

Oak Park River Forest League of Women Voters Eyewitness Report

Observed by Mary Haley

Date: November 15, 2018

Meeting Length: 3 hrs.

Meeting Name: District 200 School Board

Headline: Board Votes to Accept IMAGINE Facilities Master Plan Recommendation

Events and Testimony: More than 100 people attended the meeting to speak and listen to comments about the District's plan to move forward on equity and about the IMAGINE acceptance vote. Five students spoke of their respect for Dr. Pruitt-Adams, Dr. Moore and Mr. Clark. At the same time, they expressed a desire for the District 200 to move forward more quickly on equity issues. Among their requests were: 1.) more inclusive curriculum, especially in English, history and world culture; 2.) support for undocumented students; 3.) racial consciousness training; 4.) hiring and retaining teachers of color. Representatives from DivCo, a group begun last year to work for equity in District 97, reiterated their desire to work cooperatively with the high school.

What Did the Board Discuss: Robert Grossi, a district consultant, outlined the terms of the Property Tax Relief Grant Program. If the board chooses to apply for the grant, the district could abate about 5.8M in taxes and receive up to \$3,754,030.61 from the state in the form of a tax relief grant. The application for the grant must be made by January 7, 2019. Mr. Grossi recommended that the board levy at 2.1% increase.

The board discussed the estimated levy. The majority of the board supported a plan to increase the levy by 2.1% and work to keep costs at the same level. If the levy is not increased, some board members worry the district will need to go to referendum sooner than it wishes to do.

What Did the Board Decide: The board voted unanimously to accept the IMAGINE Facilities Master Plan Recommendations. Board members pointed out that accepting the plan did not mean implementing the plan as is. Rather it is accepting the plan as a basis for deciding what needs to be done to make the school more compatible with ongoing educational needs. Ms. Cassell said that she felt black students were used as props by those who opposed the plan. Dr. Moore thanked the IMAGINE group for its hard work. Supporting the plan, she commented, is in keeping with the district's equity work. Exposing students to the arts, PE and improved facilities is another way to achieve equity.

