

January 14, 2016

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Thursday, January 14, 2016, the Board Room of the high school.

Call to Order

President Weissglass called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. A roll call indicated the following members were present: Fred Arkin, Jennifer Cassell, Dr. Steve Gevinson, Dr. Jackie Moore (arrived at 6:20 p.m.), Sara Dixon Spivy, and Jeff Weissglass. Also, in attendance was Dr. Steven T. Isoye, Superintendent (telephonically); Tod Altenburg, Chief School Business Official; Karin Sullivan, Director of Communications and Community Relations; and Sheila Hardin, Faculty Senate Executive Committee Chair; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors

The Board of Education welcomed the following visitors: Judith Alexander, K. Anderson, Milanne Bancroft, Mike Bissell, Mary Bird, John B. Bokum, Jr., Graham Brisben, Heather Clayton-Douglas, Connie & Lee Coleman, Joe Connell, Ethan Richmond Crawley, Jack Evenson, Amy Felton, Philip Fertik, Wayne Franklin, William Gale, Bruce Kleinman, Matt Kosterman, Alex Lauren, Frank Lipo, Jean Lotus, Adrienne Magnuson, Jane McDonald, Chris Meister, Ben Meyerson, Rebecca Morrow-Nye, Peter Nolan, Robert Parks, Jennifer Partridge, Kevin Peppard, Kirk Perch, Mary Colleen Roberts, Gina Sennello, Sarah Severson, Monica and John Sheehan, Doug Springer, Karen Steward-Nolan, Mary Stewart, Amber Stitzie/Pareja, Bill Sullivan, Karen West, Alison White, Carter White, community members; Barbara and Rebekah Brand and Jake Grant, students.

Resolution

Mr. Weissglass noted that the former Board of Education had approved a pool project in April. The current Board of Education approved a funding structure in October and then approved a resolution to issue bonds in November, a petition was filed within the required 30 days, and subsequently, a challenge was filed, which was found to have been filed late. The Board certified the referendum question for \$17.5 million in Working Cash Fund Bonds for the March elections in the appropriate timeline. This meeting provided the Board of Education an opportunity to discuss whether it wanted to consider abandoning its intention to issue bonds. Board of Education members had not had an opportunity to talk with each other due to the Open Meetings Act, which says no more than two board members can talk privately about an issue nor have serial conversations. The impact of withdrawing/abandoning the bonds would be that the Board of Education would not be permitted to issue to those bonds for this project. It would be considered a restart. The narrow question to consider is: Withdraw/or abandon the intention to issue the bonds. The Board of Education looked forward to the public comments.

Public Comments

Jake Grant, senior at OPRFHS, varsity swimmer and senior leader, swam at OPRFHS and attested to the fact that the pools are not even average; they are falling apart and need replacement. The pool project would help the PE program. He believed a parking plan should be fully developed before pressing forward with this project, but the pool project should go forward.

Amber Stitzie/Pareja, 1113 Washington, Oak Park, graduated in 1990 and while attending OPRFHS, swam and played water polo. She hoped that her 3 future OPRFHS students would also have such an opportunity. All of the time and efforts the Board of Education and administration had expended on this project were appreciated. She encouraged the Board of Education to keep students at the center of its work and move forward the project.

Ethan Richmond Crawley, resident of Oak Park, swam with TOPS and swam at OPRFHS. He thanked everyone for attending this meeting. Compared to other pools in the conference (York and Fenwick, etc.), the state and quality of the pools is terrible. The air quality is a significant issue.

Karin West, a resident of 818 N. Harvey, Oak Park stated that 1) many families support forward thinking and infrastructure updates, but many families with young children and no children that need more education as to why the pools are important. She hoped for a viable parking plan, not necessarily a garage. She was disappointed that so much time on where all of the cars would go, instead of asking what we need to do to use our cars less. The ballot question is unclear to people unfamiliar with the issue: "Shall the Board of Education of OPRFHS Consolidated High School District 200, Cook County Illinois, be authorized to issue \$17.5 million in bonds for Working Cash Fund as provided for by Article 20 of The School Code." A clearly worded question to fund a portion a new pool on the site of the garage would be more effective. This should not be an invitation to go back to the drawing board or question the work that had been done. She hoped the Board of Education had a Plan B for a Scenario B and that included infrastructure and a range of diversity of extracurricular activities that OPRFHS deserve and need for 21st Century Learning.

