

## BOARD BRIEFS

*News from the New Trier Township High School District 203  
Board of Education Meeting  
October 21, 2019*

### NTEF, Troglia Family Partner with District on Greenhouse for ELS Students

The New Trier Educational Foundation and the family of Sofi Troglia, a student in the Educational Life Skills program who passed away in December 2017, have partnered to raise funds for a rooftop greenhouse at New Trier that will honor her memory by providing opportunities to students with special needs.

The Board of Education directed Superintendent Paul Sally to proceed with the partnership after a discussion during Monday's Board meeting.

New Trier incorporated two green rooftop spaces into the new West Building, which opened in 2017. The 300-square-foot greenhouse would take less than 10 percent of the space on the south green roof and give students in the ELS program opportunities to enhance their academic, vocational, and social-emotional skills. For example, students would use science skills to learn about plant growth and math skills to measure materials needed to grow the plants. They could create and decorate vases and pots in which to sell their plants and use communication skills to advertise and sell their products. Special education teachers are enthusiastic about the numerous learning experiences a greenhouse offers.

The estimated cost of the greenhouse is \$300,000, which includes the structure and equipment, plus accessibility enhancements to accommodate students who may be in wheelchairs or have other mobility concerns. The Educational Foundation Board approved a \$100,000 commitment last month but since has indicated they believe they will be able to raise even more than that amount.

Some student groups and athletic teams have already committed to fundraising for the cause. New Trier's Naming Committee will review a proposal to name the greenhouse in honor of Sofi.

If you are interested in making a tax deductible donation to the Foundation to support this project, please click here: <https://app.mobilecause.com/f/2id7/n>

### District Presents Tentative Levy

Chris Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, presented the Board with the District's tentative tax levy, which is the primary funding source for District programs and operations each year.

The District is recommending a 1.9 percent levy increase, exclusive of taxes levied on new property. The state's Property Tax Extension Limitation Act restricts school districts to increasing their levies by the Consumer Price Index or 5 percent, whichever is less. The 2018 CPI was 1.9 percent.

Property taxes account for approximately 91 percent of New Trier's operating budget. These revenues support the district's academic program, including a deep and broad curriculum and a faculty with more than 95 percent holding advanced degrees; a vast extracurricular program with an 85 percent participation rate; and strong student services, including dedicated post-high school counseling services and multiple supports for students who may be struggling.

While the assessed value of taxpayers' homes may increase significantly, particularly in reassessment years, the district's levy does not increase by that amount, and the district's tax rate paid on the assessed value of a home falls as the value of property rises. Average homeowners should see the New Trier portion of their tax bill increase by 1.9 percent.

The tentative levy includes an estimated sum to capture tax revenues generated from new property in the District, such as new houses or businesses. Since new property values are not yet known, the District must estimate the amount, which is then automatically lowered to match the amount of new property that comes on the tax rolls.

The Board will vote on the levy at its November meeting. Johnson's full presentation can be found here: <http://bit.ly/ntlevy2019>

### Other News from the Oct. 21 Meeting:

- The Board heard a report on summer school 2019, which saw an enrollment of 1,647 students, or 39.6 percent of all students. The seven-week summer school program includes academic courses, enrichment courses, sports camps, and travel opportunities. Enrollment in academics and sports went up, while enrollment in enrichment courses went down in 2019. Last spring, the District conducted a survey of students, staff, and parents to gather feedback on New Trier's summer school offerings and structure. While most respondents were satisfied with summer school, they identified schedule -- length of the session, dates, and time of day -- as the main deterrents to participation. A committee of faculty and administrators is studying whether any changes are needed to the summer school program and will make their recommendations by the end of the school year for implementation in summer 2021. The summer school report is here: <http://bit.ly/ntsummerschool>
- Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, presented proposed new courses and revisions to existing courses for the 2020-2021 school year. Proposed new courses include digital design, technical theatre, and civics leadership as well as expanded offerings in mathematics and science for students who receive special education services. The proposals also include one-semester options in art, public speaking, and transition seminar as well as additional options to meet the state's civics requirement in public forum debate and global studies for English language learners. The Board will vote on the course proposals and revisions at its November meeting.
- The District's auditor presented the audit and the Annual Financial Report for the 2018-19 school year. The report highlighted the District's strong financial management and excellent credit rating, and indicated that the auditor found no issues in the District's financial reporting.
- The Board adopted a resolution calling for increased collaboration with the municipalities in the township regarding economic development. The resolution expresses the District's wish to continue to be a part of a vibrant community with residential, retail, and other business opportunities, all of which contribute to healthy schools, and calls for stronger collaboration between the municipalities and the district when economic development

tools are used that may impact the District and its taxpayers. In particular, the resolution strongly discourages the use of Tax Increment Financing districts (TIFs).

- The Board voted on its positions regarding a number of resolutions proposed for action by the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB), which is the professional organization for school boards across the state. The resolutions help the organization determine its work with state lawmakers on issues affecting public schools; none of the resolutions would become state law without action by the General Assembly and governor. Among other issues, the Board voted to oppose resolutions that would allow school districts to decide whether trained civilians could carry guns in schools; to support a grant program for special education; to support programs for trauma-responsive practices in schools; and to reaffirm the IASB's position on lessening the time spent on standardized testing. The Board voted to abstain on a number of resolutions that do not apply to New Trier or that were unclear in their application.

*The New Trier Board of Education generally meets on the third Monday of each month, with the business portion of the meeting beginning at 7 p.m. in Room C234 on the Northfield Campus, 7 Happ Road.*

*Full videos of Board meetings are available online at <https://nths.mediaspace.kaltura.com/category/BOARD+OF+EDUCATION/>*

*Information about Board of Education members, upcoming meetings, agendas, minutes, and other documents are available at <http://www.newtrier.k12.il.us/boardofeducation/>*