

October 25, 2018

The regular Board meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Thursday, October 25, 2018, in the Board Room and Room 293E of the OPRFHS.

**Call to Order**

President Moore called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. A roll call indicated the following Board of Education members were present: Fred Arkin, Matt Baron, Jennifer Cassell, Thomas F. Cofsky, Craig Iseli, Dr. Jackie Moore, and Sara Dixon Spivy. Also present were Dr. Joylynn Pruitt-Adams, Superintendent; Greg Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Roxana Sanders, Senior Director of Human Resources, and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant Clerk of the Board.

**Closed Session**

At 6:37 p.m. on Thursday, October 25, 2018, 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; 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); Litigation; seconded by Mr. Arkin. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

At 7:30 p.m., the Board of Education resumed the open session in Room 293E.

Joining the meeting were Cyndi Sidor, Interim Chief School Business Official; Dr. Gwen Walker-Qualls, Director of Pupil Personnel Services; Michael Carioscio, Chief Operations Officer.

**Visitors**

Tim Brandhorst, Ev Catrambone, Kitty Conklin, Bill Gale, Theresa Jurgus, Lynn Kamenista, Maureen Kleinman, Ryan Magonsen, Amanda Massie, Denise McDermott, Kim Nepple, Kevin Peppard, Melanie McQueen, John Phelan, Mike Poirier, Kathleen Schrobilgen, Gina Sennello, Monica Sheehan, Susan Stock, Michael Stec, Sabrina Tellez-Brennan, and Vee Thomas, Community; Ginger Colamussi, Dr. Robert Grossi (consultant), Amy Hill, Thaddeus Sherman, Michael Stephens, and Jonathan Weintraub, Faculty; Steve Schering of the *Oak Leaves*; Kirk Young of P&W; Ryan Brennan, Eunseo Choo, Nico Gonzalez, Monique Gunn, Violet Harper, Eleanor K., Naomi Leach, Adrian Marcus, and Kahalia, students; and Michael Romain of the *Wednesday Journal*; David Pope, John Hedges, and Gary E. McCullough of the Tax Efficiency Task Force.

**Outstanding Teacher**

The Board of Education congratulated history teacher Michael Stephens for receiving the Illinois State Board of Education “Those Who Excel” Teacher Award. The ISBE honors individuals who have made significant contributions to the state's public and nonpublic elementary and secondary schools. Excellence, Meritorious Service and Special Recognition awards are presented in seven categories: classroom teacher, school administrator/principal, student support personnel (licensed), educational service personnel (unlicensed), school board member/community volunteer; team, and early career educator. Nomination

materials are evaluated by a selection committee comprised of individuals who represent a variety of educational organizations. Awards of Excellence winners in the classroom teacher category are finalists for the Illinois Teacher of the Year. Local school district leaders and members of school communities nominate candidates.

**FOIA Requests**

Ms. Kalmerton reported that four FOIA requests had been received and four were resolved.

**Student Council Report**

Eunseo Choo, the new Student Council Board Liaison, reported:

- 1) Student Council was working on raising money for charities.
- 2) Students were concerned about the new 12 days of absences as it did not take into effect religious holidays, etc.
- 3) Students wanted to have a salad and fruit bar in the cafeterias.
- 4) Students wanted more and working scanners so that they are not late for class.
- 5) Students wanted to use their IDs to pay for color printing;
- 6) Mr. Choo attended the town hall on graduation, and he felt it was good constructive dialogue and Mr. Rouse explained it well. Students were open to many ideas, but they wanted a say in it as it was their graduation.

**Superintendent's Announcement**

Dr. Pruitt Adams announced the following:

Senior Raquel Hernandez was named a *Class of 2019 National Hispanic Recognition Program Scholar*.

Forty seniors were commended in the *2019 National Merit Scholarship Program*.

Sixty African-American juniors were selected to attend the recent *Black Student Leadership Conference* at the College of DuPage. The day included sessions on GPA and admissions, and cultural awareness, and featured two-panel discussions with current college students and college admission counselors

The following students were named to the OPRF Shakespeare Slam Team: Alyssa Coughlin, Manny Flores, Maeve Doody, Victoria Richter, Fiona Golden, Jordan Murray, Lisa Perrone, Sam Theis, Lucas Vergara, and Sonia Zartman. Their regional bout is November 3, 2018.

Forty-eight music students earned spots in the *2018 Illinois Music Education Association District I Ensembles* and will perform at the District I festival next month:

English teacher Laura Young's fiction work "Daughter" was published in *Shoreline of Infinity*, a science fiction quarterly magazine.

Twenty-two new, certified staff members completed OPRF's annual *Beyond Diversity Workshop* as part of our ongoing Racial Equity Professional Development plan.

Boys' Varsity Golf Team members Andrew Corsini and John Parker qualified for state and

Dr. Moore announced that introductory reports in the future would be before public comments. She also noted that the public participation guidelines. This time was not a dialogue with the Board of Education and comments were limited to three minutes. Written statements should be provided to the Clerk of the Board.

### **Public Comments**

Ryan Brennan, a student, supported the proposal to change the graduation attire to support all students. The high school owes this to its students.

Violet Harper, a student, noted that students were proud of the 135-year old unique and distinct graduation ceremony. She did not support changing the attire. She reminded the Board that a few years ago several changes were made to the graduation attire to let students feel more included. She added that not only would students be paying for the caps and gowns but they would be trying to find something to wear underneath it. She concluded with the fact that it was important to recognize the values of OPRFHS and to have the confidence within one's self.

Eleanor K., a student, noted that holding the graduation ceremony at UIC would take away a rich part of OPRFHS's history. If every child has five tickets for his/her family and they only need three, the tickets can be given back to the school to be distributed to those who need more. Giving the best tickets to the highest donors of Boosters is wasting valuable seating space. The cost of graduation will not be cheaper. Families do not want to take the train nor rely on the timing on the Eisenhower Expressway. Staying in Oak Park is more convenient and more cost-efficient. Students do not want to graduate from UIC. She attended OPRFHS, and she wanted to graduate from it.

Nico Gonzalez, a student, had remaining questions regarding the lack of student outreach on classroom changes. The ability for students to speak their minds is crucial. He was concerned about lack of voting on the graduation dress. He also suggested adding more seating to the football field. Many families only need 2 or 3 tickets. He felt changing the venue was a quick fix, and the administration had not considered other solutions. This event is the student's graduation, and they deserved to have their voices heard.

Madeline, a student, stated that changing the graduation attire was more equitable and more cost-effective. Students can change into other clothes after they graduate. Last year transgender students did not walk because they felt uncomfortable. If students vote, the students affected the most will always be in the minority. Also, not everyone has an expensive suit in the hanging closet to wear. Students can wear whatever they want under the gown, and they will have a sense of diversity and unity.

Naomi Leach and Kahalia Schebik, students, noted that caps and gowns would alleviate any issues. The traditional attire isolates students. If OPRFHS claims to be LGBTQ, it is failing these students. They supported the change in graduation venue for the following reasons 1) it is a more stable choice because of weather; 2) seating is unlimited; and 3) even if more seats are added to the football field, if it were to rain, families would only get two tickets; and 4) who to give back extra unused tickets to the school is an issue.

Amanda Massie, Kitty Conklin, Bill Gale, Gina Sennello, and Monica Sheehan read the following comments:

“Good evening, we thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight.

“Acknowledging that all decisions of consequence should be based on fact, our group, OPRF Pragmatic Solutions has conducted research and compiled and analyzed key data for your review. A few members of our group will assist in presenting this information to you tonight. You have important decisions ahead that will impact our school and our community in a significant way, and your decisions should be based on fact and actual “needs,” not “wants.” The reality is that D200 can no longer fund expensive “wants.”