Wayne Franklin, a resident of 508 Home Avenue, Oak Park, appreciated everything the current and previous boards of education had done to get the pool project off the ground. He felt indebted to them. He is part of a group that looked forward to educating the community, including both families with and without children, about the importance of this project and what the Board did to answer the questions. He was sorry the objection was not put forth.

Karen Steward Nolan, 739 N. Hayes, Oak Park, is pro-pool had heard the term "no stone was left unturned" used. She asked when compromised meant when there was no Plan B. She became a fierce advocate of building the pool as a

result of careful study and analysis. This project must move forward to serve the students of these communities. A compromise solution of shrinking the scope of the project would kill many programs. The Board of Education has selected the plan of last resort. If the referendum bonds fail, the Board must start from scratch or abandon this project. OPRFHS is comprised of caring, intelligent people who want great schools and the best community resources.

Matt Kosterman, 1443 Bonnie Brae, River Forest, thanked the Board of Education for its work and noted that he and Wayne Franklin were the flyers of the objection. He was sorry that it was late. In a review of the petition, 1,000 signatures were found to be challengeable. This experience has shown him what needs to be done next time. It is also much easier to tear something down rather than build something up. If one is not reading the minutes or attending the meetings, people are unable to realize the good work that the Board of Education is doing. Taxes are important, but people do not move to OPRFHS for taxes and parking. People move to this area because of the community, the neighborhood, and for their children. He believed the question of going for a referendum should be moved to November in order to have time to educate the public. He pledged his support in that endeavor.

Joe Connell, a resident of 530 N. Elmwood, Oak Park, noted that the approved pool project was somewhere between now or never because it would be difficult to educate the public about the referendum in just 75 days. Without a workable parking plan or the latest architectural renderings, etc., as well what the consequences would be to the curriculum, extra-curricular activities, and community access, he was dubious that the referendum would pass. He suggested writing a question for the November ballot that would address all of the issues, not just the question of bonds or aquatics.

Peter Nolan, 739 N. Hayes, Oak Park, thanked the Board and acknowledged that this subject was an emotional rollercoaster. He was disappointed that this issue had created divisions within this community and, in some instances the process had failed in being role models for the students. Mr. Nolan admired the Board's effort to listen to the community. However, he did feel that there was now a consensus that Oak Park and River Forest want to maintain aquatics at the high school. A positive coalition had been formed with all of the sports programs at OPRFHS, and most of them had come together in support of this project. Those who do not feel a referendum should pass have valid concerns about parking and not being given the opportunity to vote. He encouraged the Board of Education to work with the Village on creating a parking plan, and he supported an educational plan to activate the broader community that wants aquatics.

Mary Bird, resident of 537 S Highland, Oak Park, thanked the Board of Education for the work it does on behalf of OPRFHS children. She had written the Board of Education on December 8 asking whether funding a \$37.5 million pool was consistent with the school's Vision and Mission Statements. She now

understands that the Board is deciding whether it wants to include or remove the \$17.5 million referendum question from the March ballot. The Board's president listed several reasons that could support withdrawing the resolution: 1) providing more time to develop a parking plan, allowing time for a Park District feasibility study, and more time for educating the public prior to the November date for a referendum. She asked that the Board and administrators re-examine expenditures in light of the school's Vision and Mission Statement & the needs of its students. The Vision statement reads that the school "will become an ever-improving model of equity and excellence that will enable all students to achieve their full potential." The Mission statement reads that the school "provides a dynamic, supportive learning environment that cultivates knowledge, skills, and character and strives for equity and excellence for all students."

She referenced a report given on October 13 concerning ACT scores and the GPAs provided by the administration to the Instruction Committee That report stated, in part: *"We need to understand how it is that we drove a 2.3 point increase in ACT composite for one group [during their time in high school] and a 0.7 increase for another; and why our impact is racially disparate."*

On October 22, the full Board reviewed and discussed the report. Board members asked pointed questions and requested additional data. The school's equity goals were referenced during the discussion. It was also stated that further analysis may challenge the administration to think differently and talk differently about achievement in a bold way." Her understanding is that the Board is considering that it might benefit from an opportunity for more time. She encouraged the Board to utilize any time to also reflect on the school's vision and mission and to return to the critical data that was reported in October and the possible actions that might affect change. The students depend on them, and the most vulnerable students depend on them more. They share a unique and powerful opportunity to provide academic paths, guidance, and supports that can alter life's trajectories for many students.

