Minutes
Northgate School Board
Committee of the Whole Meeting
Monday, September 14, 2026
Northgate District Administration Boardroom

The Regular Committee of the Whole meeting of the Northgate Board of School Directors was held Monday, September 14, 2026. The meeting was opened at 5:37 p.m. by Mrs. Cheryl Patalano, President.

Roll call showed the following Board Members present: Mrs. Cheryl Patalano, President; Mrs. Wendi Lee, Vice President; Mr. Michael Rajacovich, Treasurer; Dr. William Bergmann; Dr. Melissa Bilski (arrived at 5:48 p.m.); Mrs. Amber Lehman (via Zoom); Mrs. Abigail Lindsey; Ms. Laura Pollanen. Absent: Mrs. Chelsea MacDonald.

Staff present: Dr. Caroline Johns, Superintendent; Mr. Christopher Ursu, Director of Finance and Operations; Emily Carter, Board Secretary; Dr. Christina Garczewski, Director of Special Services; Mr. Rob King, Technology Director; Dr. Christopher Caton, Director of Curriculum and Assessment; Mr. Bob Metz, Facilities Director; Mr. Michael Wagstaff, Assistant Secondary Principal and Athletic Director; Dr. Qualisha Zyhier, Bellevue Principal; Dr. Joseph Peacock, Avalon Principal; Dr. Nancy Bowman, Secondary Instructional Principal; Dr. Michael Amick, Secondary Student Services Principal; and Dr. Jeffrey Evancho, Director of Partnerships and Equity.

General Meeting

Visitors' Commentary: Mr. Rich LeViere of Pittsburgh Spirit, a resident of Latrobe, addressed the Board regarding the Pittsburgh Spirit request being tabled. He stated that Pittsburgh Spirit would like to remain with Northgate, that the organization has been flexible with Northgate, and that Northgate students are welcome at any Pittsburgh Spirit practice.

Motion was made by Mrs. Patalano, seconded by Mrs. Lindsey, that the Board approve items A1 through A10 as a consent agenda as follows:

1. Tax Assessment Appeal Settlement

Approve the negotiated settlement of the real estate tax assessment appeal filed by Meraki Residential III, LLC for the property located at 902-904 Erdner Avenue, Avalon, establishing a fair market value of $1,500,000 for tax years 2026 and 2027. This settlement will result in refunded taxes of $12,627 in 2026 and reduced taxes of $13,003 in 2027.

2. Supplemental Positions

Approve the following supplemental positions for the 2026-27 school year: Heather Persson, Yearbook Club (Avalon), $1,736; Sara Clunan, Mindfulness Club (Bellevue), $1,736; Sherrill Farmer, Rubik's Club (Avalon), $1,736; Thomas Ewing, Rubik's Club (Bellevue), $1,736; Christina Mackowick, Avalon Book Club, $1,736.

3. Supplemental Adjustment

Adjust the Elementary Forensics supplemental position to include both Gretchen Monahan and Austen Tarabay as Elementary Forensics Sponsors for the 2026-27 school year at a rate of $1,736, to be split evenly as follows: Sponsor 1: Gretchen Monahan ($868); Sponsor 2: Austen Tarabay ($868).

4. Divided Supplemental

Approve the Middle School/High School Forensics supplemental stipend of $1,736 to be split evenly as follows: Sponsor 1: Gretchen Monahan ($868); Sponsor 2: Austen Tarabay ($868).

5. Divided Supplemental

Approve the Avalon Best Buddies Club supplemental stipend of $1,736 to be split evenly as follows: Sponsor 1: Francesca Lindelow ($868); Sponsor 2: Jacob O'Keefe ($868).

6. Kindness Club Supplementals

Approve the three Avalon Kindness Club supplemental stipends of $1,736 each as follows: Stipend 1: Abigail Anderson ($1,736); Stipend 2: Heather Persson and Melinda Malsch ($868 each); Stipend 3: Sandi Nusskern, Nicole Borza, Austen Tarabay, Elesa DiBello, Breann Rupik, and Danielle DiDomenico ($290 each).

7. Bellevue Kindness Club Supplementals

Approve the two Bellevue Kindness Club supplemental stipends of $1,736 each (total: $3,472) to be split evenly as follows: Stipends 1 and 2: Sharon Trimber, Theo Papazekos, Eileen Maiette, Barb Gusew, Kristy Slate, Katie Caldwell, and Moira Folan ($496 each).

8. HealthCorps MOU (Renewal)

Approve an MOU with HealthCorps, Inc., in coordination with the University of Pittsburgh, for a Teens Make Health Happen Club in collaboration with the Advisory Program for the 2026-27 school year at no cost to the District.

9. STEM Coding Lab MOU

Approve a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with STEM Coding Lab to deliver an after-school computer science program for the 2026-27 school year at no cost to the District.

10. Arts Greenhouse MOU (Renewal)

Approve a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Carnegie Mellon University (Arts Greenhouse) for after-school programming for the 2026-27 school year at no cost to the District. The term of this agreement may be extended by consent of both parties.

