

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

**November 13, 2023**

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

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, November 13, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.

**Members Present**

Ms. Kimberly Alcantara  
Mr. Avik Das  
Mr. Keith Dronen, President  
Ms. Jean Hahn, Vice President  
Ms. Courtney McDonough  
Ms. Sally Pofcher  
Ms. Sally Tomlinson

**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

**Also Present**

Dr. Michael Marassa, Chief Technology Officer; Dr. Renee Zoladz, Director of Human Resources; Mr. Jon Lepeska, Math Department Faculty and Education Association President; Ms. Gail Gamrath, Associate Principal – Northfield campus; Mr. Dan Paustian, Assistant Principal, Graduating Class Team 2027; Mr. Chris Mitchell, Associate Principal, Student Services; Ms. Sarah Struebing, Assistant Principal, Graduating Class Team 2025; Mr. Scott Williams, Assistant Principal, Graduating Class Team 2024; Ms. Trish Sheridan, Assistant Principal, Graduating Class Team 2026; Ms. Molly Lombardi, Social Studies Department Faculty; Mr. Paul Moretta, Social Studies Department Faculty; Ms. Julie Novak, Library Department Faculty; Mr. Leif Gamrath, Kinetic Wellness Department Faculty; Mr. Jeff Bailey, Technology Department; Mr. Eric Johnson, Technology Department; Mr. Mike Hill, Technology Department; Ms. Lindsey Ruston, Board of Education Secretary; members of the press and community.

**BUSINESS MEETING**

**I. CALL TO ORDER – 5:45 p.m. – C234**

Mr. Dronen called the Regular Meeting of November 13, 2023, of the Board of Education to order at 5:45 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present, except for Ms. Pofcher. Mr. Dronen 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 student disciplinary cases. Ms. Hahn seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Mr. Das, Ms. Hahn, Ms. McDonough, Ms. Tomlinson, Ms. Alcantara, Mr. Dronen

NAY: none

ABSENT: Ms. Pofcher

The motion passed.

**II. CLOSED SESSION – 5:45 p.m. – A201A**

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

Mr. Dronen called the Regular Meeting of November 13, 2023, of the Board of Education to order at 6:37 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present.

**IV. Minutes and Reports**

**\*A. Regular Meeting of October 16, 2023 (open and closed session)**

Mr. Dronen asked for any comments or adjustments on the minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 16, 2023 (open and closed session). There were no requests for changes to the minutes. Mr. Das moved, and Ms. Hahn

seconded the motion that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 16, 2023 (open and closed session). Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

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:

- Adviser Room Olympics have taken place for the last several years and is popular among students. The Olympics now take place during three quarters instead of just one with several events taking place. This quarter's events were Tug of War and Pumpkin Decorating.
- Ms. Lori Worth, Eighth Grade Transition Coordinator and Mr. Waechtler hosted a Private School Presentation for those families whose children attend private schools. About 80 people were in attendance to learn more about New Trier. One highlight was the three upperclassmen who answered questions from the families.
- The Academic Assistance Center (AAC) had over 1,800 visits in the first quarter, which is a record. Mr. Waechtler thanked Ms. Steph Moretta, AAC coordinator, and its tutors. Students have fallen into the habit of seeking help when needed, which is a great self-advocacy skill to have.
- Next, Mr. Waechtler shared about Freshman Success, which is part of the Annual Plan. The majority of this work is completed during first quarter. Freshman Success is comprised of explicit lessons that help students transfer successfully to New Trier. He thanked teachers and leaders for dedicating class time to these skills. Executive Functioning skills are focused on in English and math classes, while technology is focused on in science and social studies. The Kinetic Wellness department works on social emotional lessons and adviser room concentrates on behavior and safety. Finally, various departments take on a range of study skills like annotation and how to study for a test. A survey of adviser rooms was conducted, and results overall were very positive with over 90% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing with several statements such as they know how to use their Trevian Tracker or access resources. Mr. Waechtler shared some items to work on going forward such as executive functioning with an electronic medium and not just a paper one like the Trevian Tracker. Students also reported knowing how to do these things, but not always using them, the school needs to follow up in courses to encourage these habits.
- Mr. Waechtler thanked families for attending Parent-Teachers Conferences, noting that parents seem to like the software that is used for virtual conferences. He also thanked teachers for the time they dedicated to conferences.
- Finally, he wished the Board a happy Thanksgiving.

