

**NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 203
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
February 16, 2021
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 Tuesday, February 16, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

Members Present

Ms. Cathy Albrecht, President
Mr. Keith Dronen
Ms. Carol Ducommun
Ms. Jean Hahn
Mr. Brad McLane
Mr. Greg Robitaille

Administrators Present

Dr. Paul Sally, Superintendent
Mr. Christopher Johnson, Associate Superintendent for Finance & Operations
Dr. Joanne Panopoulos, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education
Mr. Peter Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction
Mrs. Denise Dubravec, Principal – Winnetka Campus
Mr. Paul Waechtler, Principal – Northfield Campus

Members Present Via Phone

Dr. Marc Glucksman, Vice President

Also Present

Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications; Mr. Michael Marassa, Chief Technology Officer; Dr. Renee Zoladz, Director of Human Resources; Mr. Augie Fontanetta, Athletic Director; Mr. Andy Butler, Kinetic Wellness Department Chair; Mr. Dave Conway, Director of Physical Plant Services; Mr. Marty Platton, Pepper Construction; Mr. Kevin Havens, Wight & Co.; Mr. Jason Dwyer, Wight & Co.; Mr. Mike Hill, Technology Department; Mr. Charles Wood, Technology Department; Ms. Lindsey Ruston, Board of Education Secretary; members of the press and community.

BUSINESS MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER – 5:30 p.m. – C234

Ms. Albrecht called the Regular Meeting of February 16, 2021 of the Board of Education to order at 5:31 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Ms. Albrecht then stated that a full, in-person meeting is not practical or prudent due to the Governor’s declared disaster.

Roll call was taken, and all members were present except for Dr. Glucksman.

Ms. Albrecht asked for a motion to move to Closed Session. Ms. Ducommun moved that the Board adjourn to closed session for the purpose of the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the District or legal counsel for the District, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee or against legal counsel for the District to determine its validity. Mr. Robitaille seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Ducommun, Ms. Hahn, Mr. McLane, Mr. Robitaille, Mr. Dronen, Ms. Albrecht

NAY: none

ABSENT: Dr. Glucksman

The motion passed.

II. CLOSED SESSION – 5:30 p.m. – A303

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

Ms. Albrecht recalled the Regular Meeting of February 16, 2021 of the Board of Education to order at 6:39 p.m. Ms. Albrecht confirmed that Dr. Glucksman, who participated via telephone, could hear her. Roll call was taken, and all members were present.

IV. Minutes

Ms. Albrecht asked for any comments or adjustments on the minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of January 11, 2021 (open session) and the Regular Meeting of January 19, 2021 (open and closed session). There was one request for a change by Mr. Dronen that was incorporated. Ms. Hahn moved, and Mr. Dronen seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of January 11, 2021 (open session) and the Regular Meeting of January 19, 2021 (open and closed session). Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Hahn, Mr. McLane, Mr. Robitaille, Mr. Dronen, Ms. Ducommun, Dr. Glucksman, Ms. Albrecht

NAY: none

The motion passed.

V. Communications

Ms. Albrecht invited anyone from the audience who wished to address the Board to come forward and fill out a yellow communications request form and give it to Ms. Niki Dizon, Director of Communications. There were two requests for public comment. Ms. Albrecht reminded commenters to keep their remarks to three minutes each in accordance with Board Policy 2-230.

1. Ms. Kristin Wisner, parent and Class of 2024 New Trier Parents' Association Co-Chair, shared comments in support of the proposed East Side Project at the Winnetka Campus.
2. Mr. Jim Burnside, Assistant Athletic Director and Head Girls Soccer Coach, shared comments in support of the proposed East Side Project at the Winnetka Campus.

VI. Special Orders of Business

A. Update from Campus Principals and FOIA Report

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

- He began by thanking Physical Plant Services (PPS) for their great work today to clear the campus of snow after the storm.
- The District partnered with a pharmacy for a community vaccination clinic last Wednesday. He thanked Mr. Johnson, Associate Superintendent for Finance and Operations, and Dr. Sally as well as the nursing staff for their work. The clinic vaccinated over 1,000 people, including New Trier faculty and staff, Township staff, and community members from group 1B.
- The Frosh/Soph Musical, Emma, took place in late January. He noted it was great to see students able to still have these opportunities.
- Attendance is hovering around 40% and the new library has been very popular and at capacity on a couple of different occasions.
- February is Black History Month and there is a great partnership between the Racial Affinity Coalition and Student Council. There is a daily photo on monitors around campus that display an African American historical event. Students can then do an activity associated with that event and learn more about it.
- Course registration is taking place and will conclude next week.
- The Freshman Girls Club participated in Project Linus where they made blankets. They were donated to local hospitals to bring comfort to seriously ill children.
- Pep Club made posters and placed them around the campus regarding social distancing, wearing masks, a lunch reminder as well as other Covid-19 safety reminders.

