

**NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 203
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

August 19, 2024

**New Trier Township High School
7 Happ Road, Room C234
Northfield, IL 60093**

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A **Regular Meeting** of the Board of Education of New Trier Township High School District 203, Cook County, Illinois was held at New Trier High School – Northfield Campus, 7 Happ Road, in Room C234 on Monday, August 19, 2024, at 6:30 p.m.

Members Present

Mr. Avik Das
Ms. Jean Hahn, President
Ms. Courtney McDonough
Ms. Sally Pofcher
Ms. Sally Tomlinson, Vice President

Administrators Present

Dr. Paul Sally, Superintendent
Dr. Christopher Johnson, Associate Superintendent
Dr. Joanne Panopoulos, Asst. Supt. for Special Ed and Student Services
Mr. Peter Tragos, Asst. Supt. for Curriculum & Instruction
Mrs. Denise Dubravec, Principal – Winnetka Campus/Assistant Supt.
Mr. Paul Waechtler, Principal – Northfield Campus

Members Absent

Ms. Kimberly Alcantara
Mr. Keith Dronen

Also Present

Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications; Dr. Michael Marassa, Chief Technology Officer; Dr. Renee Zoladz, Director of Human Resources; Mr. Jim Maile, Director of Physical Plant Services; Ms. Molly Lombardi, Social Studies Department Faculty and Teachers' Association President; Mr. Jon Lepeska, Math Department Faculty; Ms. Kelly Breiner, Science Department Faculty; Mr. Mike Hill, Technology Department, Mr. Jeff Bailey, Technology Department; Ms. Lindsey Ruston, Board of Education Secretary; students; members of the press and community.

BUSINESS MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER – 5:30 p.m. – C234

Ms. Hahn called the Regular Meeting of August 19, 2024, of the Board of Education to order at 5:30 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present, except for Ms. Alcantara and Mr. Dronen. Ms. Hahn asked for a motion to move to Closed Session. Mr. Das moved that the Board of Education adjourn to closed session for the purpose of the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees, specific individuals who serve as independent contractors, or specific volunteers of the District or legal counsel for the District, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee, a specific individual who serves as an independent contractor, or a volunteer of the District or against legal counsel for the District to determine its validity; the placement of individual students in special education programs and other matters relating to individual students; and litigation, when an action against, affecting or on behalf of the particular District has been filed and is pending before a court or administrative tribunal, or when the District finds that an action is probable or imminent, in which case the basis for the finding shall be recorded and entered into the closed meeting minutes. Ms. Tomlinson seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. McDonough, Mr. Das, Ms. Pofcher, Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Hahn

NAY: none

ABSENT: Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Dronen

The motion passed.

II. CLOSED SESSION – 5:30 p.m. – A201A

III. BUSINESS MEETING – Open Session – 6:30 p.m. – C234

Ms. Hahn called the Regular Meeting of August 19, 2024, of the Board of Education to order at 6:31 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present except for Ms. Alcantara and Mr. Dronen.

IV. Minutes and Reports

***A. Regular Meeting of July 15, 2024 (open and closed session) and the Special Meeting of August 4, 2024 (open and closed session)**

Ms. Hahn asked for any comments or adjustments on the minutes of the Regular Meeting of July 15, 2024 (open and closed session) and the Special Meeting of August 4, 2024 (open and closed session). There were no requests for changes to the minutes. Ms. McDonough moved, and Mr. Das seconded the motion that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of July 15, 2024 (open and closed session) and the Special Meeting of August 4, 2024 (open and closed session). Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. McDonough, Ms. Pofcher, Ms. Tomlinson, Mr. Das, Ms. Hahn

NAY:

ABSENT: Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Dronen

The motion passed.

B. Report from Campus Principals and FOIA Report

Mr. Paul Waechtler, Principal for the Northfield Campus, shared the following student events and program updates from that campus:

- He welcomed the Board to the beginning of another school year and noted it was great to have staff back.
- He shared pictures of the construction work that took place over the summer, particularly concrete work and landscaping. Mr. Waechtler thanked PPS for their work all summer long, but particularly the last couple of weeks getting ready for school.
- Fall athletics are underway with students and coaches which is bringing good energy to campus.
- Mr. Waechtler recently presented to freshman transfer parents while their children met with former transfer students. They toured the building and got to know one another.
- Mr. Mark Howard and Ms. Sue Ellen Haak, Class of 2028 Adviser Chairs, met with new advisers to help them get ready for the start of school. They also met with senior helpers as they prepared to welcome students.

