



963 Airport Road North Bay, ON P1B 8H1
Phone: 705.472.8170
Website: www.nearnorthschools.ca

Ashley St. Pierre, Chair

Craig Myles, Director of Education

The July 21, 2025 **Special Board Meeting** of the Near North District School Board was held in person at the Head Office and via a Zoom video and/or teleconference.

Trustees Present:

Ashley St. Pierre ®
Howard Wesley ®
Julie Bertram ®
Caren Gagne
Shane Hall ®
Louise Sargent
Bill Steer

Administrative Staff Present:

Craig Myles, Director of Education
Gay Smylie, Superintendent
Seija Van Haesendonck, Superintendent of Business
Kim Pauli, Associate Superintendent ®
Wendi Proulx, Manager of Finance ®
Deb Bartlett, Communications Officer ®
Maureen Egan, Executive Assistant
Stephanie Courchesne, Executive Assistant

Trustees Regrets: n/a

Regrets: Mel Gray, Superintendent
Tim Graves, Superintendent

Other: n/a

® attended remotely via Zoom video or audio conference

1.0 Call to Order

Chair St. Pierre called the Special Board meeting to order at 11:06 am.

Land Acknowledgement

Trustee Steer delivered a reflective land acknowledgement, sharing a personal story about discovering a significant pictograph along the Matawa River. He emphasized the spiritual and cultural importance of such sites to Indigenous communities and acknowledged the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe and Algonquin peoples.

2.0 Attendance and Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Attendance indicated that 7 trustees were present for the meeting.
The floor was opened for trustees to declare conflicts of interest, with none rose.

3.0 Review of the Agenda

Chair St. Pierre thanked everyone for attending. She advised Trustees that this meeting has been convened as a "Special Meeting". Our bylaws state that a special meeting may be convened at the call of the Chair. Please note as per bylaw 105 clause 3 no other items shall be transacted or considered unless all members of the Board qualified to vote on the matter are present and agree unanimously to so consider.

Motion: 25-07-01, J.Bertram/C.Gagne

That the agenda for the Special Board meeting of July 21, 2025 be approved. – CARRIED.

4.0 Trustee Vacancies

The Board addressed the need to fill two trustee vacancies resulting from recent resignations. Trustees discussed the importance of ensuring these individuals are contacted promptly and confirm their willingness to serve. An amendment was added to the motion stating that if either candidate declines, the Board will initiate an application process to fill the vacancy without delay.

Motion: 25-07-02, H.Wesley/B.Steer

That the Board fill the current trustee vacancies with the 2022 election runners-up from zones 1 and 3 and if unsuccessful that the Board proceed with the application process. - CARRIED

5.0 Finance Committee Reports

Chair St. Pierre thanked the Superintendent of Business and her team for the work on the budget. She noted that it is increasingly difficulty to manage the budget and their work has made it easier for trustees to consider and discuss.

5.1 Review of the 2025/26 Budget

Motion: 24-07-03, H.Wesley/C.Gagne

That the Board approves the 2025-2026 budget as presented. – CARRIED

Trustee Hall, Chair of the Finance Committee, introduced the 2025–2026 budget. He noted that the Finance Committee had met on July 15 to review the draft budget, brought forward for Board approval. Superintendent Van Haesendonck provided an overview of the budget, highlighting the challenges of managing within a constrained fiscal environment. Trustee Sargent raised concerns regarding the transparency and completeness of the budget materials. Trustee Bertram echoed these concerns, requesting more detailed breakdowns of legal and consultant fees.

Trustee Sargent asked for a recorded vote. Trustee Sargent stated she is voting no because she is not seeing the budget in its entirety.

	YEA	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Bertram, Julie		x		
Gagne, Caren	x			
Hall, Shane	x			
Sargent, Louise		x		
St. Pierre, Ashley	x			
Steer, Bill	x			
Wesley, Howard	x			

5.2 In-Year Deficit Elimination Plan

Motion: 25-07-04, B.Steer/S.Hall

That the Board approved the 2025-2026 Estimates in year Deficit Elimination Plan as presented. – CARRIED

The Board reviewed the 2025–2026 In-Year Deficit Elimination Plan. Trustee Hall introduced the plan, noting a key amendment: the language in Appendix A was changed from “right-sizing staffing” to “right-sizing operations.” Superintendent Van Haesendonck explained that the plan includes implementing a revised Attendance Support Program, as mandated by PPM 171. Trustees expressed concern that the plan’s cost-saving measures could lead to staff reductions before exploring alternatives such as asset sales. Vice-Chair Wesley and Trustee Bertram emphasized the need to prioritize people over buildings. Director Myles and Superintendent Van Haesendonck provided detailed explanations of the complexities involved in asset disposition. Trustees discussed the possibility of revising the deficit plan during the fall or winter.

