

May 2, 2017

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School was held on May 2, 2017 in the Board Room of the high school.

**Call to Order**

President Weissglass called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. A roll call indicated the following members were present: Thomas F. Cofsky, Dr. Steve Gevinson, Dr. Jackie Moore, and Jeff Weissglass. Also in attendance was Dr. Joylynn Pruitt-Adams and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board.

**Closed Session**

At 6:03 p.m. Mr. Weissglass 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. Collective negotiating matters between the District and its employees or their representatives or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees; seconded by Ms. Dixon Spivy. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

At 6:33 p.m., the Board of Education resumed its open session.

**Visitors**

Tod Altenburg, Brenda Horton, Michael Carioscio, Karin Sullivan, Jacqui Charette-BassiriRad, OPRFHS Administration and Staff, Jeannie Affelder, Matt and Bridget Baron, Carol Cox, MaryAnn DeBruin, Wayne Franklin, Bill Gale, Eric Gershenson, Rivkah Gevinson, Karin Grimes, Craig Iseli, Bryon Lanning, Amanda Massie, Chris Meister, Kevin Peppard, Susan Parks, Monica Sheehan, Steve Tyma, and Holly Van Deursen, Community members; Steve Schering of the Pioneer Press; Steven James and filing crew.

Dr. Pruitt-Adams announced that Agenda Item No. 5, Memorandum of Understanding was being pulled and would not be acted upon that evening.

**Public Comments**

Kevin Peppard had been concerned about Agenda Item No. 5 being approved at this meeting rather than at the next Board of Education meeting but was relieved as the item had been pulled. He also questioned the legality of the meeting held on April 11, 2017, as the posting must occur 48 hours prior to the meeting and he did not believe that was the case. He questioned that timeline and suggested that the meeting needed to be re-held.

Eric Gershenson read a statement from Matt Girson, who could not attend this meeting but wanted this on record. "First, I want to thank Steve for his service for the past four years. Next, I'd like to congratulate Matt, Craig, Tom and Jackie for their election victories. Thanks to all of the board for the work you are about to undertake on behalf of our children and our community.

"I'd like to offer a special thank you to Jeff Weissglass for his service on this board, for his commitment to quality education for all D200 students, and for his excellent leadership. Some people prefer to lead from the floor and others lead

from the pulpit. Jeff is capable of both, but his time on the D200 board locates him in the latter group. During his tenure as the board’s president – and his two years as vice president – he never shied away from difficult issues or topics. He met every challenge with his shoulders square and never failed to learn the particulars of each situation and to weigh variables thoughtfully. This thoughtfulness is Jeff’s real strength and I hope that future decisions made by this board follow the model established by Jeff to take the time to think through – thoughtfully – the best ways to build an even better educational experience for the students. More specifically, I hope that whoever steps up as the next board president has the courage and mind to lead D200 with as much integrity and thoughtful compassion that Jeff brought to the board.

“I know I speak for many community members who are disappointed that Jeff won’t be serving on the D200 board moving forward, but as a friend, I can selfishly say that I look forward to more lunchtime restauranting.”

**Minutes**

Mr. Weissglass moved to approve the open and closed session minutes of April 27, 2017 and a declaration that the closed session audiotapes of September 2015 be destroyed and a declaration that the closed session minutes from January 1, 1987, through April 2017 shall remain closed; seconded by Dr. Moore. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

**Canvass of the Vote**

Mr. Arkin moved to acknowledge the Canvass of the Vote; seconded by Ms. Cassell. A roll call vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

The Official Certificate of Results of the April 4, 2017 Consolidated Election of the HIGH SCHOOL Board of Education Oak Park and River Forest High School 200 are attached. The Cook County Clerk’s office, after having completed a canvass of all votes cast for the high school Board of Education Oak Park and River Forest 200, certifies that the listed candidates received the following vote totals.

Thomas F. Cofsky (Nonpartisan)	6,097
Craig D Iseli (Nonpartisan)	6,600
Jeff Weissglass (Nonpartisan)	5,677
Matt Baron (Nonpartisan)	6,317
Albert Sye (Nonpartisan)	745
Douglas W Springer (Nonpartisan)	3,625
Jack E Davidson (Nonpartisan)	2,779
Christian Chiakulas (Nonpartisan)	1,318
Jackie Moore (Nonpartisan)	7,839

O.P.R.F.H.S. District 200 welcomed the newly-elected members: Dr. Jackie Moore, Thomas F. Cofsky, Craig D. Iseli, and Matt Baron.

**Recognition of Retiring Board Members**

Mr. Arkin thanked Mr. Weissglass and Dr. Gevinson for their contributions to their communities. They were unselfish. Dr. Gevinson’s insight and vision were huge. Mr. Weissglass exhibited the characteristics of leadership well. He

checked his ego at the door and did not generalize. Mr. Arkin thanked him for his tireless leadership. He owed him a deep debt of gratitude for all he had done.