Mrs. Denise Dubravec, Principal for the Winnetka Campus/Assistant Superintendent, shared the following student events and program updates from the Winnetka campus:

- Mr. Jason Boumstein, Applied Arts Department Chair, has hosted a STEM camp for the past 11 years. This year, 100 students between the 5th and 8th grades participated. New Trier students helped with the camp and were mentors to the younger students.
- Mrs. Dubravec hosted a leadership retreat for her Winnetka Campus Leadership Team. Similar retreats were held for the Northfield Campus Leadership Team and the Administrative Team. She shared the three goals that she and her team are going to work on this school year.
- Mrs. Dubravec hosted a welcome barbeque on August 19th for Transfer families. There are over 45 transfer students joining New Trier plus five exchange students. Most of the transfer students came from within the state this year. She thanked the New Trier Parents Association for their work on this event. Student Ambassadors took parents on a tour, while members of the Newbies Club took the students on a tour and did activities together. Both groups then came back together for lunch.
- Today was Opening Institute Day for faculty and staff. Mr. Phil Boyte, known for his work on transforming school culture, kicked off the day. Mrs. Dubravec spoke to the idea of people first, professionals second that he presented on. He also met with coaches and sponsors of New Trier's extracurricular programs. Mrs. Dubravec thanked Ms. Stacy Kolack, Student Activities Coordinator at Winnetka, Dr. Tim Hayes, Student Activities Coordinator at Northfield, Ms. Steph Gamauf, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty, and Ms. Kate Goodman, Kinetic Wellness Department Faculty who saw Mr. Boyte at a conference over the summer. After lunch, there were speeches by Ms. Hahn, Dr. Sally, and the association presidents.

Dr. Johnson gave the FOIA report, noting that there have been two requests since the last Board meeting. One regarding mailing equipment and another requesting a copy of a contract. All have been closed.

V. Communications

Ms. Hahn invited anyone from the audience who wished to address the Board to come forward and fill out a yellow communications request form and give it to Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications. Ms. Hahn stated that due to the number of issues which must be considered at the Board Meeting, commenters should limit their statement to three minutes per Board Policy 2-230. Likewise, if a comment requires a response, either Ms. Hahn or an administrator will contact the commenter in the days following the meeting. Questions and comments should address the Board of Education as a whole only. No comments should be directed to an individual Board member, audience, principals, or other staff members. No complaints against individual employees are allowed during a Board of Education Meeting. She also asked that the audience refrain from clapping or a response of any kind regarding people's comments. There was one request for public comment.

1. Ms. Lila Hernandez, senior, spoke about adding American Sign Language (ASL) classes at New Trier.

Ms. Hahn thanked Ms. Hernandez for her email earlier in the summer and for sharing her junior theme with the Board. She noted it was impressive work and that the Board always appreciates hearing from students.

VI. Special Orders of Business

A. **2024-2025 School Year Kickoff**

Ms. Hahn shared the following statement prior to the 2024-2025 school year kickoff presentation:

The start of a new school year is traditionally an exciting, optimistic time, when we reconvene as a community- hopefully refreshed and rejuvenated from the summer, ready to commit our collective energies toward the opportunities, as well as the inevitable challenges, that lie ahead. As in the past, this year holds the same promise as we eagerly resume our continuing efforts to teach our students how to think wisely, converse civilly, and engage conscientiously in a world of diverse ideas. Yet this year, our early enthusiasms are also particularly vulnerable to disruptive pressures that likely will be brought to bear by divisive local, national, and global events. So in anticipation of the coming year, the Board would like to take this opportunity to ask every member of the New Trier community to reaffirm the commitment we made to our students and to ourselves, in 2020 when we adopted the following Critical Thinking and Civil Discourse Statement:

New Trier Township High School believes that a fundamental aspect of our mission is to develop critical thinkers who can navigate a complex world through civil discourse, respectful inquiry, engaged listening and open consideration of multiple perspectives. Key to fulfilling this charge is the cultivation of a school environment in which all students feel welcome and free to explore a wide range of ideas. Our firm commitment to this principle reflects not only New Trier's obligation to prepare our students for their future but our belief that the open exchange of ideas lies at the core of a democratic society in which individuals are accountable for their actions and treat one another with dignity, compassion, and respect.

