

OAK PARK AND RIVER FOREST HIGH SCHOOL  
201 North Scoville Ave.  
Oak Park, IL 60302

## **FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

A Finance Committee meeting was held on Tuesday, January 16, 2007. Chair John P. Rigas called the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m. in the Board Room. Committee members present were: Jacques A. Conway, Barbara P. Fernandez (arrived at 8:28 p.m.), Valerie J. Fisher (arrived at 7:38 a.m.), Dr. Barry S. Greenwald, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Yasmin A. Ranney, and John P. Rigas. Also present were: Susan J. Bridge, Superintendent/Principal; Cheryl L. Witham, Chief Financial Officer; Jack Lanenga, Assistant Superintendent for Operations; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors included: Kay Foran, Director of Community Relations and Communications; James Paul Hunter, F.S.E.C. Chair; Fred Galluzzo and James Paul Hunter, F.S.E.C. representatives; Ralph Lee, community member; and Eric Gershenson and Chris Meyer of the Early Childhood Collaborate.

### **Collaboration for Early Childhood Care and Education (Collaboration)**

Mr. Gershenson addressed the Finance Committee about O.P.R.F.H.S. continued support of the Collaboration in the amount of \$15,000. The Collaboration is a unique, public-private partnership whose mission is to make high quality, affordable early care and education available to all children from birth to age five in Oak Park. Mr. Gershenson stated that the Federal Reserve Bank of Minnesota has done an extensive analysis of the results of high quality early childhood programs. Its findings support the fact that the first five years of life are critical to the brain's development and consequently the child's future. The real question becomes how to use available public funds wisely.

A high quality environment enriches social thinking and reasoning, motivation, tenacity, and success in school early on. Data has shown that providing an enriched environment generates an extraordinary rate of return of between 15 to 18 percent. In the fields of education and economics, that translates to enormous savings, particularly in the growing area of special education.

Until 2001, zero dollars had been spent to assure best practices and coordination in this community. To date, \$177,000 has been allocated to the Collaboration's purpose. The Collaboration is a public/private partnership of every jurisdiction in the community. A sizeable and growing number of educational providers, etc., and the League of Women Voters are a part of the Collaboration. Mr. Gershenson had provided a very detailed articulation of the Collaboration's accomplishments. He felt it was an impressive set of activities considering the amount of money the Collaboration receives. To offset some of

expenses, people with expertise in this area with regular day jobs help the Collaboration. They are committed to the mission of every child having access to a high quality education. The Collaboration knows that what it is doing is just in the beginning process. There needs to be a more sizable commitment by the community in order to realize that every school system will have the children that will succeed at every level.

Mr. Gershenson closed his comments by stating that he was happy that Board members Rigas and Fernandez were the Board of Education liaisons to the Collaboration.

Ms. Ranney commented that given the fact that the Collaboration's work was groundbreaking nationwide and asked if it were collecting data on its work in the areas of training, professional development, etc.? She also asked what kind of attention was the Collaboration receiving? Mr. Gershenson replied that the Collaboration started five years ago. Several years' worth of data was collected from parents reporting on their children's experiences. The Collaboration had some people who were familiar with data collection. While there is somewhat of a baseline, the data was not collected by researchers. The Collaboration has not been successful getting researchers involved in it. He desired the participation of the school districts in terms of beginning to envision how data should be collected systematically, i.e., following the children through their early childhood experiences in Districts 97 and 200. He felt that if this were in place, first-rate researchers would be interested in this work. At this time, however, there is no budget for researchers. He continued that what the Collaboration was doing was essential. Even though there are few models in the country like this, it is still trying to entice the first class people it needs.

On page 4 of the Collaboration's Update, an initiative of partnering with Triton College's Early Childhood Program was noted. Mr. Gershenson stated that some day care providers have taken college credit courses for a couple of years but this is the first year that they have taken a three-hour credit course at Triton. At this time, fifteen people have registered for the core program of Triton's Early Childhood Curriculum. These students must complete the class with a grade of C or better in order to receive reimbursement for the class. A tremendous amount of energy was expended to get to this point. All but one participant had never taken a college class at Triton before. Last year, quarterly meetings were scheduled with between 12 and 18 daycare providers throughout the community. This year monthly meetings are held. The Collaboration is helping to excite the day care staff to take these classes. The population of students in these day care centers is about 700. There is the potential to affect a significant number of students. Pam VanNatter, O.P.R.F.H.S. Director of Daycare Center, has been an active contributor and is a director of the Collaboration.