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

- She followed up on Mr. Waechtler's note about the lunch reminders and shared that a video will be sent to advisers regarding the lunch campaign of Eat Up! Mask Up! Clean Up!
- The same activity for Black History Month is taking place at the Winnetka campus as the groups collaborate.
- There are 27 National Merit Finalists.
- The school also has eight seniors who were selected as candidates for the 57th US Presidential Scholars program. It is one of the nation's top honors for high school students. There are approximately 600 candidates and in April, the White House Commission will select up to 161 for the honor.
- The 38th Annual Jazz Fest recently took place virtually. Mr. Nic Meyer, Music and Theatre Department Faculty, with the help of the school's video production team assembled current students from Jazz Ensemble 1 as well as

video from the past seven years to create the program. There will also be a day program for students with video resources and performances. About 25 schools will also participate in that program.

- Over the weekend, the Chess Team took 18th in the state in a virtual tournament.
- The New Trier Philosophy Club took first place in the 6th Annual Chicago Regional High School Ethics Bowl.
- Kinesis completed their dance show, the first with spectators again.
- The Music and Theatre department's Choir-Opera is rehearsing for Newsies.
- Athletics have returned and Mrs. Dubravec thanked Mr. Augie Fontanetta, Athletic Director, and Mr. Burnside for their work of trying to include some spectators. She shared the example of a virtual gymnastics competition that was currently taking place.

Mr. Johnson gave the FOIA report, noting that there were seven requests since the last Board meeting, six are closed and one remains open. They include: two regarding special education statistics, one regarding retirements, one regarding salary schedule information, one regarding property tax information and one regarding facilities bidding.

B. Report on New Trier Reopening and Operational Plan for 2020-2021

Dr. Sally reported on the New Trier Reopening and Operational Plan for 2020-2021. The agenda included an update on cases and quarantine, increasing the number of students on campus, travel guidance and an update on Grey Days.

Dr. Tim Hayes, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, shared an update on the number of cases and quarantine. He shared the exclusion chart from today, noting there are 25 students with a confirmed case of Covid with 88 students in quarantine. Dr. Hayes noted that the school is still working through the number of cases it has seen from the community with this cluster. He reminded parents and students to use good judgement as well as avoid gatherings. For a frame of reference, this is the number of cases that the school was at on February 4th, and the peak of the cluster was on February 10th with 48 cases, so the hope is that the school is heading down the other side of the peak. Dr. Sally shared the positivity rates for staff zip codes and the Township as well as new cases per 100,000. Dr. Sally also stressed the importance of abiding by the District's strong internal mitigation efforts. The school needs to continue to have the support of students and families, especially quarantining if they have attended large gatherings. There will be consequences for those who disregard the District's mitigation efforts either in school or on the Ruvna app.

Mr. Johnson provided a brief update on the saliva screening. There continues to be strong participation from students and staff and Mr. Johnson thanked students, staff, and parents for their commitment to the program. There is a proposed change to the drop off schedule. Currently, extracurricular participants provide their samples on Sunday with all other students providing their samples either Sunday/Monday or Tuesday/Wednesday depending on their track. Due to high extracurricular participation, especially as Athletics begins, 78% of samples are dropped off Sunday/Monday. The program is more effective if samples are screened in a distributed fashion as it helps to better detect Covid in the environment. Beginning next week, there will not be a separate extracurricular drop-off time, all students will drop-off on their assigned days in advance of in-person attendance. Students will continue to be screened on a weekly basis and families will be notified of this change this week. This schedule change will help to hopefully pick up cases that may not have been visible on Sunday/Monday. Dr. Sally shared his appreciation of students and families who are participating in the saliva screening. This change is important for the extracurricular program as students are often in five or six days per week. Those students who are in two days a week will continue to submit their sample prior to attending.

Dr. Sally provided attendance for the first half of February. He went on to share further details, noting that attendance dropped at Winnetka due to an increase in quarantines. He also shared the reminder of "Eat Up! Mask Up! Clean Up!" to keep students safe in lunch and free spaces.

Next, Dr. Sally discussed increasing the number of students on campus. There is space at the Winnetka campus to have additional students in attendance, while at the Northfield campus, there is less capacity for extra students as a higher number of students are already attending in-person. The District will communicate to families and ask them to complete a request form if they are interested in their student attending four days a week. This would begin on March 1st for the remainder of third quarter. The District recognizes that it does not know what the response will be but will be watching to see what numbers come out of the survey. This will be done in a measured way as the school is still trying to manage a bit of a surge in Covid numbers. Parents, students, and staff will also be sent a survey to share their feedback on Grey Days. In regard to planning for fourth quarter, there is some concern amongst the Reopening Advisory Board (RAB) that there will be a number of seniors who want to join and be a part of the school as much as

possible during their last quarter. The District would like to provide this opportunity as much as possible for seniors. The week of March 15th, the District will ask families about fourth quarter. Capacity will be limited due to the six feet of distance that is required.

Dr. Hayes then shared about travel guidance. Cook County has been trying to make sure that their guidance is in alignment with the city of Chicago. The new guidance is that if a person travels to an “orange” state, they either need to quarantine for ten-days upon their return or have a negative diagnostic test result, taken no earlier than 72 hours prior to one’s arrival home. It is also important that while traveling a person is social distancing, masking, and following the other guidelines to keep them safe. This information will be communicated to parents. This new guidance will also be reflected in the Ruvna questions. Dr. Sally noted that the District will continue to watch Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) and what guidance they have for travel and will adjust accordingly. The sender schools have adopted this as well as many others in the area. The District looks to the local health department to give it guidance on these matters so as to keep school as safe as possible. Dr. Sally then invited questions and comments from the Board.

