

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 7  
NEWBURY LIBRARY-MEDIA CENTER  
**BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**  
March 1, 2023 – 6 p.m.

APPROVED at 3/22/2023 BOE MEETING

**PRESENT:** Chair Ms. Molly Sexton Read (B), Vice-Chair Mr. Robert Jerram (NH), Secretary/Treasurer Mr. Noel Gauthier (NH), Ms. Theresa Kenneson (C), Ms. Deborah Bell (N), Ms. Kim Crone (N), Ms. Lisa Fragale(C), Superintendent Dr. Judith Palmer, First Selectman of Barkhamsted Mr. Donald Stein, First Selectman of New Hartford Mr. Daniel Jerram, New Hartford Board of Finance Chair Ms. Kerry Guilfoyle, First Selectman of Norfolk Mr. Matthew Riiska, Norfolk Board of Finance Chair Michael Sconyers.

**ABSENT:** Ms. Mary Duran (B), Director of Finance and Operations James Gaskins.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Ms. Sexton Read called the Board of Education meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Ms. Sexton Read gave a brief synopsis of the 2023-2024 budget and invited the represented town officials to provide their input and/or comments pertaining to the District's 2023-2024 Proposed Budget.

First Selectman Donald Stein asked how the District is addressing the decrease in student population yet the staff population is staying constant. He asked how much of an effect the State requirements are having on this issue? Dr. Palmer explained that there was a decrease in teams in the Middle School due to this decrease in student population. She commented that due to the 25 credit graduation requirements, teachers were moved from the Middle School to the High School. The Middle School enrollment will be decreasing in the coming years, which will eventually cause a reduction in the Middle School teams. Regarding the High School, the District looks closely at the enrollment, and the State requirements of the 25 graduation credits for every student every year.

New Hartford First Selectman Dan Jerram commented that 6 or 7 years ago, the District enrolled 1050 students and currently the enrollment is approximately 800 students. This is a precipitous drop, and at some point this has to permeate into the High School. In New Hartford, the 6th graders are dropping and kindergarten enrollment is slowly decreasing yet stabilizing. He expressed that if the other towns are in line as to the decreasing enrollment of New Hartford students, then the District's numbers of students most likely will decrease and stabilize at 700. He restated that the staffing range has stayed constant for a number of years. At some point, this staffing range has to be addressed with this yearly student enrollment decline. First Selectman Jerram commented on the tuition pricing, Vo-Ag tuition and the student population from tuition. First Selectman Jerram commented on the health insurance increase in the proposed budget. Dr. Palmer explained the proposed percentage health insurance increase was due to plan changes in negotiations. First Selectman Jerram thanked Dr. Palmer for everything and congratulated Dr. Palmer on her retirement.

Ms. Sexton Read reviewed the timeline for the superintendent search with the town officials.

Board of Finance Chair Kerry Guilfoyle asked about the salary line for the new superintendent and where an anticipated increase will be absorbed in the budget. Ms. Sexton Read answered by explaining there is a budget line item to absorb potential increases.

Dr. Palmer expressed a thank you from the bottom of her heart for the support that she has received from the elected officials, and the Board of Education over the years. She expressed she deeply appreciates their value, input, and support over the past 13 years. Working together, they have all collectively accomplished some amazing things for Regional School District No. 7.

BOARD DISCUSSION ON PROPOSED BUDGET

Ms. Sexton Read opened the floor to the Board members for any questions, concerns, or clarification. She explained in Mr. Gaskins' absence, please email all questions to Mr. Gaskins. He can then answer all questions at the next BOE Meeting on March 8, 2023. Mr. Rob Jerram commented on the yearly surplus. Ms. Sexton Read expressed the overall concern of the decrease of enrollment and the hiring of new positions. Mr. Rob Jerram

discussed the overall surplus of Regional School District No. 7 and his thoughts of this calculated number moving forward. Dr. Palmer explained the proposed number in the budget is an audited number and cannot be changed for this budget, yet moving forward this can be addressed.

Dr. Palmer explained that the percentage of Special Education students are on the rise. There is a definite need for the newly proposed Special Education Teacher. Dr. Palmer expressed the common denominator among conversations with all Superintendents are the rising costs of Special Education.

Ms. Sexton Read review the timeline for the superintendent search. She expressed and reviewed how involved each Board member would participate in this process.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION** by Ms. Kenneson, seconded by Mr. Gauthier, to ADJOURN at 6:51 p.m. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Crone, Ms. Fragale. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Barrett  
Board Clerk