

August 14, 1969

Minutes of the special meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Skokie Public Library held at 5:30 p.m. August 14, 1969, in the Lecture Room.

Members present: Howard Hummer, Diana Hunter, Donald Kraft, Richard Lindberg, Selma Pötty and Rabbi Karl Weiner, Miss Mary Radmacher, Chief Librarian.

Also present: James W. Hammond, architect, Bernard Kaplan and Jerold Panas of Jerold Panas and Partners, Inc.

Copies of the Referendum Study made by Jerold Panas and Partners, Inc. were distributed. Discussion followed. Mr. Bernard Kaplan stated a section of the report has been withheld which had to do with some review of the most recent census figures. There has been an increasing number of young couples coming into Skokie. Certain median age figures could suggest possible danger problems. There is a co-relation between referendum rejection and retirement years. Skokie is a very unique community in many respects. It is important to be sure of what goes into our statement of facts. He stated, "If we accept the basic recommendations of this report, we will need all kinds of feedback on voters' sentiment - how to divide on income and educational background, the ethnic edges, etc. We will need to know about the community characteristics and try to explain the campaign and consider strategy. You will have questions, but the recommendation I would like to emphasize is that the date which was suggested of October 21 be advanced to the first or second voting date of December. We think that the referendum might have a better chance in the spring - late April or May. The urgency of needs makes this unreasonable and the anticipation cultivated cannot wait. A number of very essential steps to both inform the voters and organize citizens committees sufficient to know that this referendum has been won two weeks before going to the polls cannot be done if the referendum is held in October. There would be insufficient time to do the job as we would like to do it. We feel the report includes a sufficient sample of some of the expressions from the people of the community to project a real picture. Because there is a sub-

stantial division between some of these people, we have a big selling job to do. The report suggests there is a level of opinion information and some misinformation with respect to the library and the problems it has. To correct this is part of Panas' job. We really are not aware of any community anywhere in the country that cares more for a library, the appearance and services than Skokie. It is above the national average in its feeling about the Library. So, we must put the story across that the Library is in jeopardy. If this can be built up and believed, we do not think there will be much of an organized opposition. The real problem is to convert what people believe about the Library into votes out of the threat that they may lose it. There will be a cultivation of a public mood. Out of this will come not the passage of this referendum but the groundwork for clearer understanding. If we go beyond the study, our role is not only organizing and helping to guide the referendum itself but also in helping to train key citizens and volunteers for staff. A citizens organization as we have in mind is not several thousands of people to sit around the table for discussion but a large number of people who will make a commitment for the referendum - a citizens committee unique by those who belong to it and therefore give witness and help when the vote is cast."

Mr. Panas said that he found in the study no organized situation now; only one man who said he will personally help the revolt against it and Mr. Panas hopes to convert him.

Rabbi Weiner stated that after examining the list of persons interviewed he was puzzled - still did not know who is the power in this community and who are the opinion makers and who makes whom go to vote. He said that if the Library is going for a referendum it is hoped it will be voted in by its friends - but very few of the names listed as interviewed are the Library's friends. Mr. Kaplan answered that the men on their staff are good listeners and able to detect reactions and opinions. The Library's friends happen to be for this referendum. School people had the information about any upcoming referendum. He also said that they found very little sense of keen urgency or real need to pass the Library

referendum but also found not one single case of a hardliner "again-er." We have a tremendous job of attitude directing ahead of us.

Mrs. Petty's appraisal was that most of the people on the list were the sort that will not do any work. It is the little home owner that should be contacted.

Mr. Jerold Panas stated that, as far as the people who were interviewed, it was necessary to start somewhere but also they did not get to see everyone they would like to have interviewed. Also, they were trying to raise some money for the campaign and some of those interviewed were for that purpose. These are the people in the community who initiate and get things done. There is an inherent respect and love for the Library. As of now there is no fervent desire to do this job since the chances are better in December. December is clear of everything. One last thing about the list, it is only a means to take the first step and we think it served its purpose."

