

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

Pool Site Committee Meeting Minutes
December 8, 2014

A Pool Site Committee meeting was held on December 8, 2014. Mr. Weissglass called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. in the Board Room. Committee members present were Jeff Weissglass, Tom Cofsky, Steve Gevinson, Dr. Ralph Lee, Tod Altenburg, John Stelzer, Chris Ledbetter, Paul Aeschleman, Joe Connell, Thomas Cronin, Joyce Gajda, Chris Meister (arrived at 7:54 p.m.), Mary Roberts, Stephen Schuler, Peter Traczyk, and Cathy Yen. Also present was Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors included Sharon Patchak-Layman, Board of Education Member, Dr. Steve Isoye, Superintendent; Phil Prale, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction; Karin Sullivan, Director of Communications and Community Relations; Robert Zummallen, OPRFHS Director of Buildings and Grounds, Patrick Brosnan and Rob Wroble of Legat Architects, Stan Jagielski and Al Steffeter of Henry Bros., Terry Dean of the *Wednesday Journal*, Lorne Golman, video expert; Kim Allgood, Jeff Arnold, Brian Endless, Matthew Kemper, Gary Nieslawski, Greg Price, Dave Salde, and Bill Sullivan, representing baseball; Mike Adams, J. Affelder, John Carmody, Christy Chapman, Curtis Cruver, Nancy Heezen, July Lloyd, Kevin Peppard, Greg Price, Gordon Mackey, James Ridgeway, Ian Silver, Ellen Somberg, Deborah Wess, and Kim Wojack, community members; Bob Conrardy and Diane Daggett representing diving; Gordon Markely, Dennis Podgoiski, and Scott Traylor representing Pony Baseball, C. Anderson, Julie Blankmeister, Dana Connell, Julie Elinger, Gary Kaplan, Amber Pareija, Ellen Pimentel, Kathy Right, and Ken West representing swimming; Arlene Pedraz, Catlin Phillips, and Peter Ryan representing TOPS; Chris Koch and John Callahan representing youth football.

Public Comments

Dana Connell, resident of 538 N. Elmwood, Oak Park, doubted that a referendum to build any pool, regardless of the site, would pass. The offsite location is not viable because 1) the villages are landlocked and any property identified for this project would come off the tax rolls, and 2) the Park District is unwilling to write a check. Pitting one sport against another is not good. Someone will have to compromise: Aquatics had compromised for long enough.

Dennis Podgoiski, resident of 1136 Schneider, Oak Park, top swimmer, spoke about the pool air quality of the pools and the lack of pool space. While other sports' needs were currently being met but the swimming community's needs were not.

Greg Price, resident of 618 Clarence, Oak Park, did not support building a pool on the fields.

John Carmody, parent, coach, and father of five sons who graduated from OPRFHS, wanted the green space maintained and available to all of the sports that needed to develop their programs. The Pony League was focused at Lindberg Park and shared that green space with OPRFHS and Fenwick High Schools. The Pony League is a feeder program to both OPRFHS and Fenwick. Its program will compact if OPRFHS moves its sessions to Lindberg Park and that will impact the students' development. Compromises are already being made amidst all sports with regard to outdoor playing spaces.

Gary Nieslawski, resident of 1025 Home, Oak Park, IL, reiterated that the OPYBS could not afford to lose green space in the village. If the green space is used for a pool building, that space will be lost forever. He continued that Ridgeland Commons would only accommodate his program, not Bronco

Pony. OPYBS is the main feeder group for the softball and baseball programs and without a place for students to play and practice, students will not be developed. OPYBS prides itself on providing quality candidates for the high school programs, yet it cannot get space to run a legitimate season in the village for these leagues, even without the elimination of any more fields. Currently, it uses space throughout the villages, St. Mary's, and Concordia University. Losing more space will endanger seasons and leagues.

