

Oak Park and River Forest High School District 200

201 North Scoville Avenue □ Oak Park, IL 60302-2296

TO: Board of Education
FROM: Joylynn Pruitt, Interim Superintendent
Karin Sullivan, Director of Communications & Community Relations
DATE: Dec. 13, 2016
RE: Post-Referendum Recommendation

BACKGROUND

On November 8, 2016, Oak Park and River Forest residents voted down a bond issue of up to \$25 million by Oak Park and River Forest High School District 200. The bonds were intended to help fund a five-year, \$44.5 million facilities plan. According to the results from the Cook County Board of Elections, out of 35,676 ballots cast, those opposed to the bond issue prevailed by a margin of 28 votes, or 0.08%.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The large number of votes that were cast indicates the community's high level of interest in this issue, while the near-tie reveals a community that is evenly split in its views. We believe a number of factors contributed to residents voting "no," including the overall cost of the project, a desire to fund the project only with cash reserves, the cost to taxpayers, the demolition of the current parking garage, and concern about whether long-term facilities needs were fully vetted.

In the past five years, the district has led two long-term facilities planning committees and multiple pool committees, as well as a strategic planning process. Yet we find ourselves at an impasse when it comes to addressing facilities issues. It seems clear that what is needed is a different process, one that goes beyond pools, locker rooms, performing arts classrooms, etc., to ask: What are the instructional needs of the next generation of learners and how should the high school's facilities be altered to meet those needs? Internal stakeholders clearly need to be involved in the next steps. Additionally, we believe a process that also more broadly and deeply involves community residents and community partners is essential to resolving these questions.

NEXT STEPS

We recommend that the Board approve the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT, pursuant to Policy 4:150 - Facility Management and Building Programs for the academic year 2017-2018, the Oak Park and River Forest High School D200 Board of Education charges the Administration with establishing a community engagement and outreach committee to review previous processes, make recommendations, and strengthen community partnerships pursuant to District goals related to equity, academic programming needs, facilities to support those needs, and finances, in order to ensure that the District meets the educational needs of the next generation of learners.