“The lasting legacy of “America to Me” should be that our limited educational dollars be used to improve academic outcomes for all of our students and to best prepare them for life after graduation so that every student steps confidently into their futures. That mission that legacy aligns with our community’s values.

“With Imagine’s proposed plan, you are considering demolishing the structurally sound southeast corner of the building to construct a 10-lane competition pool with a dedicated diving well, a luxury for any high school. This pool would also offer 17-practice swim lanes. Imagine refers to this pool as an 8-lane competition pool with a diving well, but high school swimlanes can be 7-feet wide, so Imagine’s proposed pool is actually a 10-lane competition pool with a diving well. It’s a large pool by any standard.

“While the Imagine group says its pool only costs 2.5 million dollars, the cost for digging the hole, the pool’s mechanicals, and liner. In reality, the entire \$66 million price tag for Sequence 2 is an associated pool construction cost, as this pool, that’s double the size of a high school competition pool, CAN’T be built without demolishing and rebuilding the structurally sound building. Based on 2014 cost estimates of \$80 million to 87 million dollars to build a 37-meter pool, the same size as this 40-yard pool, it’s cost prohibitive to build this pool within the existing building. That was the finding of the 2014 Pool Site Committee.

“Yet, that’s not true for the other elements in Sequence 2, as they can be accommodated by renovating the existing building. They don’t require that the building be demolished. There is also no line item cost for the 600-seat aquatic center, and no cost has been released. It appears to be hidden in a category called “Community/Shared Spaces.” Many of the Imagine cost estimates lack transparency, and there are no component costs. We haven’t had time yet to go through the new cost estimates being released in tonight’s meeting, but we hope that they are presented clearly and transparently.

“The fact is OPRF doesn't "need" this size pool and aquatic center. They are expensive “wants,” and our limited educational dollars should not be used to fund the “wants” of the school’s aquatic teams and the “wants” of private swim clubs. Our limited educational dollars must be used to support the true needs of our school.

“Despite repeated requests by the community over the past few years and as recently as a couple months ago, for you, the D200 Board, to review and update the school's outdated swimming requirement, no action has been taken. The self-imposed, mandatory swimming requirement is being used to inflate the need for pool water. It is reasonable and prudent for a school to conduct a comprehensive review of a program before undertaking a major and expensive replacement project. Despite claims to the contrary, the pool is a key driver of the \$218 million proposed facility plan.

“Our report centers on the school’s physical education (PE) swim requirement relative to other area schools. When we learned that the Imagine group had conducted research into

the PE swim requirements of area high schools and also collected data on Recent Chicagoland High School Pools, we submitted FOIAs for the information, using it as a starting point for conducting our own research.

“We included all of the schools in Imagine’s two distinct studies in our review of PE swim requirements. Imagine didn’t include all schools in its swim requirement study; schools, such as Fenwick, which have no PE swim requirement weren’t included in Imagine’s review. The schools Imagine included appear to be random. For example, Imagine did not include all of the schools in OPRF’s conference, the West Suburban Conference. Some of those schools have no pool and no swimming requirement.

“OPRF Pragmatic Solutions included all of the schools in the conference and even broke down the data to the Silver Division, OPRF’s division within the conference. Our review included 50 schools to Imagine’s 26 schools.

“Imagine used general terms-only, "less than a quarter", “a quarter” or "more than a quarter" to describe each school’s respective swim requirement, but that’s vague and clearly doesn’t tell the real story. A quarter is nine weeks. Our information is specific to the number of days of swimming required and represents a more accurate picture of the schools’ respective requirements. We are awaiting replies and/or clarifications from three schools and will update the chart accordingly, emailing it to the Board.

“We compiled the information of area schools’ swim requirements into an easy-to-read chart called “Evaluation of Required Swim Curriculum for Suburban Chicago Area High Schools”. It clearly shows where OPRF’s PE swim requirement is in relation to its peer schools.

“At the October 3<sup>rd</sup> Imagine Community Conversation, co-chair Mike Poirier stated that the group’s research of swim requirements at area high schools showed that 70% of the schools had the same or more PE swimming required as OPRF. Our research proves otherwise.

“In fact, OPRF requires substantially more swimming time than its peers in every category. It requires on average three times more “days of swimming” than its peers in the West Suburban Conference and two times more “days of swimming” than its peers in the Silver Division.

“In our review of 50 schools, OPRF requires, on average, twice as many “days of swimming” as the other schools. In Imagine’s own review of swim requirements, OPRF requires 60 days of swimming to the average of 37 days of swimming at other schools. We have copies of the Evaluation for you and the collected data is also aggregated into charts. In addition to our research, here are some basic facts about high school swim programs.

- Swimming is not a state or federal high school graduation requirement.
- Many high schools have no swim requirement or a pool on campus. A pool is a luxury. The construction cost and a pool’s routine operating and scheduled repair costs are often too high and unsustainable for school districts.
- Based on the park district’s research, if children don’t learn to swim by the third grade or so, they are less likely to ever learn how to swim.

Realistically, the focus for any high school swimming program should be water safety.

“Based on responses to our FOIA requests over the last two years, we have learned the following:

- OPRF spends nearly a million dollars a year on PE swim salaries and incidentals, that figure includes no pool costs.
- The merits of its swim program are unsubstantiated. A request to obtain exit-testing outcomes, to measure swimming proficiency gained through the PE swim classes, came up empty. The FOIA finding aligns with a statement made by the then-school board president during the 2016 pool referendum campaign. He said while the classes conduct a pre-testing, there is no exit testing.
- The time is now for you, the D200 Board, to insist on an objective and comprehensive review of the school’s self-imposed and burdensome PE swim requirement. It really needs to be addressed before any decision is made to spend \$66 million to demolish a building for an unneeded 10-lane competition pool and dedicated diving well, to benefit the fewer than 100 unique students who participate in the school’s IHSA aquatic teams in any given year.

“Imagine’s other chart, “Recent Chicagoland High School Pools,” and its information that looks at the size of pools built by other area high schools since 1996 is irrelevant to OPRF’s pool discussion. None of those other schools had to demolish a structurally sound building to construct their pools. OPRF is constrained by space. It is cost-prohibitive to build a larger than standard size high school competition pool on campus; a building must be demolished or green space taken away to accommodate what is a very expensive want, and not a need of this public high school. These are all findings based on fact and released in the 2013 Stantec Report, the comprehensive year-long review of the school’s pools and their usage.

“OPRF has never presented a transparent and comprehensive review of the costs to operate and maintain a long stretch pool. What is that cost, and what does it cost to operate and maintain a standard size high school competition pool? Given the realities of our tax-burdened community, all costs, construction, operating and maintenance, must be considered and weighed as to their value to students, the school, the community, and its taxpayers.

“D200 commissioned a statistically significant survey in 2016 to assess the community’s interest in the then-proposed pool plans and related questions. The Fako Report concluded that a pool at the high school was not a priority for the community.

“There are, however, two viable pool solutions. Either one offers you, the D200 Board, a rational choice that would be in the best interests of all stakeholders today and tomorrow. OPRF Pragmatic Solutions supports these solutions. Neither requires the total demolition of the structurally sound south end of the building, and both would create significant space within the building.

“One solution is a standard size high school competition pool in the east pool/south gym site. This rational pool solution was featured in a Legat 2016 pool plan, the 2013 Stantec Report and the 2003 Wight Report.

“The other solution is a joint pool partnership between D200 and the park district to create a year-round aquatic resource at Ridgeland Commons for the school and community. The price tag for either pool option is under \$20 million.

“There are two high school swim programs worth mentioning in this discussion. The focus for both is water safety. First, Stevenson High School’s PE swim program, which is a best practice, includes a test-out option for students who already know how to swim. A school official says about half of their students don’t test out and are required to take one session of swimming. It ranges from three to six weeks, depending on need. The students who test out choose another PE option. Stevenson’s entire PE program is choice-based.