Judith Alexander, 1205 N. Harvey, Oak Park, noted there were three areas of consensus among those who had worked to gather signatures for the referendum.

- 1) Demolishing the garage and displacing faculty and staff, Farmer's Market shoppers and those who attend events at the high school was unacceptable. A parking plan must not be developed without the considerable involvement of all of the community members, not just residents around the high school.
- 2) More education is needed. Most of the community was not involved in the process and had no idea that the Board of Education was considering removing the parking garage
- 3) There was an expectation that a referendum would occur.

In reading the memo attached to the agenda, only 2 possible solutions were cited. One was to tear down the garage and build a natatorium. She asked why was it

that only a brand new pool would do. The current pools can be repaired with the loss of 1 swimming lane. While that is not enough for competition, is it worth \$37.5 million? She suggested using the Fenwick pool or enclosing the Ridgeland Commons pool. Why is only 1 pool needed for class? She suggested postponing the referendum and make it a true community-wide process, because if not, it would not pass in March nor in November.

Heather Claxton-Douglas, 508 S. Elmwood, Oak Park, stated that a wise woman had said, "What people don't know, they will make something up, feel excluded, and then get angry. People are angry about the cost and the placement of the pool. She suggested renovating the old pool and hosting competitions at the universities. When questions were asked, the most common response was that a subcommittee had discussed all of the options, and this was the best decision. The public does not know what alternatives were discussed, and the people are angry about that fact. She asked them to consider informing the public.

William Gale, resident of 925 N. Euclid, Oak Park, stated that the problems being faced are those facing OPRFHS, not the OPRF Swim Club. He supported aquatics, swimming, PE, and health. A statement has been made that it is easier to tear down something rather than to be positive, but in this conversation, the garage will be torn down in its midlife. Another Board of Education committed to solving a problem by building the garage. He looked at the work that had been accomplished by the Board of Education in March 2003 which allowed the construction of the garage. The Village of Oak Park accepted and funded it because it acknowledged the high school was the largest employer in the Village, 145 students drove to school and then drove to work after school, and the high school hosts after-school events. A parking plan will not solve the parking problems for the 60 performing art events, 415 sports contests, parent open houses, parent/teacher meetings, community events, summer camps, etc. The high school is the heart of the community.

Rebecca Morrow-Nye, a resident of the community for 38 years, stated approximately 531 people work at high school. Parents, substitute teachers, Cheney Mansion, Ridgeland Commons, etc. all have parking needs. The only workable, comprehensive parking plan is a multi-level parking structure which already exists and the taxpayers already paid \$4.5 million for it. She could not support any destruction of the parking garage at Scoville and Lake Streets. Street parking will not replace the garage. The community uses the garage, and it is necessary for community and school events. The Village of Oak Park zoning also requires nearly 230 on-street parking spots. The garage is a valuable asset to the school and the entire school district. She stated that if the parking garage was torn down, the consequence would be that the Board of Education would not be elected again. A pool is needed but not at the expense of the garage.

Philip Fertik, 728 Superior, Oak Park, questioned the words Mr. Weissglass choose in his earlier remarks with regard to substituting the word "abandon" with

“withdraw.” Mr. Fertik asked what the legal effect would be on the decision to defer a referendum. What was clear was the sequence of events and their meaning. While individual Board of Education members gave assurances that there would be a referendum, a decision was made not to do so. People are upset about that fact. More people signed the petition than did the petitions for Board candidacy. He believed the question of the referendum should be asked now because it was more straightforward than waiting until November and people will be exhausted by then.

John Bokum, a resident of 629 S. Home, Oak Park for 37 years, has attended Board of Education meetings for 6 years. While the issue of the pool has been a consideration for 6 years, it has discussed seriously with the architects for 3 years. He stated:

- 1) The high school is landlocked, and only so much green space exists. Is this a game of playing one off against the other?
- 2) The pools are 90 years old and cannot be repaired.
- 3) The Board of Education approved financing this project with \$20 million from the fund balance and \$17.5 million in bonds to spread out the payments so that the current taxpayers did not have to pay the full burden.

