

New Hartford Public Schools
Board of Education Regular Meeting (In-Person)
Tuesday, November 19, 2024 @ 7:00PM
Ann Antolini School – Library

PRESENT: Superintendent Jeffrey Sousa; Chairman Timothy Klepps; **Board Members:** Meagan Albert; Vice Chairman Thomas Buzzi; Penny Miller; Erik Perotti; Frank Rodenberg; Timothy Russell; Deirdre Tindall and Kristin Young.

ALSO PRESENT: Kelly Carroll; Amy Kennedy; Michael Lynch and Heather Mathes.

Chairman Timothy Klepps called the regular meeting to order at 7:01PM.

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Order of Business

Chairman Timothy Klepps announced a change in the order of business, item H (Reports) will happen before item G (New Business). Additionally, under item G (New Business) number 2 and 3 will be removed and put under item K (Executive Session). Item K (Executive Session) will follow item I (Public Comment) and be before item J (Adjournment).

C. Communications to the Board of Education/Public Comment None

D. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Sousa began by thanking all Veterans, especially those who are New Hartford residents who attended the Veterans Day ceremonies at the New Hartford Public Schools. He also gave a warm welcome to Laura Wesolowski, a new nurse at New Hartford Elementary School. Mr. Sousa also thanked and congratulated John Pollutro for his 34 years of service with the New Hartford Public Schools. Mr. Pollutro is a school custodian at Bakerville School, who plans to retire in January 2025. He has been with New Hartford since 1990.

Next Mr. Jeffrey Sousa introduced this year's Student Representatives, Emma Jack and Dexter Cerruto. Dexter informed the Board of the recent field trip to the adventure park field in September, they had a great time. He also noted the Civil War unit has been an interesting subject to learn about. A new experience was switching classes, a great experience that Dexter described as a change of scenery. Sixth graders also have free seating at lunch, the plus to this is you can sit with friends from other classes. Emma describes the class charters. A charter has expressed ways the students want to feel, some examples were: *safe, respected, happy*. In a charter each student signs the charter, like a contract. They agree to have everyone in school feel the way the students have described in the charter or "contract". This means they all agree to have everyone feel this way or in this example "*safe, respected and happy*" at school. Dr. Kelly Carroll did a great job in the selection process for this years Student Representatives and was highly thanked by Superintendent Sousa.

Mr. Sousa expressed his praise and thanks to Board Member Deirdre Tindall (New Hartford Board of Education, CABE delegate) for a fantastic job at her first delegate assembly. He also thanked Chairman Timothy Klepps, Director of Student Services Michael Lynch and all the Board Members who attended the Board of Education retreat on November 13, 2024.

Mr. Sousa announced New Hartford has been awarded a solar grant from Eversource, that will be installed at Antolini School only. Mr. Sousa will be working with First Selectman Daniel Jerram to install the solar; there are a lot of steps in this process. The electricity created by this solar will support the school and then any additional electricity would supply cash flow to the Town of New Hartford. Mr. Klepps emphasized there is a benefit to having this solar installed at no cost to the Town. The Town would essentially receive money for whatever electricity is not used. The excess electricity would not be used to supply the other two schools. This is an install at Antolini School only, as it is the largest. The install could take three to five months.

Lastly, Mr. Sousa and Chairman Timothy Klepps went to the Board of Finance, they presented the adopted non-lapsing account for the Board of Education policy. The Board of Finance requested to see the non-lapsing account reported in some format either monthly or quarterly, to be most transparent. Mr. Sousa thanked the Board of Finance and First Selectman Daniel Jerram for touring the schools to view the most recent physical enhancements to the school's security.

The NHPS (New Hartford Public Schools) leadership team did a presentation regarding academic performance updates - "*educating for excellence*". The leadership team is four individuals: **Michael Lynch, Kelly Carroll, Amy Kennedy and Heather Mathes**. The NHPS leadership team heavily thinks about how success is measured. Several examples were presented, please refer to the BOE Presentation/Performance Update 23-24 Data Trends and Fall 2024 for more information. Dibels K-3 measured that as students enter Kindergarten, they are off to a typical start for what has been seen over the past few years. First and second graders are off to a strong start compared to previous years, showing they are maintaining what they have learned over the summer and those entering third grade are off to a typical start with more than typical starting in the "above" category compared to previous years. In the 23-24 school year, Kindergarten has great growth, second graders had tremendous growth 75% are at or above and third graders have maintained their second-grade performances. The NGSS (state assessment) in fifth grade trends shows that New Hartford continues to score above the state averages and maintain those numbers year after year. Despite the implementation of a new curriculum all students trended positively, the highs and lows in math are going to be looked at more closely. Trends in ELA show that the average scale score increased in all grade levels from last year. NHPS is meeting goal above the state average in the Smarter Balance Assessment Data Trends. The third graders are quite a bit above the state average. Third and sixth graders are above state average in Math. There is a subgroup in the Smart Balance Assessment Data: high needs / non high needs. The staff can see the students in red and track how they progress. The software tracks each child individually, so no child falls through the cracks. The next steps are the staff will continue to implement the ELA program, and hyper-specialized training will continue, organized by Michael Lynch. This data will support the development to create a district engagement plan in the next few years.

