

**NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 203
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE - BOARD OF EDUCATION**

July 13, 2026

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

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A **Committee of the Whole 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, July 13, 2026, at 3:00 p.m.

Members Present

Mr. Avik Das
Ms. Jean Hahn
Mr. Joo Serk Lee
Ms. Courtney McDonough, Vice President
Mr. Brad McLane
Ms. Sally Pofcher
Ms. Sally Tomlinson, President

Administrators Present

Dr. Peter Tragos, Superintendent
Dr. Christopher Johnson, Deputy Superintendent
Dr. Chimille Tillery, Asst. Supt. for Curriculum & Instruction
Ms. Lauren Owens, Chief Technology Officer
Mr. Augie Fontanetta, Athletic Director
Mr. Jim Maile, Director of Physical Plant Services

Also Present

Ms. Wendy Watts, Wight & Co.; Mr. Kevin Havens, Wight & Co., Mr. Nick Cosek, Pepper Construction; Ms. Natalie Critchley, Cashman & Stahler; Mr. Steve Cashman, Cashman & Stahler; Mr. Mike Hill, Technology Department; Mr. Eric Johnson, Technology Department; Mr. Jeff Bailey, Technology Department; Ms. Lindsey Ruston, Board of Education Secretary; and members of the press and community.

BUSINESS MEETING

I. Call to Order

Ms. Tomlinson called the Committee of the Whole Meeting of July 13, 2026 of the Board of Education to order at 3:00 p.m. in room C234 at the Northfield campus. Roll call was taken, and all members were present, except for Mr. Das, who arrived at 3:08 p.m. and Mr. Lee, who arrived at 3:11 p.m.

II. Communications

Ms. Tomlinson 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 Dr. Tragos. There were no requests for public comment.

III. Long-Range Facilities Plan Review and Discussion

Dr. Tragos introduced the long-range facilities plan presentation, noting that while the focus is on the buildings, facilities, classroom technologies and potential timelines, the core of this discussion is the District's long-range plan as it relates to student learning and outcomes. Dr. Johnson shared additional comments, noting that the District has thoughtfully used the resources and funding available to it without the need for a referendum to accomplish significant improvements over the past 12 years. The presentation included spaces that do not meet the standard that the District wants from an instructional, safety, mechanical, and environmental perspective. The goal for the meeting was to have a discussion to explore these needs and the possible strategies that the District could take to address them. He then introduced Ms. Wendy Watts and Mr. Kevin Havens from Wight & Co., Mr. Nick Cosek from Pepper Construction, Ms. Natalie Critchley and Mr. Steve Cashman from Cashman & Stahler. The goal was not to review costs or timelines but rather deepen understanding of the District's needs in advance of Board adoption of a long-range plan. This will be followed by a recommendation for a set of projects to pursue first that have the greatest impact on students and possible funding mechanisms and timelines to bring the projects to life.

They went on to provide a detailed presentation to the Board on the potential roadmap for future facility improvements across the District. The presentation was divided into four chapters. The first was "Investing in the Future," where they focused on topics such as a point of inflection, key challenges, and translating the Strategic Plan into physical environments. The second chapter focused on the process used to "Listen to the New Trier

Community,” which included common themes across both campuses. The third chapter, “Many Voices, A Unified Direction,” centered on areas of opportunity through specific lenses as well as planning at both the Northfield and Winnetka campuses. The fourth chapter, “A Framework for the Future – Priorities and Phasing,” outlined priorities at both campuses. Board members were encouraged to ask questions throughout the presentation and did so. Dr. Johnson shared comments once the presentation concluded and invited discussion from Board members.

Ms. Hahn inquired if the goal is that in ten years everything is done or if in ten years, all of priority one is done as shown in the presentation. Dr. Johnson replied that realistically the District would like to see everything done in ten years, but there may be a limit to both time and resources. After additional comments, Dr. Johnson said that it will be a living plan with adjustments occurring if needed.

Ms. Pofcher inquired if it would be a fair observation that what is in priority one would exceed the District’s ability to finance without engaging the community. She was curious as to the process for the Board to understand a bit more about whether the District will need to divide group one into multiple groupings. Dr. Johnson replied that the District would like to come back to the Board over the next year with a refinement of the top priority items. This would involve the Finance Committee and Facilities Steering Committee. At that time, the District will dive into the specifics.

