

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Tuesday, December 8, 2015, in Room 293 of the high school.

Call to Order President Weissglass called the meeting to order at 8:21 p.m. A roll call indicated the following members were present: Fred Arkin, Jennifer Cassell, Thomas F. Cofsky, Dr. Steve 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; Philip M. Prale, ASCI; Sheila Hardin, Faculty Senate Executive Committee Chair; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors Jeannie Affelder, Judith Alexander, Karen Anderson, Bridgett Baron, Al Berggren, Kit Bernardi, Ainsley Borg, Lisa Col, Dana Connell, Andrew Crawley, Brian Endless, Kathleen Fiorito, Wayne Franklin, William Gale, Deborah Gorman-Smith, Julie Griffin-Meadows, Dorothy Houlihan, Lisa Kayser, Matt Kemper, Tom Kindler, Maureen and Bruce Kleinman, Dan Koenig, Matt Kosterman, Sarah Miyater, Rebecca Morrow-Nye, Peter Nolan, Tony Nowak, Kathy O'Donnell, Robert Parks, Jennifer Partridge, Ellen Pimentel, Lynette Poirier, Mary Colleen Roberts, Vicki and Bruno Rohner, Julie Root, Peter Ryan, Jack and Monica Sheehan, Joel Shoemeyer, Ian Silber, Doug Springer, Cheryl Stein, Karen Steward-Nolan, Mary Stewart, community members; Patrick Pearson, OPRFHS faculty member; Jared Allread, Sage Degand, Scott Kiefer, Ethan Resek, students; Michael Romain of the *Wednesday Journal*.

Mr. Weissglass explained that no decision would be made tonight about the pool, but that the Board of Education welcomed the public's comments.

Public Comments A jazz quartet ensemble of students performed as a prelude to the Winter Prism concert on December 10.

Ian Silber thanked the Board of Education for being bold and transparent and applauded it for being upfront with the people and involving the stakeholders. It formed a committee of 16 members from all area of the community to study the issue of the pool. He was proud of what has been done, and he hoped the Board of Education would continue to do what was best for the school and for those who participated in the democratic process.

Matt Kosterman, a resident of this River Forest since 2002, has two daughters at OPRFHS and one at Roosevelt. He too thanked the Board of Education for its service on this issue. OPRFHS needs a new pool and no best solution exists. The project has been discussed in 30 meetings over three years. Now people who were not engaged before are coming to the party. A pool will affect everyone with school-aged children. Green space is the one commodity that is more constrained than parking. The parking garage should not have been built; the pools were 60 years old at that time. Eliminating green space will have a

trickle down on effect on all sports. He hates tax increases, but the community must spend money to maintain its standard. If not a reduction in the desire for homes in the area will occur and result in lower home prices. It would only take a 1% reduction to equal the amount of increase in taxes as a result of this proposal. Ten out of 10 will vote no to the raising of taxes, and no one likes change.

Peter Nolan, a resident of 739 N. Hayes, Oak Park, thanked the Board of Education for their dedication in resolving this issue. The people who just recently joined the process feel there is a crisis. People are asking why the pool is being moved. The answer is that the pools are dying and all of the other viable options have been exhausted. Now is a critical moment. Many support a pool, but not just on the garage site. While people want to have a vote, the choice is not between the pool and the garage site. It is between a pool on the garage site, less green space, or no aquatics program. He asked the Board of Education and community members to be the proverbial adults in the room. Choices are limited and imperfect and he urged the Board of Education to put the interest of students first when making this decision.

Karen Steward-Nolan, a resident of 739 N. Hayes, Oak Park. She thanked everyone from the community, giving special credit to the committee members who studied the issues and the boards. She learned that often the deepest learning occurs expectedly. She hoped for a deeper understanding from this meeting. She also confronted the image a cartoonist had put in the community 11 times which depicts middle-aged, white men of sizeable girth wearing small swimsuits, swim caps, and goggles. To make central to the argument over the pool a loathing image of the human body is an embarrassment to this community. Swimmers are all different shapes, ages, ethnicities, attire choices, etc., and there is nothing humorous or embarrassing about wearing a small swimsuit. The swimming community is open to all body shapes. Water sports uniformly offer equal opportunity to both men and women.

Al Berggren referred to an Intergovernmental Agreement that was signed by the Board of Education's predecessors in 2003. It says "the parking garage will serve the needs of the school district and the community by providing badly needed parking facilities." It gives teachers and staff the ability to use this facility free of charge at all times and exclusively between 6 a.m. and 4 p.m. on school contract days. In the 25-year lease for a 300-space parking garage with options to extend began March 10, 2003, the only reference to removal says upon expiration of original lease period or any extension thereof. The garage is an integral part of a larger plan of accommodating parking in the neighborhood of the school campus. The city of Crystal Lake and Crystal Lake South High School just fought about some bleachers. In a ruling made by the Illinois Supreme Court, the city as a home rule community, has the power to regulate land use within its jurisdiction through zoning, and no school districts are not exempt from zoning laws. Schools are in the R2 District which is intended to preserve and protect low-density neighborhoods and schools are required to have 1 parking space per classroom on site, i.e., 186 parking spaces on campus.

The residential protection standards are to ensure that any potential adverse impact on nearby resident property is minimized. The contractor said the price for repurposing the space was not included in the \$37.5 million. The Board of Education has an agreement to keep the garage.

Andrew Crowley, a resident of 329 S. Lombard in Oak Park, echoed the previous comments about the transparency that had occurred during the three-year process. Transportation is an important dialogue in this community, and a solution can be arrived at after the pool is built.

