

The Board meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Thursday evening, December 21, 2006, in the Board Room of the high school.

**Call to Order**

President Dr. Barry S. Greenwald called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. A roll call vote indicated that the following members were present: Barbara P. Fernandez, Dr. Barry S. Greenwald, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Yasmin A. Ranney, and John P. Rigas. Jacques A. Conway arrived at 6:45 p.m. Also present were: Dr. Susan J. Bridge, Superintendent/Principal; Jason Edgecombe, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Richard Perna, Coordinator of Student Safety; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

**Closed Session**

Ms. Ranney moved to enter closed session at 6:38 p.m. on Thursday, December 21, 2006, 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; Student disciplinary cases 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(10); Collective negotiating matters between the District and its employees or their representatives or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(2); and Litigation, when an action against, affecting or on behalf of the particular District has been filed and is pending before a court or administrative tribunal, or when the District finds that an action is probable or imminent, in which case the basis for the finding shall be recorded and entered into the closed meeting minutes. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11); seconded by Dr. Millard. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried. Ms. Fisher was absent.

The Board of Education reconvened open session at 7:28 p.m., on Thursday, December 21, 2006. A roll call vote indicated that the following members were present: Jacques A. Conway, Barbara P. Fernandez, Dr. Barry S. Greenwald, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Yasmin A. Ranney (departed at 8:00 and returned at 9:15 p.m.), and John P. Rigas. Also present were: Dr. Susan J. Bridge, Superintendent/Principal; Jason Edgecombe, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Jack Lanenga, Assistant Superintendent of Operations; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Amy Hill, Director of Instruction; James Paul Hunter,

Faculty Senate Executive Committee Chair; Loie Davis, Student Council Board Liaison; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

**Visitors**

The Board of Education welcomed the following visitors: Kay Foran, Director of Community Relations and Communications; Linda Cada, Director of Special Education; Dr. Carl Spight, O.P.R.F.H.S. Institutional Researcher; Lori Cerceo, O.P.R.F.H.S. Business Office; Rachel Schmidt of the *Tabula*; Sheila Flattery of the League of Women Voters; Jose G. Flores, Dr. Ralph Lee, Christine Price, Terry Burke; Pat Nassano, Wyanetta Johnson, Burcy Hines, Dale Rodgers, Christina Price, Brittany and Devon Wooten, community members and student; Terry Dean of the *Wednesday Journal*, and Christopher LaFortune of the *Oak Leaves*.

**Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Bridge congratulated John Stelzer and Cindy Milojevic for choreographing the Pack the Place evening on Friday, December 8, which drew an estimated crowd of 2,000 participants, and included the opening of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, the varsity girls' basketball game against Glenbard West, the varsity boys' basketball game against York and an activities' fair for all attendees.

Dr. Bridge announced that twelve faculty members have received nominations for the Golden Apple Award, the largest number of teachers to receive this nomination in recent history.

Dr. Bridge also thanked Officer Freelain for his work on behalf of students, staff, and the school community and congratulated him on his promotion to detective. Officer Eric Locke will replace Officer Freelain as the school's Oak Park Resource Officer.

Dr. Bridge noted that the school celebrated 159 students for committing a noteworthy act of kindness or thoughtfulness at the 2006 Human Relations Award Breakfast on November 30.

Faculty member Marie Urbanski informed Dr. Bridge that the Volunteer Resource Team of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County had recognized O.P.R.F.H.S.'s Biology/Environmental Club for the Club's adoption of Thatcher Woods. The Forest Preserve District will post a sign by Thatcher Woods indicating this adoption.

**Board of Education Comments**

Dr. Greenwald reported that one F.O.I.A. request had been resolved and another was in progress.

Ms. Fernandez reported that she attended the December 12 annual Holiday Tea, noting that it was well attended. She was

complimentary of the students who provided the music. She enjoyed the occasion.

Dr. Millard reported that the Board of Education had made a decision to reopen the search for a new superintendent. She continued that if there were a school administrator of the caliber appropriate for O.P.R.F.H.S., to pass the names on to Board President Greenwald.

**Visitor Comments** Mr. Flores, resident of 1132 Edmer Avenue, Oak Park, addressed the Board of Education.

Mr. Flores, a resident of Oak Park for 30 years, had three children graduate from O.P.R.F.H.S. He attested to the fact that O.P.R.F.H.S. is a wonderful institution. While Oak Park has outstanding schools, he is deeply concerned about the rising property taxes. Both he and his wife are professionals and make a decent living. He wondered, however, how well those who did not do as well were surviving. He recently read in the *Wednesday Journal* that the school has asked for a 4.75 percent increase in property taxes. He asked the reason for the increase.