“The other high school PE swim program that’s relevant to this conversation is Glenbard North. While it has no pool on campus, it does have a PE swim requirement. All students take one session of swimming, three weeks in length, usually in one’s freshman or sophomore year. The PE swim classes are held during the school day. A bus takes students to the park district pool that’s a mile away. The same program could be replicated here with a joint pool partnership with the park district at Ridgeland Commons. A summer school option could also be offered.

“Both the Stevenson and Glenbard North PE swim programs are logical, reasonable and cost-effective. If D200’s swim requirement is to be forward thinking, it should incorporate a test-out option and reduce the number of days of required swimming. D200 has no data to support the effectiveness of its current program, and its requirement exceeds on average other area high schools’ respective PE swim requirements. Any required high school PE swim program should be based on water safety.

“Given all of this information, does Imagine’s proposed 10-lane competition pool with its dedicated diving well and its substantial ongoing maintenance costs, as well as its 600-seat aquatic center, align with our community’s values, and is it the very best use of our limited educational dollars? Based on the Fako survey, the community’s answer is no.

“Relatedly, in closing, it is a false narrative that much of the cash reserve can be used to fund any facility plan. The cash reserve is already "spoken for". It's going to be drawn down substantially over the next five years as it's earmarked to offset the school's deficit spending, according to D200's Five-Year Financial Projections, released in October 2017. Every dollar spent from the cash reserve for any facility improvement moves our community one dollar closer to an operating referendum. Based on the projections report and a statement made by the school’s chief financial officer at a December 2017 school board meeting, an operating referendum is already a possibility in 2023. We appreciate and thank you for your time and consideration.”

Susan Stock, parent, read her comments on graduation attire. “ I want to express my thanks to you, the District 200 Board of Education, as well as Dr. Pruitt-Adams, Mr. Rouse, and the many dedicated staff and students for the steps OPRF has taken toward the inclusion of trans\*, gender-nonconforming, and gender fluid students over this past year. As the parent of a trans\* student, I am aware of the wonderful support they have received but also aware of the many microaggressions my child has experienced in their time at OPRF related to their gender identity. As the parent of a student who spoke at the Board meeting where the vote to adopt the inclusion policy was taken, I am grateful for

the care, attention, and validity these issues have received and continue to receive. But the work is not done.

“I am writing to ask you to discontinue the "tradition" of binary gender identification at graduation (girls in white, boys in black). This is an antiquated tradition that simply no longer makes sense, especially in the light of the policies and procedures that were adopted this spring. It is akin to asking all students to identify their racial/ethnic identity--giving them only two options, African-American or Caucasian, because these are the two largest groups at the school--and then requiring all students to wear a garment that communicates one of these two sanctioned identities. We do not and would not do this for race--why are we doing it for gender?

“My child will graduate this spring. This is a request for OPRF as a large institution to change the graduation tradition, but it is also a very personal request as this will greatly impact my family. My child may not attend graduation if they are forced to publicly identify themselves as male or female.

“I also encourage you to not put this to a student vote. To do that would just pass along the responsibility, and we know that minorities lose in a vote. Rather, I advocate for the administration of OPRF to take a stand and extend the policies and procedures already put into place with the earlier Board vote this spring.

“Yesterday the New York Times reported that the Trump administration is attempting to establish a definition of gender that would be fixed at birth, essentially denying the existence of this group of students (and people) on a federal level. We in Oak Park and River Forest are proud of our more recent history of setting the standard and doing the work in terms of social justice issues. I plead of you to continue this work for these ever-more-vulnerable group of students. Eliminating the practice of requiring binary gender identification at graduation would be a hugely symbolic and important step.

“Thank you for your consideration of this request and the issues I raise. I look forward to hearing your response. I would be happy to engage in further conversation if that would be helpful.”

Maureen Kleinman read the following: “I’ll start with a very brief comment: No. Too brief? OK - Absolutely not. Or, maybe three words is better: Are you crazy? Or four, You must be crazy!

“So now we are theoretically at a cost of approximately \$218 million for the total of the five sequences, not including inflation or the cost of borrowing. And that does not even get us any new or renovated academic or vocational/applied arts classrooms. Those improvements, along with their associated \$15 million cost, while technically part of the \$28 million estimate for sequence 1, have actually been shifted to Sequence 4. So, any new or renovated academic or vocational/applied arts classrooms are in the distant future. And that brings the cost down to a level that can be paid out of reserves with some debt certificates or Life Safety bonds. So much for OPRFHS educating and preparing its student for college or careers, but boy, they will have nice PE and swimming facilities.

“OK, my comments have been pretty negative, so I will offer a constructive suggestion. Since Oak Park is the home to many iconic buildings designed by the iconic architect Frank Lloyd Wright, may I suggest that this project deserves to have its own iconic



architect. Forget about the no-names you may be considering. They may be large, well-respected firms, but they are run of the mill. You need to think really Iconomic. I suggest going with Studio Gang, led by Illinois own Jeanne Gang. She is perhaps best known locally for the Qua Tower on North Columbus Drive near Millennium Park as well as the nearby Vista Tower (still under construction). These are the largest projects ever awarded to an American firm headed by a woman.

“So, If you are going to do it, do it right and do it proud. Make it a statement building-- one that will draw tours from around the world in the great tradition of Oak Park architecture - the Studio Gang designed Oak Park and River Forest High School Aquatic and Sports Complex.

Monique Gunn, mother of Grace Gun, and a parent of an OPRFHS graduate, stood in support of caps and gowns, but not in changing the graduation venue. Caps and gowns provides a variety and their use dates back to the 15th century. Many parents have graduated wearing caps and gowns and that should be considered. Last year was stressful for her in trying to make sure her daughter had a memorable experience. But because of the limited amount of tickets available, they had discussions about who could attend. She asked that the Board not crush the memories of those who will be graduating.

Amy Hill, OPRFHS History Division Head, thank the Board of Education for recognizing Michael Stephens for his Those Who Excel Award. She is also the parent of a graduate and freshman and she support the change in graduation attire. This is about weighing competing values: tradition on the one hand and social justice on the other hand. They are at odds. For her it is an easy win for social justice. She was persuaded 15 years ago when Sue Bridge, the former superintendent, said girls could wear pants. This has been a long conversation and she was excited that this may be the last year that transgender students will have to out themselves on a day when they should be celebrating. She agreed with many of the arguments that had already been made in favor of the change, and the one that really persuaded her in the last two years was regarding the transgender students, who should not be forced to out themselves at graduation, and that graduation should be a celebration instead.

Sabrina Tellez-Brennan, community member, stated that the change to caps and gowns would allow a segment of the student population to have the same rights as all others, and it was the duty of the Board of Education to be inclusive of all of them. These students are relying on the Board of Education to be their voice. She was proud of high school and its strides to be equitable and to provide a safe environment. That is why her family moved here and why they stay.

Kevin Peppard did not agree with the new rule which allowed people to wear hats in the building. He also believed that the graduation attire should be changed to caps and gowns, but the ceremony itself should remain on this campus. He also planned to speak at the October 30 Special Board meeting regarding the \$218 million cost of the IMAGINE recommendations. That amount would need to be financed three times over 40 years. The Board has a debt limit of \$152 million. The District needs to consider its financial limits, time constraints, and priorities.

Ginger Colamussi, faculty member, read the following statement: “Dr. Moore, Dr. Pruitt-Adam, Mr. Rouse, board members, faculty and community members:

“I am writing to you in support of the proposal to adopt a new dress code for graduation attire at OPRF. I was sad to hear that this discussion was happening while I am unavoidably traveling for work and hope you understand that my absence does not reflect a lack of concern about this matter. My husband, my son and I strongly support the change to cap and gown.

