

**New Hartford Public Schools
Board of Education Meeting
March 2, 2021
6:00 pm/Virtual Meeting
Access Meeting/Listen Only
Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84184289169?pwd=SlJ4U0pNaDhmM0F1OWJuTEE3Y2lhQT09>

Meeting ID: 841 8428 9169

Passcode: 7hJNNn

Present- Tim Goff, Karl Hermonat, Penny Miller, Tom Buzzi, Tim Klepps, Tony Persechino, Heather Tomala, Kelly O'Dell Longhi, Mary Stempien

Other- Heather Mathes, Laura Polakow, Susan Lundin, Brooke Harris, Kelly Carroll, Amanda Shaw, Jennifer Harris

A. Chair to Open Meeting- Tim Goff opened fully virtual meeting at 6.02pm

B. Pledge of Allegiance- The Board joined in saying the pledge of allegiance.

C. Chair Select Order of Business- No changes to the order of business.

D. Superintendent's Report

1. Healthy Food Certification

Mr. Murphy opened the Superintendents report, by giving a brief overview of the annual exercise to approve the State of Connecticut's mandate to school district BOE's to approve participation in the National School Lunch Program. The motions were as follows:

MOTION-by Goff pursuant to Section 10-215F of the CGS New Hartford Board of Education certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards will comply with the CNS during the period of July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. Seconded by Miller.

Unanimous

MOTION- by Goff that the New Hartford Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the CNS provided that (1) such food is sold in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on a weekend (2) such sale is at the location of the event and (3) such food is not sold from a vending machine or a school store. Seconded by Miller.

Unanimous

A copy of these motions will be shared to the board by Tim Goff following the meeting.

Mr. Murphy closed his report by thanking all those who participated in the National read aloud day on March 2nd. Although this was a fully virtual event, staff and students had a great day.

E. Public Comment/Communications to the Board of Education

A letter was received by the Board on March 2nd from Brooke Harris who expressed her concern regarding the elimination of a 4th grade teacher at Ann Antolini School as proposed in the 2021-2022 district budget. Tim Goff will respond directly to Ms. Harris to address this issue.

An email was also forwarded to Tim Goff on February 18th By Superintendent Murphy, from Jane Allen who also expressed her concerns regarding the reduction of the grade 4th teacher at Ann Antolini School next year. Mr. Murphy responded to Ms. Allen directly.

Both forms of communication will be including in the board minutes.

F. Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes – February 16, 2021

Tim Goff asked to pull the minutes from the February 16th meeting and make changes to specific items. Goff read these aloud for the board:

Under Superintendent's Report

1. Budget 2021-2022 Motion by Perschino to approve the proposed budget for the 2021-2022 school year. Buzzi seconded for discussion. ***(Add) This motion was rescinded and adjusted for further discussion.***
2. Under Motion to Approve the 2021-2022 Board of Education budget for the New Hartford Public Schools for \$8,869,070 for presentation to the Board of Finance in March. All those in favor: ***(Add) Goff***

Motion- By Goff to approve the meeting minutes from February 16th with proposed changes. Seconded by Persechino.

Motion passes

A copy of the updated minutes will be submitted to the Superintendent's office by the Board Secretary for review.

2. Expenditure Report

3. Personnel

Mr. Murphy informed the board that Todd Marfyak has retired from his position as part time custodian at Ann Antolini School. He will be replaced by James Lathrop who will start on March 15th, Mr. Murphy and Chairman Tim Goff thanked Mr. Marfyak for his years of service and wished him well in his retirement.

Motion- by Miller to approve consent agenda as presented. Seconded by Tomala.

Unanimous

G. Reports

1. Review Policy 5145.44 (Personnel Certified/Non-Certified/Title IX Sexual Harassment)

Kelly O'Dell Longhi read aloud the second review of this policy with recommended changes.

Motion- By Tomala to approve the second read of **Policy 5145.44 (Personnel Certified/Non-Certified/Title IX Sexual Harassment)** seconded by Stempien.

Unanimous

Tim Goff notified the board that next board meeting on March 6th will be in person. The maximum capacity will be 25 to a room. It is hoped that restrictions will ease in the coming months to bring meetings back to full capacity. Goff will keep the board updated with any updates or changes.

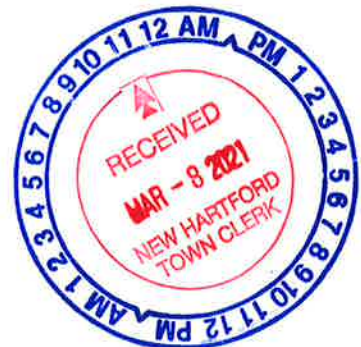
H. Adjournment

Motion- by Miller to adjourn meeting at 6.25pm. Seconded by Stempien.