Dr. Greenwald stated that schools are only able to impose an increase equal to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). That index has been lower in recent years. The CPI never matched the cost of the expenses to the high school. The school's revenue is always less than its expenditures. While it is never defacto or done without thought, the Chief Financial Officer advises the Board of Education as to the legal limits of how much the levy can be increased. In an attempt to keep up with the expenses, the school has asked for its allowed increase. The Board of Education cannot soften the reality that taxes are high. It takes a great deal of money to provide quality education. By virtue of the laws that create tax caps, school districts are forced to ask their communities periodically for a referendum. O.P.R.F.H.S. asked for a referendum in 2002 and the community supported it. Many school districts were not as fortunate as O.P.R.F.H.S. at that time. While the last tax bills were staggering, it also means that the school does not have to ask the community for a referendum until 2018. This is simply funding to support the every day effort to educate the children of the communities.

Mr. Flores understood that it takes money to sustain the wonderful programs at O.P.R.F.H.S. He asked if the school had ever explored other revenue in addition to the taxpayers. He credited the Board of Education with being very intelligent and creative and he hoped other options were being explored. He offered his assistance in this endeavor. Dr. Greenwald explained that the school does explore

other funding opportunities, i.e., grants. While there is discussion about the inequity of school funding being based on property taxes and increasing the income tax to offer some relief to property owners, a change of this sort would not be beneficial to O.P.R.F.H.S. in any substantial or helpful way.

Mr. Rigas added that unlike the village government, schools are limited in how they raise revenue. They cannot impose a sales tax or charge larger user fees. The only right schools have is to property taxes. The state government has not increased funding for education in years. Anything that would happen in Springfield in the way of “swaps” would be detrimental to O.P.R.F.H.S. The only positive part of the local funding is the fact that local dollars are being spent locally. Property taxes also increased in Oak Park because of the Park District referendum and Cook County’s shifting of some of the tax burden from commercial to homeowners. At the last reassessment, many people had larger property increases than others did. That was the result of the assessor’s office—a shifting of the tax burden to others. The reassessment is only a problem if the property is reassessed at a higher amount than the average of the community as a whole. It is an imperfect system. An alternative would be to have a Proposition 13 as in California. However, Michigan tried that and its schools went bankrupt.

Dr. Greenwald continued that of the fifty (50) United States, Illinois ranks 49<sup>th</sup> in terms of state support for education. O.P.R.F.H.S. is working with the Village of Oak Park to carve out more properties from the TIF. While the school is trying to be creative and make a difference, there are no assurances that the efforts will be successful. Every time a levy is passed, the Board of Education thinks long and hard about the communities who have been very good to the school system.

### **Consent Items**

Mr. Rigas moved to approve the consent items as follows:

- The open minutes of November 16, 21, 28, 30, December 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 12, 2006;
- Resolution Ratifying and Confirming Execution of certain vouchers and payment of certain bills and expenses, fund transfers and list of bills for December 21, 2006 (attached to and made part of the minutes of this meeting);
- Resolution Authorizing Execution of Certain Vouchers for the Month of January 2007;

- Approval of Check Disbursements for December 21, 2006;
- Amendment of Policy 20, Board of Education;
- Adoption of Policy 4111, Safety Program;
- Amendment of Policy 4370, Mandatory Reporting Responsibilities;
- Amendment of Policy 6134, Instructional Materials;
- Deletion of Policy 6210, Field Trips;
- Amendment of Policy 6220, Tutoring and Therapy;
- Deletion of Policy 6400, Instructional and Recreational Support Materials;
- Approval of Policy 5110, Student Rights and Responsibilities for First Reading;
- Approval of Policy 5111, Student Freedom of Expression, for First Reading and Deletion;
- Approval of Policy 5112, Waiver of School Fees, for First Reading; and
- Approval of Policy 5113, Student Accident Insurance, for First Reading;

seconded by Dr. Millard. A roll call vote resulted in six ayes. Motion carried. Ms. Fisher was absent.

**Approval of Proposed Course Changes for Academic Catalog**

Ms. Fernandez moved to approve the proposed course changes for the 2007-08 Academic Catalog (attached to and made a part of the minutes of this meeting); seconded by Mr. Rigas. A roll call vote resulted in six ayes. Motion carried. Ms. Fisher was absent.

**Presentation of Preliminary Levy**

Ms. Witham stated that this was an opportunity for public comment on the levy. She reviewed a glossary of terms, the timeline, Tax Caps and CPI comparison. No oral or written comments were received.

**Adoption of  
Annual Tax Levy**

Dr. Millard moved to adopt the resolutions regarding the Annual Tax Levy, as presented (attached to and made a part of the minutes of this meeting); seconded by Ms. Fernandez. A roll call vote resulted in five ayes. Motion carried. Ms. Fisher and Ms. Ranney were absent.