Ms. Cassell thanked Mr. Weissglass and Dr. Gevinson for all they had shared with the community and with her personally. Dr. Gevinson's institutional knowledge has been invaluable. She learned much about his years at the high school, especially when he went to Evanston Township High School to learn about the work it has done to address the achievement gap. Thank you.

Ms. Cassell learned much from watching Mr. Weissglass as a leader and it made her think about the goals to which she wants to aspire as she moves forward as a parent, a person, and an attorney. She enjoyed getting to him about the vision for the high school. Without him on the Board of Education, it will not be the same.

Mr. Cofsky appreciated the opportunity to be with both Mr. Weissglass and Dr. Gevinson for the last four years. Their passion and perspective was both appreciated and valuable. He was grateful to them as friends. Mr. Weissglass worked tirelessly on behalf of the students. He is a consensus builder and he started in depth right away. He also brought a critical, strategic focus and a futurist view to education that helped guide the Board of Education. He was grateful to have served alongside him.

Ms. Dixon Spivy presented flowers to the retiring Board members. She had heard Dr. Gevinson's eloquence, passion, and love for the school. It was remarkable. She thanked both of them for setting examples as board members. She had had no idea of how much work or the challenges there were to being a board member, and they handled it with the grace and dignity that she will always try to achieve.

Dr. Moore began her journey with Mr. Weissglass and Dr. Gevinson, which made it less daunting and scary. She acknowledged their deep passion as being untenable. She had met Dr. Gevinson at Red Hen with a family friend's daughter and he had remembered her brother who he had taught and the papers he had written. Dr. Gevinson was this person's favorite teacher and continues to impact his adulthood. He has impacted teachers and students. He put on a Board of Education's hat to look at the school's policies and she has learned from him. Mr. Weissglass was the reason she ran from the board. She remembered being at Unity Temple for a Collaboration on Early Childhood talk and they were charged with signing in people. Mr. Weissglass was running for the Board of Education and he told her why. They developed a friendship and respect and while not always like minds; they both were determined to improve the lives of children. Because she liked working with Mr. Weissglass, she also decided to run for the Board of Education. He knew of her plans before her family knew. They have always been collegiate and they developed their own sign language. She appreciated the level of respect and collegiality that this Board of Education has afforded her. She refused to say goodbye and she hoped his talents would continue to be used in these districts.

Dr. Pruitt-Adams stated that her 10-month tenure had gone by quickly and it was because of them that she was at OPRFHS. Dr. Gevinson helped her understand the traditions that exist here. While change is inevitable, one must respect and

honor tradition, and he had pushed her to be higher and better, as that is what she had read from his questions. She enjoyed their time at Blueberry Hill. She highly respected his passion for education, his commitment to the education of all students and students at OPRFHS. Having served as a staff member and then additional 4 years as a Board of Education member is a testament to his commitment.

She remembered talking with Mr. Weissglass about being the interim superintendent with the vote taking place on Thursday and then starting the following Tuesday. If they had wanted her, she wanted to be here. Mr. Weissglass had caused her to leave the state of Missouri. He had helped her with the learning curve, he supported her and her multiple family emergencies, and he allowed her to tell her Taylor story at a regular weekly meeting. He has a passion for the school system and the growth of humans everywhere, it is about his ability to build relationships. She promised the two of them that she would do their best to uphold the ability to do this job.

Dr. Pruitt-Adams presented them with plaques on behalf of the Board of Education, the faculty, staff, and administration and more importantly, the students, for their time, dedication and commitment to “Those Things That Are Best.”

Dr. Gevinson’s made the following remarks:

To Dr. Pruitt-Adams and to the administration, they had his best wishes for new levels of success in the coming years. He believed there was an almost universal sense of hope and promise from every corner of the school and the community for what lies ahead and for the leadership they will provide in getting there. He hoped that Dr. Pruitt-Adams’ ear would be a truly glorious one. Concerning the rest of the administrative team, he has very much appreciated working over these years with gifted, committed administrators, several of whom he had worked with in a very different capacity as a teacher and division head. Putting on my board member’s hat was quite interesting in that regard, and he hoped he was able to keep it on straight most of the time. He gave a special shout out to Mr. Prale, as he would soon retire. They had been through much together as their work has intersected over the years. He has given this district the highest level of service in his various capacities here, and he wished him all the best as he embarks on the next leg of his journey.

To the faculty and staff, he wished he had more of an opportunity to work directly and formally with them during his tenure on the board, but the structure of things does not really allow for that. The faculty remains extremely talented, skilled, and devoted to the students, and he remained convinced that the more the faculty takes its proper role in leading the educational work here, the better off this school will be.

