

July 28, 2016

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on Thursday, July 28, 2016, in the Board Room of the high school.

**Call to Order**

President Weissglass called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. A roll call indicated the following members were present: Fred Arkin, Jennifer Cassell, Dr. Steve Gevinson, Dr. Jackie Moore, Sara Dixon Spivy, and Jeff Weissglass. Also in attendance was Dr. Joylynn Pruitt, Superintendent; Nathaniel Rouse, Principal; Tod Altenburg, Chief School Business Official; Philip M. Prale, ASCI; Dr. Gwen Walker-Qualls, Director of Pupil Support Services; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

**Visitors**

John Stelzer, Director of Athletics; Fred Preuss, OPRFHS Director of Buildings and Grounds; Marsha Sutter of Minding Your Business; Rob Wroble of Legat Architects; Elizabeth Hennessey of William Blair Co., Dave Fako and Sandy Kim of Fako Research & Strategies, Inc.; Mary Haney of the League of Women Voters, Kevin Peppard, Bill. Gale, Wayne Franklin, Larry Lipps, Lynn Kamenitsa, Burcy Hines, Mike Poirier, Monica Sheehan, and Gina Sennello, community members. Steve Schering of the *Oak Leaves* and Michael Romain of the *Wednesday Journal*.

Mr. Weissglass stated that the purpose of this meeting was to gain information. An additional meeting will be scheduled for more discussion. This meeting will end by 8:30 p.m.

**Public Comments**

Larry Lipps, a long-time resident of Oak Park, the parent of swim team daughter who had a good experience, had attended the community meeting. He felt the parking garage takes up too much space; the District needs to utilize all of its space, and the Fieldhouse needs renovation. He supported Plan A, even though it was more expensive than Plan B & C.

Mike Poirier, resident of Oak Park, felt the bundling of performing arts with the swimming pool scope was a dilemma, even though he was a fan of performing arts. The swimming scope has been researched, defined and understood, but performing arts was too vague. It is being brought forward too quickly, and he did not know how to evaluate it. How would the Board of Education sell the idea? He felt the Board of Education should unbundle the two to have greater community support.

Monica Sheehan, resident of Oak Park, read what she believed to be the top ten points and questions relevant to the pool discussion.

“10. The fact is only an 8-lane, the 25-yard pool is needed to operate a high school aquatics program. It’s been stated that it would be an issue for water polo teams to have to stagger practices, yet other OPRF sports teams stagger practices,

without complaint, due to limited field space. And, according to the usage chart linked in tonight's agenda, water polo practices would end at the SAME time in all three plans, Options A, B and C. The same is true for the other aquatic teams.

"9. Swimming feeder programs and the public would have no access to the 40-meter pools in Options B and C during the week in the spring season. Under Option A, they would have access to the West Pool. Four lanes are better than none.

"8. Why would District 200 spend 20 million to 30 million more dollars to build a pool?

"7. What are the total estimated annual operating costs for each pool plan?

"6. Why would District 200 demolish its existing garage, which would provide at least 25 more years of service, only to build a tall, narrow, inferior garage?

"5. How have you, the school board, addressed potential safety issues posed by the subterranean pool in Option C?

"4. Explain the vetting process used to determine the need for performing arts spaces and other components in the three plans?

"3. Explain the need for the 10.7 million dollar addition in Option A. It includes thousands more square feet of performing arts space than Options B & C.

"2. For a public high school with two theaters, explain the need for a black box theater.

"1. According to the responses at the recent community meetings and the phone survey, voters would overwhelmingly reject Options B and C. Respondents were divided even on Option A.

"I supported Option #2, \$22.3 million, as it was pragmatic and the District could pay for it with its current cash reserve. This would relieve the Board of Education of the pressure of going for a referendum in November and its uncertain outcome. It would give the Board of Education time to fully vet the various components of the long-term facility plan. It's a win-win."