He suggested that the Park District and the Village of Oak Park work with the property between the Park District and the south Lake Street fields, as it has the same footprint as the current garage. Both the Village and the Park District are aware of his solution. It would solve the parking and pool issues and not use any more green space. The three taxing bodies would pay for it now and into the future.

Mary Colleen Roberts, 818 N. Grove, Oak Park, has two children who are both swimmers, and they are involved in the myriad of athletic opportunities that every parent that lives in Oak Park throws their children in until they say no. She thanked the Board for calling this meeting. She was pleasantly surprised by the interest expressed in this pool project over the last few months. Genuine issues exist that need to be addressed, namely parking. This board has been very responsive to the community and adjusts when it is necessary. Through the petition process, the need to keep a structure parking plan in place at the high school was important. When the pool community met, it explored the combined pool and parking option. Many thought it would be rejected because of the expense. It is obvious that people want both the pool and the parking structure. The board authorized the building of a lesser expensive pool; however, frugality does not fit the pool in this case. She supported changing the scope of the project to include parking, knowing that it will cost more, and because of that, require a referendum to issue bonds to cover those costs.

Monica Sheehan, resident 626 Fair Oaks, Oak Park, stated that the Cook County Election Board today struck down the challenge to the petition and thus the

question will be on the March ballot. According to County's records, 15 members of the community spent 110 hours trying to keep the voters from voting on this pool. It was repeatedly alleged that people did not sign their own names and that people did not sign their names in my presence. There was no fraud or no pattern of fraud. The petitions followed the Board of Education's petition form; it's wording and its rules. In two weeks' time, 4300 voters signed the petition to put the bond issue on the ballot. Backdoor referendums should not be abolished in Illinois. Elected officials should be required to put all of their big projects on the ballot, as is the case in many states. She suggested that the Board of Education just put this on the ballot.

Bruce Kleinman read a statement from his wife, Maureen Kleinman. "Board President Jeff Weissglass stated that one of the primary reasons that the Board might withdraw the resolution of intent to issue the bonds is to "Provide more time for public education prior to the next opportunity for a referendum, on November 8, 2016." Education? For whom? And to what end? That parking issues aren't important in Oak Park? That the high school, as a major employer and community resource, shouldn't be concerned where its employees and visitors park? Let's call it Parking 101; I wonder, would that be a remedial or an AP course? The only argument I've heard for removing the parking garage is that the high school, for many years, "made do" with street parking on the neighborhood streets. If it was good enough then, it's good enough now. Here's some "education" for those suggesting a return to past ways...For many years, the high school had 1 administrator who served as both the Superintendent and the Principal. In 2007-08, the job was split into two separate positions. Do we really need both of these administrators? Perhaps we should go back to having one person fill both roles. And as recently as 2001, one person held dual roles of Student Activity director and Communications director. Ted Demos, who filled both roles at that time, also taught English classes in the morning. Now we have a full-time Student Activities Director AND a full-time Community Relations director, and while they do provide valuable services, neither of them teaches English. Perhaps one person should do both jobs once again? Or even all three. My point is, just because something worked in the past, does not make it a reason to do it that way again."

Bruce Kleinman, representing himself, had no anger against the Board members. His wife has worked at the high school for 10 years, and he had enormous respect for Mr. Arkin, as a great volunteer wrestling coach, but he disagreed with not asking the public for the voice. Not to do so was either a denial of the ballot or fear of fellow citizens. Fear of the ballot strikes at the heart of the country; it is Un-American. He agreed that backdoor referendums were destructive. The parking garage is a major point of contention. He viewed the destruction of the garage as the destruction of a neighborhood. He wanted more people to study the issue. He said that people have a right to petition the government, to assemble and to go into court, and they may do so if the garage decision continues.

Kevin Peppard, 715 Thomas, Oak Park, suggested that the Board seek legal counsel about whether it had the ability to withdraw the question. Mr. Weissglass responded that the District attorney's had said that if the intent to issue the bonds were abandoned, the question was moot, and it would be removed from the ballot.