Brian Endless, 1212 Columbian, Oak Park, a member of the board of Oak Park Youth Baseball and Softball, and parent of an OPRFHS graduate and current sophomore, thanked the Board of Education members and community members who contributed to this issue. He supported the resolution passed by the Board of Education and believed it was the best solution for the entire community. There were multiple years of discussion, negotiations, public meetings, and enormous input from the community, school groups, newspapers, etc. There are not many options. A new pool is needed. The parking location it is the best location and the only one feasible for the pool. He focused on losing green space. Soccer would be affected because it plays on other fields in the Village. The football team and marching bands use these fields. If the fields were used for a pool, the trickledown effect would be to push things off campus, yet there is no place to go. Baseball and softball feeder groups would be damaged. Green space is by far the most valuable commodity. Putting the pool on the parking garage site keeps all sports on campus. A parking study was done and when people walked the community they found available parking. He encouraged the Board of Education to stick to the resolution and support it.

Joe Connell addressed three commonly discussed issues plus a personal comment.

“1. Pool Size--Our school is sized for the size of our student body. The size and quantity of our cafeterias correspond to the number of students in a lunch period; our auditoriums relate to performance and audience sizes and schedules. So too with aquatics.

“Why not a 25-yard pool like other high schools? The Dept. of Education says the average enrollment is 781 students per high school. At projected enrollment of 4,000 students, OPRF will be **5.1** times larger than the average US secondary school.

“What about peer institutions?

- Fenwick doesn't have a pool this size with 1,175 students
- Evanston doesn't have a pool this size. It has 2 pools and use Northwestern University's long-course pool with 3,122 students
- Niles North has a new pool that cost \$20M, same architect, it is its 2nd pool with 2,389 students
- York (in our West Suburban Conference) has a 50-yard pool with 2,632 students

- Stevenson does have a pool this size with 3,942 students. It built a Long course pool 20 years ago.

“This is not about the 1%-ers or being gold-plated. It is about building to accommodate our size.

“2. Pool Use and Need

“The local editorial cartoonist implies that the pools are only used by elite, white, competitive swimmers. Let us draw a picture of use and need based on facts:

- 300 - 400 students use the pool daily for all 8 periods, plus extracurricular activities, and after that, community programming.
- Approximately 77,000 OPRF students of both genders and all races have saved themselves from drowning in our pools since 1926.
- 70 % of African-American and 60 % of Hispanic/Latino children cannot swim. (Source: National research study by the USA Swimming Foundation and the University of Memphis)
- African-American children drown at a rate nearly three times higher than their Caucasian peers. (Source: CDC)

“Addressing this is elitist? The “achievement gap” should have priority. Athletic Director John Stelzer said in 2014 that OPRF was at 96% of its PE and athletic capacity and that 57% of the OPRF enrollment are student-athlete participants. Another Board study showed that of the 70% of our students who participate in extracurricular activities, all of them have higher GPAs than those who do not participate. Venues such as fields, gyms, studios and pools play a part in addressing this complex matter.”

“What are you *for*? As Karen Stewart-Nolan notes, it is easy to be against something. It is much harder to be *FOR* something.

I’m *for* a vibrant student high school experience filled with choices.

I’m *for* keeping the green space intact and all current activities staying on campus.

I’m *for* teaching a life-long life-saving skill to all our students.

I’m *for* the democratically elected School Board establishing strategic plans and making decisions that relate to OPRF’s curriculum, facilities, and resources to achieve them.

I’m *for* the deliberative, transparent, yes, exhaustive process that leads us to this plan from a slate of imperfect possibilities.

What are you *for*? This is packaged as a pool project. But it is much, much more.”

Deborah Gorman-Smith, a resident of 635 Fair Oaks, Oak Park, parent of a swimmer, and softball and baseball players, appreciated the Board of Education for its thoughtful and deliberate process and transparency on where to put and how to fund a new pool. The Board of Education thoroughly studied and researched every aspect of the what, where, and how over the last three years. Forty meetings had as an agenda item the pool and hours of public comment were received. The process was public and transparent with the *Wednesday*

Journal reporting on it. From looking at all of the materials, it is clear that no stone was left unturned. The Board of Education went above and beyond to ensure there was community input. Board of Education members have been fiscally responsible stewards. This is the time to move forward with the well-considered decision.

Karin West, resident of 814 N. Harvey, Oak Park, came to US citizens two years, because she wanted to vote in elections. She had the opportunity to vote for some of the current Board of Education members. She had elected the Board of Education members to make the hard choices on her behalf and on behalf of the community and the OPRFHS students. She valued their time and effort to look at every option and to come up with the current solution of building a pool on the parking garage site. Having a pool is important. Her son now teaches simple swimming skills to graduate undergraduate college students and university professors who had not had the opportunity to learn swimming.

Peter Ryan, resident of 414 Augusta, Oak Park, thanked the Board of Education for its work and read a statement written by a friend. The pro-referendum group was spreading exaggerated statements, misinformation and fear. They are using the cost of \$54 million by adding \$17 million for refurbishing the old pools. This cannot be linked to the new pool amount. The most informed ones should make this decision, the Board of Education. They were sworn in as Board of Education members to do their best for OPRFHS. The garage was a backdoor deal and many voters were against it when it was built. The pool will be regulation size, not an Olympic-sized pool. The Board of Education has spent countless hours on this subject and their efforts were appreciated.

