

# NORTHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## School Board Minutes

February 23, 2026  
District Office Board Room

1. Call to Order

School Board Chair Claudia Gonzalez-George called the regular meeting of the Board of Education of Independent School District No. 659 to order at 6:00 p.m. Present: Butler, Epstein, Goerwitz, Gonzalez-George, Miller, Nelson, and Quinnell. Absent: None. This meeting was open to the public, live-streamed and recorded, and access to the recording was posted on the school district website.

2. Agenda Approval/Table File

On a motion by Goerwitz, seconded by Quinnell, the board unanimously approved the agenda.

3. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

4. Announcements and Recognitions

- The community is invited to attend an event with Dr. Anton Treuer, professor of Ojibwe at Bemidji State University, on Friday, Feb. 27 from 4:00-5:30 p.m. at the Northfield High School Auditorium. Dr. Treuer will speak about his book, “Everything You Wanted to Know About Indians but Were Afraid to Ask,” as well as Native culture.
- Rock and Roll Revival returns this year with evening performances at 7:30 p.m. March 6-7 and March 12-14, and a matinee on Sunday, March 8 at 3:00 p.m.
- From now until March 27, the Northfield Arts Guild will feature the artwork of students in Northfield at the main gallery. The Imagination Celebration reception will take place on Saturday, March 7 from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m..
- Public Schools Week is Feb. 23-27, 2026. We celebrate the role that public education plays in shaping the future of our children, our community, and our future. Join us in thanking the people, programs, and successes that make our schools the heart of our community.

5. Items for Discussion and Reports

- a. DYC Update: Student Pledge Against Gun Violence. District Youth Council (DYC) representative Atticus Mayer updated the board on the Student Pledge Against Gun Violence, a student-led commitment to resolving conflict without firearms.
- b. Proposed 2026-2027 Debt Service Fund Budget. Director of Finance Val Mertesdorf presented the 2026-2027 Debt Service Fund Budget. The board will be asked to adopt the budget at the May 11, 2026 board meeting.
- c. Proposed 2026-2027 Internal Service Fund Budget. Director Mertesdorf presented the 2026-2027 Internal Service Fund Budget. The board will be asked to adopt the budget at the May 11, 2026 board meeting.
- d. Board Renewal of Operating Levy. Director Mertesdorf and Superintendent Hillmann presented a timeline for board renewal of the 2017 operating levy as part of the FY27 budgeting process at the Feb. 9, 2026 board meeting. Board members had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the process. Board renewal of an operating levy, using the same conditions as originally approved by the voters, is permitted by Minnesota Statute 126C.17.

6. Committee Reports

- a. Northfield Forward Committee. Board Member Corey Butler provided an update on the Feb. 16 Northfield Forward Meeting.

7. Consent Agenda

On a motion by Miller, seconded by Nelson, the board unanimously approved the consent agenda.

- a. Minutes. Minutes of the regular school board meeting held on Feb. 9, 2026.
- b. Gift Agreements. Gift agreements included in the board packet.
- c. Overnight Field Trip Requests.
  - i. Northfield High School FFA Advisor T.J. Austin requested board approval to take five FFA students to Minnesota FFA T.E.C. Connect March 1-3, 2026 in St. Paul, MN.
  - ii. Northfield High School FFA Advisor T.J. Austin requested board approval to take two FFA students to the Minnesota FFA Agricultural Policy Experience March 1-3, 2026 in St. Paul, MN.
  - iii. NHS Business Professionals of America (BPA) Advisor Theresa Wilson requested board approval to take 14 BPA students to the BPA State Leadership Conference and Competition March 5-7, 2026 in Minneapolis, MN.
- d. Financial Reports.
  - i. Financial Reports - October 2025. Director Mertesdorf requested the board approve paid bills totaling \$2,833,276.75, payroll checks totaling \$3,879,423.15, a wire transfer totaling \$400,000.00 from Frandsen General to Frandsen Sweep, a wire transfer totaling \$50,000.00 from Frandsen Sweep to Frandsen General, a wire transfer totaling \$3,169,085.09 from MNTrust GO Bond Oper to MSDLAF Liquid, and the financial reports for October 2025. At the end of October 2025, total cash and investments amounted to \$74,952,886.59. No bond payments were paid in October.
  - ii. Financial Reports - November 2025. Director Mertesdorf requested the board approve paid bills totaling \$3,126,913.92, payroll checks totaling \$3,718,183.36, a wire transfer totaling \$300,000.00 from Frandsen General to Frandsen Sweep, a wire transfer totaling \$500,000.00 from Frandsen Sweep to Frandsen General, and the financial reports for November 2025. At the end of November 2025, total cash and investments amounted to \$75,907,160.61. No bond payments were paid in November.
- e. Personnel Items.
  - i. Appointments
    1. Hezekiah Ben Shirnai, Head Girls Golf Coach at the Middle School beginning 3/30/2026. \$3,393 stipend.
    2. Hollis Holden, Instructor Lead for Community Education/Recreation effective 4/6/2026-5/31/2026. Step 2, \$16.37/hr.
    3. Robin Lerbakken, 1.0 FTE Long-Term Substitute Speech/Language Pathologist at Greenvale Park effective 3/9/2026-6/10/2026. MA10, Step 10.
  - ii. Increase/Decrease/Changes in Assignment
    1. Richelle Audiss, CNA I at the Middle School, add Assistant Middle School Boys Tennis coach effective 3/30/2026. \$2,828 stipend.
    2. Tyler Faust, Behavior Support Specialist for the District, change to Special Education Teacher at Greenvale Park effective 2/2/2026-6/10/2026.
    3. Natalie Giles, .90 FTE Early Childhood Teacher at the NCEC, change to .9125 FTE effective 8/25/2025.
    4. Madalyn Heinz, .90 FTE Long-Term Substitute Early Childhood Teacher at the NCEC, change to .9125 FTE effective 8/25/2025-4/3/2026.
    5. Hollis Holden, Instructor Lead for Community Education/Recreation, add Instructor Assistant as needed effective 4/6/2026/5/31/2026. Step 2, \$15.29/hr.
    6. Cecelia Kivell, Special Education EA/PCA at Bridgewater, add Substitute KidVentures Site Assistant on call, as needed effective 2/10/2026.
    7. Marea Nielsen, KidVentures Site Assistant on call, as needed at Bridgewater, change to KidVentures Site Assistant for up to 12 hrs/week at Greenvale Park effective 2/13/2026.
    8. Taylor Choudek, Special Education Teacher at Bridgewater, change to Special Education Teacher at the NCEC effective 2/23/2026-6/10/2026.
    9. Madison Warner, Early Ventures Teacher for 40 hrs/week at the NCEC, change end date from 3/31/2026 to 4/17/2026.
  - iii. Leave of Absences
    1. Armando Martinez Rosas, Head Custodian at the Middle School, FMLA leave of absence beginning 2/11/2026 and continuing through 2/20/2026.
    2. Angela Schock, Teacher at the Middle School, FMLA leave of absence beginning 3/20/2026 and continuing on an intermittent basis for up to 60 work days.
    3. Tegan Underdahl, Early Ventures Teacher at the NCEC, extend leave of absence through 4/17/2026.