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

- She echoed comments from Mr. Waechtler regarding conferences, noting that parents shared comments about what they heard from teachers about their students as well as the time that teachers put into preparing for conferences. She noted her appreciation for the faculty's dedication.
- The monthly celebrations continue with Native American Heritage month. There are a variety of opportunities available during the month.
- The performances of *The Burial at Thebes* recently concluded. The Frosh-Soph musical is underway as well as other performing arts.
- The IGSS teachers took over 60 kids on a retreat last month, which allowed for further bonding and collaboration.
- She highlighted the Halloween celebrations that took place with faculty and staff dressing up as well as a pumpkin decorating contest.
- The New Trier orchestra and band festival was held on October 19<sup>th</sup>, while on October 26<sup>th</sup>, the school hosted the Township orchestra and band festival. This included incoming freshmen who were able to perform alongside New Trier students and was an opportunity for them to see the performance spaces. She thanked the music department for hosting.
- Fall sports have concluded. Boys' cross country won regionals and sectionals. Mr. Ben Crane, junior, won first in the sectional and third at state. Girls' volleyball won regional and sectional championships as well but lost during the super sectional. Boys' soccer are state champions, coached by Mr. Matt Ravenscraft, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty. Girls' swimming and diving finished second in state.

- New Trier Parents' Association Parent University hosted a presentation about eating disorders. Three medical professionals participated and there was a Q&A as well.
- Fall Athletic Signing Day recently took place. The principals' signing day was combined with the athletics one, so not only did this day include students who played on a New Trier team, but those students who did not, but are still going to play at the college level. There will also be a spring signing day for athletics and a separate celebration for those students in performing arts who will pursue that in college.
- Today, the school commemorated Veterans Day. Ms. Steph Gamauf, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty, and Student Council put the day together. Staff members who served were honored, along with family members of staff.
- The Art Department recently went to Pilsen to tour the National Mexican Museum of Art. They toured murals and spoke with some of the artists who painted them.

Mr. Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, shared highlights from the Illinois Report Card. New Trier's academic performance is very high and is highest among its peer schools in the state. The school report card collects data from both academic and non-academic factors using data from the 22-23 school year. The SAT data is from the class of 2023 who took the assessment in the spring of 2022. It shows how well students perform academically and how the District is progressing on a wide range of goals. The report card also includes a summative designation or a rating and is the descriptor about how a school is meeting the needs of all of its students. New Trier uses the data to identify areas of strength and improvement. This data is already being used by the school. There are eight indicators of student success, five academic ones that count for 75% of the summative designation. There are three that are non-academic and account for 25%. There were four areas where New Trier earned all the points possible, which included English Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science Proficiencies and Graduation Rate. In the remaining four areas, the school did not earn full points, but was still strong. Those areas included English Learner Progress to Proficiency, Chronic Absenteeism, Climate Survey, and 9<sup>th</sup>-Graders on Track to Graduate.

Next, Mr. Tragos shared highlights from English Language Arts or what is evidence-based reading and writing on the SAT for 11<sup>th</sup> grade. In 2022-2023, there was a nine-point increase from 2021-2022, putting the proficiency rate consistent with what it had been prior to the pandemic. The dip in scores in 2021-2022 was one that the District was attentive to early on, identifying targeted support that was needed for students. Working with teachers and leaders, the school made data-informed curriculum revisions. New Trier's proficiency rate of 80% is the highest in the state among non-selective enrollment high schools. Math highlights include a two-point increase from 2021-2022. The math department took a similar post-pandemic approach to the one that was taken for ELA. The 72% proficiency rate put New Trier third in the state among non-selective enrollment high schools. The science assessment is not an SAT category, but rather 11<sup>th</sup> graders take the Illinois Science Assessment, which is a stand-alone assessment. There was a 12-point increase over the past two years and at 83% is the ninth highest in the state among non-selective enrollment high schools.

