New Hartford Board of Education
December 5, 2023 – Regular Meeting
Antolini School Library @ 7 pm
https://youtu.be/icprJQi41N8?si=Uwfzzh8DoqIQIidx

Present Vice Chairman Kelly O'Dell-Longhi, Tom Buzzi, Tim Klepps, Penny Miller, Frank Rodenberg, Deirdre Tindall, Tim Russell, Kristin Young, Meagan Albert and Supt of Schools Jeff Sousa.

Also, present Ed Mumm and Aulay Carlson

Pledge of Allegiance
Vice Chairman O'Dell-Longhi opened the meeting at 7 pm and asked all present to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Interim Chair to Conduct Board Officer Elections
Vice Chairman O'Dell-Longhi asked for nominations for the position of Board Secretary.

Motion by Mr. Klepps nominated Penny Miller for the position of Board Secretary. Second by Ms. O'Dell-Longhi.

Unanimous

Vice Chairman O'Dell-Longhi asked for nominations for the position of Vice Chairman.

Motion by Ms. Tindall nominated Tom Buzzi for Vice Chairman. Second by Mr. Klepps.

Aye: Rodenberg, Russell, Tindall, Klepps, Buzzi, Albert, Young, Present: O'Dell-Longhi, Miller

Vice Chairman O'Dell-Longhi asked for nominations for the position of Chairman.

Motion by Ms. Miller nominated Tim Klepps for the position of Board Chairman. Second by Mr. Buzzi.

Unanimous

At this time newly elected Board Chairman Klepps took over running the meeting. He thanked everyone for the nomination and welcomed the new board members.

Communications to the Board of Education / Public Comment
There were no communications to the board.

Ed Mumm, 6 Barella Road, spoke on armed security for the 3 schools. He said he is all for school security and believes that the Superintendent and the board has the best interest in keeping our school and children safe. By hiring just one security guard we are not providing the same protection for all of our children. What happens if there is an incident and the school guard is at another school. He said as a parent he would be very upset. As taxpayers we are paying for a service and that service was not available. He realizes there is a cost issue with hiring 3 guards. He is not a fan of hiring just one guard on a rotating schedule. Second there was a survey and he doesn't know why many of the teachers were against it. He hopes their voices are being heard. When he drops off his son at Bakerville in the morning and the door is wide open for 10-15 minutes. We are talking about hiring a security guard who is armed

yet we are leaving the door wide open. If we really put our heads together there are many other options to strengthen and make our schools more secure. As a taxpayer he doesn't want to throw his money into a false hope that this person will be able to react in time and do the job. He said being a cop for 19 years you have to be efficient, tactical, well trained and your mind has to be so mentally perfect to engage a threat and to be able to eliminate that threat. He said the odds are stacked against the guard even before anything happens. He hopes that we as a community with the board & superintendent we can re-evaluate this and look at other ideas that we can put forward so that we are getting some value out of those investments. He doesn't feel that paying someone $75,000/year is going to get us the results that we want when that critical incident happens.

Aulay Carlson, 455 West Hill Rd, spoke about security. He said you only have one school that can be made secure. That school is Antolini School. It is the only school with a gate and fence with separation from the school. He read a letter that in part it said that he has been trained in the use of using hand guns, automatic and semi-automatic weapons. He said that if you are moving with a hand gun and trying to hit a target that you won't. Instead, you will hit something else. With automatic & semi-automatic weapons that have a high rate of firing aiming is not important. A guard with a hand gun will not survive against someone with an automatic weapon. He said adding a guard will not add security. It will add a placebo that will allow the Board of Education to sit back and say they did their best. He also included a letter he had sent to the *Waterbury Republican* and asked the board to read it before making a decision. Both of these letters are available for viewing at the Superintendent's Office. He then passed out both letters to all board members.

Board of Education Chair's Report
None

Superintendent's Report
School Security Update and Possible Vote on Next Steps
Supt. Sousa thanked Kelly for running the elections as Interim Chair. He also welcomed the new board member. He provided a timeline and grant initiatives that were awarded to New Hartford. BOE for security upgrades. The BOE School Security Sub-Committee was in place prior to the hiring of Supt. Sousa. In January 2023 the subcommittee told the board that school security consultants would be consulted, a community survey would be developed and distributed to the townspeople and school staff relative to the hiring 1-3 school security guards. This survey was sent out on a postcard with a QR code for accessing the survey along with a website. The security consultants came back with suggestions to harden both the exterior and interior of the schools. They recommended a retired POST certified police officer in good standing. In February a proposed phased implementation of armed security officers and the budget implications up to $225,000 for 3 officers. That motion was denied. In March the survey results were presented. Approximately 395 people responded. The results are: residents 53% yes and 47% no, residents with no children in school 41% yes and 59% no, residents with children in school 65% yes and 35% no. The teachers were also surveyed and 20% said yes with 80% saying no. Seventy-five thousand ($75,000) was earmarked for one armed security officer with the future intent of hiring 3. This money was not related to instruction or cutting positions. The Capital budget was also increased $50,000 for security infrastructure. The board asked for more information so they asked Supt. Sousa to ask First Selectman Jerram if the question could be placed on the upcoming ballot in May. That request was denied as it was requested too late. The survey results are posted on the school website (https://www.newhtfd.org/domain/341) under FAQs along with responses to questions asked. The plan was then to ask for it to be added to the November ballot. That request was also denied upon advice of the Town Counsel. Informational meetings were planned for October & November. As some of the $75,000 has been expended we now have $57,700 earmarked for the one-armed security officer. In October two CT grants were awarded for physical security upgrades. A total of 3 grants have been