Kevin Peppard, resident of Oak Park, concurred with the statements of Ms. Sheehan and Mr. Poirier. He referred to the phone survey. He felt the community meetings were very useful, but they did not represent the community. He supported Option A. He referred to an email he sent to the Board of Education about bonding for the \$22 million because the cost would be spread to the people who would be using the pools and they would get some tax relief.

He wanted to see a resolution to the pool, as it was an emergency. Performing arts can continue to be vetted.

Mary Roberts, resident of Oak Park, stated that the Board of Education has the facts and it knew each of the options on what LTFP A versus B would provide the best benefit for the students and the community for the next 50 years. Ms. Sheehan's comments were not based on evidence nor fact. Ms. Roberts supported Option B.

**Report on  
Community Meetings**

The Board of Education was informed that incorrect information had been received from William Blair regarding homes in River Forest. The correct information has been posted to the website. The goals of the community meetings were: 1) share the current plans and costs with community members, 2) give the Board of Education, administration, staff, and architects the opportunity to interact directly with the community, 3) collect more qualitative feedback on the options. OPRFHS hosted the first meeting, and 85 people attended. Dominican University hosted the second and 50 people attended. Mr. Arkin facilitated both meetings. A chart was distributed at the meeting that compared each of the facility plans. A modified gallery walk followed the presentation. Three stations were set up and manned by board members and architectures. Notes were taken by Ms. Sullivan, Ms. Sutter, Board of Education members, and administrators. Community members reviewed the pros and cons of Options 2 and 4 and Option C. Comments and questions were recorded on comment cards and thus individual comments were included in the data set

**Report on  
Quantitative Research**

Fako Research was hired to conduct a public opinion survey. Its report was posted on the website. Fako asked 300 registered voters the following questions:

- 1) What is the most important issue or problem facing the high school?
- 2) What should OPRFHS priorities be?
- 3) What is the view of residents on Board of Education's fiscal management?
- 4) What is the most favored plan?

Mr. Fako provided background on his company. It started in 1998 and focused on public policy, business, and politics. Fako was asked to get the public's opinion on the pool plans and various components of them and related work. His job was not to tell the Board of Education what to do but to give data and interpret that data so that the Board of Education could make a good decision. The 300 voters who were surveyed are a representative sample of Oak Park and River Forest residents. Approximately 46 were surveyed via their cell phones. His firm was one of the first company to actively dial cell phones only.

The survey took approximately 13 minutes. While the responders had a general sense of education, quality, finances, taxes, pool and garage, they did not necessarily know the specifics. Participants were asked to give priority to their

responses. These results were included in the packet. Overall replacing the pool with new pools was a low priority. The items that had a high priority were 1) adding classroom space for the band, orchestra, and choir, 2) improved classrooms with technology and more efficient designs were high, and 3) preparing for a projected increase in enrollment of 350 students.

When asked about the Board of Education about fiscal management, administration, etc., the response was favorable at 42%. The trust factor is important and the District is well positioned regardless of what direction it goes.

Respondents were provided general descriptions and approximate costs for three different plans under discussion to improve OPRF's facilities and swimming pools. The first was the \$40 million plan, and the residents were split. Residents are split on the \$40 million plan – 46% Favor (15% Strongly/31% Somewhat) v. 47% Oppose (25% Strongly/22% Somewhat). This is not a plan that the community is rejecting, but it has natural opposition. The amount of support drops for the bigger or more expensive plans.

When presented with the \$54 million plan, opposition increases 56% Oppose (32% Strongly/24% Somewhat). Just under two-fifths of residents (37%) favor this version, though support is lukewarm with 28% only somewhat in favor of the plan and 9% strongly in favor.

An overwhelming majority of residents (69%) oppose the \$68 million plan (45% Strongly / 24% Somewhat). A quarter of residents (27%) favor this iteration of the plan (7% Strongly / 20% Somewhat).