Brian Endless, resident of 121 Columbia, Oak Park, Board of Education member of OPYBS, supported rehabbing the pool or choosing the parking garage site if parking along the railroad tracks was a feasible option, rather than using green space, and he could be in favor of moving the fields to the north, and relocating the tennis courts. OPYBS would want advance knowledge in order to be able verify the information. He also asked that it be completed within one year so that no more than one season would be lost. If Lindberg Field was utilized, it would mean that the Pony League and softball would have to move.

Gordon Mackey, resident of 1103 Holley Court, Oak Park, agreed with the previous speakers' remarks, noting that the 60 x 90 football fields was an obvious placement, but it would kill the Pony Program.

Peter Ryan, resident of 414 Augusta, Oak Park, thanked the committee for its work, whose purpose was to recommend a real site for a new pool. He urged the Committee to make a real recommendation to the Board of Education and while he did not want to take away green space, aquatics was deserving of better facilities.

Julie Blankemeier, resident of 240 S. Euclid, Oak Park, spoke on behalf of the future students. As a mother of a runner and baseball player, a swimming pool would not take away from other sports. The pool is one of the most highly utilized facilities in the school as both boys and girls use it, many of whom do not participate in other athletics. Learning how to swim in PE classes is imperative for every student. Several swimmers have committed to college because of their sports. She hoped that the school could continue to have swimming facilities, but not at the expense of other athletes.

Julie Lloyd, 345 Home Avenue, Oak Park, representing swimming and water pool, spoke on behalf of future students. The needs of children come first. She hoped that the current pools hold up for 2 more years and that a decision is made soon.

Jeff Arnold, resident of 547 Forest, Oak Park, represented T-ball, had not heard any supporters of baseball say that OPRFHS should not have a pool. However, if green space were used for a pool, it would affect the baseball community. He provided statistics as to the number of youth in the community who could be affected.

Additional Meeting Dates and Meeting Goals

- 1) Update the committee on additional information
- 2) Discuss pros and cons of each option still under consideration
- 3) Discuss process and timing for answering unresolved questions (e.g., parking plan; off-campus location for a west field sport; partner and location of off-campus competition pool).
- 4) Discuss what else the committee needs in order to make a decision.

Timeline

A referendum (if needed) would drive the timeframe. To be on the April 7 ballot, the Board of Education would need to adopt a resolution between January 13 and 20. The Committee could meet on December 15 and update the Board of Education on December 18. A Special Board of Education meeting could be held on January 13, 2015.

The question raised then was what would make it possible to come to a recommendation at the January 5, 2015 meeting.

Garage Site

If a pool were built on the parking garage or baseball field site, an opportunity to repurpose the old pools for athletic and academic reasons to satisfy Strategic Plan need exists. However, construction work would not begin until they were vacant. Thus, it was important to separate that from the other options and be aware of the expense. How those spaces will be used in the future will command much consideration.

Parking Garage Option

Legat put together options, including additional documents and layouts in order to get more information to Henry Bros. Legat believed it was important to further define the information and take the committee through each of the current options, showing the layouts. The parking options are complex.

Option 2: Construction on the parking deck. A floor plan with parking spaces that exceeded 120 to 130 parking places required changes to the original layout and to the size of the building. It would require complete removal of the existing parking structure. Because of the weight of the new building, the water would not be reusable. Significant effort would be made to maximize the existing ground. The pool depth would be 6 feet. Every effort would be made to maximize the efficiency of the volume of the space, i.e., sloping the parking deck to the maximum of the pool.

Option 2B. Instead of driving up, people would drive down. The pool would be elevated 19 feet in order for cars to get behind the pool basin. This would be a long-course pool with a 10 foot deck all around and a 6 foot bulkhead.

Option 2C. The pool deck and volume are being elevated. This would accommodate 210 to 220 parking spaces. The depth of the building would be 10 feet below the other options. The lowest level would be 23 feet underground. The deeper the construction, the higher the cost. The reason to build down rather than build up is that the height restriction is 45', and these options exceed that without any parking at all. The goal is to minimize the height in order to keep the structure. It is a balancing act. One member felt that because the cost for going down was much higher and a variance was planned, he/she preferred building up because no one would protest because no view would be lost from Lake Street.