received for a total of $1.2 million. Part of the grants will go towards applying a 3M ballistic glazed to all of our windows in the 3 schools. This does not allow the glass to be shattered. The RFPs are out. All grants received are 3 years. The doors & locks are in the process now but the grants will help to expedite them. The phone system internal infrastructure will be upgraded. An external & internal camera system will be upgraded and expanded. Perimeter fencing will delay entrance to our school grounds. Interoperable radios need significant updates. These are the major pieces we are looking to overhaul in our schools.

Mr. Klepps asked for clarification on the grants reimbursement rates. Mr. Sousa said the CT grants ranges in the $0.52 cent range and the federal grants range from $0.75-0.78 cents. For every dollar we spend and depending on which grant we receive either the $0.52 or $0.75-0.78. Mr. Klepps also said that on the school security sub-committee it was discussed at length the hiring of one guard or three guards. Because of budget constrictions the cost of 3 guards was voted down by the sub-committee. The one guard would be someone who roamed between the 3 schools along with our resident state trooper and the town constables.

Mr. Klepps opened the floor to discussion by the board. Ms. Young said she is new to the board and that she has attended the informational meetings, read the board minutes and spoken to town residents. She said she hasn't heard much support from the town for the plan as proposed. Specifically, the one guard for 3 schools. That we aren't being honest as to the real cost of security to the district. With only one guard we are leaving our schools unprotected at various times. There is more work to be done to understand how we can bridge that gap. To come up with a plan that is satisfactory to everybody.
Mr. Russell shared that in 2018 the FBI data showed 328 people were killed in school shootings and 537 were injured. When an armed person arrives at a shooting incident the shooter overwhelming stops their attack. If we have someone at our schools it is unlikely that the shooter will come to our schools. The FBI data shows that the presence of an armed guard serves as a deterrent to the attacker. Studies have shown that the presence of an armed guard has contributed to positive school climate and enhanced overall well-being. He personally believes that we need an armed guard in each school. If people are concerned about the $75,000 cost – in 2018 census we had 2,228 single family homes. If the $75,000 was divided among the single-family homes it would cost $34.00 per household per year which is about half of what we spend on coffee each month. It is not about money but it is about saving lives, loving our children and each other. Let's do what is right.
Ms. O'Dell-Longhi said there wasn't overwhelming support for or against the guards. She listens to the townspeople and the teachers. What she found interesting is the number of teachers who are not in support of an armed security officer. The 80% is a big number. These are the people who are on the front lines taking a bullet for your child. Did anyone who is in favor of an armed guard ask the teachers why they felt like this? There is a reason why and you need to ask the them why. That money could be better spent in other areas. We have a huge mental crisis going on in the schools across America. After working as a long-term sub in a nearby town and the mental health of some of the students she left the public school system and now works in a private school. We need to be pro-active rather than reactive. The teachers need more paras, special ed teachers and smaller classes. This is not the same school system as it once was. We live in different times; different society and we are dealing with children that are post-COVID. If money grew on trees, we should have all the security that we could. She hoped that with 4 new board members this wasn't being voted on tonight.
Mr. Buzzi said his biggest thing is having the opportunity to do something and we didn't do it. That isn't something he wants to live with. To lose a child is an unthinkable loss. His biggest thing is a deterrent. In the Tennessee shooting the shooter went to a different school because the first school had an armed guard. Deterrents are a big factor. When he grew up you respected a policeman – now they don't. An officer in school will give the child someone to look up to and it will pay dividends down the road.

