

November 17, 2016

The regular Board meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Thursday, November 17, 2016, in the Board Room of the OPRFHS.

**Call to Order**

Vice President Moore called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m. A roll call indicated the following Board of Education members were present: Fred Arkin, Jennifer Cassell, Thomas F. Cofsky, Dr. Steven Gevinson, Dr. Jackie Moore, Sara Spivy, and Jeff Weissglass (attended telephonically). Also present were Dr. Joylynn Pruitt, Interim Superintendent; Tod Altenburg, Chief School Business Official; Brenda Horton, Director of Human Resources Nathaniel L. Rouse, Principal; Philip M Prale, ASCI; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant Clerk of the Board.

**Closed Session**

At 6:39 p.m. on Thursday, November 17, 2016, Dr. Moore 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 and 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. 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)(1), as amended by PA.93—57; 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); Student disciplinary cases 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(10); seconded by Ms. Cassell. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

At 7:30 p.m., the Board of Education resumed the open session.

Joining the meeting were Michael Carioscio, Chief Information Officer; Amy Hill, Director of Assessment and Research; Karin Sullivan, Director of Communications and Community Relations; and Sheila Hardin, Faculty Senate Executive Committee Chair.

**Visitors**

Matt and Bridge Baron, Virginia Beacon, Joanna and Ryan Borgdorff, Jack

Davidson, Chris Donovan, Jim Farrell, Taylor Feld, Natalie Hayes, Denise Houser, Lynn Kamenitsa, Maureen Kleinman, Adam and Sally Lemke, Mark Lingen, Judd M., Guilleninda Madrigal, Amanda Massie, Steve Matticks, Marcella Neira, V. Nelson, Peter Ogunsanya, J.V. Palmisano, Ellen Pimentel, Jason Reneria, Peter Ryan, Gina Sennella, Janel Smart, Samantha and Laurel Smart, Nancy Woulfe, Scott and Cathy Yen, community members, Mary Haley, League of Women Voters.

**Public  
Comments**

Virginia Beacon spoke of her and her family's support of Mike Powell in that he has been a more positive role model for children than any other teacher, coach, or administrator in the school. He changed attitudes and is a father figure. She never doubted his character. He was everything someone would want in a son or a daughter. She asked: Who has not hired a babysitter to watch their children when they leave their house, entrusted a child with their children or pets and has not obeyed the rules set out for them.

Mark Lingen, the 25-year resident of Oak Park and father of two children, spoke about the sport of wrestling. He knew Mike Powell for over a decade and spoke to his being an amazing role model who opened his heart and soul and his home to making better women and men by challenging them daily. He was being singled out because it being on his property. Mr. Powell has broad shoulders. He is ethical, morale, and a role model for all students. Who at OPRFHS learned of this alleged incident? Why is the administration not doing anything about this? He encouraged the District to allow Mr. Powell to continue to be a positive influence on the children of this village.

Cathy Yen read her email to the superintendent. "We only met briefly when you presented to the Business and Civic Council at the Carleton Hotel a few weeks back. I wish I was reaching out now under better circumstances.

"I am writing because I am moved to share my experiences with Coach Mike Powell. I understand that he is on administrative leave, pending the school's investigation of an incident that occurred at the beginning of the school year at his home here in Oak Park while he and his wife were away. Let me be clear that no one has asked me to contact you - I am doing so because I want to reiterate what you may already know about Mike's history here with the underserved in our school community - a history he may not readily share himself.

"Our entire wrestling community is devastated over the rumors that certain youth betrayed Coach Powell's trust and behaved badly in Coach's home. We are disappointed in their alleged behavior, without a doubt. I must underscore that it leaves us absolutely speechless that anyone would betray Coach Powell of all people, as he has spent his adult life dedicated to the education, training and holistic development of these young men. All the wrestlers owe so much to

Coach Powell and the program - it is truly unfathomable that anyone would betray his trust in this way after all he is done for them. But then, you have more experience dealing with the mysteries of the teenage mind.