Mr. Robitaille inquired as to the messaging to families about the four-day option. Dr. Sally responded that it will be an open invitation. He shared other comments, noting that while it is an open invitation, each campus continues to watch for those students who are struggling as well. The District will then work on the numbers with Dr. Sally noting that he remains committed to staying safe, maintaining six feet of social distancing while also bringing in as many students as safely as possible.

Second, Mr. Robitaille commented on Grey Days and inquired if Dr. Sally had thoughts on returning to school on those days. Dr. Sally stated that the District will look at it and he also acknowledged that there would need to be a significant shift in the structure of what has already been put together. He noted that it is important that the school is serving its students who are in most need. Mr. Tragos, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, shared additional thoughts, noting that there are sound pedagogical reasons for the Grey Day in this environment and moment in time. He continued with his comments, stating there are benefits to the whole system in a hybrid environment and pandemic. There have been two Grey Days so far and more data will be gathered from future days. Mr. Robitaille asked if the question could at least be addressed to which Mr. Tragos agreed.

Ms. Ducommun noted that the travel guidance is realistic but thought parents may have questions. She shared an example of a person traveling, comes home and has a negative PCR test. She inquired if they should also continue to submit their saliva sample on their assigned day and believes the answer to be yes despite it feeling redundant. She encouraged this as the saliva screener may catch something that did not show up in the PCR test. Dr. Sally responded that yes, students should continue to submit their sample even though they will have had a PCR test. This will be emphasized in messaging to families. Ms. Ducommun inquired as to how families will inform the school of a negative PCR test. Dr. Sally responded that the District will not collect the information but asked that families keep it in case an issue arises. It will also be a Ruvna question inquiring if they followed the District’s guidance. This has been the usual philosophy with families, and they are generally compliant.

Ms. Ducommun emphasized that it is imperative to get students in seats now who want to be, and she applauded the staff for undertaking this effort as there are many logistics. She inquired of Mrs. Dubravec if asking those students who are remote during third quarter whether they are coming back if it impacts the number that she is willing to accommodate in the remaining portion of the third quarter. Mrs. Dubravec responded that there will be another check with families around March 15th. Dr. Sally added that it does not impact now, it needs to be clear that it will be asked again in the middle of March about fourth quarter plans. He shared other thoughts and Mrs. Ducommun noted that this will make a difference for families and their students. Ms. Hahn noted that the first step is asking parents and the second step is to see where the school has room. She inquired if that was based on attendance numbers or who has opted in to in-person learning. Dr. Sally answered it was based on attendance numbers and those students who are present in-person. He noted that some classes are over capacity and in that case, some students go to a Zoom Room in order to participate. Each teacher and their department leader are figuring that out and often times there is space in the classroom because another student did not attend in-person that particular day. This plan will continue to be implemented, however, much of it depends on the capacity of the lunch and free areas. Ms. Hahn commented that this came up in RAB about seniors wanting to be in more. There may also be incremental growth in attendance as more teachers are in-person and even as the weather gets nicer. Ms. Hahn noted that the numbers are not fixed and can fluctuate and inquired how much room is available. Dr. Sally responded that although this has not been the experience so far, it does need to be monitored as fourth quarter begins.

Ms. Hahn inquired where the four-day students fall in the saliva screening, to which Dr. Sally answered that they will be kept alphabetical by last name. When the District communicates to families about the staggered testing, she would like the point made that the school wants students testing later in the week if that is their assigned days. She wanted to make sure that this was the goal and not permissive action.

In the popular press, Ms. Hahn has read that the six feet of social distancing might not need to be followed in schools. In Illinois, this directive comes from the state and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). She inquired if anything has been heard about the school moving away from that. Dr. Sally stated that he has heard that discussions are on-going but has not heard about an imminent announcement related to that. If an announcement is made, the District will discuss and determine how to respond.

Mr. McLane continued to encourage a graphic depiction for the exclusion chart. Second, he noted the push towards the distributed screening model is a plus. He thanked those who helped to influence this move and found it helpful to hear their perspective. Mr. McLane then inquired if the SafeGuard saliva screener would count as the diagnostic test, to which Dr. Sally said it would not. He then inquired if double-masking has been discussed at RAB. Dr. Sally said it would be discussed at tomorrow's meeting and the medical professionals will be asked for their guidance on that. Mr. McLane stated there was no down-side to double-masking but there seems to be a considerable up-side.

Mr. Dronen reiterated Dr. Hayes' previous comments reminding parents and students to use good judgement. He also commented that the new staggered testing will also be important. He noted that parents have a responsibility to use good judgement in order to keep cases down.

Dr. Glucksman congratulated everybody at New Trier for their responsiveness, flexibility and being able to pivot quickly. He gave examples that have occurred since last week's Committee of the Whole meeting such as with the staggered testing and tightening up of the Ruvna questionnaire.