Wayne Franklin, a resident of 308 Home, Oak Park, thanked the Board of Education for all of its work. His son will finish high school and will not benefit from a new pool, but he had learned life lessons from sports. His son is a young man of color. There is the achievement gap. But what he has learned in performance swimming had increased his ability in other things. Academically, it is important. The Board of Education has fiduciary responsibility. They were elected to do that. Nothing here says the public has to vote on everything. The \$17.5 million in bonds is spread for over 20 years and much forethought was given to future generations contributing. Baseball, softball, marching band, tennis, soccer, lacrosse, field hockey, as well as swimming, water pool, synchronized swimming teams will support the Board of Education in its decision.

Cheryl Stein, resides at Division and Fair Oaks, and was concerned about parking as this community has the worst parking she has seen, except for Chicago. Fenwick and many other prize-winning teams have 25-yard pools. She is a lap swimmer and can only use the pool three months out of the year and only early in the morning. She asked why this was not discussed with the Park District at the time it was redoing its outside pool. She asked if she would be able to use the new pool. A fair policy is needed and the community needs to be able to use the pool.

Tony Nowak, resident of 825 N. Cuyler, Oak Park, has three children who are not competitive swimmers, but they do know how to swim. They are involved in other green space activities and it is important to developing learning skills. Being engaged contributes to learning, improved GPA, etc. While there are other parking garages at Harlem and South, no more green space exists. He has only one car and uses the parking garage. Working with the parking plan and transportation is part of this equation. However, it is important to build the pool and save the green space. All options have been exhausted and this is the best of the imperfect choices.

Bridgett Baron, resident of 128 Francisco Terrace, Oak Park, thanked the Board of Education and she appreciated its tough position. People have said that this has been transparent and vigorous process. A new piece of information to her was that until September she had been unaware that the decision had been made to be build a 50-yard pool. A big part of building a new pool was to host meets and competitions, rent out it out and get income, etc. However, ample parking will not be available to host these meets and competitions and to rent out space. She wondered how that would be addressed, and would it be addressed before the pool was built.

Julie Root, resident of OP resident, was not opposed to the plan to renovate or create a safe and usable swimming space. Her two children will attend OPRFHS and she looked forward to them benefiting from renovated facilities. She asked that this decision be brought to the voters. Many were under impression that this would be brought to referendum and while perhaps inaccurate, from what she had reviewed, that had been the decision. People did not expected the process to be different. The Board of Education was elected to represent the entire community, but this issue has divided the community. She respected and believed that the voice of the swimming and sports communities needed to be represented and heard, but the many people who have not come to the meetings and who are expressing their opinion deserve to be heard as well. She believes it needs to come to a vote.

Jennifer Partridge, resident of Oak Park, believed that the community was lead to believe by commentary and explicit assurances by Board of Education members that this would go for a referendum regardless of the site selected. It has been argued that the April Board of Education elections served as a referendum on the pool issue, but that is not true. Not a single member during the election expressed support of the pool without going for a referendum. Why then would the taxpayers believe they had authorized the pool process, when as recently as 2013, the use of surplus funds to build a pool was voted down. Now, the Board of Education has decided to deny the community the right to vote on a significant process. That is wrong and the reason why thousands of people have signed the petition in 10 days. She has interacted with hundreds of people in Oak Park and River Forest and they are thanking those engaging on their behalf. The overall response is unexpected and powerful. I request the Board of Education reconsider its decision and to allow the community to vote on this project.

Sheila Hardin, 8129 Lake Street, RF, teacher and chair of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, read the following statement.

“The Faculty Senate recognizes and supports OPRF’s need for a viable, safe pool space that meets both the academic and co-curricular requirements of our students. However, the Board’s current plan to demolish the parking garage presents significant concerns:

1. Demolishing the parking garage compromises the personal security of faculty and staff. School employees arrive and leave the school at all hours of the day; many people rely on arriving extremely early in the morning or leaving late at night in order to get their work done. Currently, security guards monitor the exterior of the school and parking area, and there are cameras in the garage to ensure the safety of both property and people, especially in off-hours. This security would be lost with the demolition of the garage.
2. Elimination of on-campus parking raises serious liability issues, especially in times of inclement weather. Currently, the school goes to great lengths to keep walkways free of ice and debris and to clear snow from parking spaces in a timely manner. Under the new plan, it is not clear who will be responsible for snow removal and for keeping sidewalks free of snow and ice.
3. The school has made an effort to be supportive of employees with children, and this parking plan has the opposite effect. The staff who will have to park the farthest from school will likely disproportionately be people who need to drop their children off at school. Many schools prohibit early drop-off, a problem which is compounded by commute time because a significant percentage of our staff does not live in district.
4. OPRF’s role as a central, essential institution for both cultural and athletic events is compromised by a lack of parking. The current plan will make it more difficult for parents, visiting parents, and staff alike to attend school events. OPRF wants faculty and staff to attend games, plays, and concerts at the high school and a lack of parking makes that attendance more difficult.
5. The demolition of the parking garage will diminish OPRF’s status in the broader professional community. The existence of ample, on-campus parking has logistically allowed OPRF to expand relationships with other schools, businesses, and professional associations. The lack of parking will limit our school’s ability to host such events.
6. The current proposal exacerbates the already strained relationship the school has with our neighbors. As difficult as daily parking will be, events such as Back-to-School Night, Parent-Teacher Conferences, and 8th Grade Open House will place an even greater burden on these relationships.

“In closing, the Faculty Senate is concerned that the process has been flawed in several ways. The foremost concern is that the board formed a Pool Committee and then failed to adopt the recommendation of that committee. The Faculty Senate recommends that the Board of Education adopt the recommendations of the Pool Committee and build on-campus parking in conjunction with the new pool.”