“The current dress code is outmoded, discriminatory and out of step with community values and needs to be updated. Our school strives to be at the cutting edge with course offerings, technology, training, policies, and activities. It, therefore, baffles me why in the face of students who are so uncomfortable with it they choose to miss their own graduations this district continues to impose this dress code.

“I have read Principal Rouse’s comments and those of others that a dress code that allows male or female students to wear either (a) a suit or (b) a dress or pantsuit is fair to everyone. I’d like to take a moment to explain why this is not the case. If the dress code were “wear anything you like if it is black or white” then it would not impose a burden on non-binary and transgender students. But by framing the choices in terms of gender-specific clothing, students are forced into choosing how to present that day via uncomfortable gender stereotypes. They can fit in box A by wearing a suit and then be identified as male. They can fit in box B by wearing a dress, skirt or pantsuit and then be identified as female. There is not an option to say both or neither, because whichever they choose they are by the terms of the dress code forced to conform to one set of expectations or the other. For transgender students who for example are not “out” to grandma or their teachers or others in attendance at graduation, they have to either be forcibly outed by their choice or hide themselves. In cap and gowns, they do not have to hide anything and they don’t have to meet anyone’s gender stereotypes. For students who identify as agendered, non-binary or gender fluid, having to make the choice of which part of themselves to leave behind at graduation is demeaning and depressing. For some portion of this population, just being faced with a choice of no good options causes a panic attack. In these cases, a choice of dress or suit does not provide a chance to express individuality, an argument I have heard for eschewing cap and gown. It forces them to hide their true selves or skip graduation. These are not hypothetical students. These are actual current and former OPRF students.

“And for what reason is such a burden being placed on these students? For your idea of a nice photograph?”

“For those who object to that word “impose” does not apply here when students have in the past voted on the issue, may I point out that allowing a majority to make the rules that only adversely impact a small minority is not any kind of democracy. A vote by only the girls that the boys must wear ties wouldn’t be considered fair, and this isn’t either.

“I urge you to consider what the compassionate decision is, what the enlightened decision is, and whether denying students the right to celebrate their own selves and identities at their graduation for the sake of photographs can be justified. I proudly wore a cap and gown to all four of my graduations, and I think the pictures of my classmates and I are spectacular.”

Mr. Phelan, River Forest resident and former Board of Education member, spoke about graduation venue and attire and provided some context. He spoke about the importance of the traditions being considered as it is easy to see things happen on the field and just to

watch the ceremony and say that it looks nice. It is hard to understand the pride of it 30 or 35 years later and understand how strongly people feel about the institution they grew up in. That pride of the community is an asset of the community, and it is political capital, and the Board will spend it, as it makes the decisions that happen with change. The graduation venue is not the time to spend this capital. Mr. Phelan is the father of six children and three of them have graduated and he has had to make decisions about who get tickets always. People have had made those decisions for 50 years. There is more room on the football field and a change could be made to the orientation, etc. He saw no compelling reason to make a change and spend that political capital.

Mr. Phelan continued that for over 100 years, the graduation attire has been a sense of pride at OPRFHS. He liked the change that was made a few years ago where any student could wear either black or white, as it made sense. He shared a story of a project manager of Euro Disney. He had hired institutional cleaning crews from all of the surrounding institutions to scour the park the night before its opening. He received a panic call hours before the park opened, because the cleaning staff had swept away all of the cobwebs, etc., in the haunted house, and thus a major attraction did not open on the first day. Mr. Phelan believed that spending political capital on this change would not be good. He asked the Board to understand the depth of this decision.

Ev Catrambone, resident of Oak Park, spoke about graduation attire. Her transgender son went through graduation last year and was out. He had transitioned by the time he had graduated, and the attire was not an issue for the family, but it was an issue for other students. She spoke on their behalf. Her son had a hard time deciding whether or not to go to graduation, not because of his outfit, but because of his concern for other students who were not comfortable. He is not outspoken, and he had a hard time making his space at OPRFHS. He got through school, and her family was very proud of him. He wanted to graduate very much. That day was important to her family, and it was upsetting that other students could not express themselves on that day. In her opinion, caps, and gowns would be better for those who have anxiety about who they are and what they are. It is a day to celebrate academic achievements.

Vee Thomas, the grandparent of Grace Gunn, was at graduation last year and at the last minute, her mother was able to attend because someone else gave up a ticket. It is poor viewing on the field because one cannot see them when they graduate. It is time for a change. This is the student's time, and the Board of Education should listen to them and make a change. It would also be less expensive to have caps and gowns. Savings could be made on flowers. Tickets should be unlimited, and the viewing would be better at UIC.

Michael Stec, a 22-year old resident, and parent in Oak Park, thanked the Board of Education for all it does. He commented that while he was not a part of OP Programmatic Solutions, he was concerned about the cost of IMAGINE that addresses athletics over the expense of academics. He felt the Board of Education was trying to bypass the voters and that brewed a lack of trust. He wanted the Board of Education to present multiple options and costs to the community including options that reduce the overall costs and eliminate certain athletic programs. He asked the Board of Education to work with the community on understanding and trust with the facilities planning.

Theresa Jurgus asked the Board of Education to consider the IMAGINE opportunity carefully, as major improvements can only be made once. Priorities have to be

accessibility, academics, and community spaces like libraries, cafeteria and student center, along with arts and athletic improvements tailored to and compliment priorities of academics and accessibility. She asked the Board of Education to be careful of the resources and as it will impact every family and business and many local businesses are also residents of the community. She asked if the Board of Education would consider:

- 1) Building a smaller athletic footprint incorporating a 25-meter pool.
- 2) Analyzing of the option of building an entirely new facility.
- 3) Putting the final plan out for a referendum.

Lynn Kamenista, co-chair of IMAGINE Work Group, stated that much false and misleading information had been shared on letters, online comments, social media, flyers, etc. She suggested that residents seek to get more accurate information by visiting [IMAGINE@OPRFHS.org](mailto:IMAGINE@OPRFHS.org). Some of the misinformation is as follows:

- 1) False: There are no STEM labs included in the plan. Truth: The “S” in STEM stands for science, and all OPRFHS science labs would be replaced or renovated in the plan.
- 2) False: The plan includes an Olympic sized pool. Truth: It replaces two pools with one pool that is designed to support existing programs and diving that does not require an Olympic pool, and that would be 49% larger than the pool being proposed
- 3) False: The cost for two of the five phases have not been disclosed, and line item expenditures were not detailed. Truth: Detail was posted on 9/9 and then more on 10/4. Cost estimates for phases 4 and 5 were made public this week.
- 4) False: The cost of the plan is \$250 million cost. Truth: It is \$31 million less than that.
- 5) False: Facilities needs are not clearly defined. Truth: A 56-page document detailing identified needs has been available since 9/9.
- 6) False: An emphasis on extracurricular activities over the core mission of education. Truth: This plan starts with a new library and tutoring center and goes on to renovate or rebuild all of the general classrooms and science labs including 76 in Seq 1, in addition to new or renovated arts, Special Education and PE classrooms, etc. IMAGINE sees all aspects of education as important. Also, extracurricular activities take place in the academic spaces. This plan accommodates both extracurricular and curricular as it is important to academic and connection to the school. In short, one cannot believe everything one reads, and she hoped residents would come to their conclusions based on the information provided at [IMAGINE@OPRFHS.org](mailto:IMAGINE@OPRFHS.org).

Ryan Magnuson, Oak Park resident, read the following statement: “My name is Ryan Magnuson, and I am on the Imagine OPRF Work Group that is creating a long-term facilities master plan for our school.