Next, in an infographic, Mr. Tragos displayed the overall index score and summative designation of commendable. It is the second highest rating out of five. In previous years, New Trier's summative has been exemplary which is the highest rating. He shared the three criteria that make a school exemplary and commendable. The first two criteria for each are the same – there are no underperforming student demographic groups, and the school has a graduation rate of greater than 67%. The categories differ in that an exemplary school's index score must be in the top 10% of schools statewide. Mr. Tragos shared that there are a number of peer schools who were exemplary last year and are now commendable. For New Trier, the main reason for a lower index score was chronic absenteeism which was at 31% of our student body giving a weighted index of 3.9 out of 10. Mr. Tragos went on to recognize the good work and progress of the 66 high schools that are in the top 10% of the state, however, many of them have proficiency scores on academic indicators much lower than New Trier's. The question then becomes how a school with high academic performance be rated commendable. Mr. Tragos noted that it is like grading on a curve and only a certain number of schools can be in the top 10% and then when the weighted index scores are distributed, schools with high academic scores are not included. This "grading on a curve" is not the most accurate way to represent how schools are meeting their own benchmarks and the state's benchmarks. New Trier is in communication with key members of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), including the state superintendent, to advocate for an accountability metric that also recognizes the good work that spreads across more than 10% of those schools and how that can be reported to the state in a more accurate and fair way for all schools involved. All this information is used for continuous improvement and Mr. Tragos shared several ways it will be used to do so.

Dr. Johnson gave the FOIA report, noting that there have been five requests since the last Board meeting. One was regarding student records. Three were regarding payments for construction and one was regarding the bookstore.

### **Communications**

Mr. Dronen 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 Mr. Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. There was one request for public comment. He reminded the commenter of the three-minute limit.

1. Ms. Audrey Klein shared comments on science for the 25-26 school year.

## **VI. Special Orders of Business**

### **A. FY 23 Audit Report**

Dr. Johnson began the FY 23 audit report by introducing Mr. Scott Duenser, audit partner at the Wipfli accounting firm. He replaces Mr. Andy Mace, who has retired. The Wipfli firm has been the District's auditor for three fiscal years. The previous auditor, RSM, serves as the technical accounting consultant who assists in implementing new standards and drafting financial reports, so the District is fortunate to have two experienced teams of financial professionals assisting it in making sure that it reports accurate and fair financial information. Dr. Johnson acknowledged Mr. Myron Spiwak, Director of Business Services, and his staff for coordinating the audit process. Overall, the report shows that the financial health of the District is strong with revenues exceeding its budget and expenditures coming in under budget. Dr. Johnson will talk more about the specific results in the context of the 5-Year Plan in January.

Mr. Duenser and his team have been working closely with the Business Office over the past few months gathering data and completing audit procedures. They have also worked with RSM on reporting matters. Wipfli is substantially complete with their audit procedures and has reviewed, in detail, the financial statement report. A few housekeeping items remain before the final statement is issued. They will then work with the District to get it filed with the appropriate agencies and regulatory bodies. Mr. Duenser highlighted that the District issues the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR), which is the highest and most comprehensive financial reporting model that the District can issue. It is considered the gold standard in financial reporting. The report is also reviewed by the Illinois Association of School Business Officials (IASBO) in addition to the Government Financing Officers Association (GFOA) annually to ensure it is in compliance with reporting standards. The report for 2022 did receive the certificate of excellence from IASBO and the certificate of achievement from GFOA. It is anticipated that the report for 2023 will receive the same certificates.

Mr. Duenser highlighted the statements found in the back of the ACFR which has ten-year schedules of trend data. Referencing page 86 and the net position ten-year data, he shared that the net position is the overall equity of the District. It considers not only regular assets and liabilities, but also capital assets and long-term liabilities such as bonds and pension debt. It is a component of how healthy the District is, and, in his review, Mr. Duenser found that every year the District's financial position has been increasing. The only decline happens when the Governmental Accounting Standard Board issues a new statement and reporting model, usually involving adding debt. This was the case in 2018. This is a testament to how the finances are kept and run at the District.

Wipfli does not have any deficiencies to report this year. They will have the unmodified clean opinion similar to the prior years as well. Mr. Duenser thanked Mr. Spiwak for all of his work in answering questions in a timely manner and providing all necessary information. Mr. Duenser then invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Hahn inquired about the timing of getting the report filed and asked if it is typical that the Board would not have it at this meeting. Mr. Duenser noted that this has been an issue in the auditing world, specifically in Illinois school districts since Covid. With the increased standards that have been established, the reporting is more complex and requires more time to get done. Mr. Duenser also noted that post-Covid, the industry has seen many firms leave the school district reporting arena, which has put pressure on those who remain. He also had a conversation with the District's regulatory body, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) regarding issues of timing as well as deadlines moving forward. Mr. Duenser and his firm want to get these reports done as soon as they can, but there is a lot of compliance work and getting their own audit file cleaned up as every three years the firm is audited as part of a peer review standard. Dr. Johnson added that historically when the District was on a cash basis, it was easier to get the audit done quickly. Now being on an accrual basis, the District has two months to recognize revenues. When the final report is submitted in December, the District will still be two to three months ahead of many other school districts. The goal is to get the report done as fast and accurately as possible. Mr. Duenser provided further perspective. Ms. Hahn thanked Mr. Duenser for his work as well as that of the Business Office.