Rabbi Weiner said that the report made the Library Board realize a few things - this is the worst time to have a referendum yet we must have it; that in contrast to the schools the Library does not have the natural backing of the PTA; opinion in this community is tremendously important; and we know there are certain areas in Skokie from which we can expect a negative response. He stated that he was interested in one item - the Fine Arts concept. Here he saw one group with a vested interest, but the report shows that among the negative replies specifically the statement is made "but not for the Fine Arts."

Mr. Panas said that what he is trying to determine is where is the strategy and what is it?

Mr. Kaplan said, "We are going ahead with the referendum and hope to suggest by implication we are to work as consultants in your behalf - therefore we should suggest the strategy." Mr. Panas said, "What we are going to suggest doing now should be heard without reference to using us." Mr. Kaplan said that he thought we have to consider the kinds of things in terms of a number, and seemingly

conceive of a calendarization and scheduling with some sort of a chart that gives a graphic picture of a whole campaign strategy laid out like a war room. He said, "We have to conceive of a great many details but I would like to concentrate on the major commitments. There are so many related activities and functions such as a basic fact sheet and folder. Right now we need to talk about what it is going to take, such as work, people attitude and mechanics to getting people to vote. In terms of strategy, what we are talking about is an organized citizens library committee, with an organizational structure that gives it the predictability of success it has to have. We must have a functioning citizens committee whose reputation is sufficient to reach into all of these areas discussed. Such a committee must have leadership. It will have to handle a myriad of details and have people who do leg work. It will contain all of the ingredients of a long-time political organization. Much material will be needed, mailing and distribution pieces; a speakers bureau; people who are volunteers; a list of voters; and people who will quickly inform us of any unfavorable reactions. Some testing of mailing pieces or hand distribution pieces will be done - in other words some feedback. No matter how any campaign is conducted, it bears the basic responsibility of being the gauge and must stay in the background. We think the kind of leadership has to be the sort that can imply interest to win enthusiasm in the beginning, not on the basis of the story of the library but on the basis of the fact that ----- . In terms of strategy, do not know what will be used but must have a corps of people to follow through to see that the actual vote takes place. Before people get located in a negative position it will be very important to pick off this kind of danger through some sort of endorsement by the leaders. Must begin by finding the right kind of leadership then quickly develop the story and bring this together in graphic scenes in an exciting way that really swings." He continued by saying, "We must have the best leadership we can find in Skokie and best staff of working volunteers to ring door bills and get the vote out."

Mr. Panas said, "There are a couple of bad factors - (1) you lost a referendum and cannot afford to lose another. We do not want you to lose it again so our

plan is not to just get through but get through in a big way. We think it is important for Skokie and doubly important for the library but, in addition to winning the referendum, we want to build a group of friends to count on over the years. As a result of the work we do in getting ready for the referendum, we will turn over a group or army of workers. (2) The fact that this is both a bond issue and tax levy, and (3) you do not want to go through all of this again - in other words, let's win it and do the job. It is our judgment there will be 4,000 to 5,000 "no" votes. There are further complicating factors this year, namely, the taxpayers revolt. There is a lot going against us. We ought to have a citizens committee or a group of 'yes' votes that will constitute 'yes' votes. This is the campaign strategy - how do we get these votes? We are not press agents - we mobilize people - we organize people - we stimulate people to do things. We do some good folders and get things in the newspaper but you don't win the referendum through the newspaper and so it is possible the strategy, in our campaign, will be to develop an organization in Skokie to be sure of the 5,000 to 6,000 'yes' votes. We try to determine who are really members of the Library Club, who is our public and those are the ones on whom we put our ammunition. It is easier to get a 'yes' vote to the poll than a 'no.' A calendar is established and followed up; group meetings; letters go out; we do something to make it happen on time. There is busy work."