Mr. Rodenberg said he works at a school with an armed security guard and he has a blank slate on the topic. How long would be hiring an armed security guard for? Would it be a one-year hire? Supt. Sousa said right now it is for one year. Mr. Rodenberg continued by saying sometimes this becomes permanent. One of his concerns is the effect on staffing. Is it feasible to do this as a pilot? Supt. Sousa replied at this point it is. Just like every program we look at every year we would have to look at the budget and re-evaluate it. This was looked at for 11 months and now you have 4 new board members. Why didn't the board vote on this before? Ms. O'Dell-Longhi replied she believed that the board couldn't come to an agreement. Ms. Tindall said the board didn't come to an agreement because there were lots of interruptions and disruptions. Mr. Buzzi said the reason it was put off is because the board was getting 4 new board members who would serve for 4 years. It would give the new members a chance to vote on it. Mr. Rodenberg asked if you do this could you have an interim and then put it out as a referendum question in the future. Supt. Sousa said he is not confident that having a non-binding advisory question on the referendum is possible as we are 0-2. Mr. Rodenberg said we are trying to please the parents, staff and other members of the town that are not on the same page. He said working in a building with an armed security guard and pretty good infrastructure he feels the hardening of the building makes him feel the safest. Ms. Miller asked more than the armed security guard? Mr. Rodenberg replied that the guard is one person in one spot and he is great guy. The hardening of the building has been a game changer.
Ms. Young asked if we did more forward on one guard what is the evaluation criteria for to say this is working in the way that we expect in the absence of an actual school attack. How do we know this is successful in a way that furthers the education goals of our schools and community. She said she hasn't seen anything on this to say I can sign off on this knowing this is the expansion plan. She hasn't heard much about support for the plan as stated. So it is frustrating to her as a new board member and a town resident that the board seems on a path to move forward to hire one guard knowing that people don't want to spend the money on 3 guards. That the teachers don't support it along with people in the town that don't want it. People who do want it want 3 guards. It is going to create budget problems for us down the line.
Ms. Miller asked Supt. Sousa to speak with First Selectman Jerram to see if a referendum question could be added to the ballot on the budgets in the Spring. We need to reach our senior population who don't do QR codes and aren't on any of the Chatter groups. Some of these people live paycheck to paycheck. If we decide to add $250,000 to our Capital Budget, she isn't sure how they will be able to pay their taxes. She said she does want to protect our children but we also need to fix our infrastructure. While we have done some upgrades to our schools, we need to do more with the 3 grants we received.

Mr. Klepps said at the last security meeting the discussion was on the hiring of the armed security guard. The board would ask Supt. Sousa to provide the next meeting with the credential requirements as well as the process of hiring this individual.

Motion by Mr. Klepps that we ask Superintendent Sousa to review the credential requirements of the interviewers, evaluation criteria to fit in our school system as well as the hiring process of the armed school security officer to be presented at the next board meeting for discussion and possible action. Second by Mr. Buzzi,

Unanimous

EdAdvance School Based Mental Health Professional Grant
Supt. Sousa said that EdAdvance has received a school based educational grant for the entire region. We have been awarded a ½ time school counselor at no cost to the district for the next 5 years. He

thanked Dr. Jeff Kitching and Dr. Judy Palmer for making this happen along with our Student Services Director Mike Lynch.

Social & Emotional Learning Early 2024
In early 2024 the board will go over what is and what is not the social & emotional learning curriculum in our schools.

Budget Surveys
For the 2024-2025 budget we will elicit perceptions and input from the community, our staff and students in grades 3-6. Supt. Sousa would like input from our stakeholders across the board.

CABE Recognition
Supt. Sousa said that Ms. Miller was recognized at the CABE CAPSS Convention as a member of the New Hartford Board of Education for 10 years. She was recognized for her dedication and commitment to local education and the community. He said we are so happy and blessed to have Penny Miller serve as our Board Secretary and 10 years. Ms. Miller thanked the board.

Supt. Sousa said that the Pre-K class has a cooking program on Thursday afternoons. The board is invited to attend if they want.

Recently the 4th grade class went to the State Capital. Our representative Mark Anderson was able to give them two tours of the House. The students were able to sit in the seats of the legislators.

Leslie from Hands of Grace said she was overjoyed and humbled by all the donations sent to them by the New Hartford Public Schools.

Routine Business
Approval of Minutes – November 7, 2023
Motion by Ms. Tindall to approve the minutes of November 7, 2023. Second by Mr. Russell.

Aye: Klepps, Tindall, Russell, Rodenberg, Miller, Buzzi, O'Dell-Longhi, Albert; Abstained: Young

Unanimous

Expenditure Report
Motion by Ms. Miller to approve the Expenditure Report. Second by Ms. Tindall.

Unanimous

New Business – First Reads
Policy and Regulation 5141.4 Students – Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect
Policy and Regulation 1212 Community Relations – School Volunteers
Policy and Regulation 1250.1 Community Relations – Visits to the School

Old Business
BOE Meeting Schedule 2024-2025

Motion by Mr. Buzzi to approve the BOE Meeting Schedule for 2024-2025. Second by Ms. Miller.

Unanimous

Reports
EdAdvance Board
Ms. Tindall said that the Draft minutes were shared with the BOE Board. She suggested that the board read Dr. Kitching's updates. The 3 things she thought were important are: the annual report that went out, Early Childhood and Family program and the state mandates. EdAdvance is also applying for various grants.

