

**TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 211
Palatine, Illinois**

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING**

February 21, 2023

5:00 p.m.

Official

A special meeting of the Board of Education, Township High School District 211, Cook County, Illinois was held on February 21, 2023, with a posted start time of 5:00 p.m. at the G. A. McElroy Administration Center at 1750 South Roselle Road, Palatine, Illinois. Access for the public to view the Board of Education Meeting live-stream was available on the District 211 YouTube channel using the video button on the Board meeting agenda on District 211's website or at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/District211>.

Call to Order

Roll Call

On a roll call, the following officers and members were:

Physically Present: Kimberly Cavill, Secretary and Member
Mark Cramer, Member
Peter Dombrowski, Member
Steven Rosenblum, Vice President and Member
Anna Klimkowicz, President and Member

Present by Phone: Curtis Bradley, Member

Absent: Timothy Mc Gowan, Member

Also present were: Superintendent Lisa Small and Members of the District Administrative staff.

Pledge of Allegiance

President Klimkowicz led the Board of Education and the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comments and Hearings

Public Comments

There were no Public Comments this evening.

Unfinished Business

Approval to retain Cozen O'Connor Public Strategies to provide state government relations advice and lobbying services in relation to the Mega-Project PILOT Legislation, related TIF reform and public school finance impacts.

Mr. Dombrowski made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cavill, that the Board of Education authorize the Superintendent to retain Cozen O'Connor Public Strategies to provide state government relations advice and lobbying services in relation to the Mega-Project PILOT Legislation, related TIF reform and public school finance impacts.

Superintendent Small made the following comments:

“There are three public school districts involved in the land that formally housed the Arlington Park International Racecourse and is now owned by the Chicago Bears. The complete approximately 320-acre site is all contained within the District 15 elementary school taxing district. Within the high school taxing districts, Districts 211 and 214 split the property with most of the land being within the District 214 taxing district.

At this time, there are no building plans approved by the Village of Arlington Heights, but the mixed-use plan, publicly presented by the Bears organization, includes the stadium, office, retail and residential buildings.

Currently, the unapproved building plans have the stadium entirely within the District 211 taxing district with no residential buildings in that area. It is unknown exactly how many new students may be a part of the residential areas that are currently proposed but not approved by the Village of Arlington Heights within Districts 15 and 214.

Legislation known as the Mega Project Assessment Freeze and Payment Law typically referenced as the Mega Project was recently introduced in the Illinois General Assembly as SB 1350 and now HB 3565. The legislation would amend primarily the Property Tax Code to create a development incentive for any company seeking Mega Project status but immediately benefitting the redevelopment of the current Arlington Park International Racecourse with a proposed Bears football stadium and mixed-use development area.

This new proposed Mega Project legislation freezes the assessment value of the property for up to 40 years. Any improvements to the property or future new development on the property for up to 40 years would not generate any new taxes received by the district. The first year could be a frozen valuation of the property on vacant land.

This freeze on the property taxes for up to 40 years allows for tax certainty for the company during development and in return the company pays what is called a “special payment” in addition to the frozen valuation of property taxes. The special payment is then divided among all taxing bodies at the tax rate of the first year of the mega project.

The legislation is currently written so that the special payment details are an individual agreement between solely the company and the local municipality.

Though it is anticipated that the current language of the bill will change over time, the attachment to the agenda details a comparison of current language of the bill compared to a TIF.

It is unknown whether the Bears Organization plans on proposing the entire property as a Mega Project or having some portions as part of a TIF. New TIF legislation – SB 1391 - has been sponsored by Senator Gillespie along with the Mega Project Legislation that she sponsored.

The recommendation for the hiring of a joint lobbyist group to represent the three school districts is to ensure the interests of the school districts is written in the legislation, if the legislation is being considered for approval.

Any TIF or Mega Project Legislation involves freezing or controlling the amount of taxes that a public school district can collect even as the value of the property increases. These legislative decisions then have an effect on school districts for decades into the future.

Economic development is a vital component of all of our villages and school districts recognize and support that development. The school districts are asking that when it comes to freeing tax payments and assessment evaluations, the school districts must have a say in the decision making as public schools and our tax payers are directly affected by these decisions.

The current Mega Project legislation designates the tax and special payment decisions to be made by the Village of Arlington Heights and the Bears Organization. Therefore, the three school district taxing bodies which includes all the communities in District 211 are not protected when property tax decisions are made that can be in place for up to 40 years.

At the February 16 Board of Education meeting, the will of the Board was that any action regarding a lobbyist contain the name of the recommended firm and preferably that District 211 be able to join Districts 15 and 214 in collaborating through one lobbyist if possible.

On Friday, February 17, Districts 15 and 214 entered into an engagement agreement with Cozen O'Connor Public Strategies, and it was agreed, pending District 211 Board action on February 21, that District 211 could join in the engagement agreement made with District 15 and District 214 with Cozen O'Connor Public Strategies via an addendum naming District 211 as the additional third district to the agreement.

As stated in the attachment to the agenda, the scope of representation by Cozen O'Connor Public Strategies will include state government relations and advice and lobbying services in connection with state legislation that affects the school districts. This is reflected specifically in the recommended action tonight.

Cozen O'Connor Public Strategies will work to ensure that the three Districts' interests and funding are protected in connection with state legislation concerning mega project developments, TIF district reforms and the related impact on public school financing. The lobby services will include, but are not limited to, identifying key stakeholders, including state and local elected officials and staff; develop and implement a government affairs strategy; advocacy at the Illinois General Assembly and Governor's Office; communicate regularly as directed by all Districts; and work cooperatively with all Districts' Boards of Education, staff and allies.

The engagement of Cozen O'Connor is for one year at a fee of \$9,000 per month or \$3,000 per District per month with the option to cancel at any time with 30 days written notice. It is estimated that the engagement would last approximately four to five months.

It is a powerful voice when the two largest high school districts in the State and their common elementary school district are all asking for the same support and changes in the legislation that is currently being considered in direct connection to the Bears development project. My thanks to Interim Superintendent Ken Arndt and Superintendent Laurie Heinz for their open lines of communication as the three school districts are navigating this situation.”

The following Board Members made comments regarding approval to retain Cozen O'Connor Public Strategies to provide state government relations advice and lobbying services in relation to the Mega-Project PILOT Legislation, related TIF reform and public school finance impacts: Mr. Dombrowski, Mr. Cramer, Ms. Cavill, Mrs. Klimkowicz and Mr. Bradley.

After discussion, a roll call vote was held with the following results:

Aye: Steven Rosenblum
Kimberly Cavill
Peter Dombrowski
Curtis Bradley
Mark Cramer
Anna Klimkowicz

Nay: None

The motion carried 6-0.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board of Education, President Klimkowicz thereupon declared the meeting adjourned at 5:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary, District 211

President, District 211