Staff will be queried about their preference as to whether access should be from either the alley or the mall.

While the cost difference estimates between options 2B and 2C ranged from \$14 to \$15 million for 120 parking spaces to \$28 to \$30 million for 220 parking spaces, the costs had not been confirmed with the construction manager. In order to accommodate additional parking, the District would have to dig deeper and that would require the reinforcement of lighting, mechanicals, etc. Legat recommended maintaining the alleyway, as it provides emergency access. Originally, the cost of Option 2A was \$36 million.

Enough lockers would be available in the new building to accommodate PE students. In addition, the connection/access from the old building to the new building would best be located in the balcony area of the Field House. Access to the building from Scoville was suggested, because access from Lake Street would have a big impact.

Option 3A. This option included moving varsity baseball offsite and redeveloping the fields with turf as that would require less maintenance. Field development would cost \$2 million.

Option 3B. This option included moving softball offsite.

Option 3C. This option included moving tennis off site.

Discussion ensued. While putting a pool building on the tennis court site was considered, the guiding concern was how to connect that building to other PE components.

The entrance and exist would be in the southeast corner of the building. An assumption was made that most visitors/participants would park in the garage and that would minimize the impact on Linden. It would be made clear that pick up and drop offs would not occur on the mall.

Dr. Isoye made preliminary calls to determine whether other spaces could be considered for relocating any teams, specifically that of softball, baseball, and/or tennis. A question that arose was whether this was a temporary permanent structure. One member asked if it were alright for students to practice on clay courts and to compete on concrete courts and it seemed that differing opinions existed.

The only park big enough to hold a baseball field in both Oak Park and River Forest was Lindberg Park. If the high school utilized it, the pony league would have to give up practices. Using Lindberg Park would require multi-use facilities to regain space in the infields and it would not appeal to the community.

Option 5: This option included fixing the current pools, without moving walls, by extending the deck and losing a lane. Thus, smaller pools would mean no competitive pools; the pools would be used for instructional purposes only.

Some members wanted to explore sharing a pool with Ridgeland Commons. The problem with combing a community pool with a competitive pool is that the community wants a warmer pool and swimmers want a cooler pool. Also if a roof were put on Ridgeland Commons, the earliest it could be completed would result in a life span of 4 to 5 years. Engineering has said that it would require rebuilding its shell in 10 to 15 years.

One member pointed out that the parking garage is 10 to 12 years old and its estimated life is 30 years; thus, if nothing was done with it now, it would have to be redone in 15 to 30 years. As the District looks at the pool with garage spaces, it must take into account that this will provide parking for a longer period of time and, thus, will temper the cost of the pool with parking. And, this site would cause no loss of green space in the community.

It was suggested that additional parking samples be explored. One member reminded the committee that building on the parking garage site would affect a large number of people for many years. It will fall under the category of working conditions and be an issue at the bargaining table. This is not a small matter.

Garage Site

Pros

Replacing garage needed soon anyway
No loss of green space

Cons

Cost – walking distance/time
Many users opposed
Faculty Concern
Event parking
\$125K per space

One member supported working with the Village and finding other options as the cost of a single parking space was too high. Another member liked the garage site because of its proximity to the school and because it made sense for the students, the people in the community who will use the facility to go into the natatorium, and for security. At the high end it is \$125,000 per space, but suggestions to make the building higher rather than digging deeper could reduce the cost. This is not about community parking or event parking. A site is needed that works for everyone. A commitment has been made to build a pool and to make it something that attracts people to the community. Another member supported keeping some parking, as 280 cars on the street would bring back past problems. However, with 100 spots in the garage and utilizing Lake Street and the east/west streets, it could be feasible. While expensive, tearing down the garage and completely eliminating parking would be difficult to do. Another member noted that while parking would be expensive, part of what is being bought is not just the parking, but green space. There is duality to the cost. Another member was a fan of preserving green space because the flexibility of green space could be lost for several generations. This member felt that the parking garage site was the only option because it saved sports and it would not cause an interruption to a sport.