Curriculum Subcommittee
Ms. Tindall reported that the first year of the 5-year plan on ELA has been implemented. The staff and students have engaged with the new curriculum. The staff is continuing with the curriculum program. In the RULER curriculum, the students engage in weekly lessons and daily routines with positive interactions with peers and adults

Community Outreach
Mr. Sousa said the committee met briefly. There was a piece lacking in the community outreach mission. A survey was created for the community members. We are looking to engage the community more. The survey will be sent out Dec. 6th, 12th and Dec. 21 to elicit as much information as we can.

Executive Session
Superintendent 's evaluation
Motion by Ms. Miller to enter Executive Session for the purpose of the Superintendent's evaluation. Second by Mr. Klepps at 8:42 pm.

Executive session ended at 8:55 pm

Motion by Ms. Miiler to approve the new format of New Hartford Public Schools Superintendent Evaluation. Second by Mr. Buzzi.

Unanimous

Motion by Mr. Buzzi to adjourn at 8:56 pm. Second by Ms. Miller.

Unanimous

Respectfully submitted by Penny Miller, Board Secretary
Attachments: Aulay Carlson's letters
2024-2025 Meeting Calendar

NEW HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
• ANN ANTOLINI • BAKERVILLE • NEW HARTFORD •

January 2023

School security consultant

Develop and distribute community survey re: current school security & hiring 1-3 armed security officers

Research cost associated re:armed security officers

February 2023

Proposed phased implementation of armed security officers (BOE motion denied)

Distribute community Survey

Security consultants: Layers: Harden exterior, harden interior, hire (1-3) armed security officers ($75K-$225K)

March 2023

Survey results presented

Earmarked 75K for one (1) armed security officer, future intent on hiring 3

Increase capital $50k security infrastructure

Post question to referendum

Survey Results (in favor of at least one armed security officer):

NHPS Staff:
12 Yes (20%), 47 Nay (80%)

Town resident survey results:
208 Yes (53%), 187 Nay (47%)

New Hartford Resident (no students in school):
60 Yes (41%), 85 Nay (59%)

New Hartford Resident (w/ student(s) in school):
139 Yes (65%), 74 Nay (35%)

April/May 2023

Denied request for advisory referendum (Too late)

Plan: add advisory referendum (November election)

September 2023

Request for Referendum denied via Board of Selectmen

Plan for two informational and listening sessions Oct. 25th & Nov. 21st

October 2023

Two CT grants for physical security upgrades announced

Informational Meeting (public comment)

FAQs

November 2023

Informational Meeting (public comment)

FAQs

December 2023

Security timeline presented

Grant implementation presented

$57,000 in current budget to cover one armed security officer

Grant Implementation

2024	2025	2026
Security windows	Security windows	
Security doors/locks	Security doors/locks	Security doors/locks
Phone system (mass messaging)		
Camera system (external and internal)	Camera system (external and internal)	Camera system (external and internal)
Perimeter fence	Perimeter fence	Perimeter fence
Interoperable radios	Interoperable radios	

REP. HOWARD
REP. DOUCETTE

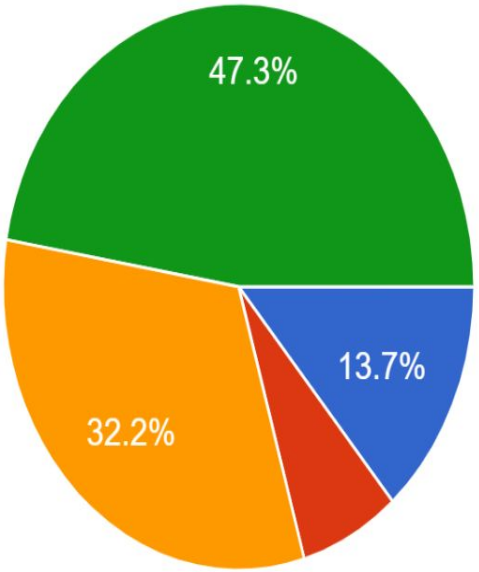
Earmarked from 23-24 BOE Budget (March 31, 2023)			To Date 11.29.23
Painting	30,000		30,000
Emergency Repairs	25,000	Spent 3,000	22,000
Window Cleaning	3,000		3,000
CREC Membership	1,200		1,200
Superintendent's Line	2,750	Spent	0
Propane	2,000	Spent 500	1,500
EnviroMed (Capital)	12,000	Spent	0
TOTAL	75,950		57,700

Board of Education

Special Meeting
3.16.23

Would you support an additional increase to the overall budget of:

