

**New Hartford Public Schools
Board of Education Regular Meeting
Antolini School Library
September 19, 2023 @ 7 pm**

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

Present Chairman Karl Hermonat, Members: Travis Bonhomme (in at 7:02 pm), Tom Buzzi, Penny Miller, Tony Persechino, Mary Stempien, Deirdre Tindall, Supt. of Schools Jeff Sousa, Bakerville & New Hartford Elementary Schools Principal Amy Kennedy, Antolini School Principal Dr. Kelly Carroll, Elise Yost, Kayli Midwinter and IT Specialist Paul Carmen

Absent Kelly O'Dell-Longhi and Tim Klepps

Chairman Hermonat opened the meeting at 7:00 with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair to Select Order of Business

No changes

Communications to the Board of Education / Public Comment

Nothing

Board of Education Chair's Report

Nothing

Superintendent's Report

Supt. Sousa said that the opening on the first day of school was great. Huge kudos to Dr. Carroll and Mrs. Kennedy for a smooth opening. He gave a huge shout-out to Heather Mathes, Curriculum Specialist, who stepped in to cover a 2nd grade class for a teacher who is out on long-term maternity leave. He also gave a huge shout-out to the custodians for their attention to detail. He said they did an incredible job of making our school look fantastic. He thanked Kayli Midwinter for a successful summer program. Our cafeteria food is much improved. The children said the french fries are up a notch. The cafeteria food is now obtained through Ed Advance.

Our school enrollment has increased from 444 students to 454. Some of our new students have special education needs and we will have to increase our FTE's in order to meet the needs of our children. We will continue to provide amazing services for our students.

A letter was received from the Commissioner of Education. The PDEC – Professional Development Evaluation Committee – had to adopt the Professional Development Calendar. There has been flexibility in place since COVID. A copy of this letter is available for viewing in the Superintendent of Schools Office.

Motion by Mr. Buzzi to approve the flexibilities within the *Connecticut Guidelines for Educator Evaluation 2017* for the 2023-2024 School Year as approved by the PDEC Committee for New Hartford Public Schools. Second by Ms. Stempien.

Unanimous

Mr. Sousa said a Special Thanks to First Selectman Dan Jerram and Board of Finance Chairman Kerry Guilfoyle who spoke at Convocation. He also thanked Bob D’Orio from the South End Fire Department who spoke to the staff on safety and CPR.

Routine Business

Line Item Transfer

Motion by Ms. Miller to approve the Line Item Transfer of \$28,000 from SPED Transport to Teacher Substitutes. This is for the previous year. Second by Mr. Hermonat

Unanimous

Motion by Mr. Buzzi to approve the minutes of August 15, 2023. Second by Ms. Miller

Unanimous

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

Unanimous

New Business

Letter from Board of Selectmen – Copy available for viewing in the Supt. of Schools office

Mr. Hermonat said this letter was in response to a request to put in the ballot an advisory question about having a security guard in our schools. Funds had been set aside to cover the cost of one security guard. We had hoped to get feedback from our voters and their opinion about adding a security guard. The request was denied in the letter from the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Hermonat thanked Mr. Sousa for all the time he spent over the past 3 months – answering questions from the Selectmen’s Office, putting the question together and making modifications. The feedback from the Town’s Attorney for various reasons they didn’t feel it was appropriate to put it on the ballot. The time has passed to put it on the ballot. Mr. Hermonat’s recommendation would be to have public informational sessions. This would make the public aware and to answer any questions about the role the security guard would play in our schools. The feedback would be gathered, and the board would then proceed depending on that feedback.

Motion by Ms. Miller that we hold at least two informational meetings for the townspeople to discuss employing a school security officer in New Hartford. Second by Mr. Buzzi

Discussion followed. Mr. Hermonat said without revealing too many details it would be discussed what the function of the school security guard is. Ms. Miller said she isn’t sure that route to go would be to hire an armed person to be in our schools as opposed to implementing measures such as putting a filament on the inside of the windows, installing more cameras – inside & outside, quicker notification to LCD than presently done. Whose budget will it come under? In the letter it mentions either the Town or the Police Department budget. Who would this person report to? Mr. Buzzi said at a recent Police Chief’s meeting he attended there is a lot of information available about SRO’s. He asked if at the informational sessions who would be presenting the information. Supt. Sousa said he would have an explanatory text.