Mr. Dronen inquired what percentage of districts receive the top financial rating as New Trier did, to which Mr. Duenser replied that those who produce the ACFR, it is less than 10%, mostly likely closer to 5%. Mr. Dronen thanked Mr. Duenser for his report.

## **B. Attendance Update**

Dr. Joanne Panopoulos, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education and Student Services, began the update on attendance. She provided a timeline of this work noting that the need for the school to address attendance was shared at the February 2023 Board meeting. A representative school committee came together in the spring and met throughout the remainder of the school year. Outcomes from the committee included recommended practices and approaches in developing an attendance plan that encouraged a culture of connection, a sense of belonging, and increasing student attendance habits. At the June Board meeting, an update was provided on key elements, leveraging technology in a new way, aligning the work of the Graduating Class Teams (GCTs) structure, and the attendance policy. Dr. Panopoulos noted that there are significant improvements which are the result of the collective work of parents, students, teachers, advisers, and extracurricular sponsors and coaches. She went on to recognize the work of her colleagues: Mr. Chris Mitchell, Associate Principal, Student Services; Mr. Dan Paustian, Assistant Principal Class of 2027; Ms. Sarah Struebing, Assistant Principal Class of 2025; Mr. Waechtler; Ms. Gail Gamrath, Associate Principal – Northfield campus; Mr. Scott Williams, Assistant Principal Class of 2024; and Ms. Trish Sheridan, Assistant Principal Class of 2026.

Ms. Sheridan presented the agenda and began with attendance in school, noting that not only is attendance important because it can have a direct impact on academic achievement, but it also helps students in areas beyond this achievement. Students bring value to the school community. There are several factors that impact student attendance and addressing absenteeism needs a school-wide approach. Ms. Sheridan then reviewed the school-wide measures that were implemented such as the attendance handbook, increased communication, and other supportive measures. One of the most effective parts of the plan has been the enforcement of attendance and extracurricular participation. Taking attendance by half block has allowed the school to implement the policy with improved accuracy and integrity. Teachers also continue to nurture a culture of belonging in their classrooms as well as emphasize the importance of each student being in the classroom receiving direct instruction. Ms. Sheridan also noted that parent support has been outstanding.

Next, Ms. Sheridan defined chronically absent students as missing 10% or more of the school year. The first 50 days of last school year saw 24.1% of students chronically absent while the percentage for the first 50 days of this school year dropped to 8.5%. Students attending 95% or more of the first 50 days of school increased from 47.3% last year to 67.1% this year. Both of these numbers represent a significant improvement and accomplishment.

Ms. Gamrath shared anecdotal data, noting that she and Mr. Waechtler met with parents from the year groups via the New Trier Parents Association (NTPA). Parents like the structure provided and it made their children think about how their absence might impact their classmates. Parents also said that juniors and seniors are feeling this change more than the freshmen who do not know any differently. Ms. Gamrath also provided feedback from teachers and advisers noting that they see and feel the significant improvement in attendance this year. They have also shared that the support of the attendance office staff, who keep this info up to date, has been very helpful. Advisers note that the attendance policy helps empower them to work with their students. Feedback from adviser chairs was also shared, particularly about those students who need an attendance success plan. She shared that the student and parents meet with the adviser and adviser chair where different options and interventions are put in place. The school knows the stories of those students who are struggling with attendance.

Students shared in their feedback that test days last year felt unfair to those who showed up to take the test versus a student who stayed home and missed the test therefore having more time to prepare. Students also shared that they liked having a full classroom where they are able to see their friends. Finally, Ms. Gamrath provided the positive feedback from coaches and sponsors. In order for students to participate in extracurricular activities, they must be present for at least 50% of the day. More communication was also noted between students and their coaches and sponsors. Ms. Gamrath wrapped up by sharing that there are areas for growth such as improving the Sign In Sign Out procedures, clarifying the attendance thresholds, and continuing to monitor and application of the policy.