Respondents were asked how reasonable or unreasonable various cost options were based on a median home value of \$400,000. These costs were presented as additional yearly taxes that would be used in combination with available cash on hand to fund improvements to OPRF's pools and learning spaces and ranged from \$50 to \$150 more per year. As the number went higher, the acceptance on the number declines, but anything that can be sold under \$100 seems reasonable to a majority of the community. Talking about students, facilities, etc., gives a sense of tolerance levels. When asked follow-up, open-ended questions about what they liked about the plan, the responses were generally that they liked the lower cost aspects and the lower costs plan and the related performing arts things. A series of questions was about how the plan related to issues related to the discussion to get sense of level of action and agreement. They liked best:

- 16% offered generic support for new or renovated pools(s) or generic support for the plans.
- 11% indicated they liked plans for a new parking garage or repair of the existing garage.
- 11% liked the \$40 million plan best – as the one with the lowest cost, two pools, and repair of the parking garage.

- 9% liked the inclusion of performing arts spaces and support for the arts.

They liked least:

- 39% indicated they disliked the cost, seeing the plans as too expensive and not wanting tax increases.
- 16% stated they liked the \$60 (68) million plan least – as the most expensive plan with an unnecessary underground pool.
- 13% offered concerns about the parking issue and the tearing down of the parking garage.
- 10% felt money should not be spent on unnecessary pools, or should be repaired instead of replaced, and that the focus should be on education.

The community felt it should have use of the pools as well. A couple of points that had dropped off were the benefits of the tax relief and bonds.

Mr. Fako stated that the community could relate to the age of the pool and fix something that did not work. He suggested emphasizing those things.

Discussion ensued. It was noted that the error made regarding valuing the medium price range of a house in River Forest had no effect on the survey because the survey did not focus on that. People responded to what they were going to pay, not the home value.

A request was made to see the script Fako used to conduct the survey. Fako surveyed the community about the benefits to the students, activities, and community. When one starts conjoining those things, it is more persuasive thoughts. If the community thinks something is important, it will support it.

Fako has an internal policy not to arbitrarily weigh subgroups. What was weighted was age, race, etc. The percentages of Oak Park and River Forest were 83% to 17%; that was the target, and it was not weighted.

Fako was more direct with the survey than it had been with other surveys about reasonable cost. If the community says it would support \$100 increase in their taxes and the District asks for \$400, the referendum will fail. Mr. Fako noted he was available for follow-up questions.

**Report on Potential Cost Reductions And Program Impact, Impact of Plan A Pool Size on Programs, and Potential Budget Shift**

At the request of the Board, the pool working group has been discussing a range of options concerning the prospective five-year pool and facilities plans and has identified some areas related to potential cost savings and the impact on the prospective plans. The administration provided a schedule and chart that compared current usage and then a 40-meter option as a comparison for making decisions, broken down by season. Note: it is not accurate because it changes on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. The fall and winter seasons have no impact on programming or scheduling of Oak Park groups and

## 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan

community groups. Five athletic teams participate in the spring, including two levels of boys and girls water polo and two levels of synchronized swimming. In the fall, only one sport and two teams. In Plan A (2 pools) during the spring sports season, the renovated West Pool (4 lanes) would not be usable for any of our water polo teams - the four water polo teams would have to share the renovated East Pool (25 yards). This would entail having more early morning practices and longer after school practices (until approximately 8:30 PM vs. the current end time of 6:30 PM). It would also entail changing how we schedule water polo home games - e.g. if the girls team has a home game then the boys team would either have to have an away game on that date or they would not have a pool to practice in at home. In Plan B or C - the 40m pool is a better option for water polo practice, as we can have one team practice in the morning before school and three (3) teams practice together in the 40m pool after school. However Synchro Swimming would also have to use the pool, and so we may have students using the pool until 8:30 PM on most days. From a programmatic standpoint, the master scheduler would not allow anyone else to use the pool early in the morning. The culture of competitive swim program is that students would do some practices in the morning and the afternoon, two mornings a week, other teams, i.e., boys' and girls' cross country and track teams use the pool as part of their conditioning. The impact would be limited time for community groups during the week. Buildings and Grounds (B&G) schedules outside groups. When the water polo teams are away, TOPS could utilize the space. B&G staff are in weekly and daily contact with community groups to get the time they need.

The administration reviewed comparison questions for Plans B and C.