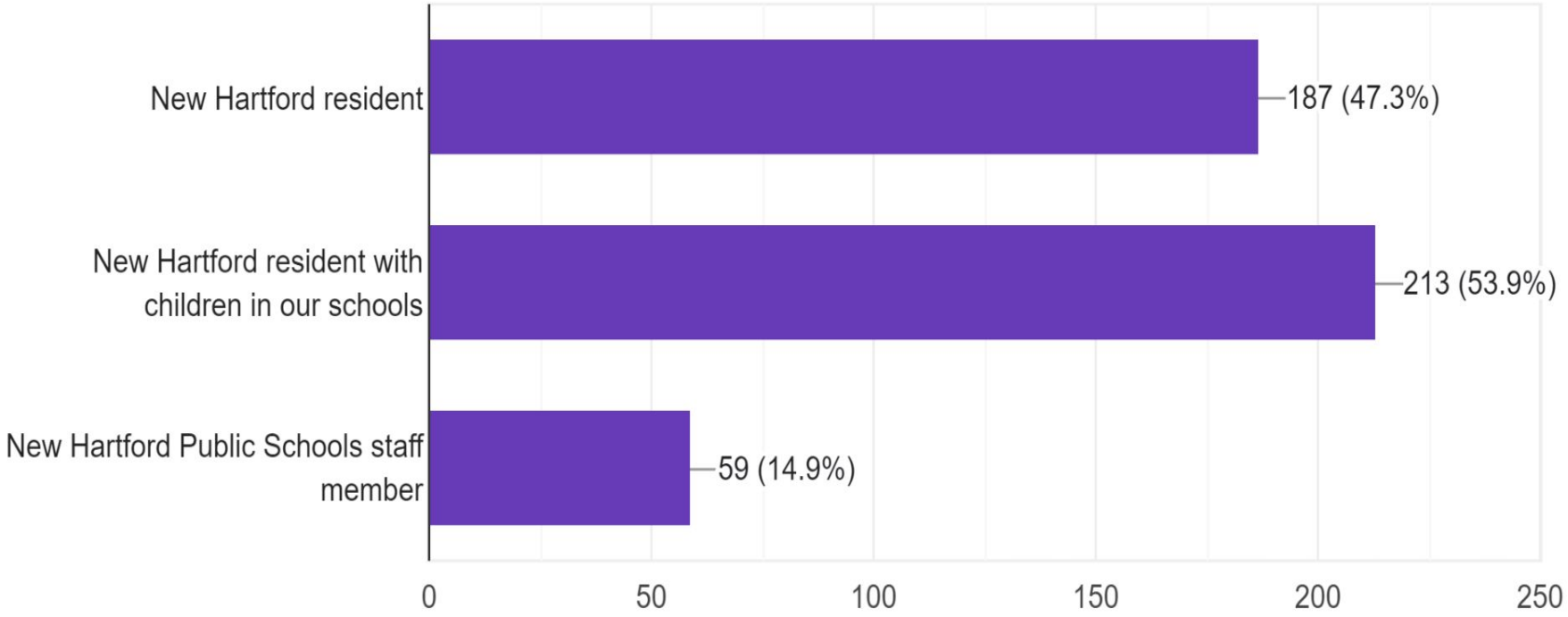
395 responses



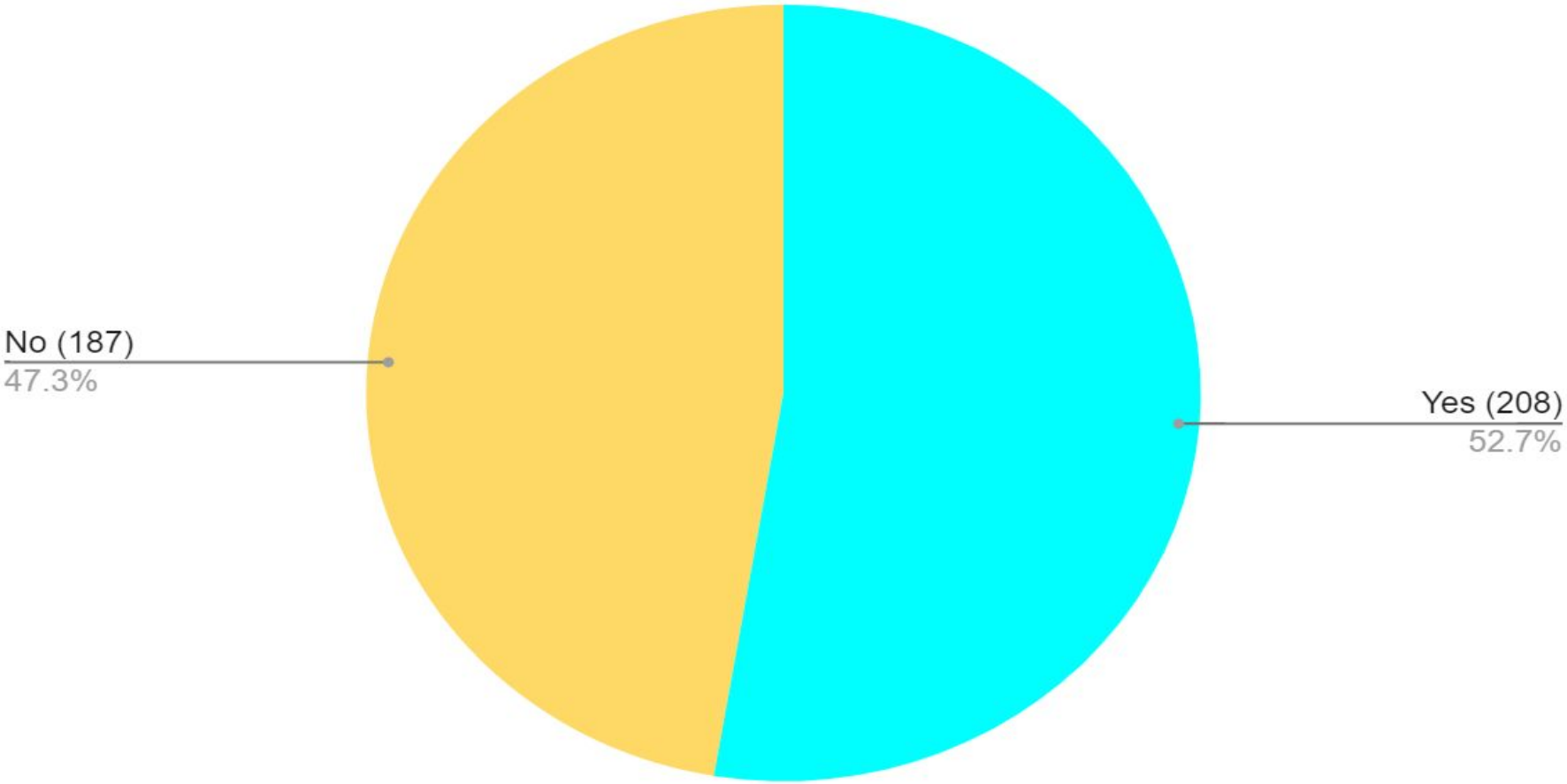
- .79% ($74, 043) One armed security guard
- 1.58% ($148,086) Two armed security guards
- 2.37% ($222,191) Three armed security guards
- No I do not support this.