Aye: Buzzi, Miller, Persechino, Stempien, Tindall, Hermonat; Opposed: Bonhomme

Motion passed

Old Business

None

Reports

None

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Buzzi to adjourn at 7:36. Second by Mr. Persechino

Unanimous

Respectfully submitted, Penny Miller, Board Secretary

Attachments In the Superintendent's Office

- 1. Letter from the State of Connecticut Department of Education*
- 2. Letter from Town of New Hartford, First Selectman Dan Jerram*



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Jeffrey F. Sousa, Superintendent
Janet Terenzi, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

FROM: Dr. Shuana K. Tucker,
Chief Talent Officer

DATE: September 18, 2023

SUBJECT: Flexibilities within the *Connecticut Guidelines for Educator Evaluation 2017* for the 2023-2024 School Year

Thank you for submitting a request for New Hartford Public School's to adopt the Flexibilities within the *Connecticut Guidelines for Educator Evaluation 2017* described in the [May 18, 2023 Memo from Commissioner Russell-Tucker \(Flexibilities for 2023-24\)](#), within the district's most recent CT State Department of Education (CSDE) approved Educator Evaluation and Support Plan (EESP) for the 2023-24 school year. By adopting the *Flexibilities for 2023-24*, New Hartford Public Schools is confirming implementation of the components in its entirety in the 2023-24 school year.

This letter serves as the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) approval of New Hartford Public Schools to implement your current CSDE-approved Educator Evaluation and Support Plan (EESP) by incorporating the components of the *Flexibilities for 2023-24* within your most recent CSDE-approved EESP for the 2023-24 school year. Please note that upon receiving CSDE approval, state statute requires the amended plan be adopted by your local or regional board of education.

Thank you for your diligent efforts in working toward the shared goal of continuous support and development of educators in order to improve outcomes for all students.

SKT:jgo



Daniel V. Jerram
First Selectman

Karl Hermonat, Chairman
New Hartford Board of Education
530 Main Street
New Hartford, CT 06057

September 14, 2023

RE: Proposed Advisory Question on School Security Officer

Dear Chairman Hermonat & School Board Members

I write today on behalf of the Board of Selectmen who met on September 6, 2023, to discuss your request (among several other local issues) to place an advisory question on the November election ballot. After providing all the associated information to town counsel, and discussing the issue in detail, on the advice of counsel, the Board has opted not to pursue the question at this time for the following reasons:

- While the issue appears simplistic, the provided question and associated text is very confusing.
- There has been little to no public engagement on this issue. There have been no public information meetings held and the one town-wide mailing that was distributed was questionable (the postcard had a link to a poll requiring a gmail address to participate that lead to a "narrow majority" of which could be perceived to be a biased sample).
- The issue was not discussed during the budget process pre-referendum when residents are typically informed of new initiatives requiring significant funding.
- Nearly half the Board's membership is up for election. Post election, the newly seated Board may or may not agree with the voting results – possibly creating a dilemma for a newly seated board.
- Lastly, the placement of the question defies the Board's elected responsibility - and could set precedent. Per counsel - if the BOE really wants to hire a school resource officer – then the Board should thoroughly research the issue and pursue it. If the Board is in consensus, vote on it, do it, and live with the results. Failure to do so could be seen as an abdication of your elected responsibility.

While the Board of Selectmen was generally not opposed to the placement of the question of this nature on the ballot, it was the conditions surrounding the question that generated significant concern. Most significantly the lack of communication with our residents, a process by the way that is incredibly difficult to complete during summer vacation months. The Board believed that most people confronted with this question (if approved) would be surprised - leading to the conclusion of "what's this all about?". As such, the Board was wary to proceed without the Board of Education holding public information sessions and allowing residents the ability to become "informed on the issue". There are other issues that could arise with the hiring of a School Resource Officer. Who is the employer? Who is qualified to be the employee's supervisor? What budget does the funding come from? Does it require Board of Finance approval for department transfer? While none of these issues are insurmountable, they would need to be addressed. Therefore, taking this question to a vote at this time seems premature.

The Board of Selectmen and the Town of New Hartford is grateful to the Board for your service to our community. We really appreciate all you do to improve education in the Town of New Hartford.

Thank you,

Dan Jerram, First Selectman



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