Mr. Williams shared next steps. The first is monitoring the sustainability and capacity of implementation. He displayed a graphic of the number of touchpoints that occur with the management of attendance by advisers, adviser chairs, and assistant principals. He went on to explain the tiered response process. This slide illustrated the volume of

work required to implement the tiered approach. The second is ensuring students maintain attendance standards in order to qualify for student leadership and program opportunities. Third, the school will continue to research and develop plans for special circumstances including students who have long-term absences to address their medical or social emotional needs as well as requests for unique opportunities. Finally, in planning for the 24-25 school year, the school will gather feedback from various constituencies and continued monitoring of the implementation of the procedures. Mr. Williams thanked all those involved including students, parents, advisers, teachers, adviser chairs, extracurricular sponsors and coaches, the Board, and administration. Mr. Williams then invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Alcantara noted she is excited and pleased to see these results. She believes they will only get better as new classes come in who do not know differently. She shared some confusion she has heard from parents about the attendance designation FTX in PowerSchool. This is used for students who are on a field trip or are part of a school-related event and she noted that these numbers still show up as absences in PowerSchool, when she believes it should be a separate column. Mr. Williams replied that this designation shows that a student was on a field trip, but not in class, however, it does count as the student being present. Ms. Alcantara noted that in PowerSchool, they look like they are in an absence column and are included in the total. Dr. Sally replied that the school may be limited by what it can do within the system but will continue look into this report. He added that students are still missing class so from a teacher's perspective, it needs to be tracked. Ms. McDonough inquired, from a data perspective, whether it counts against chronic absenteeism, which Mr. Williams confirmed that it does not. Ms. Alcantara also questioned the extent to which teachers might look at the totals and perceive them differently.

Ms. Alcantara noted that there is new wording in the attendance booklet regarding college visits and during an NTPA executive board meeting she recently attended, there was some confusion on how to report these visits. She referenced that parents should report the absence a week in advance and try and get pre-approval. Mr. Williams replied this was part of old procedures or best practice to encourage students to be forward thinking and get assignments ahead of time while teachers can also prepare. Ms. Alcantara shared that there was some impression given in the attendance booklet that families would be contacted about college visits that were entered in advance in PowerSchool and they were waiting to hear. Dr. Sally and Mr. Williams replied that they would take a look.

Ms. Tomlinson applauded the change from 24% to 8%, sharing that the only way this could have succeeded this way was by involving all the stakeholders and there must have been a tremendous amount of communication to get everyone on board. She shared that it is an amazing outcome. Ms. Tomlinson hopes that it also shows up in additional support for students and identifying those who need help. She also believes that it will also support faculty. She thanked everyone for their hard work.

Ms. Hahn echoed everyone's sentiments that this was amazing work. She noted it was a quick return to the culture of how students, families, and teachers used to approach attendance at New Trier. She noted, however, that there was an unhealthy element to the previous culture about pushing through when one is ill and inquired if the school feels comfortable that it has systems in place that a student who is truly sick can be home and take care of themselves. Ms. Gamrath replied that this did come up in the parent session and she noted that the school needs to keep reminding families that if their child is sick, they should stay home. And if there are fears around missing school due to illness, the school needs to continue to communicate and work with advisers and families on this.

Ms. Hahn shared that based on what she is hearing, there is some confusion about the mental health days. In the attendance policy, it was not clear what constitutes a mental health day. She also noted some anxiety around reporting a day as such may result in a student being flagged somehow. She inquired how these days are communicated to families in terms of how and when they should be used along with any ramifications, if any, if the five days are used. Ms. Gamrath replied that the days are tracked because if the school sees that a family is consistently calling in for mental health days, it wants to follow up. In general, they are treated similar to sick days, however if their usage starts to grow, the school will have a conversation to better understand the student's story. Ms. Gamrath noted that they are confusing and more communication about them is needed. Ms. Hahn inquired if the District is able to put some definition around it. Ms. Gamrath replied that she thinks it needs to be broad, however, the District could help define or give some examples that might help families navigate them. Ms. Hahn is also interested to hear from teachers, other than anecdotally, the impact this is having on their workload and what they are feeling in the classroom.

Ms. McDonough inquired when the Board will hear another update. Ms. Gamrath replied that the school needs to continue to gather feedback and look at numbers. She anticipates that they may be back during second semester with

an update. Next month, the Board will hear from the Graduating Class Teams about their work in areas other than attendance. Ms. Gamrath also noted that the school has looked at how students are doing academically, and it is seeing an improvement in some initial numbers. Ms. McDonough noted that the numbers may trend higher toward the end of the year, but she is also optimistic as it could be that some kids have just been out sick and deemed chronically absent. Dr. Panopoulos added that she could always provide an update during the Principals and Assistant Superintendents' reports.

