New Hartford Public Schools
Board of Education Regular Meeting
Antolini School Library
August 15, 2023 @ 7 pm

Recorded meeting – https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCX-_ZlomWmjG81dc_QM3rfg

Present Chairman Karl Hermonat, Members: Tom Buzzi, Tim Klepps, Kelly O'Dell Longhi, Penny Miller, Tony Persechino, Mary Stempien, Supt. of School Jeff Sousa, Curriculum Specialist Heather Mathes, Bakerville & New Hartford Elementary Schools Principal Amy Kennedy, Director of Student Services Mike Lynch, and IT Specialist Paul Carmen

Absent Travis Bonhomme and Deirdre Tindall

Chairman Hermonat opened the meeting at 7:00 pm with the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. Going forward the meetings will be held in the school library.

The meeting agenda was not changed.

Communications to the Board of Education / Public Comment
Supt. Sousa read a letter from Tara Fischer recognizing the efforts of Lisa LoPresti for organizing a first-grade performance and celebration. Ms. Fischer also recognized Rachel Savage for putting together an amazing art show featuring the works of all our students. A copy of that email is available at the Supt's office.

Board of Education Chair's Report
None

Superintendent's Report

1. **Update on school opening, literacy updates and focus and enrollment**
   Supt. Sousa said he was extremely impressed with all the staff and getting ready for the fall opening. We currently have 444 students enrolled. We have a lot of true talent and professionalism in our district. Huge accolades to our extended school year program held during the summer. The custodians have been working diligently throughout the summer to get our schools ready for the fall. He continued thanking all the principals, teachers, secretaries, nurses, IT department and central office staff. Curriculum Specialist Heather Mathes has been working diligently on the Right to Read Grant.
   Mr. Sousa said that he met last week with the Board of Finance letting them know that 60 students are enrolled in kindergarten for the fall. Following tonight's meeting he will go back to the Board of Finance with a formal recommendation.
   Ms. Mathes gave the end of year measures and where the students ended with their literary proficiencies. To view her entire presentation, go to:
   https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCX-_ZlomWmjG81dc_QM3rfg
   Mr. Sousa said that two sections of kindergarten will be at New Hartford Elementary School and two sections at Bakerville School due to our enrollment increase. It is possible that a couple more children may enroll for kindergarten. There have been a lot of move-ins.

2. **State of Special Education**

   Over the course of the year, we have talked about special education needs and where we are. Mr. Lynch, Director of Student Services, spoke on the historical piece of that information. Over the past ten years there has been an increase in the number of Special Education Students. In the 2023-2024 school year there are 87 students or 20% of our district population. Just 5 years ago in 2018-2019 there were 50 students or 11.2% of our district population. This is a significant increase. Ms. Miller asked if all the students were being helped within the district. Mr. Lynch said this number includes all students whether they are in or out of district. He said there has been a lot of legislation around dyslexia in the state. There are 13 identified categories in special education and dyslexia has the highest number of students. We continue to work with the Connecticut Junior Republic. They work 2 days per week as school counselors and 3 days per week as clinicians in the school setting. Approximately 20 students are seen by the CJR counselor. An FTE school counselor has been added to address mental health needs. We can do this with a grant from the state for the next two years. The caseload for special education teachers is between 14-20 students for next year for each special education teacher. The social worker/school psychologist/school counselor sees approximately 30-40 students.
   Supt. Sousa said that we currently have 87 students that need extra help. He wanted the board to know that if more students enroll and need help, we may need to add an additional special education teacher. This discussion will continue through our budget season.

3. **Exploratory projects**
   a. Looking for cost savings measures, Mr. Sousa and Mr. Jerram have had a meeting with Green Leaf Solar. To mitigate the rising cost of electricity one potential area is a solar project at Antolini. The goal is to take Antolini's electrical bill completely off the grid. A letter of intent has been submitted to work with Green Leaf Solar and a $3,750 performance service bond for tariffs, etc. Eversource has accepted it, but we won't find out if we have been awarded a grant. The grant will cover the cost of the negative loan and it will cover the cost of the panels. It has no significant impact on the school budget. The $3,750 is fully refundable. The cost of the panels will be covered in the first 6-7 years. The panels will need to be installed in 3 years.
   b. Mr. Sousa said he is continuing to see if changing to propane from oil would save any money. We are due to remove and install four 10,000-gallon oil tanks that are coming to the end of their life expectancy. The cost to remove and install new oil tanks is approximately $1.4 million dollars. This includes soil testing, running new lines, setting up new infrastructure, permits, DEEP regulations, etc. Mr. Sousa has received a proposal from HOCON in Torrington. The preliminary cost to install four – 1,000-gallon propane tanks at Antolini would be $65,000. This does not include the conversion of our oil burners to propane. The tanks would be installed on pads and above the ground. This could be a $1.4 million capital building project.
   c. Indoor air quality and HVAC requirements have been updated by the State of Connecticut. Public Act 23-167 states that we need to evaluate our indoor air quality annually. This would need to be done by January 1, 2025. The state has not provided which form needs to be collected.
   d. Mr. Sousa said the cafeteria flooring at Antolini has been bubbling up and becoming unglued because of high humidity. He is looking into remediation efforts for that. New tiles will be laid down to replace those that have come up.

Mr. Klepps asked that each of these exploratory items go before the Facilities sub-committee. He said that the cafeteria floor was just replaced recently. The problem may be related to the fact that there isn't a vapor barrier on the slab. Without the vapor barrier this allows moisture to come up.

Routine Business
Line item transfer
Motion by Ms. Miller to approve the Line Item Transfers for the 2022-2023 school year. Second by Ms. Stempien

Unanimous

Approval of Minutes – June 6, 2023
Motion by Ms. Miller to approve the minutes of June 6, 2023. Second by Ms. Stempien

Unanimous

Expenditure Report
Motion by Ms. Stempien to approve the Expenditure Report. Second by Mr. Persechino

Unanimous

New Business
Mr. Sousa said that we were able to save $25,000 from the 2022-2023 budget by shopping for different rates on our contracted services. He would like to make a recommendation to the Board of Finance that the $25,000 be moved into our non-lapsing account. We would then use that money to fund the new K section (teacher and salary benefits). Mr. Hermonat said he also attended the recent Board of Finance meeting. The Board of Finance needs to vote to release the funds in the non-lapsing account for us to use them.
In our current budget year, we have savings of $40,000 due to a teacher retirement that would be used for the new kindergarten teacher. The additional money would come from the non-lapsing account. Mr. Persechino asked if this would include an aide in the classroom. Mr. Sousa responded that with the small class size he didn't believe this would be necessary. If it is determined additional support is needed, then that will be discussed at a later meeting. We also have paras that could step in.

MOTION by Mr. Hermonat that the New Hartford Board of Education allocate the approximate $25,000 from the 2022-2023 surplus to the non-lapsing account. Second by Mr. Persechino.

Unanimous

Old Business
Policy Updates (Second Reading: A policy on Independent Evaluations)
Motion by Mr. Hermonat to approve the policy update. Second by Ms. Miller

Unanimous

Motion by Ms. Miller to adjourn the meeting at 8:21 pm. Second by Mr. Persechino

Unanimous

Respectfully submitted, Penny Miller, Board Secretary
No Attachments