One member summarized the discussion by saying that the committee and the Board of Education will need to reach a consensus on a recommendation that can be presented to the community so that all sports and their feeder programs are unified behind a single proposal. The case must be persuasive and the discussion clear that the argument on behalf of the garage is an integral aspect that will continue to have people's support. The talking points that will need to be repeated for the next 5 or 6 months will include the fact that the District is building a community asset, it is freeing up both green and inside space. If parking were eliminated, the community will pay for it via its bargaining units. The hope is that if the recommendation is the garage and the sports community would support the recommendation for the above-stated reasons.

Baseball Field Option off Campus

One member stated that organizations of youth leagues throughout the town using Park District fields spend an inordinate amount of time finding places to practice and play. The only way this works is if a sport could be moved in a fashion that recognizes the assets and the difficulties those teams face. One member felt there were no positives and only negatives to moving baseball or softball and, thus, it would not get the support of the community.

Move Tennis off campus

Pros

Moving tennis increases field space
Save parking
Cost savings
Improving facilities perhaps state of the art offsite
Acquiring

Cons

Hard to get community sport
Nothing to benefit displaced sport
Fireworks
Major ramifications
Sharing difficulty
No more than 2 sites
Increased staff time to schedule

Renovate Plus Off-Campus Competition Pool Option

The pros and cons of renovating the current pools and building an off-campus competition pool were:

Pros

Cons

Don't have option and thus no building schematics
Lose repurposing
Do not have a partner
Property would come off the tax rolls
Viability of funding scheme question
Cannot compete in renovated pool
Less water on campus
Sequencing problem

Referendum Basics

This information will be emailed to the committee members and posted on the website.

Next Steps and Information Needs

It was the consensus of the majority of the committee members that no recommendation would be made until January 5. The information to be collected is:

- 1) Information about referendum
- 2) Can the District go for a referendum without knowing the site?
- 3) Drawings regarding garage site will be shared with committee
- 4) Working with off-campus parking schematic, what is the process for working with the village?
- 5) What is the best possible site for a sport?
- 7) Need more garage utilization information (days)
- 8) Reconsider no parking
- 9) Tighter, lower parking costs numbers?
- 11) Explore tennis opportunities
- 12) Consider removing baseball and softball from consideration
- 13) Need to be sure that tennis is heard from
- 15) What is the possibility of acquiring the garage?
- 16) Better cost estimate on renovating the current pools
- 17) Possibility of partnering on garage site with renovations
- 18) Explore off site partners
- 19) Look at putting courts on top of current parking garage
- 20) What is the price per taxing unit on \$50 million?

Additional Visitor Comments

Curtis Cruver, resident of 159 Linden, Oak Park, appreciated the multiple disciplines. Originally he questioned why the garage would be torn down, but now he was leaning toward that option,

acknowledging that building a new facility would be a major disruption. He was never a fan of the baseball field because he lives across the street and the neighbors have been disadvantaged too many times. He questioned the need for student parking.

Amber Pareja, resident of 1113 Washington Blvd., Oak Park, graduate of 1990, varsity swimmer and girls' water polo player, noted that her team would not have won the state competition if it had to deal with reduced pool lanes and an offsite competitive pool. While she was not a proponent of losing green space, there was little blue space. People now drive to UIC and Riverside to compete.

Ellen Pimentel, resident of 147 N. Lombard, Oak Park, stated that her child has asthma attacks every time she enters the pool. She did not believe that asking for 3 pools was a good solution. With respect to the moving the baseball fields, the community would be more amicable, because of the inconvenience swimmers have endured: one year, there was no season, presently there is no diving. Swimming has helped shaped many lives.

Karen Stewart Nowak, resident of 739 N. Hayes, Oak Park was hopeful. She noted that the communities of Oak Park and River Forest were raising great athletes and more collaboration and support was needed.

Adjournment

At 10:30 p.m. on December 8, 2014, Ms. Yen moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Dr. Lee. A voice vote resulted in motion carried.

Submitted by Gail Kalmerton
Clerk of the Board