Ms. McDonough noted the feedback solicited from teachers and inquired what kind of feedback has been received from them on how the school could enhance the data reporting to support them even better. She inquired if there was specific feedback, or if the school was just soliciting feedback overall to which Ms. Gamrath replied.

Mr. Dronen thanked the team for their presentation, noting the excellent progress.

#### **\*C. School Calendar 2025-2026**

Dr. Sally presented, for approval, the major dates for the 2025-2026 school year. In the past, both New Trier as well as the sender schools have had multiple years of calendars set for families. Ms. Pofcher inquired if this was what was already reviewed at the last meeting, to which Dr. Sally replied that that was the calendar for the 24-25 school year. Ms. Pofcher inquired if all the same principles apply, which Dr. Sally confirmed, also noting that the same discussion was had with faculty and the sender schools like was done for the 24-25 calendar. Dr. Sally invited other questions and comments from the Board.

Mr. Das moved, and Ms. Hahn seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approves the 2025-2026 school year calendar as presented. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

The motion passed.

## **VII. Administrative Items**

### **A. Treasurer's Report for October 2023**

Dr. Johnson presented the Treasurer's Report for October 2023. Fund balance for all accounts was \$73,282,987. The weighted portfolio yield was 4.67 for PMA investments, representing about one-third of the funds in that account. The other two-thirds are liquid but earning 5.3% in interest. Interest earnings in operating funds are approximately \$1.4 million, which is already exceeding the District's annual budget. Receipts are low for this time of year historically; the District is on pace last year due to the delayed property tax payments. The District is seeing typical state and federal distributions. Local non-property taxes are higher than at this point last year. On a cash basis, the District has adequate liquidity through the beginning of December, but expects to receive property tax payments soon, and will need those payments with the start of the new calendar year.

### **B. Financial Report for October 2023**

Dr. Johnson presented the Financial Report for October 2023. Operating revenue was \$6.5 million for the first four months of the fiscal year, or 0.79% higher compared to last year. The District is still awaiting tax distributions as noted earlier. Other Local Sources category is higher primarily due to investment earnings. The adopted budget shows revenue is 6.51% higher than last year.

Operating expenditures were \$28,565,000 through October, or three percent higher than last year. Variances are within acceptable ranges or have explainable circumstances. The adopted budget for operating expenditures is 5.61% higher than last year. The District expects to see that stabilize as it gets further into the year. Fund book balances for all accounts were \$70,541,000 as of the end of the month.

### **\*C. Public Hearing: 2023 Tax Levy**

Mr. Dronen called to order the public hearing on the 2023 Tax Levy at 7:46 p.m. Mr. Johnson shared information similar to last month's presentation. The levy is filed in November and is for taxes collected by the District in 2024. It is a two-step process, with the approval of the preliminary levy at last month's meeting and the approval of the levy at this meeting after the truth in taxation hearing.

The levy is based on the 2023 extension times 5%. This multiplier is capped at the lower of either 5% or CPI, which in 2022 was 6.5%, therefore, it is capped at 5%. On top of this is added the estimated value of tax revenue from new property. The levy will fund the second half of this school year and the first half of the 24-25 school year. The levy complies with the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL) which limits the increase to the lesser of 5% or CPI. The value of new property is unknown until the summer and must be estimated. The levy is raised above 5% so the revenue from new property can be collected by the district. This year, the projected increase of the levy is 6.91% to ensure the District captures the unknown amount of new property revenue. The final amount will be determined by the county once new property is known this summer and the debt service levy will also be updated by the county. The actual increase will be less than 6.91%. The average homeowner should experience an increase of 5% for the New Trier portion of their tax bill. Dr. Johnson noted an important reminder that while the value of one's home may increase, particularly in reassessment years, the District's levy does not increase by that amount. The District's rate falls as the value of property rises. In January, homeowners will receive a bill for 55% of last year's tax bill, with the remainder due in the fall of 2024.

Next, Dr. Johnson shared that the levy dollars support the strategic plan and its annual goals. He provided the example of the Graduating Class Teams as an example when student needs were seen and the District was able to align its levy dollars to support those needs. The levy also supports a broad curriculum tailored to individual student needs, which Mr. Tragos highlighted during his School Report Card presentation as well as an extracurricular program that Mrs. Dubravec shared about earlier regarding fall sports and performing arts. The levy also supports a robust student services program. He shared additional details as well. Mr. Johnson added that levy dollars also support competitive salaries to attract and retain top faculty and staff.