Dr. Sally then began the presentation with comments on supporting students during complex world events. He shared three goals that the school works towards when events occur. He then explained how the school has and will continue to allocate its time, efforts, and resources. After further comments, Dr. Sally shared that except in rare circumstances when public matters directly impact the school's core mission, he will not be issuing public statements which may feel supportive to some but alienate others. He shared concluding comments around this topic.

Dr. Sally displayed the various areas of focus for the new school year as well as the tentative timing of when the topics would be presented to the Board. Then the following administrators, Dr. Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Mrs. Dubravec, and Dr. Johnson provided details on several of these areas. Dr. Tragos shared details about the next phase of Future Programming – Research and Development while Dr. Sally shared about the District's belonging and equity work. He mentioned the Staff Belonging Council led by Mrs. Dubravec, Dr. Chimille Tillery, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, and equity liaisons, Ms. Kristan Kenney and Mr. Alex Zilka. Mrs. Dubravec shared information on the graduating class teams including when formal presentations to the Board will take place as well as the work that took place over the summer to have a strong start to the school year. Mrs. Dubravec then shared about a communication protocol and how that will support students while building student advocacy. It can be found on the website and in several of the District's publications. Lastly, she shared details around student voice such as the Student Belonging Council and other ways that students can share their input. Dr. Sally then spoke to parent/community engagement including the restart of the Parent/Community Advisory Group. Initiatives were described in other written documents for Finance, Facilities, and Human Resources.

Dr. Johnson shared that there are 17 new faculty members this year, and he acknowledged the work of the administration, human resources leadership, and department leaders for their role in selecting these new teachers. He also acknowledged Dr. Tillery and Dr. Aileen Heidkamp, Staff Development Coordinator, for their leadership on a new teacher induction program that will support these teachers as they begin their career at New Trier. The District has also hired 23 support staff members. Dr. Sally then invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Tomlinson, noting Dr. Sally's comments about how the school will handle complex world events, shared that over the past several years it seems that school leaders have increasingly been expected to weigh in on local, state, and global events. From her perspective, many of these events are highly nuanced and complicated. She shared the importance of embracing the principles that Ms. Hahn spoke about regarding civil discourse and critical thinking statement. Ms. Tomlinson noted her support for the District's continued focus on its mission as an academic institution and how it determines the best way to meet the educational and social emotional needs of its students and staff. Ms. Tomlinson shared her appreciation for the thought put into this. She is also looking forward to everything that is to come this school year.

Mr. Das, addressing Mrs. Dubravec, noted that there is a logo that spoke of a student-centered approach to bringing out a student's advocacy voice with various elements around it. He shared how he was trying to understand the relationship between the logo and the communication protocol. He thought it was compelling to hear how infrastructure is being created that supports a young person's voice and brings supportive elements to align with each other relative to that voice. Mr. Das shared he was unclear about the extent to which trusted peers of the child are part of how that student is finding expression. After additional comments, he spoke to the logo itself, noting it feels like there is a critical implied component of not only the adults that are surrounding a given student and their voice but recognizing that that voice comes perhaps right alongside significant peer influence. The logo is compelling in bringing people back to the student-centered approach, but Mr. Das noted that it seems there is no student-centered approach that is absent also the influence of peers. Therefore, the school would want to make room for that visibly in its protocols and support network. Dr. Sally shared comments including that the school does hope that the voice of the student is the one that is heard, but he also knows there are times when students are not ready and how that might happen when a peer is the one to help. The other hope is that the people who students are officially interacting with will be the first places they go. Mr. Das shared additional comments that if space could be created in the structure for this, it may resonate with youth. Dr. Sally and Mrs. Dubravec both shared their appreciation for Mr. Das's comments.