Sarah Severson, an Oak Park resident, is also a high school principal in Chicago and echoed the comments of fellow taxpayers who felt uninformed and concerned about the amount of money being spent. The response to questions about this endeavor has been, "We need it--our school, our aquatics, etc." Her school has 378 students and 42 staff and a budget of \$2.9 million. She did not believe the school should spend \$37.5 million without asking the taxpayers. She believed over time that high taxes would prohibit people from moving to this community.

Christopher Meister, resident of 735 S. Lombard, Oak Park, has 2 current high school students and 2 future high school students. He moved here in 1981; his sister graduated from here, and he has nieces and nephews who will graduate from OPRFHS. His immediate and extended family have their monies worth of public education in Districts 97 and 200. The pools are 90 years old. In his job, he deals with facilities and schools across the state and the region which have failed to invest in the valuable capital assets of which they are stewards. While this Board of Education is engaged, collegial, works as a team, and listens to the communities, it also has a duty to the two communities who elected them to make the decisions. The community needs to invest in itself. There are 3 train lines and 1 expressway, and all of that concrete and infrastructure costs money. It is time for the 2 communities to face up to the pressing need for an important community asset. People have said in previous times if they had only done "x." If the community does not invest in its assets, the community that used to be great will no longer be great. He supported the pool and for this Board of Education to move forward and determine how to finance the pool.

Mr. Weissglass thanked the community for their comments and reiterated the question of whether to withdraw the bonds. If it were the will of the Board of Education to do so, a Special Board would be called to abandon the intention to issue bonds. The resolution that had been passed gave the Board of Education the authority to issue the bonds anytime during the next 3 years. If the intention is abandoned, the question is moot. The ballots will not be printed until the end of the month and if the Board of Education votes on January 19, the County will be directed to decertify the question. Board of Education members then shared their thoughts.

Dr. Gevinson stated that if he had a lot of money, he would give OPRFHS \$37.5 million to build a pool under 1 condition--the parking garage would not be demolished. Presently, there are at least 2 good possibilities: 1) the community center option--a facility that would include an indoor pool which could be used

by competitive swimmers, District 97, District 200 and others, i.e., the library, the Township, etc. OPRFHS's current pool could then be renovated for PE classes. Politically, he did not know if this would happen and it was impossible to predict, but he was doubtful that it would. The pool advisory committee recommended building on 1 of 3 sites (baseball, softball or tennis), and if it could not accommodate that then the fallback position was to build on the garage site, have a parking plan in place, or include 118 parking spaces in the pool building at a cost of another \$12 million or \$100,000 for each space. While new space was not found for baseball, it was found for softball at Triton; however, the Board was persuaded that the Triton space would kill the program. He had hoped for the location of the tennis courts, but it was hard to find two courts that would accommodate the meets. He suggested, however, that the District consider building courts in a park, i.e., Lindberg Park. There would be 7 more courts and space yet for soccer east of the courts. Failing a community center, he would prefer working with the Park District, move tennis off campus (PE tennis would be a minor loss), build the pool north of the stadium and move everything else north, thus saving the parking garage. He wanted to withdraw the issuing of bonds and postpone the referendum until November in order to discover whether those things were possible. If not, he favored building on the site of the pool with an adequate parking plan.

Ms. Spivy stated that the Board of Education, in hindsight, had done a poor job of educating the public. A finalized parking plan should have provided. She has lost sleep over where her responsibilities lie. Should they be with the students or the taxpayers, etc.? She was elected to deal with the issues at the school. A new pool is what is best for the school and the community as it is important to have a community that people will want to move here in 20 years. She did not believe that going for a referendum in November rather than in March was deceptive. People who put forth the petition did so because they did not believe in the plan. It would be disingenuous to go forward because the cost of the new project is unknown. To add 118 parking spots to the pool structure will require issuing more than \$17.5 million in bonds and the public's support is necessary. With regard to people not moving to this community because of taxes, she stated that people know the taxes are high. She believed going for a referendum in November was more logical, but if no plan exists, she will pass. However, the plan to build the pool with parking spots should be considered because everyone will get what they want at a higher cost. The garage is falling apart, and it is not well maintained. She was interested in revisiting the issue of parking, noting that 3 of the Board of Education members are close neighbors. A workable plan is needed, and a plan of education cannot be done by March.