4. Why is the deck space in Plan B nearly 1,500 square feet less than in Plan C Deck space is less in Plan B because the building is built right up to the angled property line, reducing some of the deck area. In Plan C the space can be squared off and include the entire deck area. There is a savings of approximately \$800,000 as a result of 20% less deck space.
5. Why is the area for seating in Plan C 840 square feet more than in Plan B?  
The Plan C seating area needs to be deeper than the Plan B seating area in order to accommodate the depth of the locker room support spaces and corridor that are located below the seating in Plan C. The length of the Plan B and Plan C seating areas is approximately the same, so the additional 840 square feet is based on the additional required depth of the seating in Plan C.
6. Specific to Plan B, what if we reduce the size of the parking facility? Taking one level off the parking facility results in 92 fewer spaces in the garage plan (for a total of 239) and reduces the overall cost of a new garage by \$3.4 million. Again, this estimate includes the associated reduction in contingencies and soft costs.
7. What is the cost of reducing the number of lanes in Plans B or C?

Each lane removed from the Plan B pool would create a savings of approximately \$323,000. Therefore, a 16-lane pool is estimated to cost \$21.9 million, while a 15-lane pool lane pool is estimated to cost \$21.6 million. However, fewer lanes in the Plan B pool would result in significant scheduling difficulties for spring aquatics teams. Each lane removed from the Plan C pool would create a savings of approximately \$359,000. A 16-lane pool is estimated to cost \$53 million, while a 15-lane pool lane pool is estimated to cost \$52.65 million. Again, fewer lanes in the Plan C pool would result in significant scheduling difficulties for spring aquatics teams.

8. What are the costs of long-term facilities plan components that fall outside of the field house?

The administration considered what a model classroom would look like and determined it would be about 1,000 square feet and asked what is the ideal versus current space when considering each of the components outside of the field house. The black box space could continue as is, but the optimal position would cost \$1.5 million. The 3 model classrooms proposed are now computer labs. One will return as a regular classroom, and in a year or two, the District will be down another lab and so the District has to rethink how to use that space more efficiently. Could the District have three teachers in two classrooms with an office space. Students could then identify a room with a teacher, and the teacher would have his/her own space.

9. What is the estimated current classroom utilization rate?

It is estimated at 70% for the coming school year. In other words, when all rooms are taken as a group, 70% are being used for instruction. A 10% enrollment increase would mean a 10% utilization rate increase. This is an opportunity to explore more room sharing, but the District is committed to one.

10. Not much overlap existed in Plans A, B, and C with regard to capital improvements other than 1 air handler, plumbing, heating, masonry work which equals about \$200K in capital improvements.

11. This was a list of definitions of soft costs, contingencies, etc.

Discussion ensued. The ongoing current maintenance costs for the pool as is approximately \$5,000 and includes maintenance on the air purification system, vacuum pumps, tile repairs, etc. If the pools were renovated in place, it would cost approximately \$500,000 to replace the ductwork humidification. In Mr. Preuss' opinion as to how long the current pools would last, he stated that more and more decking issues have arisen and the pools are leaking badly. The structural report from Larson Engineering in 2013 and the one last year said the District was taking a risk in draining and refilling them. The rebar was failing. One Board of Education members felt it would be helpful to have data to support whether the school was spending more money for water because of leakage. It was noted, however, that it would be difficult to gauge because the District has three water mains that come into the facility.

Presently students who dive, practice at Riverside Brookfield High School. Plan A incorporates diving in an 8-lane pool. Diving and team practices could occur at the same time.

What percentages are related to construction and would not vary based on construction costs? What percentage of costs are not construction related? Legat responded that the safe answer is to keep everything on a percentage basis. The construction manager would be a fixed cost, not a percentage. Time would make a difference, and that is the unknown. At some point, it could convert to a lump sum.