Judith Alexander, when the high school used a technicality to collect \$110 million without a referendum the community responded with enormous bitterness. This Board of Education had inhibited anger and mistrust and it attempted to address that by spending down the surplus. There was no true community outreach on the pool. Only those who have a vested interest in athletics have come to these meetings. As one who has been collecting petition signatures, 85% to 90% are eager to sign. People are angry. By not putting this to a vote, this Board of Education is repeating the mistakes of their predecessors. No one elected the Board of Education to spend an enormous sum on a single project without the voters' consent by resorting to a technicality again in order to avoid a referendum. The public did not know the Board of Education's position on the pool when the elections occurred. The advisory referendum to build a pool in 2013 was voted down. She asked if the petition effort failed because of the short amount of time to gather then, would the Board of Education claim it had given its advocates a fair chance. The *Wednesday Journal* called requirements unfair. If it fails, will the Board of Education finance the project with its surplus to avoid a referendum? If this is the best decision, take it to the community. If not, the bitterness and mistrust will deepen, and when an operating referendum is needed, the voters may not support it. She asked the Board of Education to think again about avoiding a referendum.

Ellen Pimentel, 147 Lombard, Oak Park, spoke about why she thought the pool selection process worked and it was unfair and undemocratic that petitions could end that process. She objected to the garnering of petitions with quotes taken out of context in order to inflame unknowing voters with misinformation. She has attended board members and pool meetings for at least 5 years. Many people have spent much time researching this subject. She singled out Dr. Gevinson who earlier commented that he was “worried about a parking,” and yet ultimately supported the solution. The number of signatures and the petition period is set by statute, not by the Board of Education. The cost of the pool is \$37.5 million, but the petitioners are using a bigger number. This is a terrible lesson for those who worked hard to find their work overturned by those who did not work on it. She felt it would be difficult to find people to be on committees in the future if their work was overturned.

Tom Kindler, 813 Clinton Avenue, Oak Park, is a parent of 4 students. He spoke as resident and regional commissioner of AYSO. He and the AYSO board are in favor of building pool on parking garage and supported PE classes, aquatics and the community at large. He supports investing in the overall high school experience. All things require capital investment. The community and

Board of Education must be willing to make the commitment to move on to the next investment. Schools that do not progress and are not schools that excel. He encouraged them to move forward with the full plan as it is the best developed.

Bruce Kleinman, 245 N. Kenilworth, Oak Park, and an Oak Park resident for 33 years, opposed the pool project because it was an insult to teachers, as they form the bedrock of an enlightened community that is interested in education. Learning to swim is important but an Olympic sized pool is not needed to learn how to swim. This is not a small project as it has wide-ranging ramifications to the local community and it should be presented to the people.

Maureen Kleinman, resident of 245 N. Kenilworth, Oak Park, thanked the Board of Education and committee members. She strongly supports parking and green space, but she does not to support 50-yard pool designed to serve the needs of the greater community. She favored a 25-meter pool with garage space above, below or next to it, etc. She apologized that she was late to the party, but 52% of the community voted against an aquatic complex in 2013.

Rebecca Morrow Nye, resident of 420 Euclid, Oak Park and a 38-year resident, asked the Board of Education to consider the high school's obligation as an institution that currently employees more than 500 persons to provide a minimum of one off-street, onsite parking space per classroom according to Article 6.2.2.d of the Village of Oak Park Zoning Ordinance promulgated in 2002. Teachers want and need parking. Sporting and cultural events create a need for parking. The school's fight for lights was predicated on parking in the garage for games. She did not oppose a new swimming pool but to propose another selection for the location for the pool. District 200 has responsibility to provide parking like Evanston and Stevenson. She did not want this high school to be substandard by not having on-campus parking.

Monica Sheehan, resident of 626 fair oaks, Oak Park. She quoted from Board of Education minutes:

April 24 and august 28, 2014, President Mr. Phelan stated that high schools financed these types of expenses by spreading them out over a long period of time and suggest the community be allowed to weigh in on them by going for a referendum.

August 28, 2014: Dr. Moore paying for this with a referendum is the only way this would feel like a true community project

April 24, Dr. Gevinson said he supported referendum.

At the 12/15/14 Pool meeting, Mr. Altenburg highlighted the reason for a referendum:

- 1) Permission to build
- 2) Permission for bonding authority

3) Community consent

Mr. Traczk had said not asking the voters would cause a backlash and other members concurred with him. Mr. Cofsky leaned toward a referendum.

At the January 13, 2015 Special Board Meeting, Dr. Lee stated he would vote against amendment because it was not clear if the District would go for referendum. Ms. Patchak-Layman stated that if the District was going to spend \$37.5 million on a project, it must affirm that with community to make sure it is what it wanted.

Ms. Sheehan stated that because of these quotes, the tax paying community rightfully thought the Board of Education would put this forward for referendum. In 2013, the community was asked if it wanted to spend the sizable cash fund to build a community pool and the voters said no. She clarified that the number of \$54 million for the pool included, the price of the pool, the purchase and demolition of the garage, and the repurposing of the old pool space. No lies were told. Taxpayers have a right to vote and she urged the Board of Education to maintain that right.

William Gale, 925 N. Euclid, Oak Park, reflected on this issue, democracy and representative government. The Board of Education members were elected to make decisions on the community's behalf. Most of the time, their decisions feel good. But the parking garage was a solution to a previous problem and he felt the decision to take it down disrespected the teachers. After reviewing the material and minutes, he acknowledged that many things had been considered. However, he suggested that repurposing the old pool could include using a storage room and, perhaps, not lose a lane. In addition, the field house has room to put an Olympic Size swimming pool underground.