Ms. Albrecht inquired if SafeGuard has any issues with handling a different routine from the school, which Dr. Sally noted that Mr. Johnson checked with them and there were no concerns. With numbers getting a bit more back to normal with positive cases, she inquired if the District thinks it is past this current situation. Dr. Sally shared that one of the epidemiologists on the RAB has been working on this question and will present information to that group tomorrow. Regarding the survey on the Grey Day, she thought it would be beneficial to get this information from those responding. She also agreed that the next best step is to try and have more students attend in-person. Dr. Sally noted it was about sustainability and safety and the District does want to increase the number of students who have the ability to come in as often as possible. The District is committed to being safe doing this. He went on to thank students and families who are doing a lot to work through all of this. He appreciates everyone's patience as decisions are made as quickly as possible. He recognizes that the travel guidance is a concern for many, especially with athletic try-outs. He thanked health services again for all their work, particularly around contact tracing, which is critical to staying open for in-person learning. Ms. Albrecht added that she and Ms. Hahn toured the Winnetka campus recently and stopped by health services. She was very impressed with the positive attitude and energy. She noted they are doing an incredible job and personally thanked them for their work.

C. 2021-2022 Bell Schedule Discussion

Dr. Sally presented on the 2021-2022 Bell Schedule, noting that the school continues to analyze its schedule as well as talk with various groups impacted by it. This feedback has been important as the school looks to next year.

Mr. Waechtler then reviewed the different schedules that are being discussed. The first is the nine-period schedule that New Trier has had for decades. It includes 40-minute periods, one of which is taken up by lunch and is the same schedule daily. He shared additional details about early bird with this schedule. The next one is the eight-period rotating block. Classes would be roughly 80 minutes and there would be four blocks per day. Lunch is embedded and there is a possibility of a late start once a week, which is not mandatory. The first week would start with a blue day, the second week would then start with a green day with classes meeting twice or three times a week. The last option is the blended eight-period block. This would combine both schedules. Three days a week would consist of a Trevian Day, where every class meets for 40-minutes. Lunch is embedded and there are two block days. Those block days have the option of a late start or early dismissal.

First, Mr. Waechtler shared a chart that had each schedule and contact information. This included contact days per week, contact minutes per week and the number of contact minutes for science per week. The current nine-period block was not considered for next year as it has the fewest instructional minutes and includes Monday as a Trevian

Day, not a Grey Day. The other three models have similar amounts of minutes and depending on if there is a late start or not, they can be almost identical. The rotating eight-period block would not have a science lab on Fridays.

Next, Mr. Waechtler shared the survey results from staff, students, and parents, noting there were many respondents from all three groups. He provided the weighted average and further details of the various priorities and preferences. Finally, he provided overall schedule feedback. Parents and students have a strong preference for the rotating eight-period block with staff split between the rotating block and the traditional nine-period schedule. There were also significant differences by department in terms of preference. Mr. Waechtler shared that while special education staff preferred the traditional nine-period schedule, students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and their parents preferred the eight-period rotating block.

Mr. Waechtler and Mr. Tragos have been collaborating on extended learning opportunities as to why they may be popular and what research might support that. Mr. Tragos went on to share the benefits of extended learning opportunities such as fewer transitions made throughout the day and are instead, within the classroom itself allowing for more time in between learning activities. These opportunities also allow for reinforced learning and deeper content as well as the ability to reflect, process and think. The extended learning time would also allow for a wider array of instructional strategies. He went on to share additional comments.

Mr. Waechtler noted that meetings were held with three of the Elective departments, Science and Special Education to problem solve and have focused discussions on their concerns. Science and Special Education preferred to keep the traditional nine-period schedule. Many of the Elective departments preferred the longer block, but their main concern was the potential for student schedule conflicts. He went on to share additional thoughts noting that the school is committed to minimizing student schedule conflicts, particularly for capstone courses. A small number of students, who in the past had a schedule with no lunch, would have to make different choices. Next, Mr. Waechtler detailed the concerns from science regarding the specifics of lab period implementation and early bird instructional time and a late start as well as ways to rectify these issues. He then provided a sample student schedule that included science and its labs. Finally, he shared the Special Education department's main concern of consistent contact days each week in Resource Seminar and other Special Education classes and their secondary concern was keeping some student engaged for the entire block. He shared additional comments on these concerns as well as provided a sample of a special education student's schedule.

Mr. Waechtler concluded that there is a need to adapt the current schedule in order to increase instructional time while keeping open the possibility of still needing hybrid and remote environments next year. The eight-period rotating block meets important needs as there is a more moderate pace to the day, it reduces stress, there is flexibility for hybrid/remote/in-person as well as enhanced learning opportunities for all students in all classes. Mr. Tragos expanded on the enhanced learning opportunities regarding the use of time and real-time feedback from students. The recommendation is to pursue finalizing the eight-period rotating block. Late start options would be discussed with the Board at the March meeting. This schedule would also see continual refinement and evaluation as the District learns from implementing it. Mr. Waechtler then invited questions and comments from the Board.

