

**NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 203  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
December 19, 2022  
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, December 19, 2022, at 6:30 p.m.

**Members Present**

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

**Administrators Present**

Mr. 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  
Mr. Paul Waechtler, Principal – Northfield Campus

**Members Absent**

Ms. Cathy Albrecht  
Mr. Brad McLane

**Also Present**

Mr. Michael Marassa, Chief Technology Officer; Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications; Ms. Teri Rodgers, Social Studies Department Faculty and Education Association President; Mr. Jon Lepeska, Math Department Faculty; Mr. Matt Ravenscraft, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty; Mr. Dan Rogan, Post-High School Counseling Department Faculty; Ms. Jill Cervantes, Post-High School Counseling Department Chair; Ms. Gretchen Stauder, Post-High School Counseling Department Faculty; Mr. Bob Zigmund, Post-High School Counseling Department Faculty; Ms. Katie Kritek, Kinetic Wellness Department Faculty; Ms. Brittany Neptun, Science Department Faculty; Ms. Robyn Ward, Science Department Chair; Ms. Kathleen Tallmadge, Social Studies Department Faculty; Ms. Julie Novak, Library Department Faculty; Ms. Sara Chao, Modern and Classical Languages Department Faculty; Mr. Paul Easton, English Department Faculty; 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 – 5:00 p.m. – C234**

Mr. Dronen called the Regular Meeting of December 19, 2022 of the Board of Education to order at 5:01 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present, except for Ms. Albrecht and Mr. McLane.

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 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; and collective negotiating matters between the District and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees. Ms. Tomlinson seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSENT: Ms. Albrecht, Mr. McLane

The motion passed.

**II. CLOSED SESSION – 5:00 p.m. – A201A**

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

Mr. Dronen recalled the Regular Meeting of December 19, 2022 of the Board of Education to order at 6:36 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present, except for Ms. Albrecht and Mr. McLane.

### **IV. Minutes and Reports**

#### **A. Regular Meeting of November 14, 2022 (open and closed session) and the Special Meeting of November 30, 2022 (open and closed session)**

Mr. Dronen asked for any comments or adjustments on the minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 14, 2022 (open and closed session) and the Special Meeting of November 30, 2022 (open and closed session). There were no requests for changes to the minutes. Ms. Hahn moved, and Ms. Alcantara seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 14, 2022 (open and closed session) and the Special Meeting of November 30, 2022 (open and closed session). Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Hahn, Ms. Alcantara Mr. Dronen

NAY: none

ABSTAIN: Mr. Das, Ms. Tomlinson

ABSENT: Ms. Albrecht, Mr. McLane

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:

- The Tri-Ship canned food drive recently concluded and Mr. Waechtler shared pictures. Northfield collected just under 20,000 pounds of food and combined with online donations and the Winnetka campus, New Trier provided over 185,000 meals, making it the largest contributor to the Greater Chicagoland Food Depository.
- Adviser room activities included collecting gifts for families with the Northwestern University Settlement House (NUSH). A Gingerbread House Competition sponsored by Pep Club was held. Ms. Alicia Landes', Art Department Chair, adviser room won, even showing up an hour before school to create the Maggie Daley ice skating ribbon. The B lounge was decorated in a Winter Wonderland theme by the Pep Club.
- Rusty the Elf provided book recommendations in the library for winter break reading.
- The New Trier Latin Club had a great showing at the first competition of the year, hosted at New Trier. The frosh/soph team took 1st place, beating out reigning champs, Northside College Prep.
- The staff holiday luncheon recently took place with Mr. Pete Collins, Kinetic Wellness Department Coordinator, Mr. Jason Dane, Kinetic Wellness Department Faculty, Mr. Ted Koulentes, Adviser Chair, and Mr. Angel Villaluz, Director of Technology, smoking meats for the entire Northfield Staff. The freshman choir also performed.
- Semester Exams are taking place this week. Mr. Waechtler thanked Ms. Steph Moretta, Academic Assistance Coordinator, for hosting therapy dogs as a stress reliever for students. The New Trier Parents' Association also provide snacks for students.
- The Frosh/Soph Musical, *Songs for a New World*, recently took place and was a fantastic performance. The dress rehearsal took place on an anchor day with around 150-200 students attending during each lunch period. This allowed many students to view the musical who normally may not have been able to.

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

- Work on the Be Brave, Be Kind, Be Proud initiative has been done with student leaders in various programs in performing arts, athletics, and activities. Two meetings have occurred, with the first consisting of only students. Mrs. Dubravec shared the topics discussed. The coaches and sponsors joined the second meeting where students reflected on the first meeting as well as how they plan to lead these conversations with each of their programs. This group will meet one last time to reflect. This same series of meetings will take place again in the early and late spring.