Mary Colleen Roberts, resident of 818 N. Grove, Oak Park, sat a year ago on the subcommittee to assist the Board of Education in making a decision about the pool and the attending issues. She named the individual board members and thanked them for listening, considering, being here, making a decision, and standing firm in the face of people calling them out and being disrespectful. The Board of Education members should not be disrespected in any way. They campaigned to be public servants. She also said that what is being a 50-meter pool. The issues being combined are parking and money. The parking issue was addressed by the Board of Education. A referendum was talked about in all of the discussions, but they were not binding on this Board of Education. What is binding is the decision to build the pool and to fund it with the reserves and \$17.5 million in bonds. Comments taken out of context that were made after examining the totality of the circumstances. She stood by the Board of Education's decision.

Lisa Col, resident of 212 N. East Avenue, Oak Park, supported the pool decision as it is the best decision for the community. Last week she was asked to sign

petition and she questioned why the petition were being circulated. The signature collector said that he/she had not been aware of what was happening. She wanted to let the Board of Education that it had been very transparent and she hoped it would go forward with its plan to build a pool.

Dana Connell clarified that the 2013 advisory referendum, was spearheaded by Barbara Langer, who was also a candidate in the school board race at that time.

Pool Project

Mr. Weissglass appreciated all of the comments and perspectives. Much consideration has been given to this difficult problem in the last two years. OPRFHS has a long-standing aquatics program, the pools are past their life, OPRFHS is landlocked, there is little green space, and infrastructure is expensive. The Board of Education has considered all of the issues, including the health and wellbeing of the students and the significant cost of replacing the pool. There is a sincere difference of opinions on who should decide the question and this feels like the heart of the democratic process of which the school board is on the front line of democratic process. It is a legitimate question.

He has been frustrated by characterization of the Board of Education and misinformation about the project. The members of this Board of Education, the prior Board of Education, and the pool committee were thoughtful people who came with no preconceived notions. He respected everyone's work. This decision was for all students and community members, not just for a few students. The pool will cost \$37.5 million. The recapturing of the old pool space will cost \$10 million. The additional \$6 million was for a second story over the recaptured space in the East Pool. The accusations made that the Board of Education was failing to invest in education or addressing achievement gaps is outrageous, as it is deeply engaged in that process.

Mr. Weissglass felt it was better to work through this process collaboratively. He voted to go forward with non-referendum bonds beginning with the phase down work, because of the long-standing upset in the community about the fund balance. The Board of Education worked hard to spend down money on capital, but the 10-year overall reduction in taxes comes to \$72 million. Savings of \$30 million has been realized and with the cost of the pool, a property owner would receive a reduction of \$2500, including the cost of the pool. Also, referendums fail. The renovation of the current pools would cost \$20 million, with a lane lost and less water and the inability to host home meets. He voted for putting attention on education and achievement disparities and attending to the needs of each and every student. This process has been tiring and distracting. He will continue to work to make this happen.

Mr. Weissglass continued that the petition effort has been distressing because misinformation had an impact. Yet, people who he respects have been working hard on it and many have surprised him as to just how much they cared about having a referendum for principled reasons, not only for those who were trying to accomplish parking or saving taxes. Thus, he is reconsidering this because from the beginning a workable parking plan, including snow removal was

needed and that has not been satisfied. Also, it has been difficult to get clear information to the public about the pool. He was concerned about the long-term impact on the neighbors and staff and the Board of Education will need to make a decision before December 28, 2015, to go for referendum on the March ballot. Also, the Village board is hearing from its constituents about the lack of a parking plan and the sale of the garage. More discussion will have to occur on these issues. Adding 118 more parking spaces would cost more. He suggested again talking about a community pool to be shared with the community and high school, and to renovate the current pools onsite.

Mr. Weissglass responded to the question as to why there was no collaboration before, the current Board of Education members cannot answer that because they were not in the conversation at that time and cannot do anything about it now. He has heard many people say they were pro pool and pro referendum, and he hoped that was meant.

Mr. Cofsky felt it was beneficial to get the outpourings of the community. He thanked those who had shared their sentiments. The Board of Education faces the challenge of gauging engagement and its job is to make decisions for the benefit of the high school. The statement that hit him the hardest is the one about the pool versus the achievement gap. Significant resources are put toward what can be done to better prepare the students. Communication needs to improve. The Board of Education has spent much time on the issue of needing a new pool. The location of the pool is an imperfect decision. He first voted against the garage site because the parking issue had just developed and needed more information. As a member of the pool committee he stated that the final outcome was a complex recommendation. If a place could be found offsite, good, but if not, the garage was the next best option. He supported that recommendation, but he was not in favor of a garage site/pool combo, as it was too expensive and counterintuitive. And, he continued to strongly support that reasoning. He had leaned toward a referendum but near the end he was swayed by factors that had already been covered. He supported the use of the bonds and fund balances. He agreed with Mr. Weissglass' comments about the deliberations with FAC; this was an imperfect decision. He saw the options as: 1) abandonment which would be a disservice to students; 2) hold a referendum in March, but communication is not to the level it needs to be and could be a waste of energy and resources at this time; and 3) continue to work with the Village on the garage and a parking plan.

