

**OAK PARK AND RIVER FOREST HIGH SCHOOL**

*2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Library East*  
201 N. Scoville Avenue  
Oak Park, IL

**JOINT SPECIAL BOARD MEETING**

Village of Oak Park, Oak Park Elementary School District 97, and  
Oak Park and River Forest High School 200

April 24, 2013

The Oak Park Elementary School District 97, the Oak Park and River Forest High School District 200 and the Village of Oak Park held a Joint Board Meeting on Wednesday, April 24, 2013, beginning at 7:00 p.m., in the Second Floor East Library of the OPRFHS.

Roll calls showed following Board and Trustee Members present:

District 97 Board of Education

Peter Barber, President  
Robert Spatz, Vice President  
Amy Felton  
James Gates  
Jim O'Connor  
Denise Sacks  
Peter J. Traczyk

District 200 Board of Education

Terry Finnegan, President  
John Phelan, Vice President  
Amy Leafe McCormack, Secretary  
Ralph H. Lee  
Sharon Patchak-Layman  
Dr. Dietra D. Millard  
Valerie J. Fisher

Village Oak Park Trustees

David Pope, President  
Glenn Brewer  
John Hedges  
Ray Johnson  
Colette Lueck  
Adam Salzman  
Bob Tucker

Also present were: Dr. Steven T. Isoye, Superintendent District 200, Dr. Albert Roberts, Superintendent of District 97, Lisa Shelly of the Village of Oak Park, , and Therese Powell, Clerk of the Village of Oak Park, and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board of Education District 200

**Visitors**

Karin Sullivan, Community Relations and/or Communications Coordinator; Chris Jascula of District 97; Mary Rose Lambke, Daryl R. Davidson, Steve Gevinson, Jeff Weissglass, Thomas Cofsky, Jackie Moore, Julie McCarthy, Eric Gershenson, Carollina Song, Ann Courter, David Weindling, John Whalen, Mary Bodlak, Marie Masterson, Paul Gajette, Henry Fulkerson, Charics Phillips Ade Onayemi, Beth Honle, Elise Pope, Mary Noll, Carolyn Newberry-Schwartz, Anan Abu-

Taleb, and other community members; and Rebecca Bibbs and Terry Dean of the *Wednesday Journal*.

### **Public Comments**

No public comments were received.

### **Board of Education Member Comments**

Members of the different boards made comments.

Ms. Fisher felt everyone was pleased to have collaborated on something that could be of critical importance.

Dr. Millard read the following statement: “Those of you who attended the regular District 200 meeting heard me explain my concerns about the allocation of substantial District 200 tax dollars for the Collaboration of Early Childhood Care and Education, nearly \$2 million over the period of this proposed 5-year agreement. I will not reiterate these tonight. While I personally support this organization and its mission, I find it impossible, as a fiduciary steward of District 200, to vote to allocate such substantial tax dollars, designated for OPRFHS high school students to the CEC without distinct evidence that the CEC’s programs in our village will bring direct benefit to improving the achievement of our students.

“In February, I voted to proceed with an IGA between the three parties despite my reservations. I hoped that the details of such an agreement would include definitive information about the outcome assessments of CEC interventions, descriptions of District 97 programs to continue those started by the CEC, and even a guarantee, however limited, of involvement of high-risk high school students in CEC interventions. For example, those students who are parents themselves and their young children in CEC programs, to ensure value to the high school. I am disappointed that neither the IGA nor the contract for services presented tonight includes any such content for any long-term accountability specifics of CEC outcomes.

“The intergovernmental cooperation of taxing bodies working toward one goal to benefit all students is certainly admirable, especially if all parties are activity collaborating toward that long-term goal, not just in dollars but also in coordinated programs. The details in the IGA regarding the operations of the Governing Board are notable, including a timetable and exact amounts due from each taxing body. Let it be noted that there may be additional expenses incurred in the execution of this agreement, shared by each part—expenses I would have expected to be incorporated into the CEC budget provided by these three parties. However, it is equally notable that similar details regarding outcomes expected from these substantial donations to the CEC are absent in the contract for services.