Mr. McLane inquired if the north and east play fields will be incorporated by reference so one is looking at this in totality. Dr. Johnson replied that he will look to see how they are represented and went on to share information about a potential stormwater project that would benefit the east side of the Village of Winnetka and New Trier. Dr. Johnson noted that they would beef up the reference to this.

Mr. Das shared his appreciation for how comprehensive and educational the information provided was. He suggested that it would be beneficial to have a graphic that shows the distinction between the District’s “wish list” priorities and a more realistic list. After additional comments, he encouraged noting the many opportunities where the community can join the District in the great things it wants to do for future generations of New Trier.

Ms. McDonough observed that the New Trier Learning Center (NTLC) could potentially be moved to the Winnetka campus. She inquired if this potential change has been vetted with those who run the program along with keeping the philosophy and heart of it. Dr. Tragos shared his appreciation for the inquiry and noted that it is an item that is still in discussion, and a final decision has not been made.

Mr. Lee inquired if Dr. Johnson anticipates any material changes to operating costs from the capital projects the District is looking at now. Dr. Johnson shared comments, noting that, in general, the operating costs are very similar to those that the District has now, if not better. Mr. Lee then went on to share that similar to other comments, a prioritization exercise is coming, and that the District will have to be very thoughtful about where it directs this investment. For him, in terms of long-term strategic planning, this might mean that it all goes into one place such as infrastructure instead of a little bit going to many different items. Dr. Johnson acknowledged Mr. Lee’s and Mr. Das’ comments, noting that this is homework that the District has in terms of what items does it pull from the roadmap as the highest priority and is vetted through various committees, ultimately bringing it to the Board.

Mr. McLane presented an argument that the District should be prepared to address regarding how much AI has changed so one might ask why classrooms even needed. The reality is the AI does not make classrooms go away. Dr. Johnson spoke to how, as AI becomes more predominant, the skills that students learn in school such as how to interact with one another, construct knowledge and how to collaborate become more important than ever. Ms. Hahn shared that there may also be a group of people who think the old classrooms are just fine. She went on to share additional comments, noting that a large portion of the District’s population no longer has children in school.

Ms. Pofcher shared her thanks for the incredible amount of work that has been done. She also thanked Dr. Johnson for his stewardship of this initiative that was not even written down last year. After sharing comments, she noted this felt like an essential first step of an important milestone on a long journey and the Board is now better educated to engage in the next step. Dr. Johnson replied that this is phase one of the development of the long-term plan and from that comes distillation of top priorities and capacity for the District and community.

Ms. Hahn, referencing the Strategic Plan slide, shared that it is nearing its end and inquired how the District will integrate the long-range facilities plan with what will eventually be a new version of a Strategic Plan. Dr. Tragos replied that the Strategic Plan work is done in much smaller time increments compared to a facilities plan, which will

be built for the next generation. They go together and yet have different purposes. He noted that there is work to be done around this.

Ms. Tomlinson commented that in 2025, the Board committed money to the administration to pull together Cashman Stahler, Pepper Construction, and Wight & Company to make sure they had a long-range plan for facilities and how those facilities helped the District achieve the Strategic Plan. She shared that document has been instrumental and looks forward to having a similar document that will help guide the Board. Ms. Tomlinson shared a comment from Dr. Johnson as well as comments about financial stewardship. She then encouraged the District and Board to go back to the question that Mr. Cashman presented at the beginning, “What would have the biggest impact on students and staff?” as priorities are worked through. Ms. Tomlinson liked seeing the academic and student life spaces highlighted as 40% of the time at Winnetka and 50% of the time at Northfield, students are in old, outdated classrooms. She was also enlightened to hear how many children are going through aquatics and would like to look at community partnerships. Ms. Tomlinson shared her thanks to all involved. Dr. Johnson also added his thanks to the team.

IV. Adjournment

Mr. Das moved, and Ms. McDonough seconded the motion, to adjourn. Upon a voice vote being taken, all members indicated they were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 4:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lindsey Ruston, Secretary

Sally Tomlinson, President