

August 16, 2016

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on August 16, 2016, in the Board Room of the high school.

Call to Order

President Weissglass called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m. A roll call indicated the following members were present: Fred Arkin, Jennifer Cassell, Thomas F. Cofsky, Dr. Steve Gevinson, Dr. Jackie Moore, Sara Dixon Spivy, and Jeff Weissglass. Also in attendance was Dr. Joylynn Pruitt, Interim Superintendent and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

Visitors

Tod Altenburg, Michael Carioscio, Philip M. Prale, Brenda Horton, Karin Sullivan, Sara Roodhouse, and Sheila Hardin OPRFHS faculty and staff; Lynda Givens of Chapman Cutter, Chris Marquardt of William Blair, Marcia Sutter of Minding Your Business; Wayne Franklin, Monica Sheehan, Judith Alexander, Amanda Massie, Marty Bernstein, and Chris Donovan, community members; Rob Wroble and other representatives of Legat. Steve Schering of the *Oak Leaves*; Michael Romain of the *Wednesday Journal*.

Public Comments

Judith Alexander, resident of Oak Park, had asked the Board of Education why increased performing arts enrollment required more space. The response to the expected 10% increase in high school students did not merit any increase in parking space? Would not a 10% increase in students mean 10% more parents coming to high school events and growth in staffing as well? Parking is already tight in the Hemingway District and it's going to get tighter. Two new restaurants on Oak Park Avenue and a new condominium project going up in the former Tasty Dog space at Euclid and Lake will make parking more difficult. The Board of Education's failure to plan for growth in high school-generated parking demand is going to add to the problem. The Board of Education is trying to reduce costs by eliminating a floor of the new parking garage, and creating a burden for the community in terms of parking. What does this say about the Board of Education's concern for the community?

Amanda Massie stated that the referendum language was vague and it omitted information on the total cost of the project, the split between cash reserves and the bond issue to pay for the project, the size of the pool, the fact that the new parking garage would be smaller by 61 spaces, and the other items in project, i.e., \$2.8 million for locker rooms, \$2.7 million for performing arts, etc. Voters have the right to know what on what they are voting.

Marty Bernstein, resident of Oak Park, stated that the Board of Education posted information for its May 17, 2016 meeting on how to go forward with gathering qualitative information, which was not representative of the full Oak Park and River Forest communities. The architects responded to the Board of Education's request for additional drawings from the architects, There was contradictory information in the statement, it caused a lack of credibility. The list of FAQ had no numbers by it. How

many people were interested in rolling the LTFP into the pool project? Why had the Board of Education made this decision? He stated that the solution was to solve the pool, parking, property tax issues and to restore the credibility of the Board by voting for Option 2 and building a pool in which the students can swim.

Chris Donovan, resident of Oak Park, stated that there was no reason to build a smaller garage and that there was a lack of public trust in spending money. He will vote no if the referendum question is as drafted. He had solicited signatures last fall and he will again this fall in opposition to a referendum. He suggested this would have political ramifications for those running for the Board of Education next year.

Monica Sheehan, a resident of Oak Park, made the following statement: “There are many things that I could spend my time highlighting tonight, but I will focus on two issues: parking and safety. While I have already raised this issue at a transportation committee meeting, a village board meeting, and I believe a school board meeting, I’m addressing the issue tonight, so it will be recorded in this meeting's minutes.

“Your proposed pool plan would demolish the garage and build a new one on the site that would result in a loss of 61 parking spaces. It's been proposed that this loss of spaces could be offset by having faculty and staff park along South Boulevard. Those spaces should be used for student parking. The school board and the Village of Oak Park continue to ignore the serious safety issue that persists along Chicago Avenue every school day. Student cars line both sides of the street, and the parked cars obscure sightlines and make crossing Chicago Avenue dangerous by *car*, by bike and on foot. Accidents abound. Parking should be prohibited on Chicago Avenue from Ridgeland to Euclid every day that school is in session. These student cars can and should be parked along South Boulevard. It is a safety issue and it is your issue.

“Relatedly, the student cars that park on blocks north of Chicago Avenue should also be moved to spaces along South Boulevard. River Forest does not allow its residential streets to be used as parking lots for Trinity, Concordia or Dominican. The same should be true in Oak Park.

“In conclusion, it doesn't make sense to knock down a structurally-sound garage and build a lesser one in its place. As a board member stated in a recent meeting, tall, narrow garages are least desirable, and that is exactly what you are proposing to build.

“The current garage is fully-parked every school day, and the garage was built to be expanded a level to accommodate increased demand for parking. With the projected increase in enrollment, that need is just around the corner. Parking is not an item to be short-changed.”

Referring to statements made by the administration and the Board of Education that the pools could not be drained and yet at one meeting, it was said they were drained and she asked what had changed.