“Over the six years I have known Coach personally, he has been a beacon of light to so many underserved young men - especially those of color and varying socioeconomic backgrounds. He has worked tirelessly to build relationships, establish trust, encourage hard work and inspire character in each and every young man he has encountered in the program. Working alongside Coach Paul Collins and the rest of the incredibly dedicated wrestling staff, Mike Powell has put himself out there to make the connections that have literally saved so many young men. I know, because my son was one of them. A promising but introverted young man, my son was full of questions but lacked confidence, struggling and awash in a sea of OPRF students, destined to become lost in a big high school and a bigger world. Coach Powell along with the other coaches tethered my son to daily life at the high school, giving him a safe place in the wrestling room and providing the mentoring he needed. Most importantly, Powell and the rest put their faith in my son, challenging him to be a better man, to set goals and to be accountable. Coach Powell trusted him to be the best person he could be. And now he is flourishing in his first year in college, on scholarship and determined to make a way for himself in life. This is by no means a unique story. Coach trusted him and he responded.

“Sadly, Coach trusted a small handful of current wrestlers to watch his dogs for one night. This time, it did not go well.

“It breaks my heart that there may be wrestlers exploring the program right now but unable to make that critical connection with Coach Powell because of the current process, investigation and resulting administrative leave that is barring Coach from the practices. It breaks my heart that the program is short a coach at a time when coaches and mentors are most needed - during the early part of the season when trust and relationships are formed. It breaks my heart that we are keeping from these students a role model who has demonstrated year after year his unfailing commitment to the life-long success of each and every participant in this program. Coach Powell's relationships with the wrestlers are literally life-changing - and the strength of these relationships has no ready substitute in our current educational system.

“I understand that you have a process and an investigation and I fully respect that. Let me just say that aside from wanting to add my voice to the many that support Coach Powell, I want to urge you to do what it takes to speedily bring this process to a close so that we can get Mike back where he belongs - in the wrestling room working with our youth.

“I am at your disposal to discuss if at any time that is appropriate. I look forward to seeing you at the Strategic Planning meeting in December, if not before.”

Jonna Borgdorff read the following statement on behalf of Mike Powell.

“I have known Coach Powell for 10 years because of my 2 sons’ participation in his wrestling program. And I am so impressed by him and his program that I have chosen to remain involved with OPRF wrestling even though my sons have now both graduated from OPRF.

“It was my privilege to be an assistant youth coach and therefore I was often in the wrestling room and mat side with both the youth and high school teams in practice and at meets.

“I witnessed daily what a rare asset Coach Powell is as a wrestling coach. But more than that, and more importantly, Coach Powell is a life coach for these athletes.

“My son Andrew is in his second year at the Naval Academy. He couldn’t get leave to be here tonight but sends you this message:

“Coach Powell taught me about work ethic and emotional strength. He taught us all that we can have the courage to make good choices. He showed me the tools necessary for me to succeed and thrive at the United States Naval Academy. Without Coach Powell's mentorship I do not believe I would be as successful as I am today.”

“Another former high school wrestler and assistant coach, US Army Sergeant Max Nowry couldn’t get leave either to be here tonight. He sends you this message:

“Mike Powell is one of the greatest assets that any program could possibly have. His skill to teach drive in life on and off the wrestling mat and to pursue greatness within ourselves is hard to come by, but Mike Powell demonstrates it.

“In my over 20 years of competing in the sport of wrestling, I have met more coaches than I can think of who were great and have impacted my life for the better, but none the way that Coach Mike Powell has. Mike Powell is a one-of-a-kind, a true inspiration for boys and girls, and what I wish to be one day.”

“There are many, many stories like these 2 successful young men shared that demonstrate what a great impact Coach Powell has on his wrestlers.

And many, many stories that will remain untold that demonstrate him teaching people to do the right thing.