- New Trier’s radio station, WNTH, now has its own app. Broadcast Journalism students, on Fridays, will share five-minute segments highlighting things going on around campus.
- Mrs. Dubravec shared about the Art Department’s retreat day on a recent Anchor Day. They visited museums or schools that they felt would benefit their curriculum in some way. Mrs. Dubravec attended their department meeting and heard about their day. It is an example of the great work taking place on Anchor Days where faculty have extended time together. Mrs. Dubravec shared about one location, Project Onward, where students with special needs each have a station to sell their art. One idea is to have Art Essential students visit so they can see the opportunities available to them.
- The Brierly Gallery displayed *Artist Quilt*. The artist met with 25 adviser rooms to discuss how to create this type of art. The art created in adviser room was added to the work of the artist’s on display. Ms. Landes provided this opportunity for students.
- Two bowlers bowled a perfect 300 game in competition. Bowlers rolled a 1364 in the second game of the season, which was the second highest game for New Trier in the CSL ever. A 3761 series was rolled against Deerfield, which is the highest three game series in New Trier’s history.
- Mrs. Dubravec also shared several opportunities where student voice has been heard. Student Council held a forum where they asked questions about how Anchor Day is going. Students then presented to Mrs. Dubravec. She is working with Faculty Senate president, Ms. Katherine Linsenmeier, to think about Anchor Day from students’ and faculties’ perspectives. Another example was from Quest Food Service. Students discussed serving size with them as sometimes one gets too much or too little food. Students will be able to select from three different sizes and pay accordingly. Students are also sharing their perspective on the tardy policy.
- The school held its first Principal’s College Signing Day for those student-athletes who do not play for a New Trier team but do play for one outside the school. Ten students were honored who will continue their sport at the collegiate level.
- The 105<sup>th</sup> Winter Music Festival took place on Sunday. Ms. Elizabeth Bennett, Music and Theatre Department Chair, created a musical instrument petting zoo so kids could try various instruments. This year the festival was held in the Gaffney due to construction. A decision on if it returns to the newly constructed gym next year will be made later.
- Mrs. Dubravec shared a story about an alum who was part of performing arts. He started his own podcast interviewing a series of alumni from New Trier who participated in performing arts.
- Mrs. Dubravec wished everyone a happy winter break and showed a clip from Student Council’s rendition of *Walking in a Winter Wonderland*, entitled *Walking in a Trevy Wonderland*.

Mr. Johnson gave the FOIA report, noting that there was one request since the last Board meeting regarding records that are related to athletics, which has been closed.

## V. 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 Mr. Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. Mr. Dronen reminded those speaking to keep their comments to three minutes or less per Board Policy 2:230. He also asked that the audience refrain from clapping, or a response of any kind in regard to people’s comments. There were no requests for public comment.

## VI. Special Orders of Business

### A. Profile of the Class of 2022

Mr. Tragos presented the Profile of the Class of 2022. He noted that this is one dimension of multi-faceted students. This class was significantly impacted by Covid. During their sophomore year they went remote in March 2020 with their nine-period day, which was then adapted to a modified block schedule. For their junior year, they began the year in remote learning, followed by hybrid learning in a block schedule. Their senior year was somewhat normal though there were some differences such as the bell schedule. Mr. Tragos noted that students were resilient and adaptable during all of this and had remarkable accomplishments despite the pandemic.

Mr. Tragos explained the purpose of the profile which provides perspective on pathways through New Trier, demonstrates the flexibility and fluidity of the level system, provides information for parents, students, and staff as well as insight into the impact of Covid. There are two parts of the report, the first gives data on course-taking patterns and the second looks at college matriculation. The data set includes 903 students who were at New Trier for all four years with 978 total graduates in the class.

Mr. Tragos began with the course-taking patterns of core academics, noting it is recommended that students take four to five core classes per year. The percentage of students who take 19 or more core academic courses was 65%, which is a 5.4% increase compared to 2021 and is an increase in general over the last several years. Typically, the concentration of classes is somewhere from 18-20 core academics. Students who took more than 20 core academic courses was 14.6% or a 3% increase compared to 2021. The school is seeing a year-over-year increase in students taking more than 20 core academics. The class of 2022 trended toward 19 or more core academic courses.

Next, Mr. Tragos discussed the course-taking patterns for elective courses. Elective enrollment increased slightly over the class of 2021, which was more of a correction to pre-pandemic times with 62.2% of students taking between two and four courses compared to 59.6% in 2021. More than one-quarter, about 28%, of the class took more than one elective per year. The percentage of freshmen taking at least one elective is slightly over 90%, however, there was a small decline after trending up over the last two years.

Referencing section C on page four of his report, Mr. Tragos shared that only 3.5% of students take exclusively level four courses all four years. Mr. Tragos noted that there may be a perception that many students are taking all four-level courses, though there are many students who take level four classes, they are not taking all courses at that level. It is important to note that students take a combination of levels. The percentage of students taking only level three is 4.3% while 2.7% only take courses at level two. Those students taking a combination of levels two, three and four is 13.5%. The main takeaway is that about 90% of students take courses at a mix of levels over the course of their time at New Trier.