“Prior to Imagine OPRF, I had not been involved in any local civic efforts. I decided to get involved after I voted no to the last referendum. I felt called to this work given my professional background in strategic capital planning and real estate development. I’ve approached this work with integrity and a sincere obligation to do what is right for my family, my neighbors, and my extended OPRF community. I am proud of the work we have accomplished.

“From almost day one, there has been an effort to label myself and this group as not representative of the community and to mislead the community about the work being delivered. To that end, I’ve been disappointed but not surprised by the recent claims

about the facilities master plan being spread on Facebook, OpEds and in flyers along the el platforms. I want to take a moment to provide some accurate information and to suggest that residents visit [ImagineOPRF.org](http://ImagineOPRF.org) to find more.

“You may have read this claim: ‘Only one plan option [was] presented to the community.’

“Here is the truth: Imagine solicited community input at every stage of the process. Multiple plan options were presented on April 16, revised plans were presented on May 19, plans were further refined and presented over the summer at public Board of Education meetings and have ultimately led to a single proposal as it is presented today. All of these prior concepts were posted and continue to be available at [Imagine@OPRF.org](mailto:Imagine@OPRF.org).

Kathleen Schrobilgen, mother of three graduates, a 25-year resident of Oak Park, and former OPRFHS employee, stated that with the conclusion of *America To Me* and the painful truth about the lack of equity and failed leadership in the walls of this school and what should be trying to imagine for this school and the community is agonizing. If the true intended outcome of this \$218 million plan is to change the demographics of Oak Park so that the issues of equity no longer challenge it, then push it through. However, she was hopeful that the community and the Board of Education recognized the need to prioritize and to recognize not everything may be possible. Sacrifices may need to be made. It makes no sense to destroy the exterior unit before the core is reevaluated and restored. Let the community vote on the change it wanted to imagine.

Tim Brandhorst, resident of River Forest, parent of a freshman, and a member of the IMAGINE Team, noted that when someone starts running a marathon, one takes one step forward and then another to set the direction and begin the race. So it is with this Board of education and the LTFP. It is now 50 years of inaction of capital improvement in the high school. All one can do is start. It will be up to future boards to continue the plan. He asked that the Board of Education accept the master plan that it had asked IMAGINE to develop in November. The master plan addresses one facility. The aquatics is only one part. Some in the community think the entire IMAGINE process is about a pool, and the Board of Education will have to deal with that segment and perception. But other use it as a strategy for the Board not to act. When the IMAGINE members explain to people the facts, they support the plan. People are encouraged to attend the town hall on October 30. He asked the Board to take the first step, set a direction, and set a journey that will last many years into the future.

Denise McDermott, parent of three graduates and a member of MOMS Demand Action, which supports sensible gun laws and is bipartisan. The IASB supports a proposal to allow armed teachers in school and MOMS Demand Action are against it. A vote will be taken on this mid-November. She wanted a Board of Education delegate to attend this meeting and vote no on this nationwide proposal, as many rural, down-south school boards are in favor of this. The Board of Education will discuss this proposal at its November 5 meeting.

Thaddeus Sherman, an OPRFHS counselor, noted that his family moved to Oak Park and he acknowledged the long traditions that serve noble purposes such that students, family, and staff experience the school as a family. His contribution would be to ask the Board of Education and the community to consider whether caps and gowns represented the

best mission and vision of the school. Would it serve the community more equitable than the current policy? What is the most passionate response to students who are at odds regarding this issue? Caps and gowns may be one way for the greatest number of students to experience graduation in a way that provides space, support and a framework through which students individual identity can be expressed more freely than the current policy.

Kim Nepple, 45-year resident of Oak Park, asked that students have a voice in the graduation attire and venue. The voice should not be biased and based on the minority. If all students have a vote, then all voices will be heard. In life, if they are allowed a voice and don't get what they want, that is life. Students will have to face that fact as they go off to college. Think about West Point. As a community and parent, she chose to come back because of OPRFHS and its traditions and the pride that she felt today about standing on that field and what it means to be an OPRFHS Huskie. She understood that only 5 tickets were allowed, but that is life. Every school does not have unlimited tickets. She asked the students be allowed to be heard. If the voice of the body at large is taken away, what message is being sent to students, taxpayers, alums, etc. She has four siblings and they pride themselves on the traditions of OPRFHS. She has heard both sides of the debate, but as a 1991 alumni, a parent of graduates, this tradition, which is "outdated" has nothing to do with fashion. This is a unique community, and it is why people come back to raise their children here. If tradition is not important then throw everything out. Forget tourism, FLW, Hemingway, etc. Respectfully, she did not want this decision made by the Board members.

Melanie McQueen, president of APPLE, made comments to the attendees. Tradition is important. Something to be said about if your child attends Spellman would you ask them to take their arch down, etc. But there is something to say about making new traditions fits our students. She acknowledged the critical thinkers in this community. In 2014, it was shocking and hurtful that her daughter would not have a cap and gown. There is something to be said about graduating where one has been raised for the past four years, but if it made sense to move to another venue, she supported the Board of Education decision. She appreciated seeing the IMAGINE team, a brand new set of faces doing things in the community. She appreciated the students who were coming out in larger in numbers about what is important to them. She supported whatever the Board of Education decides.

Adrian Marcus, resident of Oak Park since 1973 and an alum, was concerned about what the cost for IMAGINE will be OPRF taxpayers. There are stress signals in the community. David Pope said in the Wednesday Journal that for middle-class homeowners in Oak Park, the property tax burden had risen so much that the point of no return for them is approaching. Local real estate agents have said that property taxes are so high that houses in Oak Park that lenders will not underwrite mortgages for them because mortgages and taxes are too high relative to the theoretical value of the houses, i.e., a \$300K home with \$10K in property taxes. During the summer, residential real estate prices declined moderately, and prospective buyers are talking about property tax issues, and some resistance exists at buying houses priced at more than \$500K. He was worried about middle-class homeowners. He has seen the effect of property tax increases at rates more than income growth and inflation. Since the year 2000, property tax revenue has increased 170%. To stay a long-time resident of Oak Park, one has to be lucky and have an income that grows more than the property taxes. In the last 18 years, property tax has grown 7 or 8% per year.

Items H, Contract with UIC, and I. Graduation Attire, were moved from the consent agenda.

**Consent Agenda**

Dr. Moore moved to approve the following consent items; seconded by Mr. Dixon Spivy.

- A. Check Disbursements and Financial Resolutions dated October 25, 2018
- B. Monthly Treasurer's Report
- C. Gifts and Donations
- D. Resolution Recognizing the National Hispanic Recognition Program Students
- E. Personnel Recommendations, including New Hires, Stipend Position
- F. Notice to Remedy for Tenured Staff Member
- G. Course Proposals
- J. Xerographic Paper Bid
- K. Policies for Second Reading
  - 1. Policy 4:60, Contracts and Purchasing
- L. Policies for First Reading
  - 1. Policy 2:150, Committees
  - 2. Policy 4:80, Accounting and Audits
  - 3. Policy 5:30, Hiring Process and Criteria
  - 4. Policy 6:240, Student Travel
  - 5. Policy 7:50, School Admissions and Student Transfers
- M. Open and Closed Minutes of September 27 and October 16, 2018 and a declaration that the closed session audio tapes of January 2017 shall be destroyed.

A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

**Contract with UIC for Graduation Venue**

Dr. Moore moved to approve the contract with UIC for the Graduation Venue; seconded by Mr. Iseli. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Arkin read the following statement: "One thing I have come to realize after three years on this board is that we rely on data to make decisions. In the memo recommending a change in graduation venue, there is no foundation or background data to make this decision.

"I have asked the following questions that go directly to the rationale for change delineated in the memo and have not received an adequate response.