Dr. Moore stated that this was her third year as a Board of Education member, and she has watched the process with the past Board of Education and the present one in terms of the amount of work, lack of sleep, and frustration, etc. In 1994, she moved to Oak Park with her husband and 2 sons who were then 3 and 6. Her children have gone to District 97 and District 200, and she now has 16-year-old

twin girls. She and her husband wanted their children to be in public schools that felt safe and enriching and offered opportunities for relationships and activities to which they could walk. She has participated on the Collaboration for Early Childhood, Sara's Inn Board, District 97's strategic plan, several high school committees, and more. She ran for the Board of Education to give her expertise and passion to ensuring that children across the board got a stellar education. She never worried about her children because both she and her husband always advocated for them. The high school had an enormous fund balance, and she wanted to show good stewardship of the finances. This journey has gone from her saying "aquatics, community natatorium, Olympic-sized pool" to being overwhelmed and saying "this has taken a lot of time, and a decision should not be made based on an interest group." The decision is now being revisited because a decision had been made to tear down the parking garage and limit parking. Because she lives in the area, she understands the effect of not having a place to park. This situation is now polarizing. Yet some students are homeless, suicidal, cannot afford college, and teachers work diligently because they love this school. She wanted the energy that was put into filing petitions and printing out glossy pictures of pools to figure out how to best move forward and communicate. A pool is needed. Water safety is important. Being a volunteer and hearing someone threaten not to vote for her again is the least likely way to engage with her. This Board of Education has a civility, and its goal is to try to do the best for the students. She did not understand the need for the Board of Education to go for a referendum in March. The goal is to come up with a workable solution. She would not be bullied or threatened or made to feel less than because she has taken a position that will incorporate many voices. Disheartening to her were the many comments made about the Board of Education not asking the community what it should do with the money. She reminded them that they were all citizens and taxpayers.

Dr. Moore also found it appalling that at the start of the regular meeting two-thirds of the taxpayers left at the end of public comments, while the Student Council representative was speaking. Adults should model for students the behavior they want them to have. She hoped to find a way to coalesce and dial down the charged language that has promoted weariness and not been effective in working together.

Ms. Cassell was informed of the following:

- 1) District 97 intended to go for a referendum in 2017.
- 2) The cost to keep the pools running is increasing, and there were concerns about the air quality.
- 3) An engineering firm reported to the District that concrete was falling from the underneath of the decks, cracks and rebar were failing in the walls of the pool, and tiles were missing on the East pool and will have to be replaced because of water being lost.
- 4) Epoxy injections, carbon fiber wrap, and adding structure steel to the walls of the pool were repair stop-gaps only.

Ms. Cassell stated that based on the comments from the public, the petition, she did not believe that moving forward in March was in the best interest of the students of the district. More education is needed which includes a viable parking plan and a concrete design plan for visualization. The community center idea has not been thoroughly vetted as yet, and it is important to talk about all of the options before moving forward. She also did not believe the referendum would pass because of the way it was worded.

Mr. Arkin also thanked everyone for voicing their opinions and the reason for the Board of Education called this meeting was to be educated by the voters. He felt strong about the barbs being thrown at the board as they were unfounded. This process started when he was sworn in as a Board of Education member. The project was approved, and there had been no concern until the question of funding arose. He applauded the leader of the petition who got the 4,300 signatures and said the Board of Education must listen to that voice, but that was the other reason the Board of Education considered abandoning the funding. He heard the voices about the issues of parking, cost, and community input. Aquatics is an integral part of providing a holistic education for the students, and it fits in with the District's goals, mission, and Strategic Plan. He had been involved in wrestling since the 1990s; this was not a fight. The problem is that the pools are beyond their useful life. The process started with the hiring of consultant in 2012. Passionate people have been engaged to determine a solution. He invited others to be part of this process. He asked those who had been so engaged in getting all of the signatures to help the Board of Education solve the problem. As a volunteer wrestling official, occasionally, a coach would try to encourage him to do a better job. His response was that if that coach could do a better, job, he/she should. He invited the public to come with a solution. Much of the groundwork had already been done, and almost all of the documents were on the website—all of the documents with regard to all of the alternatives are available.

While Mr. Weissglass would not go forward with any pool project without a referendum, he questioned what the referendum would be. One concern he heard was that the Board of Education would abandon its intention to issue bonds and then decided to pay the entire amount with its fund balance. That was not his intention. Politically, this has apparently touched a nerve.