Next, Mr. Tragos shared about college matriculation. He shared his gratitude for the support of the Post-High School Counseling (PHSC) department and their help with the data as well as their knowledge of students and families. One trend seen in college applications and admissions is that demand was greater than supply at highly selective colleges and universities, some of which is driven by the number of applications which continues to rise. The expansion of test-optional schools has also increased. New Trier students had about an average of 8.2 applications per student (of those who applied). According to the Common App, in this cycle, the average student in the country applied to 6.2 schools. Mr. Tragos then shared details around the meaning of test optional. The percentage of New Trier students who applied test-optional to one or more schools was 35% compared to the national average of about 50%. College acceptance and matriculation rates were similar to previous years. The school relies on the PHSC department to continue to build relationships, navigate the changing landscape and educate students and families so they can make informed choices. Mr. Tragos then concluded by sharing thoughts about the college matriculation tables, noting that it is one dimension of an individualized and complicated process for students. He then invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Alcantara thanked Mr. Tragos for his report. She noted it will be interesting to see how this evolves the further away from Covid the school gets. Ms. Alcantara inquired if the tables were out of 903 students or 987 students, to which Mr. Tragos replied 903 students. Ms. Alcantara then went on to inquire what percentage of students did not go on to college, to which Mr. Tragos answered that it was about two percent. Those students who did not attend either chose to take a gap year, were international students who returned to their home country, went on to technical school, among others. Mr. Tragos went on to further explain the chart's numbers.

Ms. Hahn noted her understanding of how the report is used by the community and parents, and was curious, for instance, about the increase in the number of core academics that students are taking and what is done internally about it. She inquired if this is used to plan and think about what the school is offering and how it is being offered. Mr. Tragos replied that the information is used in these ways, which he expanded on, including the types of courses being offered, predictions for staffing and sectioning models, as well as what students may be leaving out.

Ms. Hahn inquired if students who have deferred matriculation and are taking a gap year, are reflected in the tables, to which Mr. Tragos said they are not included. She then inquired if AP courses are considered four level courses, which Mr. Tragos confirmed.

Ms. Tomlinson added the if the average is going up by one core course per student, that is around 900 additional seats being filled in a classroom, she noted that if this trend continues, it will impact class sizes as well as how many classes a teacher can teach. Mr. Tragos shared that the increase being seen is related to the summer bump. Ms. Tomlinson concluded that it is not a concern, but the school is monitoring it, which Mr. Tragos confirmed. Regarding the electives, Ms. Tomlinson shared that the average electives are one per year per student, referencing those students who participated in the Winter Music Festival, she noted that some of those students are taking two

electives a year, which means there is a large group of students who are not taking even one elective per year. Mr. Tragos shared there is a table of course taking patterns by year which shows that many will take their electives freshmen and sophomore years then taper off later in high school. Ms. Tomlinson inquired if there is anything that can be done to have students continue to take electives throughout their high school career. She noted that part of the strategic plan is exposing students to a broader curriculum. Ms. Tomlinson also shared that more semester options might encourage students to take more electives versus year-long classes. Mr. Tragos replied this is an on-going discussion amongst the elective departments who have tried to do a number of items such as adding more semester options, eliminating pre-requisites from some of their courses, and offering courses that are for beginners or non-performance. Ms. Tomlinson noted that Music and Theatre Department Chair, Ms. Elizabeth Bennett, and her faculty have driven some of these options, but she inquired if students are suggesting course offerings or New Trier's peer schools offering different elective courses. Mr. Tragos confirmed this and added that ideas for classes come from teachers and their networks as well.

Mr. Das built on Ms. Alcantara's inquiry and referencing those 300 or so students who were one of only a few who attended a certain college, went on to a trade school, or took another pathway, he noted his interest in a chart about these students that would include examples of their profiles along with the colleges represented amongst this group. Mr. Das also referenced that there are about 200 colleges represented with this particular group of students and to know those destinations would be nice. Mr. Das then asked Mr. Tragos to further explain the conference table, noting that 559 students are in a college conference, and inquired about the remaining students. Mr. Tragos replied that those students are at colleges and universities not represented by these college (athletic) conferences or took a different pathway. After further discussion, Mr. Das inquired if there are other ways of organizing colleges and universities, which Mr. Tragos confirmed there are many different ways to categorize them. He went on to share the reasoning behind categorizing colleges and universities in this particular way.

Ms. Alcantara echoed Mr. Das' request, noting it would be helpful to have that information. Mr. Tragos agreed and said he would provide that information to the Board. Ms. Hahn added her appreciation for the post-high school counseling department and the work they have done, particularly over the past few years. She noted it would be interesting to see if there is a trend as she is hearing as a parent that students who would have typically gone to elite schools need to start getting creative about where they are applying. She went on to further explain this. This could be another benefit to providing this information as it would provide a list of schools that one may not be thinking about.