Ms. Hahn noted her appreciation of the efforts to include community members in these conversations. She then noted last year's presentations from students and inquired if they would be brought in on these various reports so the Board could hear from them. Mrs. Dubravec shared that student presentations would center on how the *Be Brave, Be Kind, Be Proud* initiative is working and how it is being executed. She also noted that there will be a survey at the end of each athletic season or performing arts performance so students can provide feedback on how the school is helping them navigate their leadership or role within a peer group. Dr. Sally added that the Belonging Council will be a group that the Board hears from directly.

Ms. Pofcher shared her appreciation for the bright light put on critical thinking and inquiry, civil discourse and belonging. For what the school does as an institution and the human beings it is trying to help in their development while not shying away from the issues that are hard, but the way that they are tackled together is the making of the adults in the community.

Ms. McDonough inquired if some of the same themes that are used in leadership training for the SALT (Student-Athlete Leadership Training) program will be incorporated. Mrs. Dubravec replied that students are receiving training, but also went on to say that she wants them to be able to share some deeper thinking about the challenges and the gifts of being part of a team and leading it. She said that the various types of programs the school has will be shared.

B. Facilities Project Updates: Winnetka Campus North and Tower Building, 15 Year Plan Summer 2025, and Winnetka Campus Solar Project

Dr. Johnson presented updates on the following facilities projects: Winnetka Campus North and Tower Building, 15 Year Plan Summer 2025, and the Winnetka Campus Solar Project. Planning has occurred over the past year. He shared various framework categories, adopted in 2019, that have guided the 15-year facilities work. Next, Dr. Johnson provided an overview of the work scheduled for the Winnetka North and Tower Building. It includes work on portions of the first and second floors as the third floor has been completely rehabbed. Dr. Johnson then highlighted the project's key features. He shared that the project is estimated to cost \$35.3 million which he further

explained including the project's funding sources. The project will take place over three summers so as to minimize the impact on staff and students.

Next, Dr. Johnson shared details about the 15 Year Plan Summer 2025 projects which includes the Winnetka campus water main replacement and related systems, the Northfield campus water main, and other capital projects. These projects focus on behind-the-scenes work that is necessary. He explained the funding for these projects.

Finally, Dr. Johnson then shared information about the Winnetka campus Solar Array project. After concluding comments, Dr. Johnson invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Hahn acknowledged all the work that has gone into planning, including conversations with the Facilities Steering Committee and the Finance Committee. Dr. Johnson recognized the Physical Plant Services (PPS) leadership team, including Mr. Jim Maile, Director of PPS, who was in attendance. He also thanked Pepper Construction, Mr. Steve Cashman with Cashman Stahler Group, Wight and Company, Mrs. Dubravec and her team, Mr. Jason English, Science Department Chair, and his faculty as well as the Finance and Facilities Steering Committees.

Ms. McDonough shared, that while walking her daughter's schedule with her, it was a reminder of the huge impact this work will have every day on students and their learning. Dr. Johnson shared additional comments around this.

Ms. Tomlinson summarized a few headlines – construction costs are going up and the District is coming off a large capital project, however, if the District can afford to, the thought is to do this work now as it will only cost the District more in the future. She noted it is also a competitive time to borrow money, so if that can be done, the District can service the debt out of its existing reserves and still maintain its six-month floor, and it will not exhaust the DSEB capacity going forward. So, it feels like the District has the green light to address the 1930s and 1950s portions of the school. Dr. Johnson confirmed this and shared additional comments. The two also discussed the solar array project.

Ms. Hahn noted that careful planning and forecasting allows the District to do more than if it were not as methodical about chunking out the work.

VII. Administrative Items

A. Treasurer's Report for July 2024

Dr. Johnson presented the Treasurer's Report for July 2024, the first month of the fiscal year. There are significant receipts for local property taxes of over \$33 million. He noted that this is the earliest distribution in recent memory. Dr. Johnson went on to thank his colleagues at Cook County for their continued partnership as they upgraded their systems. The District has been able to lock in investments at higher rates both on its short- and long-term investments.

