

New Hartford Public Schools
Board of Education Regular Meeting (In-Person)
Ann Antolini Elementary School - Library
7:00PM on Tuesday, January 7, 2025

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

ABSENT: Board Member Penny Miller

Additional Education Staff Present: Kelly Carroll; Amy Kennedy; Michael Lynch and Heather Mathes.

Chairman Timothy Klepps called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Order of Business

Chairman Timothy Klepps announced to change noting item B will come before item A, under the Superintendent's Report.

C. Communications to the Board of Education/Public Comment

Aulay Carlson of 455 West Hill Road read a letter to the Board of Education, if interested in reading this letter the document handed out by Mr. Carlson is attached to these minutes, filed in the Town Clerk's Office.

D. Superintendent's Report

Student Board Representative Emma gave a learning update on the third graders as to what they are doing and their transition to Ann Antolini School.

Superintendent Jeffrey Sousa expressed his thanks to the Connecticut State Police, the Town of New Hartford Police Officer's and First Selectman Daniel Jerram. Mr. Sousa personally reached out to all parents who inquired on the indirect threat to the community. Superintendent Sousa was present in all three schools at some point during that week. The number of students absent on Wednesday December 18th, 2024 was 22 students (5.1%), on Thursday December 19th, 2024 was 106 students (25%) and Friday December 20th, 2024, 26 students were absent (6.1%). The Curriculum Counsel had their first meeting on December 19th, 2024 to review their mission statement and bylaws. Mr. Sousa extends gratitude and thanks to Town of New Hartford residents for their support at the Town meeting in December to approve the Board of Education grants. Notification was received that the Town of New Hartford Board of Education Education Diversity Plan was approved by the State of Connecticut and the Department of Education.

- **Nutrition Services - EdAdvance** - Becky Tyrell from EdAdvance gave a presentation, specifically noting the difference between lunch meals served in the school and a la carte items available for students to purchase (cash only). She noted comparable school districts in the area, in regards to what those towns offer. Becky noted this procedure in place is historically how New Hartford has always operated. EdAdvance did not implement something new rather EdAdvance continued the practice that has always been place in the school district (town-wide). Please see the attached nutritional documentation, attached to these minutes if interested. Becky also gave a report for the detailed number of a la carte items and quantities sold at each school August 2024 to November 2024. Becky Tyrell very importantly noted, that a la carte items are required to be purchased, a parent or guardian must give the child cash to purchase an a la carte item. These items cannot be purchased with meal plans, all a la carte must be purchased with cash with the exception of milk. Becky Tyrell cautioned the Board of Education to make sure parents agree to any changes made to what is offered to their children and reminded the Board this offering does, while small, bring supplemental funding to the school district. School meals provided to students are very regimented, food offered is compliant to meet the guidelines of the USDA and the State of Connecticut. Items that are sold in schools may differ from what you would buy in the grocery store to meet specific regulations. Meals are very prescriptive and limited based on the nutrition levels, for example: sodium or calories. The largest hurdle EdAdvance faces is "to make ends meet", meals are made for usually \$3.50 a meal. Roughly \$1,400 has been spent on local foods for example: apples, lettuce and micro-greens. Chairman Timothy Klepps clarified with Becky Tyrell that all a la carte items are a daily offering, she confirmed yes. Vice Chairman Thomas Buzzi questioned Becky about food waste, how much food ends up trash?

