted in motion carried.

Ms. Dixon Spivy was very pleased with the composition of the committee.

**Instructional
Materials
Fee**

This topic was being discussed because of the questions asked at the March 24 Board of Education meeting regarding the number of students receiving free lunch, reduced lunch, and a fee waiver along with detailed descriptions of the process that are currently followed in Food Service for free/reduced and the Bookstore's fee waiver.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

As of April 12, 2016:

- Food Service Free Lunch = 515 students
Of these, 59 did not apply to the Bookstore and 2 were denied
- Food Service Reduced Lunch = 99 students. Of these, 23 were denied by the Bookstore when applied for a fee waiver
- Bookstore Waived = 491 students

The difference is 24 between Food Service Free Lunch and Bookstore waived. Here is a summary of the two processes that parents/guardians complete for Free or Reduced Lunch in Food Service and a Fee Waiver in the Bookstore:

The Bookstore requires more documentation than federal requirements. In reviewing the Annual Financial Report of June 30, 2015, Mr. Altenburg noted that what sets the Bookstore apart from Food Service is that Food Service is reimbursed by the National Lunch and Milk programs and receives \$302,000. The Bookstore gets no funding.

Discussion ensued about the IMF Reduction and Revenue Impact chart included in the packet. The Reduced Student Rate (90% x \$320) district portion should be \$270, not \$2,701. The District pays 90%, and the student pays 10%. The lost to the Bookstore would be \$276,000. The incremental loss of revenue minus reduced is \$25,000.

Districts are not bound by federal guidelines for the bookstores. The District sets a policy to determine at what levels it would receive a waived or partially waived the fee which varies by district.

Ms. Dixon Spivy concurred with Ms. Zurakowski's earlier comments as did Dr. Moore, Ms. Cassell, and Mr. Arkin. Ms. Dixon Spivy stated that in her experience she would want to see Ms. Zurakowski's earlier suggestions implemented and to have the FRE in the Bookstore mirror FDA's guidelines for student lunches. Dr. Moore stated that Ms. Zurakowski's comments were grounded in overall research, and she also has a personal connection in the community. Dr. Moore concurred with the notion that making a process more onerous for families under stress is not helpful to anyone and that the process should be simplified. It is hard to reconcile this cost with other costs that may not be codified in dollars, but rather by absentee rates, etc., that come with the underlying issues of poverty. She continued that the process seems complicated, and she was disappointed that she had not been aware of it, but she knew that the process of obtaining certain forms is onerous. The Welcome

Center has a lot of responsibility for responding to requests for waiver forms. Dr. Moore continued that it is difficult to talk about spending millions on a pool when some students cannot get the materials they need. Mr. Arkin believed the District should be looking at guidelines for itself, not just at the federal guidelines. He suggested developing a sliding scale as he thought that the federal guidelines were too tight. Mr. Cofsky agreed with the need to make it easy and welcoming and favored streamlining the process and expanding it to include those illegible for the reduced component, but he struggled with validation and verification. Self-reporting information opens one up to fraud, etc. Dr. Gevinson concurred with all of the comments and suggested that the District assume the best of people until abuse occurs. Mr. Weissglass agreed that the verification question should be explored by the administration. Dr. Isoye noted that the District is not allowed to verify income for free and reduced waivers. All of the forms except for the cover memo are mandatory and come from the federal guidelines.

Mr. Cofsky stated that the topic of partnering with other entities on an application came up at IGOV. Data sharing would have to be allowed in order for the information to be shared.

Discussion ensued about those families who are on the cusp of poverty yet do not qualify by the Department of Agriculture's federal guidelines, and streamlining the process, collaborating with organizations in the community, and, perhaps, establishing a policy across all governmental agencies regarding access for families. Dr. Isoye stated that while the Bookstore policy may have to reflect these points that will not be completed by the end of the year.

Next steps: The Board of Education will approve the final IMF fee which will incorporate reduced students and the acceptance/verification of the process going only through the federal application form at its regular April meeting. A technology fee recommendation will also come forward. Dr. Isoye and Mr. Weissglass will discuss which committee should address what the cost of being a successful student is and if there is something that can be done about the people who fall just outside of the federal boundary.

**Equal Opportunity
School Memorandum
of Understanding**

Mr. Weissglass moved to approve the Equal Opportunity School (EOS) Memorandum of Understanding, as presented; seconded by Ms. Cassell. Discussion ensued.

EOS collects data and surveys students and teachers to identify the dynamics of upper-level course programs at each school. It then creates a strategy to reach and recruit students. Finally, it implements outreach and recruitment strategies and provides planning support, data tools, enrollment tracking, and troubleshooting. All in the effort to support the school's efforts to encourage more students to take AP courses. The cost of this program is \$50,000, but a grant has been obtained that will pay 50% of that fee. A timeline was provided.