The District is proud to have a strong history of balanced budgets. After the 2003 referendum, the District committed to five years of no referendum, which has now been extended to 20 years. The school carefully manages its costs and continues to align revenues with expenditures. The District has made significant and meaningful investments in its facilities funded by the existing resources provided by taxpayers.

The District also maintains appropriate reserves which allow it to fund operations between tax payments. The levy increase will help fund District expenses that have also increased. Dr. Johnson shared that the levy helps the District present a balanced budget for next year.

Dr. Johnson thanked the community and the Board for their support. He also thanked Mr. Spiwak, the Business Office staff, and administrative team. It takes the support of the entire community to sustain the level of excellence that previous generations of New Trier students have experienced. The school honors that commitment by being faithful stewards of the community's resources. Dr. Johnson then invited questions and comments from the Board.

Mr. Dronen asked if there were any public comments, of which there were none.

Ms. Hahn moved, and Mr. Das seconded the motion, that the Board of Education moves to adjourn the Public Hearing on the 2023 Tax Levy. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

The motion passed. The public hearing was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

**\*D. 2023 Tax Levy**

Mr. Das moved, and Ms. Tomlinson seconded the motion, that the Board of Education adopts the resolution approving the 2023 Levy in the amount of \$127,594,860 to be distributed as follows:

<b>Fund</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Educational	\$118,624,941
Operations and Maintenance	\$8,931,640
Transportation	\$12,759
Municipal Retirement	\$12,759
Social Security	\$12,759



Total Extension:	\$127,594,860
------------------	---------------

Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

The motion passed.

**\*E. Consideration and action on a resolution authorizing a supplemental property tax levy to pay the principal of and interest on outstanding limited bonds of the District**

Dr. Johnson presented on the consideration and action on a resolution authorizing a supplemental property tax levy to pay the principal of and interest on outstanding limited bonds of the District. Periodically, the District issues bonds paid from the District’s Debt Service Extension Base (DSEB) which is part of the overall property tax levy. Some of the items that the District uses the bonds for are the improvement of its facilities. The amount the District can levy with the DSEB increases each year using the same formula as the other tax-capped funds according to the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL). Before issuing any debt, the Finance Committee carefully reviews the parameters for each bond issuance, including annual debt service, with our financial advisor. When this information is reviewed, it includes a projection of the amount of available capacity in the DSEB assuming CPI increases, which is typically 2-3%. The bonds are then sold with annual debt service that is consistent with these assumptions, with payments to be made over the life of the debt, which is typically ten years. Because the actual CPI is not known when the debt is sold, the levy must be adjusted in some years to increase it by the actual amount of CPI. The DSEB represents about 2% of New Trier’s total tax levy, and this resolution will ensure that this small portion of the levy increases by CPI at the same rate as the other capped funds. Dr. Johnson invited questions and comments from the Board.

Mr. Das moved, and Ms. Hahn seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approves the resolution authorizing a supplemental tax levy to pay the principal of and interest on outstanding limited bonds of Township High School District Number 203, Cook County, Illinois. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

The motion passed.

**VIII. Consent Agenda**

- Bill List for Period, October 1 - 31, 2023
- Personnel Report (Appointment, Changes of Status, Retirements, and Stipends – Appointment)
- New Course Proposals
- Resolution abating the taxes heretofore levied for the year 2023 to pay debt service on General Obligation School Bonds (Alternate Revenue Source), Series 2021A, of Township High School District Number 203, Cook County, Illinois.
- Contract with Village of Hoffman Estates (NOW Arena) for 2025 and 2026 graduations
- Contract with Cashman Stahler Group for Architectural Services for Summer 2024 Facilities Projects

Mr. Dronen 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, October 1 - 31, 2023; Personnel Report (Appointment, Changes of Status, Retirements, and Stipends – Appointment); New Course Proposals; Resolution abating the taxes heretofore levied for the year 2023 to pay debt service on the General Obligation School Bonds (Alternate Revenue Source), Series 2021A, of Township High School District Number 203, Cook County, Illinois; The agreement with NOW Arena for 2025 and 2026 graduations and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute it subject to attorney review; and An architect services contract for the Cashman Stahler Group and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the contract subject to final attorney review. Mr. Das seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

The motion passed.