To his fellow Board of Education’s members, he stated that all of them have been highly intelligent, fully committed, thorough, decent, civil, sincere, extremely conscientious, and great partners in our collaborative effort to carry out our solemn responsibilities:

He wanted to say thank you to the 3 newcomers with whom he worked—Ms. Cassell, Ms. Dixon Spivy, and Mr. Arkin. Mr. Arkin listened carefully and didn't say much as he tried to learn the ropes early on in his tenure and deferred somewhat to the 4 others who were elected 2 years earlier, which made him feel flattered as he was taking him seriously for what felt like an extended time--a somewhat unfamiliar feeling. Soon enough he came into his own and began expressing opinions and taking positions with no particular regard to my opinions, as far as he could see. This says you are fast learners and independent thinkers. The district is extremely well-served by having elected you to the Board of Education and he will miss serving with all of you.

To Dr. Moore, Mr. Cofsky, and Mr. Weissglass, with whom he was elected and with whom he worked and got to know well over 4 years, he said.

Dr. Moore has been a champion of the students and their voice in their education like no one he had seen at any level in his long service at this school, and she became the de facto leader on equity matters early on. He has deeply appreciated her unfailingly incisive ideas, her passionate, articulate expression of them, and her unflagging commitment to her clear and most ambitious vision for what the school can and should be, and what it must become.

Dr. Gevinson had gained a huge amount of respect for Mr. Cofsky contributions to the work and the particular role he has played in the ecology of the Board of Education. His financial expertise and understandings about managing a large organization have been invaluable in the Board of Education's work. Maybe even more importantly, Dr. Gevinson loved his openness, his taste for the forward-looking and visionary, and his deep appreciation for the full, multifaceted entity that this great comprehensive public high school is.

Dr. Gevinson stated that Mr. Weissglass was a truly remarkable public servant, and he will be greatly missed. When Mr. Phelan, whom he regarded as a very strong and effective board president, decided not to run for re-election, Dr. Gevinson was worried about the loss of leadership on the Board of Education. But as Dr. Gevinson got to know the quality of his work and his leadership capacity during the first two years on the board, he became greatly impressed and felt greatly relieved when he agreed to take on the very difficult role of president. Mr. Weissglass led the Board of Education skillfully, sure-handedly, thoughtfully, and fairly. And, in his opinion, Mr. Weissglass got a very raw deal in not being re-elected, a raw deal from the local paper in its wrong-headed endorsement thinking and a raw deal from what must have been a sorely ill-informed local electorate. His work on the Board of Education has been as intelligent, caring, generous, supportive, and committed as anyone could hope for in an elected official.

To Ms. Kalmerton, Dr. Gevinson said thank you for being the best imaginable clerk of the board. It had been a great pleasure during the last two years to sit next to her during the sometimes interminable meetings. He greatly

appreciated her smiles, her occasional eye rolls, her quick corrections of him when he needed them, and her utter competence in and dedication to every aspect of the job. Her contribution to the quality of the work as a Board has been all but indispensable.

Dr. Gevinson then added that there were a few downsides to serving on the Board of Education.

The pool issue has been a most unfortunate distraction during his entire time on the Board of Education. He did not think it had to be, though he is not actually sure where the blame lies most squarely. He offered a parting thought. He thought that each of the solutions that were unanimously supported would have been a fine, effective, responsible solution for the community. He could also think of at least two or three others that would maybe be better. The goal remains to find the best pool solution for the school and community, and he thought that meant, as was discussed before, being visionary, and certainly not being simply frugal and minimalist.

Another thorn in his side for the past 4 years has been the Open Meetings Act. There is nothing to be easily done about it, he understood, but he wanted to register publicly that while he believes the law was well-intentioned, its unintended consequences currently outweigh its virtues, in his opinion. There should certainly be less onerous ways than there are under the current law for a body like the Board of Education to discuss vital issues among ourselves without violating the law. He thought that the Board and the District would have benefited considerably if they had been able to have some free-wheeling discussions about important matters before bringing them to a public meeting.

He also mentioned that another issue that had rankled him for four years was the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance at the beginning of the regular monthly meetings. He did not want to offend anyone by characterizing the practice negatively, but he simply said that this country has been built much more fundamentally around the idea of no one ever having to or being expected to or even being invited to publicly pledge his or her allegiance to anything or anyone than around some public recitation of a pledge of allegiance. It would be far better, he felt, if the Board of Education wanted to do something ceremonial at the beginning of a board meeting, to remind themselves of the responsibilities as a Board of Education and the mission as a school district.