- Over the past ten years how many unfulfilled ticket requests have we received – no Data
- How many times has since 1970 has it moved from the stadium because of rain – once in the last five years
- What other venues were explored? (Concordia, Triton, United Center, Sears Center, etc.)? - None
- Please provide the number of tickets (outdoor and indoor) offered each family of graduates for the period 1970-2018. - nonresponsive, of 5 tickets to 2 if rain.

“Each of these questions goes directly to the reasoning put forth in the recommendation memo, have not been sufficiently answered with data. No other alternative solutions have been explored.

“Our current graduation class of 781 is substantially less (20%) than the classes of mine and my siblings who graduated in the early 1970s. In each of those years even the years with rain (like my brother in 1975) graduation has occurred as a magnificent celebration of our students.

“Graduation at UIC will not be special or grand; just another high school graduating in their rented facility. We in the Oak Park and River Forest community take pride in our traditions, we should not be so cavalier as to dismiss them so readily. Holding graduation in our community symbolizes the passage from teenager to adulthood in the facility where the accomplishments occurred. We have no nexus to UIC, graduation at that venue will not have the grandeur or majesty of the generations of ceremonies at the OPRF stadium. Just watch the final episode of America to Me and see how truly beautiful and special that ceremony is.

“In the contract Art 13 UIC requires compliance with all of their regulations including everyone going through metal detectors, no bags, no backpacks, no purses, no diaper bags, no camera bags. All bags will be searched, no professional cameras and no outside food.

“Holding the graduation at UIC will not save the district money. It will either cost the district or the families more money to travel to UIC and pay the cost of parking.

“Holding the graduation at UIC will hurt the OPRF business community. I have spoken to the OPRF Chamber of Commerce and several members, they would not support such a move as it would damage the business community especially our restaurants which host many family celebrations.

“In conclusion, there is no data or background to support the reasons laid out in the memo, it would cost either the district or our families more dollars, and it will damage our business community. Therefore I will vote against the recommendation as I find absolutely no compelling reason to make this change.

Ms. Dixon Spivy concurred with Mr. Arkin. The UIC venue would be impersonal, and she felt it was important to have the graduation at home. There should be ways to make more accommodations. The weather is stressful, but she wanted to explore other options for space and perhaps improve upon what is in place. She did not feel other options have to be explored.

Mr. Cofsky would not support a change in venue.

While Ms. Cassell had concerns about the elderly, the disabled, and the weather, based on the public’s feedback, they were willing to take a chance. With this information and based on both the comments from the public and the Board of Education, she would not support moving the graduation venue.

Mr. Iseli noted that while there were many issues with holding graduation at the high school, not enough issues have been explored relative to having the ceremony



at UIC, i.e., transporting people, etc. He supported not changing the graduation venue.

Mr. Barron stated that the District must find ways to accommodate more families at OPRFHS. He was not in support of changing the graduation venue.

Dr. Moore noted that these were big decisions for the Board of Education and the community and she had much compassion for both sides. She felt the need to err on the side of understanding that change is hard and too much change is disruptive. She could not speak to being here 45 years, and she would hope that was not the way a valid stake in the game is established. It is about what is best for the school community. She believed more information and time was needed to make a change. She did not think moving the venue was a bad idea. It takes her two days to recover from the 95% degree heat, but that is her choice, and she has to reckon with it. She is erring on the side of wanting more information. Wherever graduation is held, it will be majestic.

A roll call vote resulted in all nays. Motion failed.

#### Graduation Attire

Dr. Moore moved to approve the change in graduation attire; seconded by Ms. Cassell. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Arkin read this statement: “I will start out stating that in my opinion, this is not board work. Attire is an administrative issue. Back in 2016, this came to us as an informational item, not an action item. Therefore, I move we table this and ask the administration to complete a process that is fair and equitable to reflective of the desires of our senior class. I also do not think all possible solutions have been vetted.

“I think John Phelan and others have outlined the very position I take regards this issue; I cannot say it any better. For students who have a financial hardship, I think there are many alternative solutions other than breaking a long-standing tradition and having all students wear caps and gowns.

“I have great empathy for our non-binary students and their struggles. I have been under the impression that the discussions and changes from those discussions since 1996 provided adequate accommodation for our students who struggle with identity every day of their lives. On this issue, we are again given no backup or foundational data. How many students might this effect? Can it be addressed with them on an individual basis? Finally, I would propose that we consider just adding the choice of a dark or white graduation gown to the list of appropriate attire.” He moved to table this item but received no second.

Mr. Iseli thought this was an administrative decision, not a Board of Education decision, because the Board of Education has already spoken with regard to equity and policy. The decision must be consistent with other policies in force. Sometimes decisions run crosswise with things wanting to be changed. He supported caps and gowns.

Mr. Barron supported caps and gowns, but he respected the opinions and traditions.

Ms. Dixon Spivy did not believe this was Board of Education work nor it should be. Procedures and policies are in place that address this issue. She understood advocating for the dress code and the reasons. She also wanted the administration to work with the students on a compromise. She would support the administration's recommendation because she always supports the administration. This is not a vote of no confidence in the administration.

Mr. Cofsky agreed that this was not Board of Education work. The Board of Education has put forth policy, and Ms. Hill said it was a debate of tradition versus social justice. He supported caps and gowns, but he did not agree that it was the goal.

Dr. Moore appreciated the comments as to why this was being brought forward to the Board of Education. The administration had responded to this question and this would have reached the Board of Education's level. The subject was laid at the Board of Education's feet/hearts to make a decision. She was frustrated because it had not been communicated to the students why this change was being considered and what the District has done regarding equity and social justice issues. She has great pride and desire for the student voice and leadership. She believed the Board of Education had to make a decision this evening. She wondered how many students had not participated in graduation because of being uncomfortable, having panic attacks, being outed or not having the money for the graduation attire. How many did not ask for help? For her, the Board of Education must be the voice for those students. She provided some history on the surveys that had been completed previously. When the students were originally asked what they wanted, 55% of the class responded. The first year the students lobbied for caps and gowns and were organized in their approach. The administration told them that graduation was a Board of Education matter, but that was not true. The District struggles with making a change to make everyone feel comfortable or happy. Safety and security of the students would demand that the students wear caps and gowns. The first vote had 184 for caps and gowns with 134 for dark suits and white dresses, and 124 additional options. A second vote was taken and caps and gowns did not garner the necessary 50%. If talking about equity for students, she hoped that as much as tradition matters, the traditions are not damaging. That is not what schools are to be about. The tradition of moving the tassel over, having family members attend, and throwing the graduates throwing their caps in the air will be just as beautiful as roses with white and dark attire. After this vote, she hoped the Board of Education could return to work at the policy level.

Dr. Pruitt Adams clarified that this was potentially the work of the administration. However, as the superintendent, she brought this forward as it was critical to hear the Board's voice. It was not meant to be disrespectful, but suggested that the wording might not have been appropriate. Board members give the community a voice. She feared that the decision would be void of the community/board voice, and it might be said that it was not brought to the Board of Education for discussion. It was out of respect for the Board and community that this was brought forward, similar to what the administration did for transgender, non-binary students. These all come back to equity. If the Board of Education tabled this discussion, the administration would make the decision. This is not because the administration did not hear the student voice. Graduation is a beautiful ceremony. This proposal was to give the voice to those who are not being heard. She asked if the administration

should still have a conversation with students telling them that this came forward to improve opportunity and access.

A roll call vote resulted in six ayes and one nay. Mr. Arkin voted nay. Motion carried.

**Tax Efficiency Report  
by David Pope**

Mr. Pope reported that the Taxing Bodies Efficiency Task Force was charged to look at taxation and the implications of decisions made by all governing bodies and sensible thoughtful recommendations going forward. Its recommendations are not directed at any organization but how they can work to ensure that all community members may continue to stay in the community.