Mr. Dronen inquired if any trends are being seen regarding test-optional or no test and the effect of students applying to and being accepted to highly selective schools. He looked at the 2018 and 2020 reports and compared them to the 2021 and 2022 reports and noted there was a decline, either of those who were accepted or those who chose to go to that school, at the Ivy Leagues, Michigan, and Northwestern. Mr. Tragos replied that he would not attribute it to any one thing but would get additional information for Mr. Dronen. Dr. Sally added that rhythms of where students attend depend on a variety of factors. He went on to add that teasing out what is happening with test-optional is part of what the PHSC department and Mr. Tragos are doing.

## **B. Student Services Organization and Leadership Model**

Dr. Sally began the student services organization and leadership model presentation by noting the exponential growth seen in the number of students seeking academic and social emotional support. This has been a target in the strategic plan as well as annual plans. Dr. Sally noted that the issues on the rise include a range from lack of student resilience to students who are hospitalized. These needs are impacting students, families and the school including its culture and climate. The District has taken a close look at how it can best manage and work with the increased complexity of students. The approach has been to work on this individually with students and families. Although it is a hallmark of New Trier, it also takes a lot of time. Dr. Sally noted that faculty and staff are committed to the work. It does require that the school look at its capacity as well as the structures in place to manage this. The District has taken many steps forward in this area with concerns beginning pre-pandemic including increases in stress and mental health issues as well as absenteeism. These issues continue in the post-pandemic world. Dr. Sally shared the steps the District has taken such as increasing staffing in the student services area despite decreasing enrollment. Classroom teachers have also increased their efforts to support and adapt to student needs. There has also been increased systemic focus on student support through the District's Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) by providing identification and interventions for students. This has all gone well, however, the school needs a more clearly defined team for these tasks. Dr. Sally noted that a greater impact can come from a unified, consistent team for each graduating class supporting students, staff, and families. This team will use MTSS to monitor, identify, intervene and follow-up with students. The communication piece is important as this team will be central to the students in a particular graduating

class. The team will communicate with teachers, families, and students, with those constituents knowing this is the team supporting these students.

Dr. Sally displayed a graphic of those who will be part of a graduating class team, which includes the advisers who will continue to move with their students at the Winnetka campus. Currently, adviser chairs remain with the year group such as sophomores, however, with the new model, adviser chairs will also move with the graduating class team. A new assistant principal position will be added to partner with the adviser chairs and lead the graduating class team. There will also be several liaisons that will work with the team from areas such as a MTSS, PHSC, school psychologists, social work, and special education. The graduating class team will move with students as they make their way through New Trier. This concept is common in schools, but what other schools do not have is the adviser program. This team will consist of 45-50 adults that are monitoring and supporting students and families. Dr. Sally shared other details related to this. He then displayed the current and new organizational charts with details about each.

Dr. Sally highlighted additional benefits to this new model such as developing leaders for the future of New Trier. Another benefit is the creation of the new Assistant Principal roles, which will allow the Principal and Associate Principal roles to have time to think strategically and implement plans such as restorative practices.

Another piece to this is building strong partnerships with families which is essential for supporting all students. An issue such as chronic absenteeism is an example where progress can only be made by partnering with parents. The District is committed to establishing fair policies and procedures while understanding the individual needs of families. This is also done with a commitment to a high level of communication with families.

This change will positively impact all groups across the school and is the structural support that is currently needed to respond to the needs of students. The new structure will continually be evaluated and improved which also includes evaluating other staffing, policy, and practices. Dr. Sally shared that these positions have been posted and will be filled over the first few months of 2023. Mr. Dronen invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Tomlinson shared that the school is always thinking three steps ahead on how to better serve students. She noted that she has been reading articles about issues of resilience, absenteeism, and the mental health crisis, sharing they have been bubbling up since pre-Covid times. She said that the reorganization is a great effort at trying to better assist students by helping to align already student-centric services into something directly for a student. Ms. Tomlinson also noted that in terms of being ahead of the game, freeing up the Associate Principals so they can spend their bandwidth on forward-thinking issues is important and she thinks this model does it.

Ms. Alcantara shared that this cohort-based administrative structure makes sense compared to how it had been done. Dr. Sally added that it is a good evolution. He noted the amazing work that the adviser program and teachers are doing, but the alignment and evolution is important for students and the community.

Ms. Hahn thanked Dr. Sally and those who put in tremendous efforts to bring this initiative forward. She went on to express her support for it, sharing a reflection that the school year was kicked off with the introduction to *Many Voices, One New Trier*. The goal with this was to cultivate a cohesive school environment in which every member's voice is heard. Ms. Hahn shared that this initiative to structure how the school provides its student services illustrates the importance of that goal and how valuable listening is to the process. She noted that this effort is the product of the District's willingness to listen to the voices of the entire school community. After additional comments, Ms. Hahn encouraged everyone, that as this process evolves, to keep listening.