Motion to approve items A1 through A10 was approved by unanimous voice vote.

Motion was made by Mrs. Patalano, seconded by Mrs. Lee, that the Board approve item A11 as follows:

11. Use of Facility Agreement

Approve a one-year agreement with Pittsburgh Spirit to use athletic facilities at Northgate for games and practices (softball field and batting cages) at $50 an hour, contingent upon availability, proper insurance coverage, and agreeing to a mutual hold harmless agreement. The term of this agreement shall be July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027.

Mrs. Lee clarified that the prior confusion regarding scheduling has been resolved.

Motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

Motion was made by Mrs. Patalano, seconded by Mrs. Lindsey, that the Board approve item A12 as follows:

12. Superintendent Goals

Approve the Superintendent goals for the 2026-2027 school year as submitted.

Motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

Motion was made by Mrs. Patalano, seconded by Mrs. Lee, that the Board approve item A13 as follows:

13. GoGuardian

Approve the renewal of GoGuardian Admin, Teacher, and Beacon for one year at a cost of $14,889.00.

Motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

A motion was made by Mrs. Patalano, seconded by Mrs. Lee, to adjourn the general meeting. The general meeting was adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Finance: Mr. Ursu, Director of Finance and Operations, presented the Financial Report. Mr. Rajacovich asked about the financial planners; Mr. Ursu stated that the District is waiting for an edited quote. Ms. Pollanen asked how the District will address the vehicle payment; Dr. Bergmann clarified that in the long term this will save the District money. The Bill List & Tax Refunds and the E-Rate Amendment with Epic Communications were presented as proposed agenda items. No action was taken.

Buildings & Grounds: Mr. Jonathan Fantazier shared information about Tree Pittsburgh. Ms. Pollanen mentioned that Tree Pittsburgh may be interested in working with the Bellevue horticulture club. No action was taken.

Technology: Mr. King, Technology Director, discussed the Raptor Emergency and Visitor Management renewal and the Google Workspace renewal. No action was taken.

Athletics: Mr. Wagstaff, Athletic Director, discussed the uniform tracker; Dr. Bilski and Dr. Bergmann noted that it will create a smooth process for maintaining and ordering uniforms. Mr. Connor Hulslander shared an update about the baseball uniforms. Mrs. Lehman suggested the District could consider requiring students to provide their own pants; Mr. Hulslander expressed concern that some families may be unable to provide them. No action was taken.

Student Activities: Mrs. Lehman led a discussion on district-wide school uniforms, citing equity, belonging, school identity, affordability, and culture, and the potential to reduce clothing-based bullying, and requested feedback from the Board, administration, and guests. Mrs. Lindsey expressed interest in hearing from students and concern that a dress code could make it difficult to secure required items through donations, and noted that some students may feel self-conscious in uniforms. Mrs. Patalano expressed that clothing-based bullying may still occur with uniforms and that sensory needs should be considered in uniform materials. Dr. Bergmann asked whether the issue is disruptive in the District; Dr. Zyhier stated that it is, and shared that her prior school maintained a uniform closet of donated clothing. Dr. Amick stated that he has not seen a pattern of outfit-based bullying at the secondary level and expressed a desire to gauge whether a significant number of students and families are affected. Mrs. Lee stated that a donation-based clothing closet should be well stocked from the beginning. Dr. Peacock noted that enforcement was difficult for staff in his past experience with a uniformed district. Mr. Rajacovich expressed concern that families might expect uniforms to be provided or laundered at no cost. Dr. Bilski noted that families typically spend money on clothing regardless. Dr. Johns will draft surveys for the Board to review for distribution to families and students, and Mrs. Lehman will prepare a discussion to continue the topic at the next Committee of the Whole meeting. No action was taken.

Education: Dr. Bergmann and Dr. Caton, Director of Curriculum and Assessment, shared discussion items, including the LinkIT pilot, the "Why Northgate?" document and community coffees, and the Dashtrom Program. Mrs. Lee suggested options other than coffee for community meetings, such as ice cream socials, so that children could attend and it would be easier for parents to participate. Dr. Garczewski, Director of Special Services, discussed the renewed Pediatric Therapy Associates contract. The AASA NCE conference attendance was presented as a proposed agenda item. No action was taken.

Administration: Dr. Johns, Superintendent, discussed two unpaid leave requests. No action was taken.

Old & New Business: Mrs. Patalano shared Old and New Business, including the PSBA Officer elections (Holly Arnold, President-Elect; Matt Vannoy, Vice President) and the PSBA Insurance Trust Trustee elections (Marianne L. Neel; Dr. Michael Faccinetto). No candidates applied for the Western Zone Representative position. The Board voted for the recommended candidates by unanimous vote.

Board Director Interviews: The Board interviewed three candidates for the vacant Board Director seat, Beth Mosley, Caroline Hari-Betton, and Kendra Hamilton, one candidate at a time, asking each candidate identical questions.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mrs. Patalano, seconded by Mrs. Lee. The Committee of the Whole meeting concluded at 6:31 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Emily Carter

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Board Secretary, Northgate School District