“If these agreements are approved tonight, I reiterate my challenge to the District 200 Board of Education, to designate in matched funds, dollar for dollar the amount paid to the CEC toward additional or expanded educational programs for our current high school students and those who will enroll here in the next 10-12 years. We cannot cheat our current students out of programs needed now in place of spending money for future students. We must do both. We must attend to all of our students’ needs.

“Dr. Lee, Ms. Patchak-Layman, Mr. Phelan, and new members Mr. Cofsky, Dr. Gevinson, Ms. Moore, and Mr. Weissglass, our communities deserve your assurance that this Board is dedicated both to our current students, those coming soon, as well as those entering in the mid 2020’s, only 50 to 60 percent of whom will have participated in the CEC programs, based on recent survey results conducted in the high school.

“I hope that the future will prove me wrong and that the high school will eventually see distinct improvements in achievement for those student participants in the CEC programs. The CEC has a gigantic challenge ahead and a huge responsibility to prove to us the value of these dollars for our high school students. When we see that evidence, that will be the time to celebrate these agreements.”

Mr. O’Connor, as a parent, a former teacher, and a former principal, supported the agreements.

Mr. Hedges stated that this was a model for future actions by the various governing bodies to pool resources for things that are important to this community. The last time this occurred was the Youth Interventionist.

Ms. Patchak-Layman was happy that everyone was working together; it was an admirable goal. The work of the CEC is good for the community, the high school, District 97 and the Village, but she was concerned with the documents presented. Many conversations have occurred outside of these documents and while many may have an understanding of the documents, the understandings were not included in the documents. She felt it was a poor contract and poor IGA. Her responsibility, as a Board of Education member, is to work for good governance and that includes accountability and transparency: Can citizens easily follow the contract to see how the money will be spent? What are the accountability for services and benchmarks? Is the contract understandable? Are there unnecessary levels of organization? Having the ability to terminate the contract at any time does not absolve these things being written into the contract. The administrative district and automatic renewals are red flags. The contract with the Township that Mr. Hedges referred to is only a 2-year contract. This should only be a three-year contract. After that time, a request should be made to the Board of Education to continue. In addition, no specific measures or benchmarks for the first two years were included and only percent of intentions were included for the remaining part of it. The contract is silent on what was to be provided to high school students; the mission statement never included the kinds of things that would be good for high school students or for being future parents. The time was not taken to make these agreements correct. Perhaps, the interest to make them correct was not there. She would not support the agreements.

Mr. Barber looked forward to the challenge of setting the baseline for the measurement goals that will lead to the benchmarks that will be discussed and adjusted over time with the CEC. This is a framework, and he welcomed this opportunity and they can rise to the challenge.

Ms. Lueck was the happiest night ever. She felt this was an example of how government should work—people are able to come together to create a framework for collaboration that is focused on real needs of real children in the community and to put aside some of the differences and agree they want the future to be stronger than the present. It is difficult to invest prevention. It is easier to invest in a problem that one can see and understand. Research supported the fact that the best investment of dollars is in prevention and is the best return on

the money. These entities have an obligation to the taxpayers to make the investment. This is a reflection of the strength of this community. The community understands that every child, no matter what age or where they come from, is a part of the community and it is up to the taxing bodies to do the best it can for each.

Mr. Phelan thanked those who started the Collaboration's effort years ago. Commencement means the end of something and the beginning of something. This is the culmination of 10 years' worth of work of current and past Board members, the Collaboration, and staff. The timeliness could not be better. This is the type of effort that communities need to engage in and if this community can be the beacon on the hill to address problems latent for a long time, then he was proud to be a part of it. He thanked Dr. Millard and Ms. Patchak-Layman for their comments. In a democracy, everyone needs to be heard and are important and these agreements reflect a balance of fiscal responsibility and a very important initiative they are engaging upon tonight. The way that it is way it is bringing bodies together is special and the agreements do have clauses that protect the entities financially should the promises made not occur. Other governing bodies will be watching and he hoped more would join this endeavor. It is like building an airplane before flying and, fortunately, the Collaboration has done the work. It is important to monitor that work.