Mr. Das shared his excitement about how this builds on the adviser program which is unique to New Trier and how there would be 40-50 professionals walking alongside a graduating class. He shared how compelling the graphic was that has the student and their family at the center. He inquired if there would be four graduating class teams at any one time, which Dr. Sally confirmed. Mr. Das then asked how these class teams are intersecting with each other. He went on to also inquire that if 40-50 adults are walking alongside one class, then, in essence, it becomes 200 adults because there are four graduating class teams. Dr. Sally noted it is four separate teams and shared details about the Northfield campus as most of those advisers do not move to Winnetka so as to keep the identity of the campus. The adviser chairs will remain while the assistant principal and many of the liaisons are going to move as bringing information to the next year is most important. In answer to Mr. Das' other question, the creation of four graduating class teams is not meant to create more silos who do things inconsistently. Adviser chairs currently meet to discuss how they approach issues and are aligned. In the future, those meetings would include the assistant principal and the

teams would still connect. Mrs. Dubravec added that there will be a lot of connection within the adviser program as the teams are discussing what is happening throughout all four-year groups. She noted the importance of those teams meeting on a regular basis. Dr. Sally added that over the past few years, one of the developments in the adviser program, which the adviser chairs have led, is being more explicit about vertical articulation of what is happening in adviser rooms and the goals for each of the grade levels.

**\*C. Facilities Update: Winnetka Campus East Side Academic and Athletic Project and Northfield Solar Project Approval**

Mr. Johnson provided an update on the Winnetka Campus East Side Academic and Athletic Project (ESSA) as well as the Northfield Solar Project. He shared a summary of the work that has been completed over the past month along with pictures of the construction site. The project is trending on schedule with completion slated for late June or early July. This month's change orders were larger than last month totaling \$335,000. The projected future usage decreased, but the District is still within its projections and contingencies.

Next, Mr. Johnson shared about the Northfield Campus Solar Project. Last May the Board approved several projects for the summer of 2023 including the installation of solar at Northfield. The system will be installed on the roof of all buildings except for A due to equipment already on that roof. It will generate approximately 43% of the total annual power for the campus with remaining power drawn from ComEd. This will not impact the reliability of power and if a surplus of power is generated it will be sold back to ComEd. The system will cost \$3.9 million which is an increase from the original estimate, however the District is seeing greater rebates and lower total net cost along with increased power generation. The payback dropped from 15 to 13 years and after 13 years, it will have saved the District more money than it cost to install. Mr. Johnson noted that 40% of that payback is received within the first year as it front-loaded with rebates. It will be installed this spring and summer but will come online the spring of 2024 when the final electrical switchgears arrive. The switchgears are a piece of equipment that has not recovered from the pandemic, with a lead time of 55 weeks. There will also be collaboration with faculty on educational aspects. The District will also collaborate with the Village to discuss about how it promotes not only New Trier's goals, but goals in the Village as well as region to use sustainable energy. This is a culmination of a substantial amount of work by the District's physical plant services staff and others. Mr. Johnson then shared technical details about the system as well as financial information. The panels are designed to be as unobtrusive as possible.

Mr. Johnson then provided a Duke Childs Field update, noting that the Village work is progressing well and will be completed this winter. The District work will be out to bid in January 2023 with work beginning after baseball season concludes in June. The District's portion of the work will be completed this summer. Mr. Johnson also showed pictures of the work and shared details on each. The District is bidding work in January, however, the bids may not come in until after the January Board meeting, so Mr. Johnson anticipates bringing them to the February meeting. Mr. Johnson then invited questions and comments from the Board.

Ms. Tomlinson noted that for the project update, future usage dropped to \$1.2 million, with around \$500,000 contingency left, she inquired if the District was still ok with its contingency. Mr. Johnson confirmed that the District was fine and shared why there is variability each month. Next, Ms. Tomlinson noted that with these panels going onto newly replaced roofs, how long a replacement lasts, and if there is an issue on a roof, if the District will still have access. Mr. Johnson replied that all roofs have a 30-year warranty and having solar panels on them does not void it. If repairs are needed, in many cases, one or two panels can be moved for the work. Ms. Tomlinson then confirmed that the panels and roofs have about the same length of life at around 25-30 years.

Ms. Hahn inquired that when discussing the bids for Duke Childs Field, if the Board will be reminded of the renderings and what they are contemplating. Mr. Johnson replied that he is happy to show this at next month's meeting.

Mr. Dronen thanked the Business Office for their work on Duke Childs, noting it is excellent how the District has collaborated with the Village of Winnetka. Mr. Johnson thanked Mr. Dave Conway, Director of Physical Plant Services and Mr. Jim Maile, Assistant Facilities Director for their work.

Mr. Dronen inquired if the solar panels would be integrated into the curriculum. Mr. Tragos answered that he and Mr. Johnson have not collaborated much on this piece yet, but he would work with Mr. Johnson and his team on this.