The Task Force membership included: Chair David Pope, Brian Chang, Joi Cregler, Judy Greffin, John Hedges, Gary E. McCullough, and James Peters.

Mr. Pope reviewed the findings of the report which was included in the packet. Over the past several years, property taxes in the Village of Oak Park have grown significantly and at a much faster pace than inflation or the growth in household income. The growth in taxes poses risks to both current Oak Park residents and the long-term viability of Oak Park's core values of diversity, affordability, integration, and aging in place. It has outpaced other communities and is putting Oak Park at a competitive disadvantage. Much of the growth has come from the approval of numerous referenda by the voters of Oak Park, thus limiting the actions that can be taken today to reduce taxes. A request was made to all taxing bodies to levy at CPI or less until 2030 to allow the community to catch up on its CPI. The work on equity the Board of Education has been appreciated, but the most vulnerable are being forced out of the community and are not able to take advantage of the wonderful opportunities in Oak Park, including the high school.

The Tax Force's recommendations include:

By adopting a handful of important budget measures and constraining spending, our taxing bodies will go a long way towards changing the trajectory of our tax increases.

- Limit actual property tax increases to inflation (CPI) or less for every governmental jurisdiction
- In Illinois, tax caps were instituted with the intention that tax revenues would generally increase at the pace of inflation. Oak Park's increases have far outpaced this goal. All governmental budgets, including those that are not tax-capped, must be constrained to live within CPI for an extended period.
  - The Village can take a leadership role here and take immediate action towards this goal by limiting 2019's property tax increase to 3% rather than the stated goal of 5%.
- Constrain salary growth
  - Set total compensation packages (base salary, contractual "bonus" structures including steps and lanes, pension benefits, healthcare benefits, work hours/days, work schedules, vacation, sick time, holidays, other paid time off, continuing education benefits, retiree and dependent healthcare and compensation benefits beyond pensions, etc.) at and not above the level required to attract and retain qualified employees.

- Publish information regarding both the hiring and attrition statistics for all full-time positions.
- Prioritize spending
  - Utilize a spending assessment framework that is integral to the budget process, which clarifies trade-offs, relative performance outcomes, associated costs, and relative opportunities for efficiencies and tax savings.
  - Consider using a budgeting approach which incorporates key elements including considering the community's relative prioritization of spending categories. Public input is meant to help guide elected officials to more efficient budget decisions.
- Reduce excess fund balances
  - Establish and follow sensible reserve guidelines that meet the needs of the taxing body while not allowing for considerable excess fund balances at taxpayer expense.
  - Mandate taxing bodies to act through citizen-led referendums if they do not act on their own to reduce excess balances.
  - Utilize common assumptions and metrics for planning and budgeting purposes across all jurisdictions (e.g. common assumptions for CPI, New EAV Growth, reassessment values, etc.) and prepare integrated single-year and 5-year financial plans and projections which will:
    - Enable the creation of a high-level community-wide summary of key financial metrics, expected cost of jurisdictional capital projects, potential funding sources and likely cost to taxpayers.
    - Create needed transparency for the citizens, elected officials, media and oversight organizations to better understand the collective impact of the plans and budgets of our taxing bodies.
    - Enable a community-wide multi-year capital projects calendar.
  - Establish a citizen-led village-wide Community Financial Oversight Commission which will:
    - Recommend annually a village-wide operating budget increase as informed by inflation o Recommend cost-saving actions including automation and eliminating redundant services
    - Evaluate and publish the collective impact of planned referenda o Monitor and publish budget decisions of each taxing body including % increase of each budget versus recommended increase and versus inflation
    - Regularly publish the cost of providing government services in Oak Park versus other communities.
    - Develop a curriculum to be used to train/inform elected officials and budget administrators as to the financial impact of our taxing bodies collective decisions o Periodically host public forums on budget, planning, referenda, large capital investments and tax-related topics.
- Efficient Delivery of Governmental Services Determine ways to reduce the cost of having six coterminous taxing bodies – facility consolidation, merge/consolidate/coordinate administration functions, services and technology.

- Evaluate the merging of coterminous jurisdictions including the Village of Oak Park, Oak Park Township, the Oak Park Public Library, and the Park District of Oak Park.
- Place an advisory Jurisdictional Consolidation Referendum question on the November 2018 ballot for consideration by the voters of Oak Park. This will give our elected officials the guidance they need to determine the best path forward (whether consolidation, increased collaboration, or some combination of these).

The voters in Oak Park have been very generous over the past several years with the approval of several referenda. The elected officials have also approved budgets with increases over and above the rate of inflation. As a result, our taxing bodies financial health is strong and their ability to take a more disciplined approach is high.

- Refrain from running tax increase referenda through 2030.
- While the Village is not subject to property tax caps and therefore would not be subject to this recommendation, we believe the Village should conduct its financial management as if it were subject to the property tax caps through 2030 which effectively means limiting budget increases to inflation (CPI).
- Require excess fund balances to be used first for capital expenditures – debt would only be utilized once excessive fund balances have been extinguished. In addition, all taxing bodies should agree to move consideration of all referenda to the fall / general election to increase voter engagement and participation. Educate / Inform Voters and Elected Officials Budget and referendum decisions have an immediate and long-term impact on our community. It's imperative that our elected officials, budget administrators and the broader public understand municipal finance, tax law and the role of each in creating a healthy community. We also believe voters in Oak Park should take a more pro-active role in giving our elected officials feedback on budget decisions.
- Educate the public and elected officials on the financial impact of our taxing bodies collective decisions
  - Use curriculum developed/approved by the Community Financial Oversight Commission.
  - Educate voters of actions they can take as voters and taxpayers
  - Encourage them to vote in all elections – and to fully understand the issues on the ballot.
  - Hold elected officials accountable for the decisions they make.
  - Participate in budgeting prioritization input discussions.
  - Take advantage of the recently enacted provision in Illinois law that allows voters to direct taxing bodies to reduce excess fund balances through referenda.

Reduce excess fund balances, - fund balances are limited as to how they can invest that monies. And could grow through their own investment and be available at a later time.

On the ballot is the question as to whether some taxing bodies could be combined to save on efficiencies.

Discussion ensued. Mr. Cofsky appreciated the value of looking at this holistically. He felt that much in the report was of value, i.e., budgetary discipline, prioritization, standardization of the key measures/indices, etc. His challenge is that since 2013, the high school's taxes have been held steady because of the fund balance. In 2019, the levy is the same as the 2013 levy and the high school has forgone over \$30 million of potential tax increases with a plan for going to referendum in the early 2020s. One cannot say that the District, who has been holding taxes, has to wait until 2030 to go for a referendum. Adjustments might be possible, but the District has been trying to keep the taxes flat. Appreciating that work, Mr. Pope continued that the rationale to not go for a referendum until 2030 is to break the habit that many jurisdictions have of increasing levies over a long period that outpaces CPI. That tends to be the drive in spending. The budget discipline would include setting total compensation packages (base salary, contractual "bonus" structures including steps and lanes, pension benefits, healthcare benefits, work hours/days, work schedules, vacation, sick time, holidays, other paid time off, continuing education benefits, retiree and dependent healthcare and compensation benefits beyond pensions, etc.) at and not above the level required to attract and retain qualified employees and publish information regarding both the hiring and attrition statistics for all full-time positions.

Mr. Iseli agreed in concept but to do so would be painful. It would be difficult to manage what is desirable and these goals. He had gone through the expense numbers, and since 2014, the District's growth is at only 3%; if the District did not subtract debt service, the growth would be 1%. For the District to go from 2006 to 2030 without a referendum would be problematic. Looking through the lens of support and demand, for many, the real supply of jobs is more plentiful at the current pay rates. This Board of Education is making up for prior board decisions in prior contracts that had increased the base.