Mr. Kraft said that everything that has been said up to this point we know. We think we know how to do everything but our difficulty is we do not have time. He said, "My question is - what is your role? Do you assign a highly competent person to this job in the Library?" Mr. Panas said, "We make those things happen which have to happen to go on to winning the campaign. We are recommending that our services be used in your program. It is one way of assuring success. The big question is - could you do it on your own?"

Mr. Panas said, "On a campaign program we would assign a senior manager and the whole program would be his responsibility - to work with a group like this through the Board in terms of what is policy. He must use you and work with you but the complete direction of management is his, as is the scheduling and strategy."

There would be a full-time director of the job. In this particular situation he would be on the case or job here a minimum of eight weeks or possibly ten. There are a number of things that will be needed that a firm such as Panas can provide. You may collect the picture of what has to be done but how it is done up is another thing. If he is there with a schedule in front of him, he sees that all functions and agreed on tasks are carried out. We do not have or want to rely in the campaign on any one person. One of the things you do not know - what is the over-riding issue - we do not think it is the library building you are going to merchandise. There is a great deal of pride in the library - the question is how to turn that around into a 'yes' vote - how is all of that put into the package? What is the over-riding issue or burning questions - and then it must be dignified and made very appropriate."

Rabbi Weiner asked, "How is it determined who comes here - what resident director is put on the scene?" The answer was that Mr. Panas determines this, and he will be someone who will fit in the community. Mr. Panas also said, "The leadership will have to start with the Board, not for a chairman, but the Board will be involved - public statements must be made, some must address groups, some must address envelopes and all be willing to work. There will be regular meetings - at least weekly and once this thing goes up, nothing holds back the steam."

Mr. Kraft asked, "What is the charge?" Mr. Panas said that in his judgment it looks like the Library will be spending somewhere between \$4,000 to \$5,000 for those things which are part of the Library's expense, such as folders, postage for mailing, extra telephone and posters. He said that all of the local items will be approved by the Board. Mr. Panas said, "For Panas' service - the Board will spend between \$8,000 to \$10,000. The Library will be charged only for the time Panas Company is in service."

Mrs. Hunter asked Mr. Panas if the Skokie Public Library Board could enter into a contract with him on the same basis as the North Shore Junior Collège had with their public relations people of paying the entire contracted amount if the referendum is successful and one-third of that amount if it fails. Mr. Panas

replied, "We were invited to bid on that job and withdrew. We think there is a question of lack of professionalism in this. We give you something which is the best possible effort to get the job done. We think if at any point you feel our people are less than effective, doing less than the very best whatever, then we should be told and something can be done about it."

Mr. Panas requested that the news media be left out of any mention of his firm. Mr. Panas and Mr. Kaplan retired from the meeting. Mr. Hammond also left the meeting.

Rabbi Weiner addressed the members of the Board and said the special meeting was called to consider the report by the Panas organization and to receive their verbal report which has been done; also to consider the possibility of engaging Jerold Panas & Partners, Inc. or some other public relations firm. First, we must make a selection of the firm and, secondly, decide whether we want to consider their recommendation of the change of the referendum date. Motion by Mr. Kraft seconded by Mr. Hummer.

Motion: That the Skokie Public Library Board of Directors hire Jerold Panas and Partners, Inc. to handle the promotion for the Library referendum.

Discussion followed. On roll call the voting was: Howard Hummer, yes; Donald Kraft, yes; Mrs. Petty, yes; Mrs. Hunter, no; Richard Lindberg, no. Motion carried.

Rabbi Weiner stated a contract will have to be made. Mr. Kraft pointed out that it should be very clear on the point that if we do not go the route we are not liable.

Mr. Hummer made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Kraft.

Motion: To remove any previous motions from the records for a referendum date for increased tax levy or expansion of the library and that a date of December 9, 1969 be set at this time.

All ayes.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m. on motion by Mr. Hummer.