Mr. Dronen inquired who of the District's peer schools have moved to the block schedule. Mr. Waechtler responded that Glenbrook North has been on a similar schedule for the longest amount of time. During the pandemic and hybrid learning, more schools have moved towards this type of schedule. Dr. Sally added that many of those schools are determining what type of schedule they will have for next year. Mr. McLane also encouraged looking at what the cohort schools are doing as well. Mr. McLane noted it was great that there was a recommendation and it made a lot of sense.

Ms. Hahn was encouraged to see the eight-period rotating block. She noted that early in the pandemic the school was receiving feedback that student anxiety was down, and that Ms. Ducommun had said that when the school was through some of this, it should see what of the silver linings could be retained. She believes this is one area that can be retained and there are academic as well as social emotional reasons to do so. She noted that the proposed schedule seems to address the needs of the vast majority of students and for those who have special interests and special needs, and if the District is confident it can mostly accommodate those students, she does not see any issues and thinks the option sounds great.

Ms. Ducommun thanked Mr. Waechtler for his presentation, noting it was easy to follow. Her concerns are the three areas that were mentioned, electives, early bird science and special education. She is confident that some of the suggestions that Mr. Waechtler had for the special education curriculum could work out well. She shared similar

concerns about early bird science that was outlined in the memo and agree that the answer is what was suggested regarding the early dismissal Fridays and late start Mondays. Ms. Ducommun's outstanding concern continues to be the electives, particularly music. She shared further comments around this concern. Ms. Ducommun noted her support for the eight-period rotating block, but who said she would be remiss if she did not ask for the opportunity to hear from someone who lives in this world daily and encouraged communication with the Board about how this will impact their department and students. Mr. Waechtler responded that the school wants to maintain its excellent music program, but more importantly, maintain the student experience within the program. Dr. Sally noted that course selection will be complete prior to the next Board meeting and will allow for data to be provided, though the depth of the analysis is uncertain. Ms. Ducommun then inquired how the school will know that there are students who selected eight periods but were disappointed that they could not choose nine. She inquired how it would be analyzed with the data that will be provided mid-March. Mr. Tragos responded that usually it is not known until the master schedule is run, but there will be early information if it conflicts with other natural conflicts. Ms. Ducommun noted that she would want to know the number of students who could not pick nine courses. Dr. Sally replied that that information would come from talking with the elective departments and performing arts as they have those conversations with students. Mr. Tragos noted that work can be done with other departments to solve issues. Conversation continued between Mr. Tragos and Ms. Ducommun.

Mr. Dronen shared his concern that this is moving too fast but knows that decisions need to be made. He inquired if the block schedule had been in consideration prior to Covid. Dr. Sally responded that student stress has been a topic for many years. There were discussions around this pre-pandemic and Covid required the District to make a change to the nine-period block schedule. For next year, Dr. Sally wants to stay focused on two items, student stress, noting there has been positive feedback from staff, students, and parents on the block schedule. Second, he noted that the District needs to be ready for hybrid or remote as it moves to next year. The interest in having the same schedule all year was very clear. Ms. Ducommun noted that in the 2003-2004 Strategic Plan the idea was brought up and she provided historical context. Dr. Sally shared additional comments, particularly regarding Modern and Classical Languages.

Mr. Dronen noted that it sounds as if the school is working to resolve issues related to electives, early bird science and special education, to which Dr. Sally responded it is. Mr. Waechtler added that the science concerns are resolved. Discussion then took place between Dr. Sally and Mr. Dronen regarding special education.

Mr. Dronen then inquired about the key points of the administration recommending the rotating schedule over the blended one. Mr. Waechtler noted the blended schedule has the advantage of more student contact days, but fewer extended learning opportunities. In a hybrid setting, having three Trevian Days, which were not well-received this year, would be problematic.

Ms. Albrecht shared that if the District is going to try this, next year is the year to do so. This has been discussed for years, mainly around student stress and reducing that. She noted there will be issues to work out. She also encouraged learning from peer schools and the consortium schools who have done this before. She also thought that a decent amount of professional development will be needed. Ms. Albrecht noted that Mrs. Dubravec had shared that there will be professional development in February to continue to work on how current classes are working and the reduction in stress. Dr. Sally shared comments noting that anything that is done next year will need to be reviewed on a continual basis. Regarding the blended schedule, staff stress was a concern in terms of managing it on a week-to-week basis, even in-person, where the rotating block has the consistency to moderate the pace. Ms. Albrecht also encouraged finding ways to adjust schedules for those students who want to take electives.