“I believe that this administration and school board want to do the right thing, So I am utterly mystified that removing Coach Powell can in any way be considered the right thing. People trespassed on his property. Coach Powell did not invite this to happen. He did not encourage this to happen. He hired a student to babysit his dogs. People trespassed on his property so that makes him another victim in all of this. We do not punish victims.”

“And I send you this message, Coach Powell is one of the greatest assets OPRF has. Do the right thing. Let Coach Powell coach.”

Sally Lemke spoke about how under the mentorship of the wrestling coaches, not only was her son’s life transformed, so was the whole family. She was surprised at the decision that had been made. She asked the Board of Education to move forward with transparency and fairness. She said that Coach Powell brought much to the community and to young men.

Ms. Smart, who has been wrestling for his entire life, had never met a man or a coach like Mr. Powell. When looking for housing in Oak Park, her son was 15 years old at the time. A landlord allowed them to rent the apartment just because her son was involved in the wrestling program. Her son echoes Mr. Powell’s words about integrity and teamwork, and they’re having to be there for the team. Everything he tells them is about trust, guidance, leadership, accountability and seeing the job through. From her point of view, he is a great man and deserves to be back at coaching.

Peter Ryan thanked the Board members, Dr. Pruitt, Karin Sullivan and everyone who worked so hard on the facilities project on the ballot November 8th. He stated “Assuming the totals don’t change, they came up just shy of the 50%-plus-one needed to pass the referendum. In a difficult and sometimes contentious environment, the 49.9% support the referendum did achieve, and the well over 17,000 votes in favor, demonstrates the significant support this Board and this project does have in these communities. This vote may also show that facility improvements and closing the achievement gap, in fact, are not mutually exclusive. With the right facilities plan, both can be addressed by ensuring more space for more students to be included in programs that help them become motivated to achieve in all aspects of student life.

“His main message was one of support and encouragement and for the Board of Education to maintain its commitment to a comprehensive facilities plan and to continue thinking boldly about the best ways to meet current and future needs at OPRF for PE, aquatics, performing arts and growing enrollment. Is there is a better

plan than what was just voted on? If anything, it would be bolder and more comprehensive than the current plan, not the other way around.

“Under no circumstances can this referendum vote be interpreted as a reflection on any other facilities plan studied by the Board. Voters may have been misled to believe a fallback plan existed, but that simply is not the truth.

“Going forward, if the Board of Education does move away from this current plan, He encouraged it to continue thinking big and with long-term vision. This project is not about comparing OPRF to any other high schools. Nor is it about what self-appointed experts consider a standard high school competition pool, as no such thing exists. This really is about what is in the best interests of the students and our communities. One takeaway from November 8th was the fact that if the voters need to be convinced at a future date as to why supporting District 200 benefits all, maybe the District may be just one step away from being there. Thank you.”

Mary Matticks is a parent of two students. She wanted to impress upon the Board of Education the urgency in reinstating Coach Powell to the wrestling program. She asked that everyone in the room raise their hand if they were the fruit of Coach Powell’s vision; they are the Huskie wrestling family. Her son looked to him and was inspired by him and, as such, had as high achievement, great character, and a candidate for US naval academy. The wrestlers deserve to have their coach back coaching as the season had begun and the first meeting was November 21. She was wary that they would be without a critical part of the program.

Ellen Pimentel, 147 N. Lombard Ave. in Oak Park, read the following statement:

“This has been a long journey, and quite frankly, after more than 5 years of attending your meetings, I’d have rather not had to keep going on this. But I’d like to thank all the hard-working members of the D200 Board of Education, Dr. Pruitt (who had such great good fortune to come to us in the midst of the run-up to the referendum!), Karin Sullivan and the many staff and administrators, parents and students who have contributed along the way to vet so many plans.

