

June 19, 2007

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Tuesday, June 19, 2007, in the Board Room of the high school.

**Call to Order**

President Conway called the meeting to order at 8:45 a.m. A roll call vote indicated the following members were present: John C. Allen, IV, Jacques A. Conway, Valerie J. Fisher, Dr. Dietra D. Millard, Dr. Ralph H. Lee, Sharon Patchak-Layman, and John P. Rigas. Also present were Dr. Susan J. Bridge, Superintendent/Principal, Jason Edgecombe, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Cheryl L. Witham, Chief Financial Officer; Jack Lanenga, Assistant Superintendent for Operations; Philip M. Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Amy Hill, Director of Instruction; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board of Education.

**Visitors**

Kay Foran, Director of Community Relations and Communications; James Paul Hunter, F.S.E.C. Representative; Terry Burke, Burcy Hines, Wyanetta Johnson, and other community members; Terry Dean of the *Wednesday Journal* and Bridgette Kennedy of the *Oak Leaves*.

**Visitor Comments**

Wyanetta Johnson, resident of 729 S. Oak Park, Oak Park, addressed the Board of Education.

Ms. Johnson heard some things to the effect that A.P.P.L.E. was not working with all of the community and that it would be placed out of school. She reviewed some of the activities in which A.P.P.L.E. had participated, i.e., the mentoring and tutoring programs for parents and students. She herself had recruited ten white professors to help tutor, but they could not to get material from the teachers. Then, the school opened its own tutoring program. A.P.P.L.E. has never been asked to help close the academic achievement gap. She continued that when she, Wyanetta Johnson, speaks out, it is not A.P.P.L.E., and she has the right to say anything she wants to say.

She continued that the Board of Education makes mistakes as does everyone else. Even though, the administration and faculty are well paid, the gap still exists.

She asked what the Board of Education planned to do to help. She continued that A.P.P.L.E. was the only organization that works 24 hours per day. She was upset “for the children.” She felt that

A.P.P.L.E. was going to be punished because of what she had said. What she does is because of her love of the students. She referred to an incident when some derogatory signs were written by River Forest students and how she had stayed up for days trying to calm things down. Ultimately, there was a meeting in the school's auditorium and everyone was asked to work together. She stated that A.P.P.L.E. reaches out to all children and to all parents. She asked the Board of Education for its consideration. She said she would continue to help children no matter what decision was made about A.P.P.L.E. She wondered if it were really the Board of Education's intention to close the gap and, if so, again asked what was it going to do about it.

**Approval of  
Check  
Distributions  
Dated June 19,  
2007**

Ms. Fisher moved to approve the check distributions dated June 19, 2007 (attached to and made a part of the minutes of this meeting); seconded by Dr. Millard. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

When Ms. Patchak-Layman asked about the charge for vendor Bream, she learned that it was a special education school. She also learned that if a student taking the in-house test prep program had a 90 percent attendance rate, that student would receive a refund of his/her course fee.

Ms. Patchak-Layman was informed that The Oak Park Township contributes funding to Snowball. O.P.R.F.H.S. pays the teachers stipends and the rest of the money is raised by students. When asked if T-shirts are bid out, the response was both yes and no. In the athletic program and the cheerleading program, the uniforms are bid out. However, many programs are supported by student activities and the school pays for part of that expense.

When asked what fees were charged for administering the payment of fees to vendors, etc., from the Student Activities Account, Ms. Witham responded that the school does not charge those groups for this service; the school does, however, keep whatever interest income it receives. She had not valued the time issuing tickets, monitoring stipends, or doing payrolls. Ms. Patchak-Layman felt that the average \$30 cost to write a check was a significant commitment to student activities. Ms. Witham noted that this was the school's commitment. The school earns three to four percent interest on approximately \$800,000 in the Student Activities Accounts.

**IASB Schoolboard  
Net Demo**

Per a request from some Board of Education members, the IASB Schoolboard Net was invited to give a demonstration on electronic board packets. After viewing this demonstration, it was the consensus of the majority of Board of Education members to participate in the IASB's free 90-day trial starting in August to see whether this vehicle was something it wanted to pursue. Ms. Patchak-Layman noted that she preferred a paper packet.

**Closed Session**

At 9:52 a.m. on Tuesday, June 19, 2007, Mr. Rigas moved to enter closed session for the purpose of discussing the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the District or legal counsel for the District, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee or against legal counsel for the District to determine its validity. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1), as amended by PA.93—57; seconded by Dr. Millard.

Discussion ensued. Ms. Patchak-Layman was concerned about the language in the CPA contract specifying that employees would be present at the time a grievance was discussed. Her concern was whether to have this discussion if the Board of Education was to be a neutral participant in terms of receiving information from both parties at the same time without pre-discussion.

Discussion ensued regarding the question of whether information about a grievance should be discussed without union representation in closed session.

It was noted that neutrality does not mean uninformed. Mr. Allen stated that the Board of Education has a right to be informed. In reviewing the contract, many Board of Education members did not see this discussion as a breach of the contract.

Dr. Lee stated that he needed a set of criteria as to when the Board of Education sat as an impartial judge. He was concerned for the benefit of the school district, itself, as to impartial judges. Mr. Edgecombe stated that the discussion was not intended to persuade the Board of Education to support the administration's decision, but to inform them of the facts. Regarding impartiality, Ms. Fisher stated that this Board of Education has a responsibility to do its best job at all times with respect to any issues surrounding District 200. There is never a situation where the Board of Education is required to somehow divest itself, as a board, of that obligation. It is not a judge or jury. The administration is not making an argument, but rather providing background and information. The other side will give information as well. She

stated that there have been many times when the administration has made recommendations and the Board of Education has the right of “novo” review. If the Board of Education is not satisfied, it can ask further questions. Regarding discipline cases, the Board of Education receives a packet of documents. If the Board of Education wished, it could interview personnel. In her view, there was no obligation to set aside one’s role as a school board member whose best interest lies with District 200.

Ms. Patchak-Layman responded that she looked at general provisions where employees and representatives have the right to be at the grievance level. The Board of Education only had the administrative view of this situation. Mr. Rigas questioned Ms. Patchak-Layman if she felt it was necessary for the employee to be involved in the District’s call to its attorney, based on her interpretations of Steps 1 and 2. Ms. Patchak-Layman reiterated that the Board of Education is getting information and will have to make a decision on the grievance coming before it. As a sitting board, she thought having discussion ahead of time was not fair nor impartial.

Dr. Millard noted that the Board of Education members were elected to assume the responsibility of the district.

Dr. Millard moved to close the discussion regarding the debate; seconded by Mr. Rigas. A roll call vote resulted in all four ayes and three nays. Ms. Patchak-Layman, Mr. Allen, and Dr. Lee voted nay. Motion carried.

Then a roll call vote on the previous motion to go into closed session resulted in six ayes and one nay. Ms. Patchak-Layman voted nay. Motion carried.

The Board of Education reconvened its open session at 10:10 a.m.

## **Adjournment**

At 10:15 a.m. on Tuesday, June 19, 2007, Mr. Rigas moved to adjourn the Special Board Meeting; seconded by Dr. Lee. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Jacques A. Conway  
President

John P. Rigas  
Secretary