4. Debbie Foley, Early Ventures Assistant Teacher at the NCEC, FMLA leave of absence beginning 3/16/2026 and continuing through 4/10/2026.
- iv. Retirements/Resignations/Terminations
  1. Matthew Hillmann, Superintendent of the District, retirement effective 6/30/2026.
  2. Emyla Lewis, Community School Club Leader at Greenvale Park, resignation effective 2/12/2026.
  3. Debbie Foley, Early Ventures Assistant Teacher at the NCEC, retirement effective 6/30/2026.
  4. Dillon Hachfeld, General Education EA at Bridgewater and KidVentures Site Assistant at Greenvale Park, resignation effective 2/27/2026.

8. Items for Individual Action

- a. Approval of Bid for NCEC ABE Renovation. On a motion by Epstein, seconded by Butler, the board unanimously approved the bid for the NCEC ABE renovation project. Bids were received from nine general contractors on or before Tuesday, Feb. 17, 2026 at 3:00 p.m. Mohs Contracting from Owatonna submitted the low base bid in the amount of \$248,780.00. This project is being paid for by a Multipurpose Community Facility Capital Projects Grant awarded by the Minnesota Department of Education.
- b. Contract with MSBA for Superintendent Search Services. On a motion by Butler, seconded by Epstein, the board unanimously approved a contract with the Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) to assist in the superintendent’s search. Barb Dorn, MSBA Director of Leadership Development and Executive Search, presented their proposal and was available to answer questions.
- c. 2026-2027 Operating Capital and Long-Term Facilities Maintenance Budget. On a motion by Goerwitz, seconded by Butler, the board unanimously approved the 2026-2027 Operating Capital and Long Term Facilities Maintenance Budgets as presented at the February 9, 2026 board meeting.

	<u>Revenues</u>	<u>Expenditures</u>
Operating Capital	\$3,548,349	\$3,295,936
Long-Term Facilities Maintenance	\$1,318,809	\$1,206,750

- d. Long-Term Facilities Maintenance Ten Year and Indoor Air Quality Management Plan. On a motion by Butler, seconded by Nelson, the board unanimously approved the Long Term Facilities Maintenance Ten Year Plan and the Indoor Air Quality Management Plan as presented at the February 9, 2026 board meeting.
- e. Policy Committee Recommendations. On a motion by Epstein, seconded by Miller, the board unanimously approved the policy committee’s recommended changes to policies 410.1, 426, 502, 527, and 528.

9. Items for Information

- a. Construction Update No. 23. Superintendent Hillmann provided an update on the NHS construction project.

10. Future Meetings

- a. Monday, March 2, 2026, 6:00 p.m., District Committee Meetings, Northfield DO Gymnasium
- b. Monday, March 9, 2026, 6:00 p.m., Regular Board Meeting, Northfield DO Boardroom
- c. Thursday, March 19, 2026, 6:00-8:00 p.m., Operating Levy Renewal Public Hearing, Northfield DO Gymnasium
- d. Thursday, April 2, 2026, 5:00 p.m., Board Work Session, Northfield DO Boardroom (Topic: Later School Start Times)
- e. Monday, April 6, 2026, 5:00 p.m., Special Board Meeting to approve the bids for the NHS Reimagine project, Northfield DO Boardroom
- f. Monday, April 13, 2026, 6:00 p.m., Regular Board Meeting, Northfield DO Boardroom

11. Closed Session: Labor Negotiations Strategy

On a motion by Gonzalez-George, seconded by Epstein, the board approved a five-minute recess before closing the meeting as permitted by Minnesota Statute 13D.03 to discuss labor negotiations.

12. Adjournment

On a motion by Miller, seconded by Gonzalez-George, the board unanimously approved to adjourn the closed session at 8:50 p.m.

On a motion by Nelson, seconded by Quinnell, the board unanimously approved to adjourn the regular board meeting at 8:50 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maggie Epstein".

Maggie Epstein  
School Board Clerk