Support programs costs can vary, and while many schools work with existing programs, something new could be implemented. Thus, the cost of the support programs is now unknown. Future commitment with EOS will depend on what happens next year; the District could decide to continue working with EOS fully, use it for data, or coaching. This was originally introduced through MSAN 3 or 4 years ago, and the District talked with EOS last year. At that time, the administration did not believe it had the capacity to enlist these services, because of the breadth of the Board of Education goals. Dr. Isoye hoped that Board of Education's goals would consider this as one of its focuses next year. Dr. Isoye continued that a superintendent in Columbia Missouri saw a tremendous increase in students registering for AP classes after engaging with EOS. Dr. Gevinson stated that the Board of Education has always sought to get students to move into honors and AP classes; this program would be a test to see how one organization would use different techniques to identify students. Dr. Moore stated that increasing student class levels must be across the board; the focus has to be on increasing rigor for all students. Dr. Gevinson stated that there is a small number of students that would transition from the transition track, but a large number of students in the College Prep track could transition. Dr. Isoye noted that the District would want to work with fidelity with EOS with the understanding what is learned can be extrapolated.

Mr. Cofsky stated that while he is supportive of specificity in goals, i.e., fully close race and participation income gaps in AP/IB by fall 2017 and Raise AP/IB performance by spring 2018, he asked how many students would be identified. He also asked what the cost of participation in AP would be. He supported the recommendation.

A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Pool Update

Mr. Weissglass gave an update on the community pool meetings. Three meetings were held, two at the high school and one at the River Forest Community Center and over 350 individuals attended. Each night about one-third of the people were walk-ins. A survey will be sent out this week about the process. Mr. Weissglass and Mr. Arkin also did an abbreviated presentation with the faculty and staff at a Faculty Senate meeting on Wednesday. On behalf of Faculty Senate, Ms. Hardin thanked the Board, noting that the feedback had been very positive. The next steps are for the consultant to bring together and prepare a report on the feedback and prepare a set of FAQ that will make decisions on how to move forward. He expects that would come to the May Board of Education meeting. He continued that people indicated an interest in better understanding of the condition of the garage, i.e., how long will it last, what is the cost to refurbish it, how much will lose if it is demolished, and how does the long-term facility plan relate to each other and how will it be merged. That may be discussed at the May Board of Education meeting as well. The goal is still to make a decision on the pool and to the extent that the LTFP can fit into it.

Mr. Weissglass' impression from listening to the conversations and from the emails he has received is that the bulk of the energy is clustered around option 2 and 4, with a group asking why swimming is needed. Option 3 had almost no support. Little energy was given to Option #1 which raises the question about what should be looked at in the LTFP. Option 4 is a pool that is 68 ft. wide but people felt it should be 75 ft. wide. Option 2 is about making the west pool all shallow and the east pool cool.

Dr. Gevinson was then asked to speak about Option 5. He thanked Katherine Christmas for doing so much work on this project, as he would not have pursued it if not been for her. He clarified that he sent preliminary drawings out Sunday and had forwarded revised drawings that afternoon, one from Legat, one on Keystone and one on the west field possibilities. Its objectives were: a single pool solution, solve the parking problem, affect sports, preserve access for other teams, do so at a reasonable cost, minimize disruption to current programs and long-term facility plan needs. Swimming and diving are key pieces. He highlighted the following points:

- 1) 1 120-ft. stretch pool for diving
- 2) Locker rooms, etc., just as the other proposals,
- 3) Close to the athletic department and accessible through the Sky Bridge.
- 4) Eleven or 12 tennis courts would be available on two sites. Seven or 8 courts at Keystone; it is a beautiful setting, has visitor seating and parking.
- 5) The River Forest Park District would have control as to when it was used.
- 6) Keep much of the practice on campus and it could and should provide year-round all-weather playing for both team play and PE by using a temporary bubble.
- 7) Preserve PE tennis.
- 8) Provide the same amount of court time and improve the court surface, as it would be replacing 80-year old concrete.
- 9) Baseball and softball spaces would be the same.
- 10) Parking would be status quo
- 11) Construction would minimize disruption to any activity. Depending on how it is staged, the District would not have to worry about disrupting any activities or services.
- 12) Going into the maintenance area would require closing down the electric power to the entire building for as long as six weeks.
- 13) From LTFP, it optimizes opportunities, free of pools and could do a 10-year plan for repurposing the current pool space, which future boards could consider for a larger project.
- 14) The original cost was listed as \$24 to \$28 million for the West field part, but because of further questioning, it would cost \$32 to \$36 million, lower than the costs of the options of 2 and 4.
- 15) Tennis dimensions are a factor.