The Committee instructed Ms. Witham to include a line item of \$15,000 for the support of the Collaboration in next year's budget. A copy of the contract had been included in the packet.

## **Acceptance of the December Finance Committee Minutes**

The Finance Committee members accepted the minutes of the December Finance Committee as presented.

## **Construction Update**

Mr. Lanenga provided a PowerPoint presentation, which showed that the installation of the new boilers and air-handling units was complete.

He noted that he had run \$17,000 over budget because of having to find the leaks in the gas system, which he had discussed at an earlier meeting. Three pipes in the basement were found to have holes in them. They were fixed as well as the leaks in the commercial kitchen.

Construction scheduled for the 2006-07 school year was now complete. Mr. Rigas received a phone call from a parent who had commented on how great the Fieldhouse and the North Gym looked. Mr. Lanenga commended Mr. ZumMallen, the new B&G Director, on his commitment to cleaning the Fieldhouse floor correctly, which had brought out the richness of its color.

## **Traffic and Parking Report**

Mr. Lanenga provided the Finance Committee members with the Traffic and Parking Study completed by T.Y. Lin International, Inc. as an information item only (attached to and made a part of the minutes of this meeting). This firm visited the high school twice, once on Friday night and again on the following Saturday, which was O.P.R.F.H.S.'s Homecoming. The study was not designed as nor was it requested to be a complete, comprehensive plan. Neither the consultant nor he believed a comprehensive plan was possible because everything was too uncertain. The firm agreed to look at the situation. Based on its expertise, it extrapolated the effect on the neighborhood.

The deluge of rain during the Homecoming game hindered providing the most effective study. Mr. Lanenga and Mr. LaPlante met with the neighbors before the report was written. The neighbors felt the extrapolation of the Friday night games was not enough. O.P.R.F.H.S. has only four football games per season and they thought that a more accurate account of the traffic congestion would be at commencement. Mr. Lanenga and the consultant did not believe that would be true because commencement was more adult-oriented and more cars would be used.

A list of recommendations was included at the end of the report. Mr. LaPlante of T.Y. Lin International had included the concerns of the neighbors in his list of recommendations. However, the recommendations do not satisfy all of the neighbors' concerns.

With regard to Homecoming, Mr. Rigas affirmed the Board of Education's commitment to scheduling it on Saturday afternoons. The report identifies the conflict of the Farmers' Market and the stress on the area. Anyone in the area during this time knows that parking and safety are serious problems.

Mr. Lanenga reiterated the fact that the Board of Education approved the installation of lights and a traffic study by a 4 to 3 vote. When discussion ensued regarding zoning requirements, Mr. Rigas commented that the State of Illinois has a separate building code for schools. It was his view that the Village has the authority in the area of zoning as it has the better experts to look at the larger picture of the village. Mr. Lanenga concurred that zoning would go through the Village.

### **Skyward**

Mr. Lanenga reported that Skyward was functioning well and that there had been no problems.

### **Authorization to Commence 2007-08 Budget Process**

Ms. Witham informed the Committee members that the Board of Education would be asked to approve the commencement of the 2007-08 budget process at the regular January Board of Education meeting.

### **Authorization to Amend the 2006-07 Budget**

Ms. Witham informed the Committee members that the Board of Education would be asked to approve a resolution to amend of the 2007-08 budget at the regular January Board of Education meeting. The amended budget will reflect changes to workers' compensation, federal grants, and hiring.

The timeline is as follows:

Published notice of Budget on Display	March 7, 2007
Amended Budget Presented at Finance	March 13, 2007
Amended Budget Presented for Display	March 19, 2007
Budget on Display	March 19 through April 26, 2007
Public Hearing on Amended Budget	April 26, 2007
Adoption of Amended Budget	April 26, 2007

### **New Certified Faculty Salary Analysis – Revised**

Mr. Edgecombe reported that the District has attempted over the past several years to provide the Board of Education with an average salary analysis for newly hired faculty members. He provided documentation with such information for the 2006-07 school year. The MA Step 5 salary amount for 2006-07 was \$56,521. Documentation showed that the average salary for all new faculty assuming fulltime service equaled \$58,822--

\$2,301 above the target salary. Further documentation removed dean counselors, deans of discipline, division heads, program chairs, psychologists, and speech therapists from the analysis because of the assumption that individuals hired into these positions generally have a level of experience that would exceed the target salary. Thus, the average salary shown was then \$54,329--\$2,192 below the target salary.