Mr. Spatz referred to a paragraph about early childhood in his campaign brochure for the school board in 1999 and it has culminated into this event.

Even though having no children, Mr. Johnson had supported this idea from the beginning because of what he had learned as a resident and from the citizens of Oak Park. Rather than being about him, it is about 1) what the community can do for each other; 2) setting another milestone for this community; 3) what sets Oak Park apart from other communities; and 4) what should be embraced. It is about building a better future for the children and the grandchildren in the community. While he had no questions about the details and the language of the contract at this time, when he had asked questions, he received responses. Mr. Johnson was proud of the work and regular check-ins will move the community forward.

Ms. McCormack believed in the mission of the CEC and she believed firmly that this would positively affect District 200 students in the years to come. She was proud to support the contract and ended her term with this intergovernmental collaboration.

Mr. Gates, as a father, grandfather, career educator, and educational researcher, was very proud of being a member of the District 97 Board of Education, as they committed to this noble and researched-based endeavor. He thanked the CEC for its work and he was confident that it would be successful.

Mr. Tucker concurred with Ms. Lueck's comments and thanked the Collaboration Board. He felt lucky to have them.

Dr. Lee made no real distinction between his support of the CEC and the work of the District 200 Board of Education. For him, the work was one in the same. Because of that, it was one of the happiest days of his life.

Ms. Felton was excited to support the two agreements, as they represented the three entities coming together to support the future of children, through several hours of discussion and meetings. She was excited to support the CEC's work in research discovery, collaboration and to have a plan that would support the success of all students.

Mr. Salzman, a parent of a three-year old daughter and in receipt of excellent CEC care with the Park District, was pleased to have the opportunity to vote in support of these agreements, as all three-year olds deserve the same level of services that his daughter has. He thanked the working group members, the other board members, and the leadership of the CEC.

Mr. Brewer stated that he was proud of the working groups that put the documents together for this great endeavor. He did not think they were put together with the notion that they were static. They are living, breathing documents, and all of the entities will have an opportunity to review the progress over time. He was proud that the documents would allow additional bodies to be part of this effort. The important aspect of this is the benefit for the future. Having one OPRFHS graduate and an OPRFHS senior, he reflected on how fortunate they were to have had the resources they had that allowed them to excel in their educational careers. Mr. Brewer believed this agreement and the work the CEC is about to engage in and has been doing, will give students without those resources the ability to excel as had his children and those of others attending this meeting. He was very excited about the agreements and the opportunity to vote on it. He thanked the Collaboration for the work it had accomplished and the work it would do.

Dr. Isoye agreed that this was an important step in the collaborative efforts of the Village of Oak Park, District 97, and the CEC and it paved the way for others to participate. While differences of opinion, there has been a high level of respect made towards the needs of each board and the views of its members. This is about the future CEC efforts and the caliber of students entering the high school. He will not forget the ongoing efforts that the high school continues to do for its students now. Congratulations to everyone.

Dr. Roberts noted that this was a unique and caring community with many voices and opinions. It had once again stepped to the plate and made the place better for the youngsters of this community. Virtually all of the research reports have said that this will prove to be a wise decision for all three boards. He appreciated all of the meetings and the work regarding the two documents. The Collaboration deserves a resounding applause for the work it is doing and for its leadership of the CEC for years.

Lisa Shelly, Deputy Assistant Village Manger, noted that Ms. Pavlicek, the Village Manager, was excited for the opportunity and for the opportunity to work with the Collaboration.