Ms. Hahn moved, and Mr. Das seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approve the contracts with Performance Services Inc. for \$3,833,503 and the Cashman Stahler Group for \$143,066 as presented pending final legal review. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSENT: Ms. Albrecht, Mr. McLane

The motion passed.

## **VII. Administrative Items**

### **A. Treasurer's Report for November 2022**

Mr. Johnson presented the Treasurer's Report for November 2022. The biggest financial news is that the tax distributions have begun. Approximately \$16 million of distributions have been received by the District and will be reflected on the December Treasurer's Report. This has freed up the District's cash flow and allowed it to continue to meet its obligations. The District has also resumed limited investments. Fund balances for all accounts in November was \$100,353,640.

### **B. Financial Report for November 2022**

Mr. Johnson presented the Financial Report for November 2022. Operating revenue was \$6.4 million for the first five months of the year, or about 88% lower compared to last year due to the variance in property taxes. Other revenue categories will likely maintain a year-long positive variance, driven primarily by the Corporate Personal Property Replacement Tax (CPPRT) receipts that came in once again over the District's, as well as the state's, estimates. The adopted budget for operating revenue is 1.13% lower than last year. This is due to last year's one-time Covid reimbursements and FEMA grants.

Operating expenditures were \$53 million through November, or 18% higher than last year's. Exclusive of interfund transfers, the expenses are about six percent higher than last year. The District is closely monitoring any inflationary pressures on expenditures. The District will look in December to see where this is at and if any corrective action in different areas is needed. The adopted budget for operating expenditures is 3.52% higher than last year. The District will continue to watch this closely over the next six months of the year to make sure there are not any unexpected variances as it deals with inflationary pressures on its purchasing.

### **\*C. Public Hearing: 2022 Tax Levy**

Mr. Dronen called to order the public hearing on the 2022 tax levy at 8:01 p.m. Mr. Johnson presented on the 2022 Tax Levy, which is filed in December and is for taxes collected by the District in 2023. It is a two-step process, the first step was last month with the approval of the preliminary levy with the second step, the truth in taxation hearing, taking place at this meeting. The Board will then approve the final levy. The levy is based on the extension from the previous year times the lower of 5% or the CPI, which is 7%, plus the value of tax revenue from new property. Therefore, the levy will be capped at 5%, even though the District is seeing expenses rise at a rate faster than 5%. It funds portions of the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years. Mr. Johnson noted that the levy abides by the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL) and limits the increase to the lesser of 5%, plus new property. The value of new property is unknown until June and must be estimated so the proposed levy is slightly higher than 5% to capture taxing on new property. This year, the projected increase to the levy is 5.55% and the final amount is determined by the county once new property is known. New property was unknown until November this year when tax bills were issued. The debt service levy will be updated based on the bonds the District has issued. Mr. Johnson noted that the District files the levy on 6.82% increase which will be adjusted down by the county once new property is known in compliance with the law. The average homeowner should experience an increase of about 5% for the New Trier portion of their tax bill. Mr. Johnson noted it is important to remember that while the value of one's home may increase, particularly in a reassessment year, the District's levy does not increase by that amount. The District's tax rate will fall as the value of property rises. Once complete, the county clerk extends the taxes with 55% of the tax bill issued in January or February with the balance due in July, however there are indications that bills may be late again next year.

Levy dollars support many items, such as the education of New Trier students, the 2030 Strategic Plan, a continued commitment to excellence in education, a deep and broad curriculum tailored to individual student interests and



needs, strong student services and supports, the extracurricular program and competitive salaries to attract and retain top faculty and staff. Mr. Johnson shared further details on each of the aforementioned areas.

The District is proud of its history of balanced budgets. After the 2003 referendum, the Board committed to five years of no operating rate referendums. That commitment has been extended from 2003 – 2022. The District carefully manages its costs on an annual basis and there are no plans for a referendum for operating rate at this time. The District has also made substantial facilities improvements through the levy by using the funds provided through it. Bond funds have also been carefully managed with the remaining referendum debt from 2014 refinanced at a historically low rate of 1.79% in 2022. Other debt in the amount of \$9.5 million was sold earlier this fall at an all-in rate of 4.05% with the actual bonds at a rate of 3.96%. In today’s market, to sell bonds at this percentage is remarkable.

The District also has appropriate reserves which allows it to fund operations between tax payments. These fund balances were critical this year to manage the property tax delay. Some districts were looking at borrowing funds at a rate of four to five percent interest rate. Although the District was disappointed to lose some investment income, the District was fortunate that the community provided resources allowed it to weather the delay. The balance also allows for the District to maintain its Aaa bond rating.

Mr. Johnson noted that the levy increase will help the District fund areas where expenditures have increased and will play a key part in presenting a balanced budget next year and act as strong stewards of taxpayer dollars. Mr. Johnson thanked the Board and community for their support. 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 is committed to doing the same for current and future students while being excellent stewards of these resources. Mr. Johnson then invited questions and comments from the Board.