The aggregate increase for all funds excluding Bond and Interest is 4.74 percent. The breakdown of the 2006 Levy is as follows:

Education Fund	\$43,090,781
Tort	1,081,500
Special Education	395,136
Operation & Maintenance	4,866,247
Transportation	787,553
IMRF	968,977
Social Security	968,977
Working Cash	987,841
Fire Prevention, Safety	<u>987,841</u>
	\$54,134,853

**Acceptance of  
Gifts &  
Donations**

Mr. Conway moved to accept with gratitude the gifts and donations as presented (attached to and made a part of the minutes of the meeting); seconded by Ms. Fernandez. A voice vote resulted in five ayes. Motion carried. Ms. Fisher and Ms. Ranney were absent.

**Approved the  
Resolution to  
Withdraw from  
The SELF-  
Cooperative**

Mr. Rigas moved to approve the Resolution to Withdraw from the SELF Cooperative (attached to and made a part of the minutes of this meeting); seconded by Dr. Millard. A roll call vote resulted in five ayes. Motion carried. Ms. Fisher and Ms. Ranney were absent.

Ms. Witham explained that O.P.R.F.H.S. is now paying a premium that is now six percent higher than the marketplace, because of the negative claim experience of some schools. A vote was taken by the cooperative to recommend non-renewal of these schools; it failed. As a result, the larger districts with good loss ratios observed that the cooperative was now becoming high risk and were considering leaving the pool. Because O.P.R.F.H.S.'s claim experience is somewhere in the middle, it would make no sense for it to stay in the pool. O.P.R.F.H.S. is required to give six month's notice to the cooperative that it intends to withdraw. With the Board of Education's approval of this resolution, Ms. Witham has the option of going into the open marketplace, comparing rates, and affirming with the other districts their intentions to withdraw from the cooperative.

**District Committees** Faculty Senate—Mr. Hunter wished everyone a happy holiday.

**Liaison**

**Representative**

**Reports**

Student Council—Ms. Davis reported that Pack the Place was a huge success. Student Council contributed the game Twister and a miniature golf game.

Alumni Association—Ms. Fernandez reported that there was no Alumni Association meeting in the month of December because of the community forums for the superintendent candidates. The president of the Alumni Association, Bobbie Raymond Larson, attended each of the forums and asked that the Board of Education go forth with a second round of the search. Ms. Larson was pleased that the Board of Education had not selected one of first candidates.

P.T.O.—Dr. Millard reported that at the last P.T.O. meeting, Mr. Lanenga gave an update on Skyward and an explanation as to how students are registered for classes.

**Appointment of  
Local Ethics  
Commission  
Members**

Mr. Rigas moved to appoint the John McCulloh, Sherlynn Reid, and Martha Trantow to the District 200 Local Ethics Commission for the 2007 calendar year; seconded by Ms. Fernandez. A roll call vote resulted in five ayes. Motion carried. Ms. Fisher and Ms. Ranney were absent.

**First Quarter  
Discipline Report**

Mr. Edgecombe presented the First Quarter Discipline Report (attached to and made a part of the minutes of this meeting).

In the Introduction Section, Mr. Edgecombe reported that Dr. Spight, Mr. Perna and the Deans of Discipline compiled documents related to student discipline statistics for the first quarter of the current school year (August 23 through October 27, 2006). The documents continue the practice of providing information regarding all disciplinary actions taken, the top three infractions by race and gender for the two primary racial groups (white and African-American), and race/gender cross tabulations involving In-School Suspensions (ISS) and Out of School Suspensions (OSS). The first quarter statistics are compared against first quarter statistics from the 2004-05 and 2005-06 school years. Only time will tell if First Quarter data reflects a real shift in student behavior patterns or if the current data is just an anomaly of the season.

In Table 1, it was pointed out that there was a name change for the category ASP (After School Program). It is now classified as an ASD (After School Detention) and is no longer included in suspension numbers since no school time is missed when a student is assigned an ASD. A second note in is the apparent reduction in the

number of detentions given in the current year versus previous years. The District does not think this is an accurate reflection of reality, but the result from a coding error during the training phase for new clerical support. This error results in fewer detentions being reported and higher ASDs being reported. It is believed that the ASD numbers were up because the Deans have conscientiously replaced verbal warnings in truancy matters with ASDs. This changed approach also provides at least a partial explanation for the increase (300 in all behavioral actions taken during the current first quarter). While overall disciplinary actions have increased during the first quarter, there is no significant increase in the number of individual students who received an ISS or OSS consequence. At the same time, the number of OSS consequences (62) in the current year has increased significantly as compared to last year (38). The difference in these numbers is reflective of the 2005-06 school year strategy of holding “family power meetings” with parents in an effort to avoid OSS consequences. Empirical evidence strongly suggested that “family power meetings” merely forestalled OSS consequences rather than eliminated them. As a result, “family power meetings” are no longer viewed as an effective strategy in managing student behavior. However, the elimination of “family power meetings” as a prevention-to-suspension strategy illustrates the need for the District to be more definitive about how the District anticipates outcomes and analyze strategy effectiveness.