Discussion ensued regarding community use of the pools. While 76% of the respondents to the survey agreed that there should be opportunities for swim for community members, there is no lap swim for them. Plans B and C have limited options for lap swim. Saturdays and Sundays are being underutilized, and that may be the time for lap swim. The two pool option would allow the most use by the community. A couple of members felt that having large numbers of students in the pool at the same time as swim class for toddlers, etc., would be a safety issue. One member felt that the culture shift of having the community use the pools more on Saturdays and Sundays would be beneficial to the entire community.

Community groups provided feedback through the program verification plan, not for these options. They are aware of the shift in usage, however. Regarding the question of whether athletes can opt out of PE class, while the State Code of Illinois allows it, the District sees fewer athletic study halls. Juniors and seniors use the varsity opt-out option. PE typically uses the facilities throughout the day, leaving no opportunity for athletes to use the pool.

Discussion ensued about reducing the length of the pool as the lanes go widthwise. If the District were to reduce the pool by more than one lane, the cost savings would be \$650,000, and it would give up two large practice spaces.

An observation was made in that Plan B there would be 92 fewer parking spaces in the garage, but 32 would be gained on the street. It was a net loss of 65 plus spaces. Where would those cars go? Fifty to sixty spots would be available on South Blvd. Part of the plan with the Village of Oak Park would have included making the southside of Chicago Avenue shared space for faculty and students. Any revenue from the sale of parking spaces goes to the Village.

What is gained or lost by having a single 40-meter pool? Mr. Stelzer, in his opinion, noted that the District would get a brand new pool. The 2-pool option is a retrofit in the building and challenges with the locker room spaces would still exist. From a training standpoint, the swim teams are in 2 pools; varsity does not

see junior varsity. One pool would put everyone in one space and allow better training as all of the coaches would be in the same space. It would be a better situation for water polo from the game standpoint; however, a 25-yard pool would be better than what is currently available. It would have a larger deck space, better storage, and allow events to be hosted.

The current PE requirement is scheduled as part of the core PE program that is part of the ninth and tenth-grade academic program. We also offer junior and senior level PE courses that would use the pool. We believe we could schedule and accommodate all courses in a single pool as described in the plans under consideration.

In Plan A, renovating the boys' locker rooms would displace the adaptive gym, which is presently used 8-periods per day. The track and cross country teams use it after school. Board of Education members were concerned about the loss of the adaptive gym about compliance.

The difference in costs for the locker room under Plans A versus B and C are because there is an additional locker room for women on the east side of the second floor.

## **Next Steps**

Discussion ensued about the Special Board Meeting agenda for Monday, August 1, 2016. Board members will have a final opportunity to discuss the plans and action will be taken. A motion will be made at the table. If someone wants to suggest a change, he/she was encouraged to offer a specific amendment. The proceed until a vote can be taken. While the projects could be unbundled, the suggestion was to start with the current plans.

Discussion ensued about all of the Board of Education members having all of the information at the table to make an informed decision. Discussion ensued about the length of this meeting. Is there a process for discussing the plans? Should a second meeting be scheduled in case a decision cannot be reached that night? The following documents were suggested to be included in the packet for Monday.

- 1) the latest draft of LTFP, ABC
- 2) The comparison chart from community meeting
- 3) PowerPoint from Community meeting as amended today with updated information
- 4) Survey and the report on the community meetings
- 5) Comparison of 25-meter versus 40-meter pool
- 6) Usage Chart

Board of Education members were appreciative of the discussion and will continue their individual conversations between now and the next meeting.

Elizabeth Hennessy of William Blair will attend the August 1 meeting and can help clarify the wording of the referendum. Her advice had been that the more general the wording, the less likely the referendum will pass.

There was a consensus to eliminate some options by a straw poll to see if there were any option they did not have to discuss. Using both dates and models of other deliberating bodies that have a time frame will make this Board of Education more attentive and help them to make a decision.

The Board of Education planned to make a decision on August 1, 2016. However, the meeting scheduled for August 16 could be a backup for further discussion.

**Adjournment**

At 8:18 p.m., Ms. Dixon Spivy moved to adjourn the Special Board Meeting; seconded by Ms. Cassell. A voice vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

John Weissglass  
President

Sara Dixon Spivy  
Secretary