Are you a

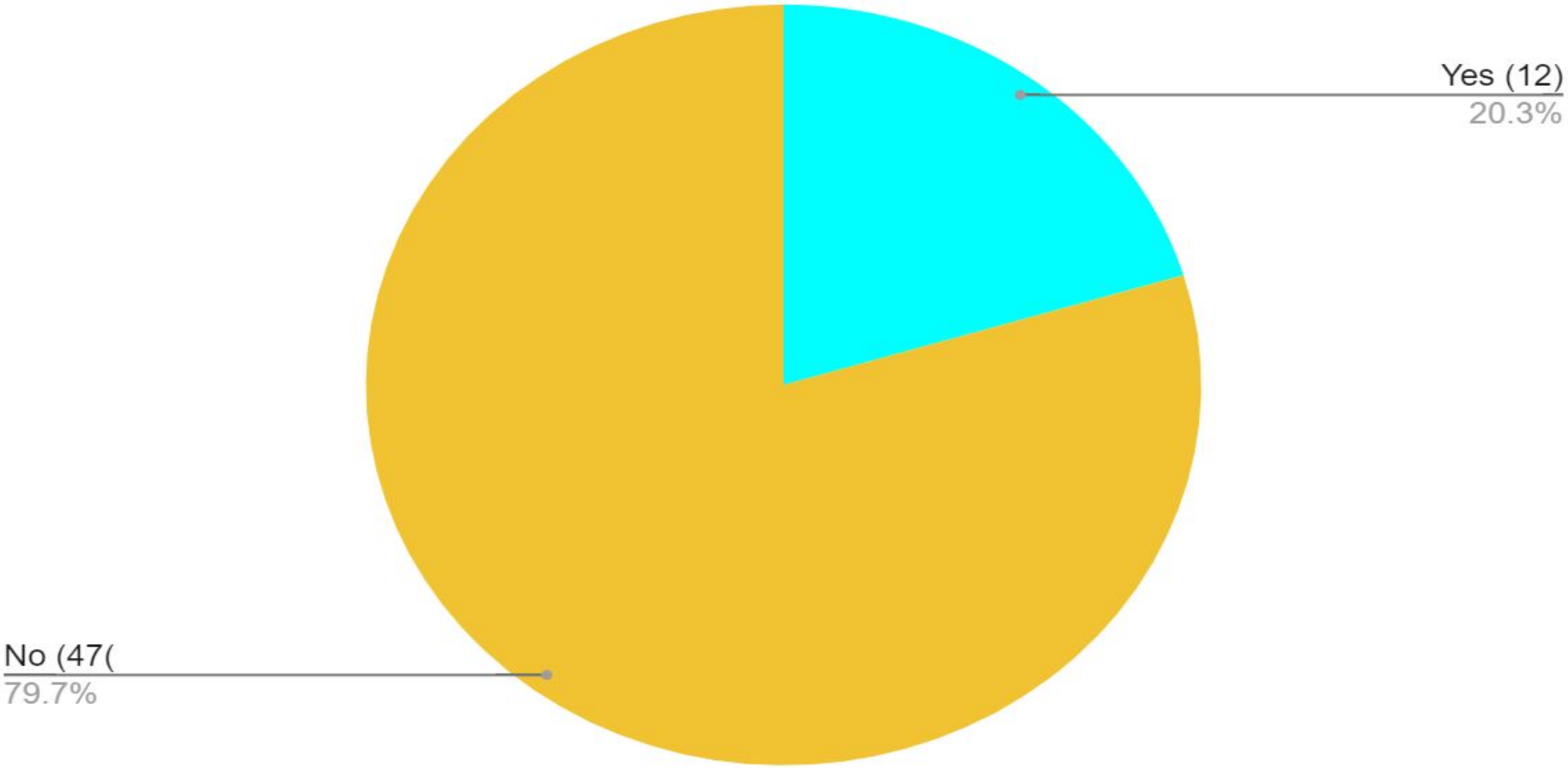
395 responses



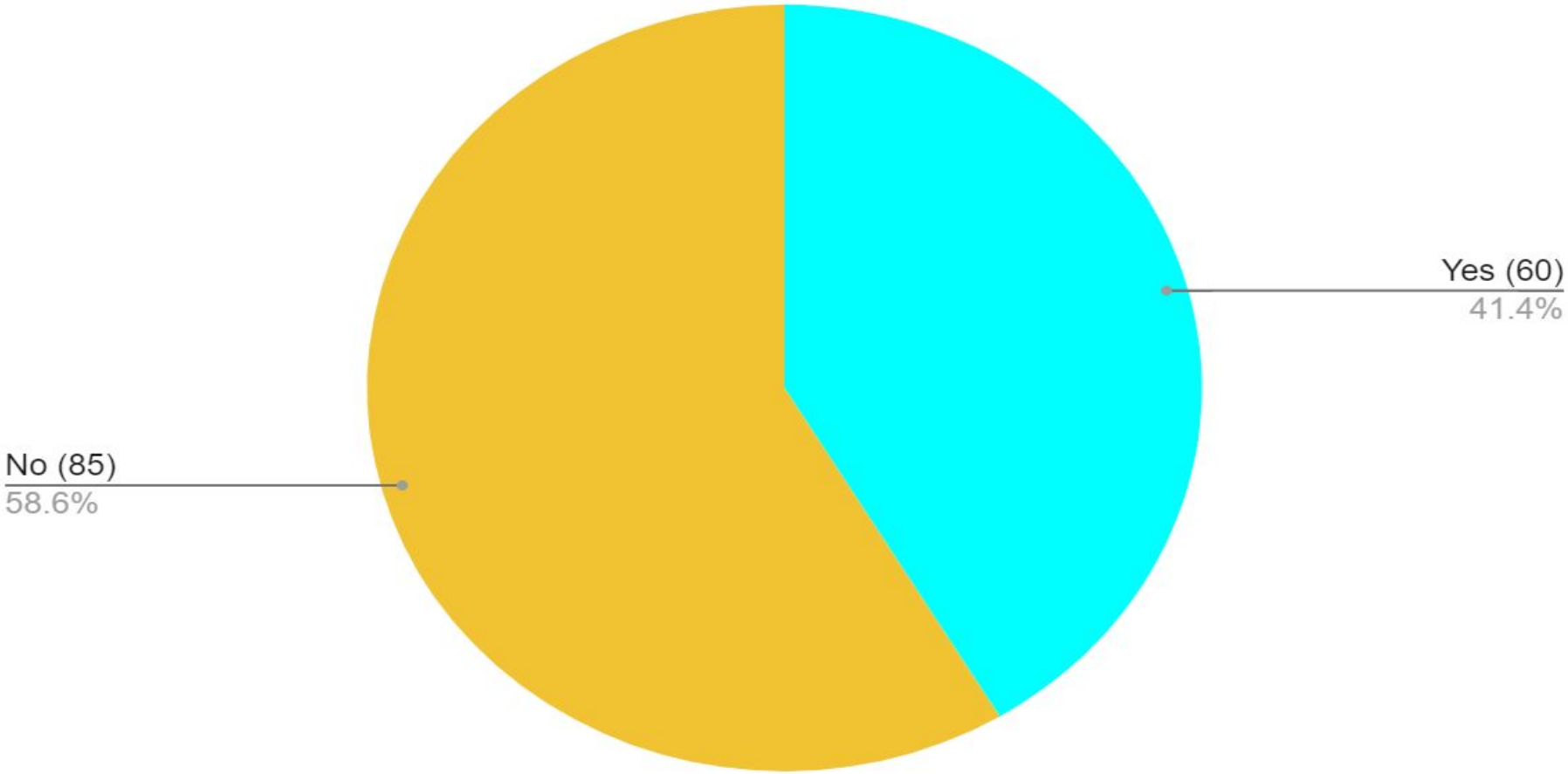
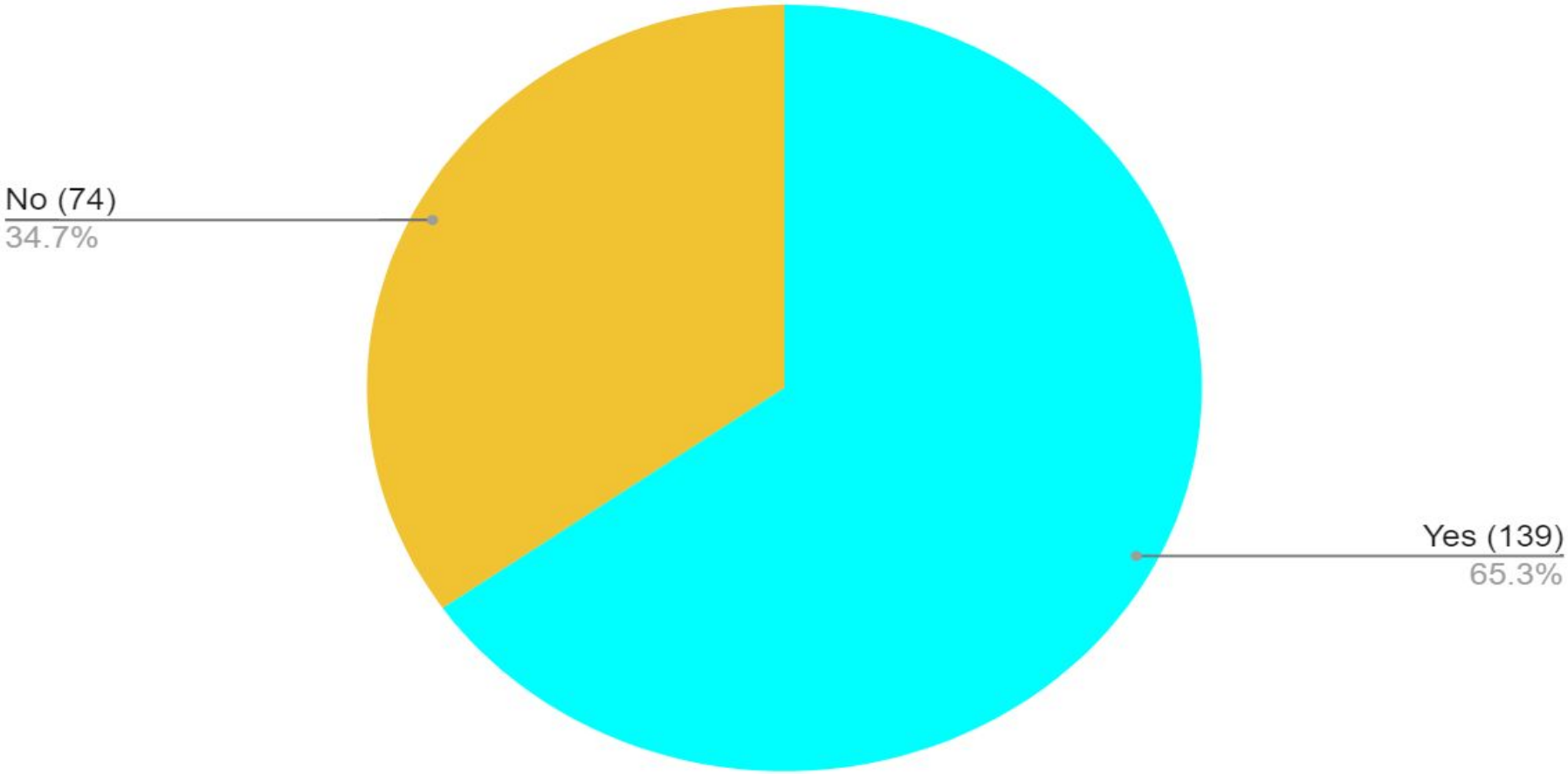
Overall (395 responses)



New Hartford Staff



New Hartford Residents (no students in school)



New Hartford Resident (with student(s) in school)