Mr. Weissglass read a statement from Mr. Cofsky, who could not in attendance and had not had the benefit of public comment or discussion.

“I believe that something must be done with the current pools, as they have outlived their life. I supported the votes that got us to where we are today, both in approving the pool and the financing of it, with the understanding that building a pool on the parking garage site required an adequate, alternative parking plan in place.

I fully respect the voices of our citizens in getting a petition executed. I was very much on the fence in whether a referendum was the right way to go. Our community is telling us they want to be directly involved in this decision.

“At this time, I am strongly in favor of withdrawing the current resolution of intent to issue bonds to support the financing of the recommended pool design. My reasoning is that: a) we do need to complete an acceptable parking plan, b) I feel it is prudent to allow the feasibility work of the Park District on a potential Community Center to take shape and c) it is clear that there needs to be even greater education of our taxpayers on this very complex issue for them to make an informed vote when this issue is ultimately brought to referendum. This will also provide time for the current work in outlining a Long Term Facilities Plan to ‘catch up’ to the pool.

“I believe we should target a later referendum date, with Nov 2016 as a possibility.”

Mr. Weissglass felt honored to be on this Board of Education with this group of people. He thanked them for their dedication, thoughtfulness, and perseverance through this process. The Board of Education is exhausted by all of this and is just trying to solve this problem. He has spent time thinking about national polarization and the ways in which local communities treat local elected officials, and it is disturbing, particularly in these seats. He has contributed many, many volunteer hours and all he tries to do is the best he can. It is the same statement the president made at his inauguration, and it continues to worsen. However, the President said politics have to reflect the best we are. JW too wants to be clear that he believes that the decision that was made was the best the Board of Education could do at the time. The concerns the petitions raised in the course of this process are valid and important and are respected, i.e., parking, total cost and the impact on taxes, and who decides if a referendum is appropriate. With regard to parking, he lives in the neighborhood. He started out believing a parking plan was needed that took into account all of the concerns of the broad number of constituencies. That has not been accomplished, and it is not yet known if it can be accomplished. It is easy to say that the people do not want cars in front of their houses, but it is also about safety when cars are on the street when students are arriving at school. What was lacking too was a plan to clear snow and ice from the streets and sidewalks. These concerns have to be discussed with the Parking Commission, neighbors and faculty and staff. The cost will be a negotiation with a community. This community is a great inner-ring suburb with very little green space and little opportunities to build. This is not the first nor will it be the last discussion about this. One person was concerned that delaying the referendum would lower the temperature and make it easier to pass. This is an effort to make the best decision. This is at the nexus between the school and the community.

Dr. Isoye also thanked the community and Board of Education members for their comments and thanked the Board of Education members for hearing their conversation. He appreciated the Board of Education’s discussion on whether to abandon the bonds. The Board of Education members stated clearly that students were at the center of the school. He reiterated what each Board of Education member

had said. Dr. Gevinson suggested it might be time to step back and brought up the idea of looking at moving other sports off campus and looking forward to the study about a community center. Ms. Spivy reflected that people were clear that they did not like the plan, and the District may have to rethink it. Ms. Cassell reminded the Board of Education the sense of urgency and the value of PE and competitive swimming. Mr. Arkin sensed a divide in the community and that it was never the intent of the Board of Education nor the administration to do that. The Board of Education was making a decision based on the information at hand. Mr. Cofsky acknowledged the message sent from the number of signatures on the petition. Mr. Weissglass was concerned about the cost, value of swimming and parking. Everyone knows what the parking plan is, and it will be full of disappointment. This is about engaging with community and neighbors. March would be a difficult timeline to accomplish what would need to be accomplished.

Ms. Hardin thanked the community, students, and volunteers. This process has involved many well-meaning and careful people. She is a teacher, mother, and taxpayer and this school must focus on many things. She cares about the pool and parking. She asked that when other topics such as reading or algebra are being discussed that people are as engaged. This is a hard decision, and she is deeply respectful of the Board of Education and the legwork accomplished by the administration.

On January 19 at 7:30 p.m., the Board of Education will consider a formal resolution.

Adjournment

At 8:21 p.m., Mr. Weissglass moved to adjourn the Special Board Meeting; seconded by Dr. Moore. A voice vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Jeff Weissglass
President

Sara Dixon Spivy
Secretary