#### **IX. Board Member Reports**

Ms. Pofcher noted that the **Facilities Steering Committee** met and shared that the discussion was more forward-looking at plans for the next 15 years. It included thoughtful consideration of a full vision for ensuring a concept that could reflect completion of the full facilities in order to accommodate future students' needs as well as ensuring that if everything outlined would accommodate those needs. It is not a proposal that is fully costed or funded but it outlines an end state that validates the possibility of a plan that would be viable while then figuring out how to fund it. There is the potential for an aquatics facility on the Northfield campus and exploration of a potential significant donor.

Ms. Pofcher shared that the **Community Engagement Committee (CEC)** met. The group learned how cumbersome the District's email system is as it does not allow for easy segmenting and mass sends to different audiences. There will be exploration of different email systems that are able to target different audiences so there is a better open rate on emails and more relevant emails are sent to different audiences more easily. The committee also saw work into thoughtfully cleaned up set of logos and color palettes to reflect the New Trier brand more consistently across all of the places it is represented.

Mr. Das noted no overall report from **TrueNorth Leadership Council**, but he did note that Wednesday's meeting was not on the Board calendar and wanted to ensure that those meeting dates are being received. He also noted that there will not be a December meeting.

Ms. Hahn shared that the **New Trier Educational Foundation (NTEF)** co-hosted an event on October 26<sup>th</sup> with the Women's Library Club of Glencoe where parents of future New Trier students were invited to hear from Dr. Sally, Mr. Waechtler, and Ms. Hahn. The event fit nicely in the Community Engagement, Partnership, and Governance framework of the strategic plan to bring younger communities into the New Trier family so they can ease anxiety and know what to expect during their time at New Trier. It was well attended and received by the community.

Ms. Alcantara shared that the **New Trier Parents' Association (NTPA)** met on November 7<sup>th</sup>. There was a presentation on bookstore planning, priorities, and issues along with a Q&A. Mrs. Dubravec provided a report on parent-teacher conferences and other goings on at the Winnetka campus, while Mr. Waechtler provided updates about Northfield. Class reports were shared as well as discussion on ways to increase opportunities for parents to get involved in and attend events with other parents.

Ms. Alcantara shared that there was a **Facilities Steering Committee** meeting on November 1<sup>st</sup>.

Ms. Tomlinson shared that the **Environmental Committee** would meet on Wednesday.

Ms. McDonough attended the **Booster Club** meeting on October 17<sup>th</sup> and their next meeting is tomorrow. They have already raised 70% of their fundraising goal and are thinking of increasing that goal. They also have 34 community partners and have raised \$30,000 with those partnerships.

Ms. McDonough attended the **New Trier Fine Arts Association (NTFAA)** on November 8<sup>th</sup>. The group heard from one of the summer scholars. There were 52 students who were summer scholars and funds from the NTFAA helped to offset the cost to attend camps and private lessons. This is also the greatest number of students that they have been able to fund. They also funded a grant for a teacher to come and lead a salsa class for Hispanic Heritage Month. She encouraged everyone to check the performing arts calendar as there are many good events coming up. She highlighted the 106<sup>th</sup> Winter Festival on December 10<sup>th</sup> with two performances at 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. Faculty and staff who play instruments have been invited to participate in the long-standing tradition of playing part of Handel's Messiah at the end of the concert.

Ms. McDonough shared that there is a **Safety Committee** meeting tomorrow.

Mr. Das shared that he would like to have representatives of the Booster Club make a presentation to the Board about the work that they do.

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

Dr. Sally highlighted the following events:

- The next Regular Board Meeting is on December 11<sup>th</sup>.
- Prior to that is a Special Board Meeting on November 30<sup>th</sup> at Northfield at 5 p.m. It is a workshop with an Illinois Association of School Boards representative.
- There are a number of performing arts events coming up including the Frosh Soph musical on November 30<sup>th</sup>, December 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> as well as the Winter Play the following week on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. There is also the Winter Music Festival as Ms. McDonough mentioned.
- At the December 11<sup>th</sup> meeting, there will be the Board Recognition Program and Dr. Sally noted that closed session will start earlier than usual. Ms. Pofcher asked if there was the possibility that it would begin before 5:00 p.m., with Dr. Sally replying it could start at 4:30 p.m. She asked if the meeting notices could be adjusted accordingly for a 4:30 p.m. start time.

Mr. Dronen inquired if there were any requests for staff research or future agenda items, of which there was none other than Mr. Das' earlier request about the Booster Club.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Lindsey Ruston, Secretary

---

Keith Dronen, President