Dr. Moore stated that the process for the current and prior boards involved thoughtful deliberation as to what was best for the community. She is a community member, taxpayer and neighbor of the high school and the issues of who will be parking on front of her house is not God-given. She shares all of the concerns in the room. Her children were not swimmers or even wanted to take swimming in PE, but her son is life guard because of it. A referendum would be about the funding, not about the pool location. These are separate issues. She agreed with Mr. Weissglass and Mr. Cofsky about a road show for educational purposes as misinformation exists. As much as it can be stated that

she was for a referendum, she reserves the right to change her mind. When it came time to vote, she voted with information and clarity. The position she took was that pools built in 1920's have outlived their usefulness and it is a matter of water safety for students. Black and brown students swim less than white students and drown more than white students. The pool is critical and it opens up opportunities for students who would never take watersports; thus, it is education. For her the issue is: a referendum if contingent upon discussions about access to the parking garage. That is how she would vote for a referendum. There was never an intention of her part in terms of voting on the parking garage not to have a parking plan or give respect to the needs and safety of the teachers, staff and students. She would like to continue to provide this information to the community via the Wednesday Journal and Ms. Kalmerton's accurate minutes.

Ms. Spivy informed the public that they could listen to the audiotapes of any of the Board of Education meetings on line if they could not attend the meetings. She also stated that the community will have access, if and when, the pool is built as the plan is to have ample water for that. As a neighbor she awaits a parking plan. Baseball offered to move off site, but because a space could not be found that did not happen. Had she been on the Board of Education when the pool project was approved, she may have opted for parking, but the expense was obscene. She had reviewed other options but she stood by this decision as a new pool was needed and spending \$20 million to renovate the old pools made no sense.

Mr. Arkin thanked everyone for their comments on this complex problem with no ideal solution. The pools are on borrowed time and the need is real and immediate. Swimming is a part of the curriculum; this is not about aquatics. People are concerned about parking, the cost, and those feel should it be brought to referendum on principle. Student enrollment is growing and growth is occurring in both curricular and extracurricular programs. Students who participate in sports and activities have a 1.0 GPA over students who do not, and they have 60% less attendance issues. This is not about exploiting a loophole. The funding was done deliberately. The Board of Education used its long-term projections and acted with the understanding that the District and the Village would work together on a parking plan. This process includes scores of community members and officials and has involved countless hours to find a solution. Some of the comments are concerning and an affront to the professional staff and faculty. It demonstrates ignorance of a dilemma. If the solution for the achievement gap was that simple, it would have been solved years ago.

Ms. Cassell thanked everyone who spoke and sent emails and that their comments would be taken into consideration. The pool committee had looked at every option and had picked the best option; she respected their recommendations. She wished that parking had been a part of the design, but it was cost prohibitive. It is important to work with village to come up with parking solution. It was disconcerting to her that the Village will not work

collaboratively, unless the Board of Education goes for a referendum, after so much time has been spent on this issue. While there is no perfect solution to this problem, this is the best. The funding decisions have been made by the Finance Advisory Committee. She suggested having tours for the community to get an understanding of what the pools look like. This is about the future of the school.

Dr. Gevinson made the following statement: “I was personally reluctant even to support continuing the PE swimming program and competitive swimming. The large public high school I attended in Montgomery County, Maryland, which was a pretty good school and school system, had no pool or swimming program, and I never felt disadvantaged by missing swimming in high school; as a faculty member, my perception was that swimming was students’ least favorite PE activity, by far; so I was look at the swimming component of PE as unnecessary and unpopular. On top of that the relatively small number of students participating in competitive swimming at OPRFHS made me skeptical of investing so much money for what seemed to me to be non-essential programs.

“My reluctance to build a 50-meter pool with more than twice the volume of water as the current two pools combined was great, too: If we were going to build a pool, it seemed to me, we should build the smallest, least expensive pool possible to meet your needs.

“My reluctance to knock down the parking garage to make room for a new pool was greater than my other hesitancies, which were quite significant: As a faculty member and administrator for 32 years, I knew very well the staff parking situation both before the garage and after the garage. I knew the garage was (and continues to be)heavily used, was a convenience deserved by the staff, was providing nothing more than the staff provided at all other West Suburban Conference high schools, and would be felt as a great loss by the staff. I was concerned, too about what it would mean for our neighbors, if we put about 300 cars onto the surrounding streets each day, not to mention all of the cars arriving for the many special events hosted by the school. The building of the garage 12 or 13 years ago, combined with the purchase of the property south of Lake and construction of the athletic fields and running track, was to me the best physical plan development project in my years at OPRFHS.

“Nonetheless, I was persuaded that I should change my mind in each case. The process of persuasion was this: As we went through our deliberations on what to do about our old, crumbling pools, I brought my hesitancies, reservations, and skepticism to each consideration and discussion, voicing all of them and weighing the arguments against initial positions. On the question of the worthiness of a PE swimming pool and interscholastic swimming, I was persuaded fairly quickly that we should have each as part of the high school program. Despite its relative unpopularity with students, PE swimming unquestionably teaches a most valuable life safety skill to every student in the school. I completely support the goal of teaching every student to swim. Further, competitive swimming, diving and water polo are sports that a comprehensive high school like ours should support.

“Fairly early in our discussions, I met some administrators and board members from Elmwood Park High School, and I asked them about swimming at Elmwood Park. They told me that they no longer support swimming there. Rather than build a new pool when they could no longer continue to repair the old one, they put floor over the old one. As I considered such an option for Oak Park and River Forest, it became clear to me that having a vital swimming program at our high school is consistent with our sense of who we are. I think it is an enduring part of the identities of our communities that we support a full physical education and athletic program at the high school.