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

Ms. Hahn inquired if the supplemental levy is automatically assessed, which Mr. Johnson confirmed. Ms. Hahn then asked Mr. Johnson to speak to the District’s efforts to keep that low. Mr. Johnson noted this is reviewed at the Finance Committee and that a new law went into effect last year. If someone appeals their property taxes and receives a refund, the refund is paid by the District in the year that the person or business receives the refund. The District counts on a certain amount to fund its budget as property taxes fund 91% of it. If there are refunds, those are subtracted from the District’s current collections. The new state law that went into effect last year looks at the refunds over the prior year and adds a supplemental levy to make up for those funds lost through refunds. This provides school districts with predictable funding. The District works in the property assessment process to ensure there is fairness and equity while reducing the amount of refunds when possible. Mr. Johnson noted that on a \$120 million levy the prior year, the District’s supplemental levy was \$1.4 million for refunds, while this year that has dropped to \$1 million. This shows the District’s commitment to reducing those refunds and ensuring there is as much equity as possible in the property tax system. Ms. Hahn thanked Mr. Johnson and his team for their diligence on this.

Ms. Tomlinson moved, and Ms. Alcantara seconded the motion, that the Board of Education moves to adjourn the Public Hearing on the 2022 Tax Levy. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSENT: Ms. Albrecht, Mr. McLane

The motion passed.

The public hearing concluded at 8:12 p.m.

**\*D. 2022 Tax Levy Approval**

Ms. Alcantara moved, and Ms. Tomlinson seconded the motion, that the Board of Education adopts the resolution approving the 2022 Levy in the amount of \$120,110,341 to be distributed as follows:

Fund	Amount
Educational	\$102,334,011

Operations and Maintenance	\$15,041,418
Transportation	\$1,561,434
Municipal Retirement	\$632,981
Social Security	\$540,497
Total Extension:	\$120,110,341

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

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

NAY: none

ABSENT: Ms. Albrecht, Mr. McLane

The motion passed.

**\*E. Consideration and action on a resolution transferring money from the Bond and Interest Fund to the Operations and Maintenance Fund of the District**

Mr. Johnson presented on this and shared that in September, the District refinanced the remaining debt for the Winnetka Campus West Side Project by issuing \$56,410,000 in general obligation school refunding bonds. This is similar to refinancing a mortgage. The debt was issued at a favorable rate in 2014, but it is now callable. The District is able to reissue the debt at a lower rate. A lower rate was locked in last February and was a forward rate lock. Through the work of the Finance Committee and the Board, it was understood that rates would be increasing. The District was able to lock in a rate of 1.79% but the deal could not close until September 15<sup>th</sup>. The bonds could not be called until December 15<sup>th</sup>. The bank funded the closing in September so the District was able to invest the \$56 million for three months until the bonds could be called on December 15<sup>th</sup>. That generated an additional amount of interest of \$357,000. That money was transferred back to the District. Mr. Johnson is asking through a resolution to transfer the money to the Operations and Maintenance fund so it may be used for future facilities work. Taxpayers will see a small portion of the levy attributed to the Winnetka Campus West Side project debt service part decrease. This demonstrates the District's financial stewardship and will be reflected on future levies through 2033 when the bonds sunset.

Ms. Hahn thanked Mr. Johnson for his successful stewardship with this process. This saved taxpayers money while also earning some extra money by taking advantage of the interest rates fluctuations. Mr. Dronen shared that at the time much thought and discussion went into this at the Finance Committee as it was uncertain what interest rates were going to do. Mr. Dronen thanked Mr. Johnson and his team as well as the Finance Committee. Mr. Johnson acknowledged the Board's role as well as the Finance Committee's. Mr. Greg Robitaille, a community member who sits on the Finance Committee, was instrumental in this process as well. Mr. Johnson also shared his thanks for the conversations he had with Board members. He also thanked Ms. Liz Hennessey, financial advisor at Raymond James, for her instrumental work as well as Mr. Myron Spiwak's, Director of Business Services.

Ms. Tomlinson moved, and Mr. Das seconded the motion, that the Board of Education adopt the resolution to transfer these earnings first from the Debt Service Fund to the Operations and Maintenance Fund, and then from the Operations and Maintenance Fund to the Capital Projects Fund. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSENT: Ms. Albrecht, Mr. McLane

The motion passed.

**\*F. Consideration and action on a resolution abating the District's working cash fund**

Mr. Johnson presented on this as well and shared that in October, the District issued \$9,500,000 of Working Cash Fund bonds as approved by the Board of Education to fund the Winnetka Campus East Side Academic and Athletic Project (\$4.5 million) and Duke Childs Field project (\$5 million). The interest rate for the bonds was once again very favorable at 3.96% and 4.05% all-in. More will be shared in the Annual Report that is prepared for the community. When looking at the debt the District has issued and refunded over the past several years, the vast majority of it was

at historically low rates, providing an excellent value for taxpayers while ensuring that the money could be used to bring the largest possible benefit to students. Mr. Johnson noted that even 4% is a favorable rate for going to market at this time. Illinois state law allows this money to be transferred from the Working Cash Fund to any other fund determined to be in need by the District. The District has designated the proceeds for these projects, Mr. Johnson asked to approve a resolution to authorize the permanent abatement of Working Cash Funds and transfer them to the Capital Projects Fund where they will be expended for construction.