Mr. Finnegan stated that residents of Oak Park and River Forest live in intentional communities. People who live in these communities are accepted for who they are. When students go to college, they are disappointed because they do not find the same atmosphere. He tells them that it is their job to bring this awareness to others. He talked about the straw buyers of homes that helped integrate these communities. The boards were standing on the shoulders of giants and visionaries. The work of the past decade by the CEC and the work of Dr. Heckman made it easier for these boards to have a roadmap for the future. The boards are putting their money into an investment that is a leap of faith. All voices are meaningful and

needed and that will continue in the spirit of openness and cooperation. He expected to see great things from the CEC. Mr. Finnegan was very proud of each board, the CEC, and the community.

Mr. Pope observed that this was the first time that any city in the United States had come together to approve a comprehensive, fully integrated approach to early childhood that will touch every child from childbirth to five years of age. He believed that the conversations outside of the community would find this unique, groundbreaking, and truly visionary leadership. While being codified at this time by the boards, these agreements had emerged from the community. He thanked all of those involved that helped to make this happen. This was his second term as president of the Village of Oak Park and his third term as a trustee. He had served the Village of Oak Park for 10 years. One of his daughters was born during this tenure. He had invited his wife and children to this meeting, as they do not have a TV and often do not come to meetings. He wanted them at this meeting because it was historic to see the collaboration among the jurisdictions that came together for the needs for all children. A half-mile radius from this meeting place would include the wealthiest census blocks and families as well as poorest census blocks and families. Mr. Pope was adopted six days after he was born and he was raised in a community that surrounded him with support, love, and every opportunity. He has learned how important it is for all to engage at the earliest ages and to provide for the needs of all students. His lens says that while a child has the potential to do anything, it depends on the situation in which they are raised and the resources given to them. Dr. James Heckman, in talking about this work, describes himself as a conservative supply-side economist. He states that the smartest dollars the public can spend are on early childhood initiatives and they flow through to all three jurisdictions. Doing so facilitates cost avoidance in the future for all taxpayers and every child is given every opportunity. He thanked all of the boards, the community members engaged in the process, the business community, the Community Foundation, the CEC, and outside legal counsel to clarify that under Illinois law the actual emphasis is to educate all children and to be more cost effective. He thanked Ms. Song, Ms. Courter, and Ms. Newberry-Schwartz for driving the process forward, and Mr. Gershenson, the original convener and to whom a great debt of gratitude is owed.

Mr. Barber stated that Districts 97 and 200 have taken many steps to address the achievement gap, as well as every district in the country, but it has not been done successfully. It was exciting to him because this was the best possible solution at this time, and at the same time, it was different and scary. There is a risk. While collaboration has been great to talk, it is ugly and messy to execute. He appreciated the comments of Ms. Patchak-Layman and Dr. Millard, as it is not a perfect agreement and some things he did not like. It does not matter that one person does not get his/her way, because that is part of being a board. Boards have to work together for the best possible solution that makes the best sense and that includes compromise. He hoped that this was not the last time a joint meeting on major issues be held. He will bring this forward when he is a member of the Village Board. In terms of messiness, he thanked those who served on the leadership team. He thanked the boards for their support and hard work, especially the working groups that included Mr. Pope, Mr. Brewer, Ms. Pavlicek, Mr. Finnegan, Dr. Millard, Mr. Phelan, Ms. Fisher, Dr. Isoye, Dr. Roberts, Mr. Jascula, Mr. Gershenson, Ms. Courter, and Ms. Song.

### **Approval of the IGA**

Mr. Finnegan moved that the Board of Education of Oak Park and River Forest High School District 200, approve the Intergovernmental Agreement for the purchase of services pertaining to early childhood education programs among the Board of Education of Oak Park and River Forest High School District 200, Cook County, Illinois, The Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97, Cook County, Illinois, and the Village of Oak Park, Cook County, Illinois; seconded by Mr. Phelan. A roll call vote resulted in five ayes and two nays. Ms. Patchak-Layman and Dr. Millard voted nay. Motion carried.

Mr. Gates of District 97 moved the above motion; seconded by Mr. Traczyk. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.

Mr. Johnson of the Village of Oak Park moved the above motion; seconded by Mr. Tucker. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.