“Soon enough, I was convinced that we indeed needed to build a new pool for ongoing PE and interscholastic swimming programs.

“The question of how big the pool should be was another quandary for me. We could not simply re-do the two old pools on the same footprint, because changes in building codes would necessitate losing 2 of our current 25-meter lanes, one in each pool, or about 18% of our capacity. I don’t need to rehearse all of the reasoning behind the conclusion that a new pool would have to be built outside of the walls of the current building. Suffice it to say that after looking at the possibilities, I was easily convinced of the necessity.

“Then the question for me on pool size because, why not build the smallest pool possible, saving money and green space? I soon learned that there was not much to be saved by building the smallest pool possible, only about 10% of the cost of a 50-meter pool. In addition, building a smaller pool would not solve our problem of where to build the pool. There was no room to build either a big pool or a small pool. Some athletic activity would have to be relocated or abandoned to make way for the pool. I also came to understand that a 50-meter indoor pool could serve the swimming needs not only of the high school but also of the community at large for year-round indoor swimming. We have no specific plans in place for community accessibility, but we have general intentions, and I think we are all eager for the pool to be a resource for the larger community.

“Further, it seems quite clear to me that a state-of-the-art 50-meter indoor swimming facility would be a valuable asset to the community an attractive feature for anyone considering buying a home in Oak Park or River Forest.

“The next question was where to build this pool. As you know if you have followed the deliberations of the Board over the last years, we struggled mightily to find the best solution possible, and I believe that we left no stone unturned as we looked at every possibility. Again, I don’t need to rehearse that process tonight, but our 16 or 17 person pool site committee, chaired by Jeff Weissglass, and whose members included those of us Board of Education members who voted against putting the pool on the site of the parking garage, after months of exploration and deliberation came to a recommendation to the Board of Education of three possible sites for building the pool--relocation either the baseball field, the softball fields, or the tennis courts to a suitable off-

site location--with the parking garage site as a last resort option. Personally, I did not even want to leave us the garage option, as I was afraid we would too easily fall back on it.

“But as it turned out, to my great disappointment, it was not feasible to relocate any of the other sports without too greatly disrupting any of the programs, and it came down to the parking garage.

“Of course, even though we were down to our last resort, we still had to be sure that an alternative parking plan would be adequate. And from the plan I have seen, it is clear that the displaced cars can be accommodated quite comfortably and without much of a burden to neighbors up to two blocks in any direction from the high school. The area bordered by Oak Park Avenue, Chicago, Avenue, Ridgeland Boulevard and South Blvd. I greatly regret the loss of onsite parking for staff that this solution entails, but I do think that it should not be too burdensome.

“A couple of personal comments on parking. I live in southeast Oak Park within a couple of blocks of Fenwick. When Fenwick built its new pool on its parking lot, Fenwick, which is not supported by taxpayer money and pays no property taxes, the Village of Oak Park implemented a parking plan to accommodate Fenwick students parking on neighboring streets, including ours. Every school day four or five cars of Fenwick students park across the street from our front entrance. And, it is not a big deal. I never think about it. It disrupts nothing.

“Another personal comment. Starting in January, I will teach English for the fifth consecutive winter quarter at the Lab School in Hyde Park. There is no staff parking lot, no permit parking for high school staff, and no alleys. Every morning I search for a parking space in a community jammed with parked cars. When it snows, the plowing is always late if it is done at all. The parking difficulties multiply, and sections of sidewalks are never shoveled. It is not unusual for me to walk 3 or 4 blocks from my car to school. It goes with the territory of teaching at Lab. I put up with it because I love teaching there, and the parking has become a minor annoyance. I am not saying that because parking is a mess for Lab School teachers, teachers at OPRFHS should expect nothing better. I devoutly wish we could have found something better, but we couldn't, and the plan in the works is not nearly as bad as the situation I just described. Staff members would have permits to park a short distance from the school, and we are determined, too, to solve winter snow removal problems. As for our neighbors, as I understand it, on a street with 32 parking spaces, 11 spaces would be permitted for OPRFHS staff parking - 5 on one side at one end of the street and 6 on the other side and other end of the street. These are not terribly burdensome arrangements.

“So I voted with my fellow Board of Education members to build a 50-meter pool on the site of the garage. But what about a referendum?”

“The final question for us, once we agreed unanimously to build a 50-meter pool on the parking garage site, was whether to ask the community to approve our financing plan. I think it is a very reasonable plan, and that nearly all reasonable people would agree, as our seven-person Board has unanimously agreed. The plan will cost taxpayers \$76 per year on a \$400,000 home for 20 years. My guess is that such a community asset as this pool would increase property values by more than that expense of about \$1580 over 20 years. In addition, we as a Board of Education have saved taxpayers more than \$28 million over the last 3 years, which will accumulate to a total of \$72 million over 10 years. When not put it to a community vote? Here are my reasons for not wanting to do so.

“I am absolutely convinced that our pool and financing plans are reasonable and responsible, especially considering our fiscal efforts of recent years.

“It took much time, discussion, and deliberation for me to become convinced of the worthiness of the plans. I was elected to put in the necessary time and effort to make reasonable and responsible decisions.

“We as a Board of Education of diverse, serious, thoughtful people from different backgrounds and with a range of perspectives decided unanimously to approve the pool and financing plans.

“Referendums are time-consuming and can easily become contentious and devise. One worries about inaccuracies, exaggerations, misrepresentations, and outright distortions in a referendum campaign, and, in fact, we have seen some of that already in the current petition drive, not to mention extremely unflattering caricatures of several of us in the local paper.