Julie Griffin, resident of Oak Park, thanked the Board of Education members for all they do. She read the following statement. "I saw the agenda and latest documents for tonight's meeting. I noted that both the band room and orchestra room are documented as "unassigned spaces." As we discussed, it is vital that the choir and theater community feel that they are getting something in this round of upgrades and I know you both feel that assignment of the band and orchestra space to choir and theater is do-able. My fear is, that without some kind of board directive for that space to be used efficiently for the growing choir and theater programs it will get swept up by some other department or for some other use. A directive can speak to your commitment to the choir and theatre departments, students, and families and would be something that I think, if assigned to a task force which includes PA faculty and staff, could be beneficial for all and signal to the performing arts community that the board is doing its best for all our students, even with limited resources.

"After speaking with the department head and teachers for choir and theater, here are some ways to use the band and orchestra space effectively and efficiently:

"1) The orchestra room, which is right next to Studio 200, could be used for additional classroom and rehearsal space. Remember - several curricular classes currently take place in Studio 200 - it is not just used for extra-curricular theater activities. Rehearsals or work for these classes and productions could take place in an actual classroom as opposed to the hallway, which often happens now.

"2) When not being used by theater, the orchestra room could also be used by the choir program for ensemble rehearsals during the school day - some of which now also take place in the hallway.

"3) The band room space has multiple options for both curricular and extracurricular student use:

- The new sound production classes could take place in the band room space (as opposed to the digital lab, which is very cramped and small)
- Guitar classes as well as vocal, jazz, and rehearsals could take place in the band room
- The choir music library and sound system (which is now housed in 3 different areas on the 2nd floor) could be housed in the current band music library.
- The theater department could use the space for meetings with students who are designing shows or working with faculty on other technical & production aspects of theater design work - this currently takes place in very small offices with no large tables on which to work.
- Students who take acting or directing classes could access a small script library which could be placed in one of the current office spaces located within the band room.
- Our award-winning speech team, which just had students participate in the National Speech & Debate Association national competition and placed in

the top 200 teams in the U.S., could have a permanent space in which to work and prepare for their tournaments and competitions.

“These are just a few ideas of how we can address department growth while serving the students and using this space more efficiently. Remember, we need to be creative for the performing arts, and there is no one better to figure that out than the faculty and staff who live it day in and day out.

“I understand that specifics about the spaces cannot be decided by tonight. However, I encourage you to make some directive or on the record statement that space opened up by the band and orchestra move will be assigned to choir and theater so that ALL of our performing arts families can be supportive of this vitally important referendum.

Review and Adopt the Pool and Facility Plan

Dr. Pruitt reported referenced that the administration had been charged to take Plan B and come back with an option less than \$45 million. The administration presented the revised plan for approval.

Mr. Weissglass moved to adopt the revised pool and facilities Plan B, as presented; seconded by Dr. Gevinson. Discussion ensued.

The administration worked with the architect and administration and support people present a plan that was under \$45 million. It is now \$44,500,000. The changes were a result of small and big moves. The big moves made big differences. Balance and priorities were considered. The pool, parking, learning spaces, performing arts, and equity and excellence are the priorities,

The changes included:

- 1) Spaces to be renovated for athletics, PE and/or performing arts on the west side of the building. No one will lose space; it will only enhance.
- 2) The weight room will be kept closer to the Scoville side.
- 3) A coordinator will allow for easier access.
- 4) Swim locker rooms are governed by IDPH regulations.
- 5) 2 stairwells were added for a parking garage.
- 6) The pool remains at 40 meters.
- 7) Mezzanine Level
- 8) Concession size was cut in half
- 9) Family changing rooms were cut in half
- 10) The floor across the weight room was removed at the cost of \$150 per square foot X 4300 square feet.
- 11) Possibilities for the unassigned spaces included equity and excellence, innovative learning spaces and efficient use of space that is beneficial for all. Julie’s statement. Space that is adaptive, supportive, safe, etc.
Floor 3:366, vacant now - classroom next year
Room 314
Mechanical

Elevator -
Reworked gym access. It remains a question.
Black box
Garage space reduction.

Discussion ensued. The timeframe for completing the work on the west would be 2 to 4 years. However, renovation to the third floor could be done in one year. The ideas on how best to use the unassigned space, labeled for band and orchestra, will come from the community. The District will invite people to the table, develop drawings, discuss the possibilities and put a cost to them. At this point, the District is at the schematic phase, not the conceptual design phase which can start at any time. This will take four years to complete.

Mr. Weissglass reflected that there had been plans for a major renovation in that space and what had been presented were plans that reflected the Board of Education's request to bring costs down. At this point there is no sense of the needs and the District does not have a sense of the needs. The challenge is now how to creatively use this space as it is built because no new financial resources are being devoted to it. Did the initial committee recommend a plan for how to use this space? What needs and priorities were developed? Are they not relevant? Mr. Prale stated that on the second floor, PE comes closer to Driver Ed. The purpose would be to consolidate disciplines so that the performing arts feel together. The value would be to optimally consolidate divisions for the students and their academic excellence. Dr. Moore wanted a process that was visionary, and to remind everyone that teacher collaboration would facilitate all students experiencing classrooms in the same way. Dr. Pruitt agreed that the administration was talking about equity for all, not just some students.