His documentation reflected the reality that strictly on classroom teacher hiring, O.P.R.F.H.S. has been able to stay within the budgetary projections of the five-year plan. However, in other professional hiring areas, the MA Step 5 target salary appears inadequate.

### **District 97 Shared Services - Food Services**

Ms. Witham reported that the pilot lunch program to two district 97 elementary schools has been successful. District 97 is pleased with the service, as it addresses nutritional requirements. Students are enjoying the food more and they are being exposed to ethnic foods. District 97 wants to extend the program next year to all of its schools.

Ms. Piekarski believes that O.P.R.F.H.S. can meet the needs of District 97 with the addition of a few staff members and some additional equipment. The District 97 P.T.O. is interested in helping purchase some of this equipment. A key component of the cost structure is the availability of District 97 commodities for next year. These need to be ordered by February 2, 2007. The Board of Education is being asked to grant permission for the administrative staff to commence negotiation of an intergovernmental agreement to provide food services to District 97. District 97's Board of Education has given permission for its administrative staff to commence negotiations.

District 200 is proposing that there be a per meal charge. District 97, in turn, can charge whatever they want. The cost of electricity, gas, etc. has not been factored into the calculations. O.P.R.F.H.S. will have to purchase one more oven and that will be factored into the cost. Ms. Fisher asked if the main goal of the project was to collaborate with District 97 to help it do something it was not. Ms. Witham stated that O.P.R.F.H.S. has the capacity to handle this extra work and it will help to keep District 200's prices down and to offer better jobs to employees. O.P.R.F.H.S.'s perspective is to try to break even and offer affordable, nutritional food to its students.

Dr. Millard asked what percentage of O.P.R.F.H.S. students eats here. Ms. Witham stated that freshmen were supposed to eat here, but she was not sure who else did. The number of students who do eat here varies because of the season, what is being served, etc. Either leftover food is used later or if dated or old, thrown out.

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee members to recommend to the Board of Education that it approve a resolution to commence negotiations on an intergovernmental agreement with District 97 for an expanded shared food services.

### **Township Treasurer Update**

Ms. Witham provided a written report on the Township Treasurer's Office announcing that the Illinois General Assembly's override of the Governor's earlier veto of Senate Bill 380, allowing the O.P.R.F.H.S. Board of Education to pass a resolution to withdraw from the Cicero Township Trustees of Schools and Township School Treasurer. A draft of the resolution was included. Mr. Rigas affirmed that the high school was free to withdraw from this organization. Ms. Witham is bonded and is the deputy treasurer. Ms. Witham was instructed to modify the resolution to reflect that she would be the treasurer.

Ms. Fisher asked if O.P.R.F.H.S. would receive a full accounting. Ms. Witham responded that it would to the best of the professionals' abilities. Presently, a full accounting may not be possible. The auditors cannot reconcile even one of the months from the 2005-06 school year. If there is a difference, perhaps there is a way to split the difference. Reconciliation for this school year has not yet taken place. The auditor has recommended O.P.R.F.H.S.'s continuance in this organization until the end of the school year so that Oak Park has Trustee representation. Ms. Fisher was adamant that a full accounting should take place.

Ms. Ranney reported on the ire from the other school districts, as they blame District 200 and Ms. Witham for getting Senator Harmon to push for this legislation. Ms. Ranney wanted to publicly thank Ms. Witham for the way in which she handled these meetings. Ms. Ranney attested to the fact that this was a major coup for O.P.R.F.H.S. Everyone is now asking Ms. Witham how she did her discovery. Mr. Rigas stated that the other districts have decided to go for a referendum to dissolve this office. They have received advice on how to be more efficient. Ms. Ranney stated that this was an example of school districts allowing the Township Treasurer's Office to manage their finances and not doing their own due diligence.

### **Monthly Financial Statements**

Mr. Rigas acknowledged the financial statements that were included in the packet and advised any Committee members with comments to speak with Ms. Witham directly.

### **Adjournment**

The Finance Committee adjourned at 9:05 a.m.