“Our decision making process was thorough and transparent.

“I am not confused about what the outcome of such a referendum should be--to accomplish the greatest good for the greatest number of our citizens.

“I was elected to represent the best interests of the citizens of our communities, and I am convinced that our plan is the best that we could realistically achieve. Avoiding an unnecessary referendum would saving many people much unnecessary trouble.

”These are my reasons for supporting our plan and not supporting an unnecessary referendum. I hope the Village Board will agree, sell us the garage, adopt a good parking plan and allow us to get on with the project.”

Next steps will be for Mr. Weissglass and Dr. Isoye to continue this discussion, talk with the Village about its status, and develop an agenda for the December 17 meeting.

The meeting recessed at 11:00 p.m. and resumed at 11:13 p.m.

2015 Levy Update

Mr. Altenburg reviewed the information in the packet. He stated that at the November 10, 2015 Special Board of Education meeting, the motion to adopt the 2015 Preliminary Levy was amended by the Board of Education. The amended motion incorporated capturing the CPI (Consumer Price Index) and any new construction/new growth that may be coming on to the tax rolls this levy year. This amendment does not prevent the Board of Education from adopting a lower 2015 Levy at its December 17, 2015 meeting, if so moved. Additionally, page 10 of The Property Tax Extension Limitation Law, A Technical Manual reads: "If during the previous levy year, a taxing district had a decreased aggregate extension compared to the preceding levy year, the aggregate extension base is the highest aggregate extension in any of the last three preceding levy years. The provision applies to any reductions in extensions, including abatements."

He continued that in 2012, the levy was \$65,019,413. The levy was reduced by the Board of Education in the amount of \$10,000,000 in 2013 based on the recommendation of the Financial Advisory Committee (FAC). Last year (2014), the levy was reduced by an additional \$250,000 again based on the recommendation of the FAC. Therefore, for the following three scenarios the 2012 level of \$65,019,413 will be used as the aggregate extension base."

He provided a spreadsheet with 3 scenarios:

1. A return to the 2012 levy of \$65,019,413 with no CPI and no new growth/new construction factored into the calculations;
2. A return to the 2012 levy of \$65,019,413 with only the CPI of 0.8% factored into the calculations. New growth/new construction has not been factored into the calculations; and,
3. A return to the 2012 levy of \$65,019,413 with the CPI of 0.8% and estimated amounts for new growth/new construction factored into the calculations.

Number 3 is the highest of the scenarios and was used to populate the Truth in Taxation Hearing and Public Notice of Proposed Property Tax Increase that would appear in the *Wednesday Journal*. The EAV and new construction will not be unknown until around April. Mr. Altenburg consulted with District 90 and 97, PMA, and Ali ElSaffar, the Oak Park Township Assessor. In last two years, OPRFHS has lowering its taxes and has asked the County not to apply the loss and cost factor. The Tax Extension Office pads the levy so that taxing bodies receive their full amount under PTEL in the event that taxpayers won't pay on time, etc., in order to get 100% of collection. In 2013/2014, The Board of Education passed a resolution saying to not add the loss and cost factor. The Board of Education will have to pass a resolution to either add or not add the loss and cost factor this year. Based on motion on November 10, 2015, the amount of the levy will be \$66,403,831 or an increase of 21.39%. A public hearing will be held on December 17, 2015.

For the non-capped funds (a.k.a. Bond and Interest), the levy request is a 0% increase. This is because the Board of Education resolved to abate the Bond and Interest Levy in full last year, and it is the Board's desire for that abatement to continue with the 2015 Levy. According to the bond and interest schedule for the 2015 tax year, this year's abatement is \$2,466,675.

A timeline was provided with regard to the levy. Discussion ensued.

Q: If the Board of Education did not abate, it would have an additional \$2.4 million?

A: Yes. The District began abating in 2013. FAC had also recommended it. There is only one year left of debt.

Q: The 3% lost cost factor would be add to the \$66 million?

A: Yes. If there are non-payments or foreclosures, it spreads those amongst the taxpayers as opposed to coming out of the high school's pocket. While most counties add it on automatically, the Board of Education has a choice.

While Mr. Altenburg's recommendation was Option 3, Mr. Weissglass planned to amend the motion to scenario 1 with loss and cost. It was noted that FAC's recommendation was CPI and new growth, but the model had those things built in it, which caused a gap. The prior practice was to max out the levy. There is a differential between what was said and the model. The model was in error. The forward projection model can be compared to FAC or it can be looked at on its own. While the Finance Committee is doing deep dive, there is a revenue differential because of assumptions in the model and increases due to Board of Education decisions. The forward projection model shows what is assumed will happen. Mr. Weissglass was confident that assumptions in the model would allow the District to still be on track to go for a referendum in the 2022/23 timeframe. Discipline will be required to follow the fund balance policy.

One member wanted to spend money on the Strategic Plan and Restorative Justice, just as the Board of Education had spent money to fund on the new PSS Team. That member felt a constitutional reluctance to not levy to the max, as there was the desire to have assurance that money would be available for all educational things to make the school a better place.

A request was made to model each of the scenarios as well as a request for a press release to be prepared explaining the 21.3% increase for next week's meeting.

It was the consensus of the majority of the Board of Education members to approve scenario 1 at its December 17, 2015 meeting.

Adjournment

At 11:30 p.m., Ms. Spivy moved to adjourn the Special Board Meeting; seconded by Dr. Moore. A voice vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Jeff Weissglass
President

Sara Dixon Spivy
Secretary

Submitted by Gail Kalmerton
Clerk of the Board