Board Member Frank Rodenberg inquired about the level to which parents are involved, asking the leadership team if they have seen a decline in parental communication, such as parent night, which weren't always well attended. Families are invited to attend the open houses and celebrations of learning. Classroom teachers may send a monthly newsletter or a note home. There has been discussion in the parent focus group how to further engage parents. Open houses are very well attended. Timothy Klepps asked about the fifth grade drop in the average scale score in mathematics. Dr. Kelly Carroll expressed that because groups can be very different from each other year to year, you can't compare one group to another group. But the team emphasizes they focus on the growth of each group individually year after year. This cohort in fifth graders was recognized as severely impacted by the pandemic and have been catching over the past few years.

E. Board of Education Chair's Report: Chairman Timothy Klepps thanked those who attended the Board of Education retreat and orientation that took place on Wednesday November 13, 2024, at 5:00PM. He

notified the Board that he and Mr. Sousa met with the Board of Finance to discuss the recent security upgrades that are well underway to make the school a safer place. He also announced to the Board of Education information regarding the Town Meeting on Tuesday December 10, 2024, at 7:00PM in the Senior Center at the New Hartford Town Hall (third floor), because there will be the presentation of Board of Education grants. Mr. Timothy Klepps expressed his appreciation to have all Board Members who could attend the meeting to be there.

F. Routine Business

Approval of Minutes: October 15, 2024 (Regular Meeting) & Expenditure Report

MOTION by Penny Miller to approve meeting minutes from October 15, 2024, and the expenditure report as presented. Second by Frank Rodenberg.

UNANIMOUS
Motion Passes

G. Reports

1. Plant Facility and Transportation – Vice-Chairman Thomas Buzzi, updated the Board on the bus contract, the contract is up after this year. The Sub-Committee met to recommend a meeting and coordination with Region 7 because their contract is up at the end of the year as well. The thought is to potentially obtain one bus company for both New Hartford and Region 7. The next steps are to get an RFP (Request for Proposal) and bring the RFP back to the Plant Facility and Transportation Sub-Committee.

2. EdAdvance – Board Member Deirdre Tindall presented the new Executive Director of EdAdvance, Jonathan P Costa, Sr is doing a fantastic job, her highlight is that Mr. Costa sends out monthly program spotlights. The takeaway is EdAdvance is doing wonderful work for the school district. Please read the October 2024 Edition Program Spotlight for more information. There is a lot planned in the next couple months.

H. New Business

1. EdAdvance Food Service - Board Member Megan Albert requested this topic to be included on the agenda. Megan Albert voiced her concerns regarding what desserts are being offered at lunch. Megan Albert questions the Board, “does it need to be offered every day? Could it be Friday’s instead?”. Megan Albert feels the desserts should be reduced because the ingredients are “unhealthy”. Mr. Sousa stated that he will reach out to Becky from EdAdvance on this topic and invite her to the next Board of Education meeting in December. To clarify, the items Megan is referring to, is separate from the lunch provided to students, this is referring to the a la carte menu. Fruit is available as a dessert from the regular lunch menu, students are not able to charge “a la carte” items on their meal accounts, they must bring money from home to purchase these items. Meaning “a la carte” items are strictly cash only. These desserts are cookies, chips, ice cream (for example). Board Member Erik Perotti expressed that this issue has been brought up in other towns like Canton. He also noted the reason a la carte items are offered by cash only is to help increase cash flow (to make money), this is because healthy foods don’t make money. Megan and the consensus of the Board is they would like to talk about what foods exactly are being offered, what the ingredient lists are, what are other districts doing and what the perception is from parents on the a la carte items. There will be further discussion regarding what the Board of Education would like to do at a future meeting. The lunch menu cannot be changed without involvement of EdAdvance. Mr. Sousa noted he would highly recommend the Board strongly consider the parents views regarding this topic. The last thing Mr. Sousa wants is parents to feel the Board is restricting the parent’s choice to what their children should eat. He suggested sending a survey out to parents before making any decisions.

I. Public Comment - (For Agenda Items Only): None

MOTION by Penny Miller to enter Executive Session at 7:59PM and invite Superintendent Sousa to attend. Second by Timothy Russell.

**UNANIMOUS
Motion Passes**

*Everyone in attendance left the meeting.
The Board of Education and Superintendent Sousa remained for Executive Session.*

Motions following Executive Session were provided by Board Secretary Penny Miller to the Recording Secretary.

K. Executive Session - Tentative Agreements. School Security. Superintendent Evaluation.

2. Action Regarding Tentative Agreement Reached with Local 1303-367 New Hartford Administrative Assistants

3. Action Regarding Tentative Agreement Reached with New Hartford Administrators Union

Executive Session ended at 8:47PM.

MOTION by Penny Miller to approve the agreement reached with Local 1303-367 New Hartford Administrative Assistants retroactive from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2027. Second by Deirdre Tindall.

**UNANIMOUS
Motion Passes**

MOTION by Penny Miller to approve the agreement reached with the New Hartford Administrators Union from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2028. Second by Deirdre Tindall.

**UNANIMOUS
Motion Passes**

J. Adjournment:

MOTION by Penny Miller to adjourn the meeting at 8:49PM. Second by Timothy Russell.

**UNANIMOUS
Motion Passes**

*Respectfully submitted by,
Elizabeth Domas, Recording Secretary*

Recorded Regular and Special Board of Education meetings will be posted to:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCX-ZlomWmjG81dc_QM3rfg

Attachments:
Academic Performance Update – 11-19-2024
EdAdvance Program Spotlight – October 2024 Edition