***D. 15-year Plan Update: Winnetka Campus East Side Academic and Athletic Project – Project Approval**

Mr. Johnson presented on the 15-year Plan Update: Winnetka Campus East Side Academic and Athletic Project – Project Approval. Mr. Johnson began by acknowledging the work of the team, which includes Mr. Dave Conway, Director of Physical Plant Services, Mr. Steve Linke, Winnetka Campus Facilities Manager, the architectural team led by Mr. Jason Dwyer and Mr. Kevin Havens at Wight & Co, Mr. Marty Platten from Pepper Construction as well as Mr. Augie Fontanetta, Athletic Director and Mr. Andy Butler, Kinetic Wellness Department Chair along with many others who have contributed. Mr. Johnson gave an overview of the project as well as shared key benefits and project features. He then noted that there had been discussion about the importance of the academic part of the project and the new classroom spaces that will be built. Classrooms in the North and Tower Buildings are being improved, but it is important that new classrooms be added to the east side of the campus as well. He shared a chart with classroom count changes beginning in 2020 through 2030. He provided further explanation of the classroom counts. Next, Mr. Johnson walked through the athletic facility comparison chart of peer schools. The project cost

estimate has remained the same from last week's meeting at \$75.269 million. He shared the direct, indirect and owner costs, noting that there is total of approximately \$8 million in contingency.

The financing plan remains the same as previously discussed and does not involve a referendum to increase property taxes. He expanded on the details of the financing plan as well as the funding sources which include alternate revenue bonds, debt service extension base (DSEB) and fund balance (reserves). The Finance Committee recommended this financing option and it is a wise use of District resources. He detailed the alternate revenue bonds, noting that using the proposed 21-year bonds will save the District about \$8 million in interest costs versus the 26-year bonds. Mr. Johnson shared a chart that summarized the alternate revenue debt service, the projected surpluses based on the 5-year plan, the projected cost containment along with the projected funds available for the \$3.1 million in debt service for the alternate revenue bonds paid by the District's operating funds. The recommendation is to proceed with the project. Based on the work of the Finance Committee, the Facilities Steering Committee and the District's analysis, the project meets the needs of students, is a key part of the 15-year facility plan, there is stakeholder and community support, and it continues the District's successful approach of renovating the Winnetka campus while taking advantage of the stability in construction costs and the favorable financing rates. At tonight's meeting, there are three actions that need to be taken. The first is the notice of intent to issue the \$50.5 million in alternate revenue bonds and \$19.5 million in working cash bonds. On the consent agenda, is the contract with Wight & Co for architectural services as well as a contract with Pepper Construction for construction management services. Mr. Johnson shared an abbreviated version of the project timeline, noting that if approved this evening, design development will begin and is the next phase of the process. Ms. Liz Hennessey, the District's financial expert from Raymond James and a key part of the project working with the Finance Committee for the pass year, joined the meeting by phone.

Mr. Robitaille commented that the reasons to do this project are the same as to the reasons for doing the West Side Project which were outdated infrastructure that was not accommodating to the programming and educational needs of students, highly energy inefficient, inaccessible to those with disabilities and had vastly outlived their useful life by a couple of decades. He shared the shortcomings of the current east side space, noting it is not salvageable. He noted it is a prudent use of taxpayer funds, an important investment in the future of New Trier, as well as an investment in students that meets the programming needs. After further comments, Mr. Robitaille stated that he was highly supportive of moving forward. Also, as a member of the Finance Committee, the numbers have been run many times and different scenarios were reviewed and this is a conservative financing plan that the District has the resources to meet and more than enough debt service coverage to pay for this without asking taxpayers for more money.

Ms. Ducommun stated she, too, fully supports the project, not because the school is in an "arms race" with other schools or that students "deserve it," but it is the Board's job to provide the facilities that are safe and respectful, which the current facilities are not. This project supports the District's educational goals and that all students will be better off for these facilities. It makes prudent use of taxpayer dollars. It is the right time, having the team intact from the West Side Project, low interest rates and supports the priorities for all students.

Ms. Hahn thanked everyone who shared their perspective about the project with the Board. She contends that the school's engaged community is one of New Trier's greatest resources and their voice is particularly valuable to the Board when faced with a large decision. Ms. Hahn noted as she read emails and listened to comments, that she was struck, not only by how profoundly families, alumni, students, and faculty value New Trier, but by their universal support expressed for this endeavor. After additional comments, Ms. Hahn stated that she wholeheartedly applauds the extraordinary efforts of everyone who contributed their talent, experience, and creativity to advance this project from a vision to a reality. She also expressed her deep gratitude for the hope this project embodies, hope that the community has the resilience to emerge from these challenging times with its relationships intact because while there is little doubt that students deserve and the aging facilities demand the investments being considered, it is ultimately the people who make New Trier the exceptional institution that is clearly valued. She noted that she is proud to support this investment in New Trier's future and grateful to celebrate the promise it holds for the community.

Mr. Dronen has spoken with many community members and they are extremely excited, both those with students at New Trier and those without.

Dr. Glucksman noted that the District is in a better position now than it was five years ago with the West Side Project as there is the added knowledge, the same team as well as living within the District's means with it being the best time financially to do this. Stakeholders were engaged multiple times, and this is a very refined project.

Mr. McLane shared that he sees the complements of three extraordinary forces all occurring at the same time, there is a glaringly evident need, combined with community outreach and input that has been extraordinary in terms of feedback. Finally, the Facilities Steering Committee, which both he and Mr. Dronen have been a part of, but also administration, teachers, staff, and outside resources, Mr. McLane noted that he not seen so much thoroughness and thoughtfulness planning that has gone into a capital investment project as he has with this. He shared that the time is right and is excited to move this forward.