Dr. Gevinson continued that on the positive side, he has loved the opportunity to serve his school and community in this capacity for these four years. Board of Education members may complain from time to time about the length of meetings, the frequency of meetings, the time commitment, the misunderstandings or lack of appreciation for their voluntary public service, and the various frictions that go along with this work, but he thought they all know how important their work is as leaders of this district and stewards of the community's resources. It has truly been a privilege and an honor to serve, and he wished all of the continuing member as well as the new members soon to be seated only the best, most productive, most effective time working for what's

maybe the best cause to serve: fostering the growth of young people into their best selves.

Mr. Weissglass stated that being a Board member is incredibly hard work. He was honored to have done the work. Very few people understand just how hard this work is, and he thanked all of them for what they put into this. He acknowledged the families who provide invaluable supports as the Board of Education does this work. He was particularly grateful to his wife, Jeannie, for the constant encouragement and support over the last four years.

Though it didn't always feel that way, together the Board of Education members made major progress. In particular, they brought a focus to what is truly needed to achieve excellence and equity in our school. While much still remains, it has been bold in moving the District forward in several ways. He named the following.

- Adopting a highly aspirational strategic plan
- 1:1 technology
- Piloting peer mentoring and social-emotional coaching
- Eliminating material fees for low-income students
- Our work with EOS to identify and support underrepresented students in honors and AP
- Focused attention to discipline disparities through CCB
- Supporting the early childhood collaboration
- Collaborating with D97 and D90
- Authorizing the documentary film that we all eagerly await
- Hiring Dr. Pruitt Adams

He then thanked his colleagues for their contributions to this work and he reflected how much he appreciated their contributions. He shared:

He appreciated Dr. Gevinson's historical perspective, his passion for the institution, his seeking full understanding of issues, and his connections to a passion for learning, for himself and for students.

He appreciated Mr. Arkin's passion for the institution, his belief in the power of sports to create strong, ethical humans and its connection to the shared vision of equity and excellence, his roots in River Forest and the broad understanding of the full community, and his business perspective, particularly around risk, as that is extremely helpful.

He appreciated Ms. Cassell for her thoughtfulness, balance, and steadfastness. He saw some of himself in her and he was sorry they did not have a chance to work more directly together. He looked forward to seeing where her leadership goes. One issue in particular that stands out is her passion for addressing gender equality.

He appreciated Ms. Dixon Spivy's commitment to equity and, in particular, her leadership of the Culture, Climate and Behavior Committee, her broad perspective on the community and on the bigger political picture in the state and country and

how it affects us, her flow of ideas in constantly trying to find the best solutions to problems, and her passion as a leader and constantly striving to improve.

He appreciated Mr. Cofsky as a leader around finances and fiscal responsibility, his perspective on large institutional management, embody the promise of how to be both fiscally responsible and his commitment to the well-being of every student.

He appreciated Dr. Moore as being a leading voice in the community and the school that the work is to meet the needs of every child every day. As importantly, in his mind, is her belief that a key way to get there is the voice of the young people themselves to be both heard and honored. He appreciated their shared long-term commitment to early childhood. While there are ways to go, he admired her insistence that ways be found to assure that data was being collected and used in ways that inform practice and help to continually improve.

He appreciated Dr. Pruitt-Adams for the remarkable leader who has already put her mark on this institution. He was saddened for her for the loss of her grandson. He believed that this work can be the capstone of her fabulous career and she is the exact right person to be leading the District now.

He appreciated Ms. Kalmerton for the countless ways in which she supported this board, and him. She produces minutes for these long complex meetings that are flawless. Her steady presence at the meetings is calming. That same presence on a day-to-day basis has been invaluable to Dr. Pruitt-Adams, Dr. Isoye, and a few other superintendents, and many board members and board presidents. Her knowledge of the policies, the Open Meetings Act, and the history of the board are tremendously helpful. Through it all her loving kindness is infectious. She is one of the great gems of this institution and he was lucky to have had the chance to work with her and to have had very honest conversations.

As he reflected on his time on the Board of Education, and particularly why the election turned out as it did, the pool, of course, played a key role. He took responsibility for some mistakes along the way. He was sad that it created or exposed divisiveness within the community. He will contemplate what he learned from the pool issues. He is also sad that this one issue had such a negative impact on his ability to continue on the Board of Education. In the meantime, he was grateful for all their comments about the contributions he had made and he did leave the Board feeling that he did the best he could and that he left the District on a strong footing.

His immediate future will be rest and reflection. He will continue national work on political bridge building and learner-centered education. He will contemplate how else he can make a contribution, both in this community and nationally. He looked forward to helping out where he can and seeing how else their paths cross.



**Adjournment**

At 7:30 p.m., Mr. Weissglass moved to adjourn sine di the Special Board Meeting; seconded by Dr. Gevinson. A voice vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Jeff Weissglass  
President

Sara Dixon Spivy  
Secretary