

Oak Park River Forest High School Board
October 22, 2015
Mary Haley, Observer

Present: Jeff Weissglass-President, Jackie Moore-Vice President, Tom Cofsky, Steve Gevinson, Sara Dixon Spivy, Fred Arkin and Jennifer Cassell (attended via phone)

Also Present: Steve James, documentary filmmaker

Mr. Weissglass called the meeting to order at 7:39 p.m.

Public Comments: Speakers including students, OPRFHS alumni, coaches and faculty told the board of the impact Stephen Jackson, leader of the Motivational Mentorship program, has had on their lives. They stated that the program provides students with support and a sense of belonging in the high school. Mr. Jackson, some said, listens to them and helps them find their voices in the high school. Mr. Jackson was an employee of the Oak Park Township who ran the high school program as part of his employment. The township recently let Mr. Jackson go, putting the high school program in jeopardy. Mr. Weissglass commented that while the Public Comments period was not a time for direct dialogue between the speakers and the board, he wanted the speakers to know that the board respects the feelings of the speakers.

Introductory Reports: Bobbi Raymond, president of the Alumni Association, reported that the association received a \$100,000 grant and that approximately half of it will be used to fund the Summer Student Enrichment Program. Funding for needy students who wish to participate in the program will be a priority.

Consent Items: All items were passed unanimously.

Action Items: The first reading of Policy 7:325, Student Fund-Raising Activities, stirred a discussion of door-to-door fund raising. Student safety, the purpose of such fund-raising, and the impact of forbidding it were topics discussed. Principal Rouse said that teams that wish to purchase items such as tee shirts and water bottles that are not covered by the school usually do this fund-raising. Dr. Isoye said that there have not been any incidents reported and that students are encouraged to approach only family, friends and close neighbors. The board passed the motion for a first reading, but requested that more information be gathered before the next board meeting.

Discussion: Amy Hill, Director of Assessment and Research, presented a report analyzing the link between ACT scores and the earning of post-secondary degrees. An ACT score of 21 or above seems to be a predictor of success in earning such a degree. In analyzing data since 2003, little improvement is seen in ACT results for African-American students. Ms. Hill concluded the approaches to achieving equity have not been successful. Dr. Moore questioned if lower ACT scores were the sole reason that fewer African-American students pursue post-secondary degrees. She suggested examining how much encouragement and help in finding aid is offered to African-American students. Dr. Isoye recommended that new ways to approach this problem need to be sought with the same boldness the board has brought to rethinking student discipline. (For further information on this issue, visit <http://www.oprfhs.org/board-of-education/Agendas-Minutes-Packets.cfm>)

The meeting was adjourned at 10:34.