Director Myles provided comments on the asset piece to ensure clarity re Widdifield. He explained that prior to this current board of trustees, a proposal was sent to the Ministry involving consolidating LLC, Alliance and the board office to the Widdifield site. The disposition of these three properties would generate significant income and long-term savings for the Board. He emphasized the solid infrastructure of Widdifield and potential community use and partnerships. Director Myles also noted the current revenue generated via Widdifield with short term leases with movie companies.

SBO Van Haesendonck further explained that if Widdifield is declared surplus we would have to wait until the Ministry’s next intake period (once per year). She also advised trustees that the Board’s Maintenance Shop would have to move into leased property because no schools could accommodate it thus resulting in additional costs. There would be no operating savings in the 25/26 year with the sale of Widdifield.

Vice-Chair Wesley thanked the Director and SBO for this information reiterating that the elimination plan should not focus on staff reductions. Trustee Bertram concurred with Vice-Chair Wesley noting the importance of selling assets. Trustee Steer stated that the Board needs to trust staff to manage the budget and elimination plan.

Trustee Bertram asked about the past considerations of selling Whitewoods PS or Northern Secondary. SBO Van Haesendonck explained that as part of a condensed capital priorities program application window in spring of 2022, when the Ministry required that boards submit at least two projects if it intended to submit one, a potential project of incorporating WW into Northern was put forward with a timeline years away, in addition to resubmitting a revised Widdifield consolidation plan. At the time, the Ministry declined both submissions, and a further debrief indicated both projects required more information. Since that time, the Ministry has overhauled the capital priorities program and requires project submissions that include formal designs and improved cost estimates, which requires a financial commitment by the board. As the NBCC has been reviewing the Widdifield project, and with the current focus on the PS JK-12 build, the financial commitment to create an architectural plan for the Widdifield consolidation has not been made to date. If NBCC/the board were to commit to maintaining Widdifield and

Minutes of the Special Public Session Board Meeting of the Near North District School Board held July 21, 2025

submitting a new capital priorities project request to the Ministry, there are fulsome guidelines from the Ministry on what is needed for a complete submission.

Director Myles reminded trustees that the continuation of the report from the North Bay Consolidation Committee is coming forward in the fall. He encouraged trustees to submit any questions re Widdifield to Superintendent Gay Smylie for information into the report.

Trustee Sargent asked for a recorded vote re elimination plan.

	YEA	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Bertram, Julie		x		
Gagne, Caren	x			
Hall, Shane	x			
Sargent, Louise	x			
St. Pierre, Ashley			x	
Steer, Bill	x			
Wesley, Howard		x		

Trustee Gagne expressed her full confidence in NNDSB senior staff and in the finance committee. She recommended that in the future, the Finance Committee's terms of reference be adjusted to include finance experience.

5.3 Borrowing Resolutions

Motion: 25-07-05, S.Hall/H.Wesley

That the Board approves the Borrowing Resolutions for the period of September 1, 2025 to August 31, 2026. - CARRIED

Trustee Hall introduced the motion, explaining that it is a standard annual procedure to ensure the Board has access to short-term financing if needed.

5.4 Finance Committee Minutes 25-07-15 (unofficial)

Trustee Sargent reiterated concerns about the Finance Committee's access to complete budget information. She emphasized that while she respects the hard work of staff and committee members, trustees must be confident that all relevant financial data is being reviewed and discussed. Trustee Bertram supported this view, stating that budget oversight should be a collective responsibility. Trustees discussed the importance of improving enrollment and exploring alternative cost-saving measures beyond staff reductions. Trustee Gagne expressed confidence in staff and the Finance Committee but recommended revisiting the committee's terms of reference to ensure financial expertise is represented.

6.0 Adjournment

Motion: 25-07-06, S.Hall/H.Wesley

That on July 21, 2025 we do now adjourn at 12:37 pm. – CARRIED



Ashley St. Pierre
Chair



Craig Myles
Director

RESOLUTION SUMMARY

25-07-01 L.Sargent B.Steer	That the agenda for the Special Board meeting of July 21, 2025 be approved.– CARRIED.
25-07-02 C.Gagne B.Steer	the amendment to the Director's contract effective immediately. - CARRIED
25-07-03 S.Hall H.Wesley	That the NNDSB approves the 2024-2025 budget as presented, as recommended by the Finance Committee. - CARRIED
25-07-04 L.Sargent S.Hall	That the Near North District School Board awards tender <i>NNDSB 2024-014 Electrical Service Upgrades, West Ferris Secondary School</i> to Bernard Rochefort Limited for \$544,000.00 plus HST. - Carried
24-07-05 S.Hall H.Wesley	That the Near North District School Board approves the Borrowing Resolutions for the period of June 29, 2024 to August 31, 2025.
24-07-06 B.Steer C.Gagne	That on July 15, 2024 we do now adjourn at 12:37 pm. – CARRIED