

# LEAGUE of WOMEN VOTERS™ OAK PARK / RIVER FOREST



**Oak Park River Forest District 200  
September 27, 2007**

*Angelika Kuehn, Observer*

Meeting called to order at 7:30 p.m. Five Board members (Allen, Conway, Lee, Patchak-Layman, Rigas) were in attendance as well as Superintendent Weninger, Interim Principal Vogel, senior staff and Clerk. Members Fisher and Millard were absent. Visitors introduced themselves as parent (one), community members (two), APPLE rep (one), press (two) and LWV observer. Several others entered throughout the evening. There were no public comments.

### *Board Member Comments*

S. Patchak-Layman wanted put on the record that she had not received answers to the questions she asked at the last meeting concerning the book store, book and fee waivers, the principal's job description compliance with the School Code, residency, forms to be corrected, Title I and parent involvement. She also requested that plans be put in place to improve the knowledge base of the 95 of 98 African American girls who (per ACT component of PSAT) were not ready for college science, for whom the math and science career door had been shut. In addition, S. Patchak-Layman stated that research showed that of the 34 African American students from D97 who met standards in 8th grade, only 3 met math benchmarks after two years of math at OPRF (reading scores are similar). She said that this is an alarming and outrageous lack on the part of D200 to fulfill its promise to students and is a travesty as a separate and unequal system of education for African American students.

J. Allen referred to S. Patchak-Layman's statement at the last Board meeting that the D200 attorney had filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for her letter to the Attorney General seeking an opinion, a situation that J. Allen and other Board members (as well as visitors) had vocally decried. He subsequently learned that no such FOIA request had been made, as verified in writing by the Attorney General. He apologized to the Superintendent and D200 attorney for jumping to conclusions. J. Allen continued, the context being S. Patchak-Layman's unsubstantiated allegation: since he had become a School Board member, the level of civility had deteriorated to an embarrassing point, involving threats of investigations and consulting attorneys, as well as half truths and twisted versions of facts and law. In the same context, he indicated that the board member responsible for these actions should apologize to the other Board members.

### *Superintendent's Report*

Hallway civility, discipline, punctuality of students to classes, and the spirit assembly are all positive. The plan to raise student achievement will be presented at the regular meeting of the Board in October. Superintendent Weninger has a strong belief concerning student achievement because this is a wonderful school for reasons he elaborated.

### *Faculty Senate Executive Committee*

James Paul Hunter reported that the faculty is looking forward to the plan for raising student achievement. Last week's Instruction Committee meeting was the best he had attended since 1985 and the Board and administration did a great job setting a framework for working together.

### *Consent Agenda*

S. Patchak-Layman removed five of 12 items from the Consent Agenda, stating that (1) she could not support the policy statement governing the Board of Education for reasons she had stated in prior committee meetings; (2) she could not support the Student Discipline policy (consisting primarily of indictable offenses) because the School Board should be the hearing body for disciplinary actions leading to expulsion (R. Lee disagreed, stating that presiding over every action that might result in expulsion is beyond the Board's duty), and also because questions remain concerning certain definitions, students' right to refuse orders they consider to be wrong, and the relationship between discipline and free speech; (3) she had factual questions about three other consent agenda items which, when answered, she supported together with the other Board members.

### *D200 Budget*

This meeting was the public hearing on the annual budget. No member of the public had asked for a copy of the budget before the meeting, and no public comment was offered during the hearing. S. Patchak-Layman had several questions about the budget that engendered much discussion with staff. The Board then approved the budget unanimously.

### *D200 Audit*

After extensive questioning of staff by S. Patchak-Layman on topics including tax increment financing, the Board approved the audit unanimously.

Throughout the foregoing, visitors, staff and Board members repeatedly asked certain Board members (and on several occasions staff) to speak so that they could be heard. The microphones on one side of the Board table were not functioning.

### *Discipline and Appeal Process and Expulsion/Review Process*

The Board reviewed a matrix illustrating these processes and engaged in thoughtful discussion about checks and balances and chains of information and reporting for several types of conduct ranging from requests for course changes to charges of discrimination and harassment, with an undertaking by the Superintendent to make changes and present the revised policies for review.

This discussion had been scheduled to end at 9:30 pm but continued thereafter. At 10:00 pm the Observer left.