Mr. Arkin thanked them and had many questions. He agreed that the majority of the high school's costs are related to human resources. He asked the following questions: 1) What research the task force used and how did they get the report; 2) what would be their advice be regarding how to fund the IMAGINE recommendations? Mr. Pope noted that 2013 FAC Committee had discussed this issue. His perspective is on what is available based on current commitments on the operating side, assuming some additional portion not yet submitted, and there are certain assumptions about rates of change, but perhaps not finalized at this point. He suggested using the portion of the fund balance that is available.

Mr. Arkin noted that property tax rates were hurting people all over the state. He asked if the task force had worked directly with lawmakers to provide adequate funding of school districts to help reduce costs by other means such as prevailing wages, etc.? In 2003, OPRFHS had received 12 percent from state aid; now it is 5 percent. The state must inance education. With the new law and based on its adequacy factors, the amount of money that OPRFHS will receive will be frozen for some time. How can lawmakers in state of Illinois push those dominos over into local governments? How can the pension shift be stopped? Dr. Moore suggested that this might be a discussion for IGOV and the Tri-board meeting.

Mr. Pope noted that the task force spent time talking about education and the challenges of why the state has not taken action. The challenge faced as a

community is within this community. In 2000%, taxes were 5% of income and now they are 8.4%. When one factors in the decisions that are made at the federal level regarding state and local taxes, it rises to 10%. The dollar amounts available in this community to pay taxes is a much larger bite of income to meet these obligations. He did not believe the state would make any decisions soon, so the intent is to say what can be done locally and recognize the challenge.

### **Levy Options**

The administration presented with two tax levy scenarios which were included in the presentation. The first option results in zero increase in the final tax extension versus the previous year's tax extension. Therefore, the proposed levy under this option will total \$66,657,009. The figures have been adjusted amongst the various funds based on need. The second option represents a tax levy totaling \$68,036,000, which is 2.1% higher than the prior year's tax extension. This is the maximum increase allowed by law and is driven by the consumer price index for the calendar year ending December 31, 2017. The District would also receive approximately \$30,000 for every additional \$1 million in new taxable property, which is estimated at \$2.5 million. This levy would increase the annual taxes of a \$400,000 market value home by approximately \$68. This decision will have an impact on the IMAGINE decision. The levy must be filed by the last Tuesday of December.

### **Update on IMAGINE**

Kirk Young of Perkins + Will reviewed the narrative in the packet, which was intended to accompany the flowchart and sequencing diagrams illustrating the current draft of the masters facilities plan. There are five sequences. The Component Flow Chart illustrates the various Components included in each sequence and how they relate to each other. Each component had a letter designation, a descriptor naming the major elements included in the Component, the estimated project budget cost, and the estimated construction duration. Some groupings will include multiple Components such as P 1- 4 or G, J&K. I. The overall combined cost is at top. The components below the dash line could be executed as discrete elements. Elements P104 renovated classrooms and were isolated and could be done over a series of summers.

In Sequence 4, identified in the master plan, B&G intended to renovate the interior of the stadium during a summer or two. Perkins + Will could investigate putting in solar panels in place of green roofs. The cost of green roofs are above and beyond putting roofs on the building. The District will need to maintain stormwater on site and green roofs could help mitigate that cost.

The second document gives the special location of each component throughout the building. Each are bound by dash lines because of construction logistics, project types. The updated detail cost estimate documents are broken down by sequence and phase, component letters, sq., estimated duration, and construction cost.

An overall summary was provided by space type designation. The intent is to see how the various components relate to each other and how they relate to the master plan. If decisions are made to amend this plan, it will be known what would be affected.

Dr. Moore noted that between now and the October 30 Town Hall, the Board will ask their individual questions and listen to the comments at the Townhall on priorities. This input was appreciated.

**Potential Funding  
for Facilities  
Recommendations  
Presentation**

This presentation addressed the funding decision points, capital commitment, reserve level, management of the gap between revenue and expense growth, financial risk that may impact the fund balance, and other issues pertinent to funding these projects.

The first decision point will be determining the capital commitment as to how much as it relates to the plan and then identifying the projects within the plan with consideration of a recommendation from the committee on which projects to address. At some point, the District will reassess its decision, assess its financial condition, determine its capital commitment, and consider taxpayer referendum.

As of June 30, 2018, the District has \$107 million in fund balance which 15 months worth of fund balance reserves. Board policy requires a fund balance of between 25% to 75%, or \$42 million to \$84 million — however, other decisions are in the control of the Board of Education, i.e., balanced budgets or run deficit budgets and utilize fund balance reserves for spending (collective bargaining agreements). Some issues that are outside of the Board of Education’s control are the state shift of the pension burden to school districts or the state-imposed property tax freeze on school districts.

The first major decision would be to commit to a balanced budget. The high school spends approximately \$5 to \$6 million on major capital expenses annually within its operating budget.

The District could allocate \$5 million to \$15 million of its annual budget towards the IMAGINE plan. If that capacity does not exist, then the Board of Education should assume it does not have money in the annual budget for IMAGINE.

Three options of funding to address the IMAGINE plan would include Life safety, Non-Referendum Bonds (20 years), and Debt Certificates (Interest payments will be a cost factor in these).

The max the annual tax levy can increase through the assurance of non-referendum debt is \$150 for a home with a market value of \$400.

The discussion will begin at the December COW meeting, and the Board will be asked to decide on funding at the regular meeting in December.

Dr. Grossi noted that the present financial conditions are such that if the District could perpetuity keep revenue and expenditure growth even, the District would never have to go for a referendum. Even though labor costs are going up generally, an opportunity may exist to control the growth savings from retirements, etc. Dr. Gross did not know of any grants that could benefit OPRFHS at this time.

**Board of Education  
Goals**

Dr. Moore moved to approve the 2018-19 Board of Education Goals as follows; seconded by Mr. Baron. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

**District 200 Board Goals: 2018-19**

The OPRFHS Board is committed to excellence in education for all of our students. The 2018-19 goals reflect the Board’s responsibility to communicate the District’s purpose through articulating the expected results for the year with the



awareness that the administration and staff are charged with developing and implementing the plan to achieve these goals.

1. Monitor goals and activities of Strategic Plan as prioritized by the superintendent, for the 2018-19 school year. The Strategic Plan Advisory Team will provide quarterly updates to the board.
2. Approve a Racial Equity Policy Charge Superintendent to develop procedures utilizing format of Gender Equity Policy and Procedures manual.
3. Monitor effectiveness of hiring policy developed to employ the most highly qualified, creative and student-focused faculty in the region. Updates will be provided to the board on the following outcomes: Procedures identified to improve recruitment and retention of faculty of color. Clarify financial targets for salaries of new faculty. Ensure uniformity of hiring practices across divisions.
4. Develop a Long-term (5-10 year) Financial Framework building on District 200 Policy 4:20. Establish a Community Finance Advisory Committee (Board Committee) comprised of community members, board members and staff. Establish and monitor key metrics for ongoing management of finances.
5. Systemic use of restorative practices to foster a positive school climate.

**First Quarter Variance Report** The First Quarter Variance Report was provided at the October Committee of the Whole meeting and was presented as an informational item only.

**2018 Levy Timeline** The 2018 Levy Timeline was provided at the October Committee of the Whole Meeting and was presented as an informational item only.

**Future Agenda Items** No discussion

**District Reports** District Liaison Reports were embedded in the agenda.

**Adjournment** At 11:49 p.m. on October 25, 2018, Dr. Moore moved to adjourn the regular Board of Education meeting; seconded by Ms. Dixon Spivy. A voice vote resulted in motion carried.

Dr. Jackie Moore  
President

Jennifer Cassell  
Secretary