B. Financial Report for July 2024

Dr. Johnson presented the Financial Report for July 2024. The tentative budget for operating revenue is 4.27% higher than last year. Any funds attributed to last year that are received by August 31st will be recognized in that year.

Operating expenditures for July were \$6.5 million or 32% higher than last year. He noted that one month does not lead to a variance due to the timing of large invoices at the beginning of the year.

The tentative budget for operating expenditures is 5% higher than last year. The report also has results from the last fiscal year as it compares to last year's actuals. As was the case with the June reports, revenue and expenses will both change as the District makes year-end adjustments such as accruing expenses, recording receivables, and deferring revenue to the next fiscal year. The audit process typically includes these additional adjustments. The financial results from last year look positive with revenue over budget and expenditures under budget. The annual financial report will be presented in October.

VIII. Consent Agenda

- Bill List for Period, July 1 - 31, 2024
- Personnel Report (Appointments, Changes of Status, Resignations, Stipends - Appointments, and Stipends - Separation)
- Cashman Stahler Group for 10-Year Health Life Safety Audit
- Board action on uniform grievance complaint appeal
- Board action on uniform grievance complaints

- Approval of the Winnetka Campus North and Tower Building Continued Renovation
- Contract for Architectural Services with Cashman Stahler Group for Winnetka Campus North and Tower Building Renovation
- Contract with Pepper Construction for Construction Management Services for Winnetka Campus North and Tower Building Renovation
- Approval of 15 Year Plan Summer 2025 Projects
- Contract with Performance Services for Solar at the Winnetka Campus

Ms. Hahn inquired if any members wanted to pull an item off the Consent Agenda, no one chose to do so. Ms. Pofcher moved that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda, which includes: Bill List for Period, July 1 - 31, 2024; Personnel Report (Appointments, Changes of Status, Resignations, Stipends – Appointments, and Stipends – Separation); Cashman Stahler Group for 10-Year Health Life Safety Audit and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreement; Based upon and after the Board’s consideration of the appeal filed in connection with uniform grievance complaint 1 made on March 4, 2024, that the Board of Education affirm the outcome reached by Dr. Zoladz, and direct the Board President to follow-up in writing; Based upon and after the Board’s consideration of the uniform grievance complaints 2-5 filed on March 4, 2024, that the Board finds no violation of law or policy, and directs the Board President to follow-up in writing; Approval of the next phase of the North and Tower Building renovation at the Winnetka Campus; Contract for Architectural Services with Cashman Stahler Group for Winnetka Campus North and Tower Building Renovation and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreement; Contract with Pepper Construction for Construction Management Services for Winnetka Campus North and Tower Building Renovation and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreement; The 15 Year Plan Summer 2025 projects as presented; and The Board of Education authorize the issuance of a Letter of Intent with Performance Services as the District’s qualified provider and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute a Guaranteed Energy Savings contract with Performance Services subject to final attorney review. Ms. Tomlinson seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Pofcher, Ms. Tomlinson, Mr. Das, Ms. McDonough, Ms. Hahn

NAY: none

ABSENT: Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Dronen

The motion passed.

IX. Board Member Reports

Mr. Das meets with the **TrueNorth Leadership Council** on Wednesday.

X. Calendar of Events & Board Members’ Requests for Staff Research and Future Agenda Items

Dr. Sally highlighted the following events:

- Committees that Board members are liaisons for are starting back up next month.
- Athletics started last week, with some competitions already underway and others beginning soon. The first home football game is on August 30th at 7:00 p.m.
- Performing Arts will have some events starting in late September.
- The first day of student attendance is this Wednesday, August 21st.
- There will be no school on Monday, September 2nd for Labor Day.
- The next Board meeting is Monday, September 16th.

Mrs. Dubravec shared that the New Trier Parents’ Association is hosting Trev Fest on September 28th at Clarkson Park in Northfield. Bands will perform and proceeds will benefit the New Trier Angel Fund. Trev Fest will run from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. and Stormy’s will be offering food for purchase.

Ms. Hahn inquired if there were any requests for staff research or future agenda items, of which there were none.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Das moved, and Ms. McDonough seconded the motion, to adjourn. Upon a voice vote being taken, all members indicated they were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lindsey Ruston, Secretary

Jean Hahn, President