### **Approval of the Contract for Services**

Dr. Lee moved that the Board of Education of Oak Park and River Forest High School District 200, approve the contract among the Oak Park and River Forest High School District 200, Cook County, Illinois, The Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97, Cook County, Illinois, and the Village of Oak Park, Cook County, Illinois, and the Collaboration for Early Childhood Care and Education d/b/a Collaboration for Early Childhood; seconded by Ms. Fisher. A roll call vote resulted in five ayes and two nays. Ms. Patchak-Layman and Dr. Millard voted nay. Motion carried.

Mr. Hedges moved to approve the above motion; seconded by Mr. Brewer. Pass unanimously. Motion carried.

Mr. Spatz moved the above motion; seconded by Mr. Gates. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.

### **Comments from the Collaboration of Early Childhood Care and Education**

Mr. Gershenson read the following statement.

“President Barber and members of the District 97 Board, President Finnegan and members of the District 200 Board, President Pope and members of the Oak Park Village Board, Dr. Roberts, Dr. Isoye and Manager Pavlicek:

“Not long ago, Marian Wright Edelman, civil rights heroine, founder and president of the Children’s Defense Fund, recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, a MacArthur Fellowship and the Albert Schweitzer Humanitarian Award - gave an address that included the following remarks:

“We have pushed so many of our children into the tumultuous sea of life in small and leaky boats, without survival gear and compass. I hope they will forgive us, and I hope God will forgive us. I hope we will all be moved to give all our children the anchors of faith and love, the sails of health and education, and the paddles of family and community to keep them safe and strong when life’s sea gets rough.

“Tonight, by your actions, you have answered Marian Edelman’s call; you have responded to her invocation. On behalf of the Collaboration for Early Childhood and as a resident and former school board member, please accept a most heartfelt thank you.

“Our community has long been characterized by our willingness to take up the most compelling socio-economic challenges of an era. It has thrived and become vibrant because of its creative engagement with these issues. A substantial body of evidence indicates that one of the defining issues of this moment is ensuring that every child develops to his or her full potential, and is not hindered by limited access to high quality early learning programs and services.

“It has taken vision to recognize the potential benefits to addressing this challenge: narrowing the disparities in achievement among our students; reducing rates of substance use and abuse in middle school and high school students and young adults; lowering rates of involvement in the criminal justice system; improving health and increased earnings as our children become adults; increasing property values.

“And it has taken courage to emerge from exclusive institutional frameworks and act in concert. By doing so you have been able to effectively address needs that affect all jurisdictions but are not the direct responsibility of any single one.

“Tonight you make possible the implementation of a blueprint for action: action that will address many problems at their source – in early childhood. While it is not a magic bullet, it is a plan based on research about what works, intended to build on what exists. It holds real promise to ensure that all our children have the opportunity to succeed throughout their school years and adulthood.

“In some sense it is appropriate to say that the real work is about to begin. But in other respects that would be misleading. As you know, a great deal has already been accomplished – and on a shoestring. This is the result of the extraordinary capability of the Collaboration’s Executive Director, Carolyn Newberry Schwartz and the dedication and productivity of her staff – that small band of sisters: Diana Rosenbrock and Karen Baldwin. It is also attributable to the leadership of the Collaboration’s Board and its Chair, Carollina Song, and the commitment and energy of all of the Collaboration’s partner jurisdictions, agencies, and individuals. People who attend the monthly Collaboration Council meetings for the first time come away amazed at the scope and dynamism of the undertaking. The truth of the matter is, if I glance behind me I could say of many of the people I see – if it were not for what you did on a given occasion we would not be here tonight. That is also true of many of you arrayed at the tables before me.

“Tonight is a milestone in the life of our community, our children, and their families. I am absolutely convinced that as the years go by, as the result of the work we – all of us – do together, you will have reason to be proud of your vote this evening. Thank you.”

### **Adjournment**

At 7:56 p.m., on Wednesday, April 24, 2013, Dr. Lee moved to adjourn the Joint Board meeting; seconded by Ms. McCormack. A voice vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Terry Finnegan  
President

Amy McCormack  
Secretary