The USTA will offer the minimum recommendations on court dimensions, but not requirements. Having talked with Mr. Galluzzo, Dr. Gevinson said tennis is not married to the dimensions. Less space could be used in between the courts, behind the courts, and the sidelines. This additional space would give the west field and Keystone more space. An IGA must be completed with the RF Park District. He asked if the Board of Education was willing to investigate this option. Some talks have occurred since he and Ms. Christmas had made a proposal to the River Forest Park District more than two months ago having to do with a combination tennis and paddle court plan. River Forest has hired an architect to draft a paddle tennis plan. Presently there are 2 courts, but the desire is for 4 and a warming hut. OPRFHS could use this timing to its advantage. The first two paddle courts are oriented north-south and, in fact, the paddle court is a winter sport and should be oriented east/west, which is difficult and expensive to do. The Park District would be interested in talking about getting all of them reoriented today. The drawings sent to the Board of Education reorientate those courts. The Park District will not go forward until it gets a proposal from the District.

Dr. Gevinson added that the coaches favored this plan.

Discussion ensued as to why this proposal had not followed the path/process of the other options. Mr. Weissglass stated that four options were developed by the working group that he and Dr. Isoye convened. The architects kept them informed. This plan did not go before the working group because they thought it was a path that was already been provided in a variety of options that met the needs of the district. No further discussion occurred. Originally, Dr. Gevinson and Mr. Weissglass had disagreed about whether to ask Legat to do the work on this. Mr. Weissglass decided that Legat should do it to determine if it made sense and to use this as a case study to have an understanding of who gets to move things forward to the Board of Education, because this came about because of a board member's urging. He asked the Board of Education if the administration and architects should spend more time and money developing the proposal.

Ms. Spivy asked whether three courts would be adequate for PE and how much water is needed? If a larger pool would only allow three tennis courts, and how that would affect tennis/team practice? Would the junior varsity team have to move to River Forest? Could practices be staggered? If it would meet the needs according to swim and tennis coaches, this proposal would get the most bang for the buck. Provided there are enough water and adequate tennis courts; this is the most long-term plan, so it addresses the needs for lesser plans. Dr. Moore concurred with Ms. Spivy. She differentiated this option from the others and did not want to minimize it because it is thoughtful, planned and the due diligence was done, so it feels more fully formed than some of the suggestions. She wanted more information and the ability to discuss it from the standpoint of the other options.

Mr. Weissglass noted that during the 2014 pool committee discussion, the tennis coach had said being off campus had real drawbacks regarding connectedness to the school, i.e., friends watching matches, etc., and he concerned about losing PE tennis. Mr. Weissglass suggested that the coaches address the Board of Education.

Mr. Cofsky was supportive of looking at it because the District wants the best option. He liked the fact that there is a collaboration with another entity. What are the obligations going forward? Ms. Cassell needed more information, i.e., one sheet to look at the pros and cons to weigh in on this option. She was disappointed that the community did not have the opportunity to weigh in on it. At the three community meetings, Mr. Weissglass had said there might be another option, but in order for it to move to a broader conversation more information was needed. Mr. Arkin agreed that the best solution needed to be found. His concerns had to do with the timing. He, Dr. Isoye and Dr. Gevinson met with the River Forest Park District which thought that getting it passed through both it and the Village of River Forest would take a long time, as it is about reconfiguring Keystone and moving activities further north on the east side towards Lake Street. He too was concerned about the loss of green space as that will be an issue with the community. How would the District be able to get public comment and input on this option? Time is of the essence, because the pools are not in good shape.

Mr. Weissglass did not think this was a competitive option because of the numbers. In addition to the \$32 to \$36 million, it does not include the cost of renovating Keystone, which could be \$2.5 million or more and it does not touch the vacated pool space. Option 4 gets a stretch pool and 8400 ft. already prepared. For comparison, if adding the cost of preparing the space at \$11 million, the total cost would be \$47 million. The loss of green space is an issue. Also, at some point, the garage will need refurbishing. The better option of a stretch pool is #2 and #4. Dr. Gevinson said it would amount to the same amount of green space if tennis is considered green space at Keystone. Dr. Gevinson found it difficult to believe that \$11 million was needed to repurpose and put down floors. This amount can be discussed at the next meeting.

Ms. Spivy asked for a discussion as to whether the garage is not torn down, would the high school assume the debt in options 2 and 5.

Further discussion will occur at the April 28 meeting about this option and whether Legat should do more work. Ms. Spivy wanted assurances from tennis and validation there was enough water. Mr. Weissglass questioned the measurements on the proposal.

Board members were asked to send any questions to Dr. Isoye and Ms. Kalmerton to structure the conversation at the next Board of Education meeting to make a decision on how to move forward ASAP.

Adjournment

At 8:30 p.m., Mr. Weissglass moved to adjourn the Special Board Meeting; seconded by Dr. Moore. A voice vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

John Weissglass
President

Sara Dixon Spivy
Secretary

Submitted by
Gail Kalmerton
Clerk of the Board