“The history of capital improvement referenda for schools in IL swings wildly from year to year. Of the six such referenda this month in suburban Cook County, three succeeded and three did not pass, but ours was the closest of all in a near dead heat. Statewide, the most recent ISBE data show that in 2013, 82% of building and construction bonds failed, and yet the year before, two-thirds passed. From canvassing during the early voting period, I feel that quite a few people voted “No” on this referendum because they still didn’t know anything about it. Those I got to too late generally expressed a regret that they hadn’t learned the facts before they conservatively voted no.

“The fact that over 17,000 people voted yes on funding this project, while in the midst of paying more attention to the national election, shows there is a lot of support in our community for a thoughtful plan to update the high school’s facilities. I have two quite disparate thoughts on where to go from here, based on that:

“One is to go back to the drawing board and work for something even bigger and better, more comprehensive and visionary, than this plan. We risk the pools failing and the drastic conditions of the boys’ locker rooms, but then the risk should reap large benefits.

“The other goes against everything I’ve been advocating for the last several months. Namely, do what the Wednesday Journal is also reluctantly arguing...pay for this project completely out of your fund balance and re-adjust the Finance Advisory Committee recommendations. Indeed some of the people who advocated voting no suggested just that. So give them what they want.

“Since 2013, 10 area high schools have built or are in the process of building new pools, often together with other facilities. Every one of those pools is a stretch pool in various sizes. Prospect High School (D214) just completed a new stretch pool as part of a \$45 million in capital improvement projects all funded out of reserves. Their reserves situation and their budget are quite similar to ours in size. Thank you.”

Another community member felt the District needed to communicate more fully and completely about the referendum as there was misinformation and confusion about what the plan contained and what would happen if the referendum failed. The District will have to work harder. The Board of Education was asked not to be intimidated by the election results, as it was essentially a tie. The Board of Education was asked to keep the students’ needs as a top priority. The people opposed to the referendum did not have a majority of the voters. He respected their time, thoughtfulness, and judgment.

Denise Houser spoke about how rare and exceptional Coach Powell is. He is an once-in-a-lifetime coach. She spoke about her son who had a developmental delay and the difficulty he had as a freshman. She wrote an eight-page letter about all of the ways that Coach Powell had changed the trajectory of her son’s life. He continued to wrestle in college and he had turned his life around. Many other boys like her son need him and she hoped he would be allowed to stay.

Jim Farrell voted no to the referendum and stated that it is the Board of Education’s responsibility to take care of the entire community, including its taxpayers, who have been struggling to stay in Oak Park because of the massive

taxes. He did not vote for the referendum because the school has the largest fund balance in the state and the community does not need a premier pool. He was impressed with the condition of the school. He continued that two pools are needed, not the second biggest pool. The money needs to be spent on education and extracurriculars for the rest of the student body as well. OPRFHS is not only competing with New Trier or Evanston but the rest of the world. His company has 370,000 employees and 350,000 are from India. They came from nothing and have learned so much and worked so hard, and they will continue to take the jobs of OPRFHS students until the bar is raised to perform higher than the state of Illinois or the nation.

Chris Donovan reported that he had voted no to the referendum. He also stated that it was because of his son's relationship with Mr. Powell that his son was voted coach of the year at a school in Michigan.

Brother graduated attested to Mr. Powell changing his life. He continued that the boys trespassed on the property; they were the one who did the wrong. Mr. Powell had asked the students to walk the dog, nothing else. He too stated that he would be disappointed if the District released him. Sidney Houser.

Adam Melibe fell had not known what to do after school when he was a freshman and that is when he met Mr. Powell who changed his direction and gave him purpose. While understanding the gravity of the situation, he felt the actions taken were perplexing. He felt that moving Mr. Powell was a crucial piece of the family and vital to those who may need to change their direction.

Mitch Newman spoke of his son and his need for motivation. Coach Powell and all of the coaches make the students feel OK. They continuously ask them about their studies, their weight, and whether they are treating their parents well. His son is in Kentucky, and would not be where he is without Coach Powell. He would feel sorry for all of the students who would not know Coach Powell as a wrestling coach if he was not allowed to return. OPRFHS is renowned throughout the country. Please give the students back their coach so that he can influence them like he did his son.