Ms. Albrecht noted there have been many meetings not only at the Board table, but with the Finance Committee and Facilities Steering Committee. She reminded everyone that this is the middle path, there was a lesser option and a larger one, but with this path, the District is getting almost all that it needs. From looking at this in the fall of 2019, she noted that it has only gotten better. After other comments, Ms. Albrecht noted the \$8 million in financing savings by going with the 21-year option. The time is right, it is the right project and it is going to finally unite the campus. She shared an anecdote, stating it is time to make the campus contiguous, modern, and flexible for students.

Mr. McLane moved, and Ms. Ducommun seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approves the Winnetka Campus East Side Academic and Athletic Project. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Mr. McLane, Mr. Robitaille, Mr. Dronen, Ms. Ducommun, Dr. Glucksman, Ms. Hahn, Ms. Albrecht

NAY: none

The motion passed.

VII. Administrative Items

A. Treasurer's Report for January 2021

Mr. Johnson presented the Treasurer's Report for January 2021. January is typically a low point for cash balances, as the school year is well underway, with typical expenses. The semi-annual debt payments are also paid in December. Tax payments for the 2020 levy started to be received in January. Cash balances for all accounts totaled \$94,431,061. The weighted portfolio yield continues to drop in the low interest rate environment, with 1.27% for long-term investments that were previously locked in and just over 19 basis points for short-term. This is very low in terms of interest earnings. There does continue to be consistent receipts for local, state, and federal sources.

B. Financial Reports for January 2021

Mr. Johnson presented the Financial Reports for January 2021. Operating revenue was \$53,550,994 for the first seven months of the fiscal year, or 2.95% lower compared to last year. State and Federal grants and categorical payments have been timely, while Other Local Sources such as parking or student fees continue to be lower this year due to the pandemic. The adopted budget for operating revenue is slightly higher for this fiscal year, so the District looks for this to catch up in the coming months.

Operating expenditures were \$60,009,365 (excluding transfers), or 1.12% lower than last year. Expenses are trending reasonably well with the overall budget. The adopted budget for expenditures was 2.58% higher this fiscal year. The District is seeing some savings on the expenditures side as it goes through the year, while seeing movement of other items, such as the athletic programming that recently began again. There will start to be normalization and the District is in a good place just past the mid-point for the year.

Ms. Albrecht complimented the footnotes in the Education Fund as it shows the oddities of this year. Mr. Johnson noted that Mr. Myron Spiwak, Director of Business Services, puts the report together.

Ms. Ducommun noted that Cook County taxes are due March 1st, but there is some forgiveness for a late payment given the pandemic. She noted that this money may not come in as readily as it typically does but mentioned that in the fall it was not that huge of an impact for the District. Mr. Johnson concurred and shared additional information.

***C. Consideration and action on a resolution authorizing the issue of not to exceed \$50,500,000 general obligation alternate revenue bonds for certain capital projects for the east side Winnetka Campus athletic and academic facility**

Mr. Johnson noted that three funding sources will be used for the east side project that was just approved. The largest is \$50.5 million in alternate revenue bonds. The first step is to approve this motion authorizing the issuance of the bonds. There will be a public hearing at the March Board Meeting with a parameters resolution issued at the April

Board Meeting which will allow the District to do the bond sale. There are other steps in between, but this is the first financing action that is being taken for the project. Mr. Johnson then invited questions and comments from Board members.

Ms. Ducommun reiterated that the bonds are coming from the operating funds, but there is a back stop, a tax mechanism, that if it becomes untenable for any reason, there is a tax levy component that can kick into gear. She asked Mr. Johnson to speak further about this, which he did. Ms. Ducommun noted it was a safe investment and low-cost financing, to which Mr. Johnson agreed and went on to share other comments.

Ms. Ducommun moved, and Mr. Robitaille seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approves the RESOLUTION authorizing the issuance of General Obligation School Bonds (Alternate Revenue Source) of Township High School District Number 203, Cook County, Illinois, in an aggregate principal amount not to exceed \$50,500,000 pursuant to the Local Government Debt Reform Act of the State of Illinois, as amended, to pay the costs of renovating, repairing, equipping, demolishing and building additions to portions of the east side Winnetka Campus athletic and academic facility and improving the site thereof. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Mr. Robitaille, Mr. Dronen, Ms. Ducommun, Dr. Glucksman, Ms. Hahn, Mr. McLane, Ms. Albrecht

NAY: none

The motion passed.

***D. Consideration and action on a resolution to issue not to exceed \$19,500,000 bonds to increase the District's working cash fund**

Mr. Johnson noted that this was the second portion of the District's financing plan, the Debt Service Extension Base (DSEB) bonds, which are a portion of the tax levy. He explained more about these bonds, noting that the District has the capacity to issue \$19.5 million in working cash fund bonds and this is the first step in that process. Regarding the overall project, the District is first going to sell the alternate revenue bonds for \$50.5 million, which will happen this spring and will finance the first part of the project. The working cash fund bonds will be sold in two groups, the first will be in February of 2022 in the amount of \$10 million designated for the Winnetka Campus East Side Project. The second will occur in February of 2023 for a total of \$9.5 million, with \$4.5 million designated for the East Side Project with the remaining \$5 million for the 15-year plan projects.