Mr. Das moved, and Ms. Hahn seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approves the resolution authorizing the permanent abatement of Working Cash Funds as presented. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSENT: Ms. Albrecht, Mr. McLane

The motion passed.

### **VIII. Consent Agenda**

- Bill List for the Period, November 1 – 30, 2022
- Personnel Report (Appointments, Changes of Status, Leave of Absence, Resignations, Retirements, Stipends – Appointment and Stipends - Separation)
- Resolution abating the taxes heretofore levied for the year 2022 to pay debt service on General Obligation Refunding School Bonds (Alternate Revenue Source), Series 2016B, and General Obligation School Bonds (Alternate Revenue Source), Series 2021A, of Township High School District Number 203, Cook County, Illinois.
- Approval of Nicor site license agreement

Mr. Dronen inquired if any members wanted to pull an item off the Consent Agenda, no one chose to do so. Mr. Das moved that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda, which includes: Bill List for the Period, November 1 – 30, 2022; Personnel Report (Appointments, Changes of Status, Leave of Absence, Resignations, Retirements, Stipends – Appointment and Stipends - Separation); Resolution abating the taxes heretofore levied for the year 2022 to pay debt service on General Obligation Refunding School Bonds (Alternate Revenue Source), Series 2016B, and General Obligation School Bonds (Alternate Revenue Source), Series 2021A, of Township High School District Number 203, Cook County, Illinois; and Approval of Nicor site license agreement. Ms. Alcantara seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

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

NAY: none

ABSENT: Ms. Albrecht, Mr. McLane

The motion passed.

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

Ms. Tomlinson attended the **New Trier Fine Arts Association (NTFAA)** on December 14<sup>th</sup>. She noted she continues to be impressed with how the fine arts department embraces and pursues some of the goals of the 2030 Strategic Plan. She provided the example that in January, there will be school-wide auditions for students participating in senior-directed projects. The projects are limited to 25 rehearsals and enables students throughout the school, not just those in the arts, to engage in them. Rehearsal assistants participated in Mrs. Dubravec's student leadership *Be Brave, Be Kind, Be Proud* meetings. Students are excited to take the lead in this initiative and noted that after every production they will give out awards to students who most exemplify these traits. NTFAA has raised about \$27,000 so far, which is more than halfway to its fundraising goal. They have also distributed most of their budgeted grant money. One of those grants helped the technical theatre and design class to create life-size puppets for the production of *She Kills Monsters*.

Ms. Alcantara attended the **New Trier Parents Association** meeting on December 1<sup>st</sup>. NTPA provided pie to faculty and staff prior to Thanksgiving. Each class provided their reports as well as discussion around new ideas for parent

programming. There was also good discussion about the Innovation Hub and one of the parents' association executive board members attended the retreat. There was also discussion about the potential for a community festival event for spring or fall.

Ms. Alcantara noted that on December 7<sup>th</sup>, she attended the **Community Engagement Committee** meeting where Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications, took the group through the results of the communications audit.

Ms. Hahn shared that the **New Trier Educational Foundation (NTEF) Liaison Committee** met on December 6<sup>th</sup> with the full **NTEF board** meeting on December 15<sup>th</sup>. They continue to partner with the school regarding the Innovation Hub and have shifted their focus to raising funds to support the personnel needs instead of the physical needs as the project has evolved. They are excited to hear what comes out of the Innovation Hub's pilot program scheduled for February. Alumni events will take place in Florida and Arizona in the coming months. NTEF also shared with the committee about the series of grants that it recently made to teachers. Ms. Hahn noted that Ms. Lindsey Ruston, Board Secretary, was working with the Foundation to find a time for them to present to the Board about the grants. Ms. Hahn shared that it was great to hear the teachers' proposals and how they are connected to the strategic plan. It shows the power of the District's partnership with the NTEF to advance the strategic plan.

Mr. Das noted that the **Booster Club** was on holiday for December and looks forward to attending their January meeting.

Mr. Das attended the **TrueNorth Leadership Council** meeting on December 14<sup>th</sup>. Their strategic plan was previewed, and the group looks forward to talking more about the details and documents will be shared with the Board. TrueNorth is also looking to renovate their spaces to consolidate their campuses and is an ongoing topic of conversation.

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

Dr. Sally highlighted the following events:

- First semester exams started today and will conclude tomorrow.
- The last day of first semester is Thursday with Winter Break beginning on Friday.

Mr. Dronen inquired if there were any requests for staff research or future agenda items of which there were none.

**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 8:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Lindsey Ruston, Secretary

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Keith Dronen, President