Ryan Borgdorff, an OPRFHS graduate attending Northwestern, echoed the comments already made about Mr. Powell, as he had changed his life. He had been given confidence, a drive to succeed as a student, and a citizen, and the confidence to apply at a university where he is now pursuing a triple major. From a peripheral influence, he cultivated a culture of optimism and pursuit of greatness that seemed impossible. He reflected that a few, unwelcomed, and troubled young men came into Mr. Powell's home. They did not have his consent to be in his home. Mr. Powell influences many wonderful people and,



unfortunately, he is the victim of some terrible actions. Removing him would be a contradiction.

**Status of FOIA  
Requests**

Ms. Kalmerton reported that zero FOIA requests had been received.

**Student Council  
Report**

**No report**

**Superintendent**

Dr. Pruitt reported the following:

The 2016 Shakespeare Slam Team qualified to compete in the finals at Chicago Shakespeare Theater. Out of more than 40 schools, the OPRF team finished in the top 9, just missing out on the top three. English teacher and adviser James Bell report that their performances were “brave, audacious and imaginative. Ben Brotman, Danny Carraher, Fiona Casper-Strauss, Alyssa Coughlin, Fiona Golden, Audra Joiner, Ellen Puhlovich, and Erin Sullivan performed and as well as collaborated with the following students on an original piece comprising language from 10 different works: Soncha Chow, Claire Ditelberg, Maeve Doody, Rebecca Galkin, Claire Mack, Eli Tobin, and Sonia Zartman.

Dr. Pruitt also reported that in its first tournament of the season, Speech Team brought home seven individual medals:

- Varsity Team: Ellie Bourgikos, second place, Informative Speaking; Max Freeman, third place, Original Oratory; Max Freeman, fourth place, Extemporaneous Speaking
- Novice Team: Anderson Kennedy and Marissa Kuriakos, fourth place Humorous Duet Acting; Meenah Harbaugh, fourth place Prose Reading; Greg Hahn, fifth place Radio Speaking; Marissa Kuriakos, finalist, Impromptu Speaking

The following student-athletes have signed letters of intent to compete in their sports at their chosen universities:

- Hannah Blankemeier-Yale University-Swimming
- Jordan Mrkvicka-Converse College-Volleyball
- Maria Kent-Stanford University-Rowing
- Christen Conley-Northwestern University-Field Hockey
- Chardonnay Harris-Auburn University-Softball
- Jason Renteria-University of Nebraska-Wrestling

The Boys’ cross country placed second as a team in the IHSA regional meet and girls’ cross country placed third as a team.

The following girls’ swimmers and divers earned All-Conference honors at the WSC Silver Swim and Dive Championships: Omer Aharon, Madeline Alonso, Liv Amundson, Hanna Blankemeier, Tamsen Cronin, Olivia Elmiger, Alex Gill,

Katherine Girardot, Kate Kennedy-Wood, Sophie Lever, Virginia Lundeen, Grace Malagoli, Samm Neilson, Kathryn Raeder, Madeline Reynolds, Emma Smith, Kayla Tando, and Natalie Ungaretti. In addition, the number one relay team in the state, Hanna Blankemeier, Alex Gill, Samm Neilson and Natalie Ungaretti, broke the 200-medley relay record by almost two seconds.

The OPRF intramurals flag football team is the champion...twice: With a record of 9 - 1, the team won the City/Suburban Flag Football League, then went on to win the Chicago Bears High School Intramurals Flag Football Super Bowl Tournament at Halas Hall in Lake Forest. The team will get to go the Bears game on November 27.