Mr. Cofsky reflected that in the path of the LTFP plan, much dialogue had occurred about consolidation, some of which was impractical and just moving for the sake of moving. The fallout was what if it could be done in a bigger picture, it would be. However, many things are misplaced and would not occur without major construction. Mr. Prale responded that it was about learning, not the spaces. It was also noted that while the garage had fewer parking spaces, more could be added with the appropriate foundation and pre-planning.

Ms. Cassell was concerned about the unassigned spaces considering the public comments and emails received from the supporters of the performing arts. She was concerned about moving this forward to the public because so much has been cut from performing arts and better articulation was needed about what will exist. Some members felt that more discussion should about whether that portion of the plan should be pursued because cutting these items would only mean a \$10 reduction on a median home. While Dr. Gevinson had favored a different plan, he was supportive of the performing arts, but \$25 million on the ballot looks better than \$27.7 million; it is not about the \$10, and there is little time for an educational effort. Mr. Cofsky concurred.

Dr. Pruitt stated that the goal was to look at the unassigned spaces, have discussions that are true to the arts, Special Education, etc., and give the Board of Education possible solutions in September, after the stakeholders have been engaged. It may even cost more money. Any room that is repurposed will cost some dollars, but the amount is now unknown.

Dr. Moore was under the assumption, regarding unassigned space and needs and equity and hearing that classes were rehearsing in hallways, that it did not seem appropriate for the space to be unassigned. While no one is losing space, how will expansion occur? It is not appropriate for the students to be having their classes in the hallways. She felt the Board of Education needed to direct the administration to look at those spaces for performing arts because they were growing and it transcended income levels and race. Performing Arts also has storage needs.

Mr. Weissglass was fascinated by the renovation proposed in the plan. The main thing the Board of Education had said was that because the pool is driving the renovations and opening up space, opportunities exist to move some of the existing opportunities in the performing arts corridor to the new space, giving the band and orchestra more breathing room. The design makes sense, but for the theater professionals who are working in those spaces, it is much worse than here. This is a tremendous opportunity with new breathing space for band and choir, and to do so without renovation. He recommended having 240 parking spaces in the garage versus the 300 and that will create additional pressures too. It felt the plan made the right compromises and worked well. He added that the prioritization was done through the initial process and the pool and performing arts were the priorities. Ms. Cassell agreed and was happy that the performing arts plans would be brought forward.

The Administration will present the results of the discussions with stakeholders at the September Board of Education meeting.

Approve the Resolution Providing for And requiring The submission Of the proposition of issuing not to exceed \$25,000,000 School Building Bonds to the Voters of the District at the

Mr. Weissglass moved to approve the resolution providing for and requiring the submission of the proposition of issuing not to exceed \$25,000,000 School Building Bonds to the Voters of the District at the General Election to be held on the 8th day of November 2016; seconded by Ms. Cassell.

Discussion ensued. Chris Marquardt of William Blair and Lynda Given of Chapman & Cutter counseled the Board that the last day to approve the resolution to issue bonds was August 22 which had to be filed with the County Clerk by August 30. Ms. Dixon Spivy read the Resolution:

“Shall the Board of Education of Oak Park and River Forest Consolidated High School District Number 200, Cook County, Illinois, build and equip a swimming

**General election
To be held on
The 8th day of
November 2016.**

pool addition to replace the existing swimming pools at the Oak Park and River Forest High School Building; alter, repair and equip said School Building to improve the performing arts, locker room and learning spaces therein; improve the site thereof; build and equip a parking garage to replace the existing parking garage; and issue bonds of said School District in an amount not to exceed \$25,000,000 for the purpose of paying the costs thereof?”

Discussion ensued about the language. “Replace existing swimming pools” meant that the two existing swimming pools would be taken out of service and replaced with a new pool. One member noted that it did not suggest that they were being replaced because of it was beyond its useful life. It was decided to use the wording “88-years old” as that was more factual.

The Board of Education was advised by Chapman & Cutter that the total cost of the project can be part of the referendum campaign but not the resolution.

Replace “space” with “spaces” after the words “locker room.”

Ms. Givens stated that since the District was putting in \$20 million of its own money, it could use that money to do things not included in the ballot proposition, i.e., athletic offices, training offices, storage spaces, etc. Learning space does not connote to classrooms. Dr. Gevinson felt PE was a learning space, but athletics was different. He was comfortable omitting it. One member wanted learning spaces named first.

The estimated cost is “not to” exceed \$45 million.

Mr. Weissglass moved to amend the motion to replace the current language with the following language; seconded by Mr. Arkin

“Shall the Board of Education of Oak Park and River Forest Consolidated High School District Number 200, Cook County, Illinois, build and equip a swimming pool addition to replace the existing 88-year old swimming pools at the Oak Park and River Forest High School Building; alter, repair and equip said School Building to improve the learning, performing arts and locker room spaces therein; improve the site thereof; build and equip a parking garage to replace the existing parking garage; and issue bonds of said School District in an amount not to exceed \$25,000,000 for the purpose of paying costs thereof?”

Adjournment

At 9:15 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

Submitted by Gail Kalmerton
Clerk of the Board