Unanimous

Respectfully Submitted,

Laura Fritch
Board Secretary



On Feb 18, 2021, at 8:41 AM, Jane Allyn <janeallyn2@gmail.com> wrote:

Good Morning Brian,

I have some questions about the budget and would like to express my concern with the recommendation to eliminate a classroom teacher position.

The increase in spending in some areas of this budget suggests that you are placing an emphasis on ensuring some students don't fall behind due to the pandemic, but not all students. What is driving the significant increase in special education? Is this outplacement tuition that will be ongoing? If so, is there a way to provide that service in our own schools that is less expensive? Maybe even an opportunity to provide the same services to other districts while charging tuition to them? You also note that the town is reimbursed for a portion of this cost, but not the school district. Can the school district ensure that the town puts that money back into the schools budget?

It feels contradictory to increase spend to benefit some students, but to then cut a classroom teacher. If we can not afford to equitably increase resources across the entire student body, can you at least keep the current classroom teacher level the same for those students that will not have increased resources?

With the immediate impact of this budget cut resulting in an average class size that is larger than any of the previous 4 years, I worry that there will be a negative impact on the student's academic results. As you dig deeper into the average class size, it is clear that the incoming grade 4 will be disproportionately impacted by this budget cut. I worry that this incoming grade 4 could have a compounding negative impact from the pandemic and having larger class sizes than any other grade, or prior year avg.

The projected class sizes are also a concern. I imagine that projecting enrollment is tricky in a regular year. I also imagine that it is further complicated in a pandemic. I do know that I continue to see news stories about young families leaving urban settings for smaller towns. New Hartford's real estate market appears to be supporting this trend and is likely to pick up in the spring. With these complicating factors, I disagree with the assumption that current classroom enrollment remains flat for the next academic year. Using that data point to support reducing the number of classroom teachers could quickly become problematic. How does that get handled if the upcoming 4th grade class gets too many new students over the course of the year?

I ask that you reconsider cutting classroom teachers, and consider an option that will not have a disproportionately negative impact on one grade.

Can I ask that you please forward this to the Board of Ed so they are aware of my concerns?

Thank you for your time,
Jane Allyn

March 2, 2021

Dear Superintendent Murphy and Members of the Board of Education,

I am writing this letter out of concern for the proposed reduction of a 4th grade section for the 2021-2022 school year. I respectfully ask that you reconsider this decision. As a parent of 3 children and a 19-year veteran elementary school teacher in a larger school district, I am fully aware of the drastic impact that class size has on education. Class size affects academic performance, student engagement, and social emotional well-being, especially in the elementary grades.

Class size affects academic performance. Overall, students in smaller classes perform better than those in larger classes. This is well known and one of the reasons families looking to buy homes and/or leave larger districts are drawn to New Hartford Public Schools. Students in smaller classes receive more individualized attention and have more opportunities for both enrichment and intervention. New Hartford Public Schools teach Lucy Calkins' Units of Study for Reading and Writing. These rigorous programs rely heavily on teachers conferring frequently with students. Larger class sizes mean less opportunity for this critical 1:1 time.

Another factor is student engagement. The smaller the class, the stronger the classroom community, and the greater the opportunity for engagement. A large class makes it more difficult to get to know students, build rapport, and establish relationships with families. Students in smaller classes have more opportunities to participate, engage, and receive teacher feedback than those in larger classes. Students in smaller classes are apt to feel more comfortable asking questions and/or participating in an environment that feels comfortable to them.

A third concern is the social emotional well-being of both staff and students. The current school year has been extremely challenging for all. The NHPS staff is incredible and I am so impressed by how the pandemic has been handled. I applaud teachers for their flexibility in teaching students in the classroom and remotely on a day-to-day basis. However, the fact remains that the fluctuation between in-person and remote learning (sometimes globally, sometimes due to specific classes in quarantine) and the fear of contracting COVID-19 takes a toll on educators and children. A larger class environment will not support the current fragile social-emotional state of our valued educators and our children.

In summary, I am extremely concerned about the proposal to eliminate a 4th grade class section in 2021-2022. In these challenging times, our children need more opportunities to be successful. Increasing class size by 5-7 students is bound to have a negative effect on our students and staff. I strongly encourage you to revisit this decision. I sincerely thank you for all you do for our children.

Respectfully,

Brooke Harris