#### **Consent**

Dr. Moore moved to approve the following consent items:

- A. Check Disbursements and Financial Resolutions dated November 17, 2016
- B. Monthly Treasurer's Report
- C. Personnel Recommendations, including New Hires, Retirements and Terminations
- D. Adoption of Preliminary 2016 Tax Levy
- E. 2017-18 Calendar and Preview of 2018-2019 (draft) Calendar
- F. Open and Closed Session Minutes May 26, July 14, August 1 and 25, September 13, 22, and 29, October 13, 25, 26, and 27, November 1, 2, and 7, 2016 and a declaration that the closed session audiotapes of April 2015 be destroyed and that the closed session minutes from January 1, 1989 through November 7, 2016, remain closed.

seconded by Mr. Cofsky. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

#### **Policy 4:60 Purchases & Contracts**

Ms. Spivy moved to amend Policy 4:60, Operational Services, Purchases and contracts, as presented; seconded by Dr. Moore. A roll vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

This policy change will streamline the approval of contracts. If a contract is budgeted for, it will not need to be approved by the Board of Education unless it is above the amount for which it was budgeted.

#### **Student Discipline**

Dr. Moore moved to adopt the November 7, 2016, decision of the Board finding Student No. RES 11-07-2016-1 -was a nonresident of the District from the start of the 2016-2017 school year through October 1, 2016, and finding the individual who enrolled the student owes the District tuition for the period of time the student was a non-resident during the 2016-2017; seconded by Ms. Dixon Spivy.

#### **Referendum Update**

Board of Education had a preliminary discussion about the next steps after the certified results of the referendum are known. The Board of Education does not have an alternative plan of action. More discussion will occur at the December

13 Committee of the Whole meeting as to other actions that Committee of the Whole meeting. The administration may begin to explore ways other processes for future considerations after the results are certified. At that time, the referendum lost by 68 votes.

**Senate Bill 7 -  
Reduction In Force**

The Board of Education received an annual notification that the administrative membership of the Reduction in Force Joint Committee would be Mr. Prale, Ms. Horton and Ms. Hill. Its first meeting will take place on December 1. The Joint Committee is in Statute, is established by the school district, and has a high level of transparency. The school will be fully compliant with The School Code of Illinois.

**Technology  
Integration Plan**

The Committee of the Whole had recommended that the Technology Integration Plan be moved to the full Board of Education as an informational item.

**Sabbatical Report**

The Committee of the Whole recommended that the Sabbatical Report be moved To the full Board of Education as an informational item.

**School Report Card**

The Board of Education received the 2016 School Report Card.

**Fund Balance Report  
Quarterly Variance  
Report**

The Committee of the Whole recommended that the Fund Balance Report Quarterly Variance Report be moved to the full Board of Education as an informational item.

**October 1 Housing  
Report**

The Committee of the Whole had recommended that the October 1 Housing Report be moved to the full Board of Education as an informational item.

Dr. Gevinson reflected on the class size averages by the department and that the highest class size in the English Department was two times more than in math and 1.5 times more than in science. Typically, English has smaller class sizes, because it is teaching writing. He did not understand the rationale for packing students into class. He felt this was an educational mistake and a workload inequity.

The question was asked as to how much does it cost per 10th on registration on average. The average registration is 6.4. If it were 6.32, how much money would be saved?

It was noted that English and reading scores were the highest on the school report card.

**Post-Secondary  
Plans Report**

The Committee of the Whole recommended that the Post-Secondary Plans Report be moved forward to the full Board of Education as an informational item.

**District Report**

The Board of Education received reports from the Alumni Association, Citizens' Council, and APPLAUSE!

**Closed Session**

At 8:45 a.m., the Board of Education recessed open session and resumed closed session. At 9:43 p.m., the Board of Education resumed the open session.

**Adjournment**

At 9:44 p.m., Mr. Cofsky moved to adjourn the regular Board of Education meeting; seconded by Dr. Moore A voice vote resulted in motion carried.

Dr. Jackie Moore  
Vice President

Sara Dixon Spivy  
Secretary

Submitted by Gail Kalmerton  
Clerk of the Board