Mr. Dronen moved, and Mr. Robitaille seconded the motion, that the Board of Education approves the RESOLUTION declaring the intention to issue \$19,500,000 Working Cash Fund Bonds of Township High School District Number 203, Cook County, Illinois, for the purpose of increasing the Working Cash Fund of said School District, and directing that notice of such intention be published in the manner provided by law. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Mr. Dronen, Ms. Ducommun, Dr. Glucksman, Ms. Hahn, Mr. McLane, Mr. Robitaille, Ms. Albrecht

NAY: none

The motion passed.

VIII. Consent Agenda

- Bill List for the Period, January 1 – 31, 2021
- Personnel Report (Appointments, Change of Status, Leaves of Absence, Resignations, and Retirements)
- Approve and award a contract to EHC Environmental for \$211,000 for the Asbestos Abatement related to the Winnetka Campus Summer 2021 Renovation Project.
- The contract amendment with Wight and Co as presented and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreement.
- Approve the contract with Pepper Construction as presented and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreement.
- Approve the Student Fees for 2021-22 school year as presented.
- Approve Site Use Agreement with Cook County Department of Public Health as presented.
- The maximum allocation of \$233,815 for scholarships for the 2021 graduation class.

Ms. Albrecht inquired if any members wanted to pull an item off the Consent Agenda, no one chose to do so. Mr. Robitaille did want to clarify a student fees comment made by Mr. Dronen. Mr. Robitaille noted that the District is suggesting an increase in student parking fees, which Mr. Dronen noted he saw in the report.

Ms. Albrecht also confirmed that Board Briefs would provide more information on the student fees.

Dr. Glucksman moved that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda, which includes: Bill List for the Period, January 1 – 31, 2021; Personnel Report (Appointments, Change of Status, Leaves of Absence, Resignations, and Retirements); Approve and award a contract to EHC Environmental for \$211,000 for the Asbestos Abatement related to the Winnetka Campus Summer 2021 Renovation Project; the contract amendment with Wight and Co as presented and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreement; approve the contract with Pepper Construction as presented and authorize the Associate Superintendent to execute the agreement; approve the Student Fees for 2021-22 school year as presented; approve Site Use Agreement with Cook County Department of Public Health as presented; and the maximum allocation of \$233,815 for scholarships for the 2021 graduation class. Ms. Ducommun seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Ms. Ducommun, Dr. Glucksman, Ms. Hahn, Mr. McLane, Mr. Robitaille, Mr. Dronen, Ms. Albrecht

NAY: none

The motion passed.

IX. Board Member Reports

Ms. Hahn noted that the **Environmental Committee** met for the first time since last April. The student Environmental Club has robust attendance and is meeting weekly. They are engaging students virtually in various activities such as fundraisers and student presentations. The committee also discussed having students from the club present to the Board about the sustainability initiatives that are taking place in the District of which they are a part. The Special Education Transition Program has been working with the committee. Part of the work that the Transition students have been doing is collecting recycling from classrooms. It has been a challenging year to find work opportunities for these students and this is one way to accommodate that. Sofi's Greenhouse was completed and the Transition and Educational and Life Skills (ELS) students have been learning about planting as well as decorating pots in preparation to plant carrots. Lastly, Mr. Conway walked the committee through the sustainability factors that are going into the East Side Project, which was well received by the group.

Ms. Hahn noted that the **Board Policy Committee** has been working to update policies. She notes the work has been gratifying to see how simple it is to go through the Policy Reference Education Subscription Service (PRESS) policies and process those revisions now that the District is attempting to use their standard policies. It will save, as the intention was, the administration a lot of time and effort in keeping the policies up to date.

Mr. Dronen reported that the **NSSD Leadership Council** met on February 10th. Effective July 1st, they will have a new name, True North Educational Cooperative 804. They also discussed the current deficit in the budget as a direct result of Covid-19 expenses and decreased enrollment due to the pandemic. They may also look for contributions from member districts.

Mr. Dronen noted that the **Facilities Steering Committee** met on February 4th, which was covered earlier in the meeting.

Ms. Ducommun noted that she continues to meet with the **New Trier Fine Arts Association** and the **New Trier Parents' Association**. She will be a guest speaker at the Junior Class parent coffee on Thursday morning.

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

Dr. Sally highlighted the following:

- Mr. Tragos and his team have been working on Institute Day which will take place on Monday, February 22nd.
- Newies, the choir-opera musical, is planned for early March.
- The athletic seasons currently taking place are finishing up.
- The next Board of Education Meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 15th.

There were no requests for Staff Research and Future Agenda Items.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. McLane moved, and Mr. Robitaille seconded the motion, to adjourn. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the members voted as follows:

AYE: Dr. Glucksman, Ms. Hahn, Mr. McLane, Mr. Robitaille, Mr. Dronen, Ms. Ducommun, Ms. Albrecht

NAY: none

The motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lindsey Ruston, Secretary

Cathleen Albrecht, President