The issue of recidivism for ISS and OSS consequences should also be addressed. For the purpose of this report, recidivism is defined as receiving an ISS or OSS consequence on more than one occasion. As reflected in Table 4, there is no statistically significant difference in the rate of recidivism for white students and African-American students. However, recidivist students do exact a higher toll in terms of time and energy from the Deans of Discipline.

Table 2 provides information related to the top three infractions by race for the two primary racial groups (white and African-American). There is no significant change in statistics for white female students. For white male students, there are two areas of significance. Gross Misconduct (13) and Vandalism (4). The focus by the Oak Park Police Department and the security staff of the District on drug use and possession at the beginning of the school year resulted in a number of white male students being charged with Gross Misconduct as exhibited by possession of an illegal substance or drug paraphernalia and/or being under the influence of an illegal substance. Vandalism appears as a new category for white males as the result of incidents of non-gang related graffiti-/tagging. This type

of offense was also a parks and public buildings hot issue in the Oak Park and River Forest communities during the 2006 summer.

For African-American females, regrettably, incidents related to Gross Misconduct (11) as exhibited by mob action and battery continue to be on the rise. A major incident during the first quarter at the main branch of the public library is responsible for most of the numbers in this category. Unfortunately, the library's proximity to the high school and the adjacent location to Scoville Park unintentionally provide an unhealthy environment for students to settle disputes at the end of a school day. For African-American males, the category of Gang Activity appears as one of the top three disciplinary infractions during first quarter, reflective of the communities' continuing concerns with adolescent involvement in gang activities and the communities' preemptive approach to addressing their concerns. However, the specific infractions noted during first quarter suggest a level of activity that is non-aggressive in nature, limited to the displaying of gang symbols (2), internet gang activity (2), and admission to gang affiliation (1).

Table 3 provided information for all racial groups in the District regarding individual students who have received an ISS and/or OSS. As shown in the Table, the numbers across all racial groups have been fairly consistent during the three-year period.

Under the discipline prevention strategies section it was stated that there does not appear to be a single set of strategies that reflect sustained success in reducing the number of students who become involved in the discipline system. Previously in this report, the lack of success with "family power meetings" was referenced. At present, the District is hopeful that the redesign of the F.R.E.E. and M.U.R.E.E. programs will prove to be successful helping students develop strategies for dealing with conflict. In addition, in conjunction with the Oak Park Police Department, the District has redeployed District security staff to cover the area from Lake/Scoville to Lake/Harlem, with particular emphasis in the area of the Library and Scoville Park between the hours of three and four. The District continues to meet with parents in an effort to solicit parental assistance in getting students to meet the behavioral expectations of the high school. Finally, the District continues to be optimistic about the use of early identification and intervention strategies through the auspices of the PSS Teams. Mr. Edgecombe responded to community members' questions.

**Approval of  
Closed Session  
Minutes**

Ms. Fernandez moved to approve the Closed Session minutes of November 16, 21, 28, 30, December 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 12, 2006, as presented and declared that the closed session audiotapes of June 2005 be destroyed; seconded by Dr. Millard. A roll call vote resulted in five ayes. Motion carried. Ms. Fisher and Ms. Ranney were absent.

**Designation of  
Election  
Representative**

Ms. Fernandez moved to appoint Gail Kalmerton as the designated representative, to handle the receiving and filing of nominating petitions to be held in and for District 200 on April 17, 2007. Authority is further given to her to delegate authority to carry out these duties when she is absent; seconded by Mr. Rigas. A voice vote resulted in five ayes. Motion carried. Ms. Fisher and Ms. Ranney were absent.

**Closed Session**

The Board of Education reconvened its closed session at 8:59 p.m. on Thursday, December 21, 2006.

The Board of Education reconvened its open session at 10:49 p.m., on Thursday, December 21, 2006.

**Student Discipline**

Mr. Rigas moved to expel Student EXP 12/21/06-20, as of December 21, 2006 for the remainder of the 2006-07 school year through summer school but held the expulsion in abeyance contingent upon completion of enrollment and regular attendance at an alternative school for the remainder of the 2006-07 school year and summer school, ongoing counseling, and verification and maintenance of residency in the District; seconded by Mr. Conway. A roll call vote resulted in six ayes. Motion carried. Ms. Fisher was absent.

**Adjournment**

At 11:05 p.m. on Thursday, December 21, 2006, Ms. Rigas moved to adjourn the Board of Education meeting; seconded by Ms. Ranney. A roll call vote resulted in six ayes. Motion carried. Ms. Fisher was absent.

Dr. Barry S. Greenwald  
President

Barbara P. Fernandez  
Secretary