The answer to this is unknown at this time. EdAdvance strives to offer different selections so children can decide what they would like, hoping they take food they will eat. One requirement though is each student has to take a fruit or vegetable, whether the food is eaten or thrown in the trash is not known at this time. Timothy Russell asked Becky what it would cost to feed the children healthier food? Becky's response to that is what type of food is her referring to, Mr. Russel said an example of grilled chicken. Children are more likely to take breaded chicken than grilled chicken, although grilled chicken is offered. Deirdre Tindall expressed her displeasure with the ingredients on the sheets provided, for example: canola oil and dyes. Deirdre Tindall feels the children are being fed unhealthy food. Frank Rodenberg asked questions to understand how much profit is being made on the sales of a la carte items. He also inquired as to the number of students who bring lunch. Participation rates for school meals could be supplied but Becky didn't have a number in mind. Becky is an advocate for better choices and food, but this comes with a price. Chairman Timothy Klepps inquired about what else is offered, for example pizza? She noted they are on a 5 week schedule, pasta usually once a week, pizza on Friday's. Offerings may also change based on the season. If anyone is interested in what is served, the menu is posted online. Erik Perotti thanked Becky for her presentation, hard work and support to our community, he noted in this instance you have to think like a kid, the child wants what looks nice and tastes good which may not always be the healthiest option. Thomas Buzzi asked if another producer could supply the meat (like chicken), do we have to use Tyson chicken. There are options of other chicken producers but they are limited to what they can buy based on price and what is allowed based on the options within the bid. Deirdre Tindall has requested the ingredient lists be sent to parents in their Friday folders. Erik Perotti emphasized this is not a school issue, but rather a larger issue. Deirdre Tindall feels the Board of Education has the responsibility to do better and the power to take unhealthy foods out of the schools, which can be done by educating the parents and being more transparent. Becky Tyrell emphasized under the a la carte items, the highest item sold is milk. Erik Perotti confirmed the Town of Canton sells all the items New Hartford does, even though they are not on the list, for example: chips, cookies. The Board would like this topic added to the next Board of Education meeting in February, Timothy Klepps requested information be emailed to him prior to the meeting.

- **District Engagement Plan** - Superintendent Sousa gave an introductory snapshot at the first presentation of the District Engagement Plan. Originally the district engagement plan was a 5 year plan and has since changed to be a 3 year document and will be reviewed twice a year. The purpose of this live document is to have more ownership. The plan is the navigation tool to move the school district in a direction towards achieving a larger goal. There are three important school goals: *1. teaching and learning 2. school climate and 3. vision of learner*. The three goals highlighted and each categories engagement goals are listed, please see the attached District Engagement Plan. Kristin Young asked clarification questions based on when this will be implemented and when the goals will be completed. She would like the goals by year and a completion timeframe included in the plan for transparency. Board Members would like to see steps included in the plan. Frank Rodenberg questioned the difference between the DPI and the smarter balance growth. Frank Rodenberg concluded he believes the numbers in the letter received from Mr. Carlson are incorrect, the wrong numbers may have been used. Kristin Young emphasized her desire for the document to show that the implementation was completed, or not. For example, she would like to see if a goal in 2024-2025 cannot be completed, then when will it be completed? The intent Kristin is expressing is the need to have a notation to hold the district accountable, her biggest concern is to have transparency to know if the implementation was effective or not. Mr. Sousa expressed how you will not necessarily see these results right away. He explained that after implementation there is review and analysis. The staff will analyze what needs to be done better, and what steps they would like to take to get to that goal. When they review what needs to be improved, they will take action necessary to feel they are favorably addressing the issues of concern. Mr. Sousa explained that less is more, the point of this plan was simplicity which is relevant to what we are doing. A new climate survey will be sent out in the Spring. Chairman Timothy Klepps made some clarification comments and noted his thoughts to say that it is the expectation that the survey taken in the Spring of 2025, will have more favorable results than the past survey due to this implementation. The Board highly emphasized that it is important for parents/guardians to know if the goal was achieved. Timothy Klepps summarized the importance of setting goals, and determines the Board is looking for more defined targets for the current year, and that the plan should set the district up to hit the target. The Board of Education has asked for a summarization of what has been completed to date and what is targeted to be completed by the end of 2024-2025. Mr. Sousa said several times, this would be a rolling document. Megan Albert questioned if this plan should be presented at the beginning of the school year. Mr. Sousa agreed, that would probably be a good idea and may make more sense to the Board.
- **2025-2026 Calendar/BOE Calendar** - These documents have been posted.

E. Board of Education Chair's Report:

Chairman Timothy Klepps had a brief discussion on subcommittees. There have been several subcommittee meetings happening lately and he would like to see Community Relations be scheduled to meet soon.

F. Routine Business

Approval of Minutes: December 3, 2024 (Special Meeting-VIRTUAL) & Expenditure Report

MOTION by Kristin Young to approve meeting minutes from December 3, 2024. Second by Deirdre Tindall.

(7-0-1)

Aye: Timothy Klepps; Meagan Albert; Erik Perotti; Frank Rodenberg; Timothy Russell; Deirdre Tindall and Kristin Young

Naye:

Abstain: Thomas Buzzi

Motion Passes

MOTION by Thomas Buzzi to approve the expenditure report as presented. Second by Timothy Russell.

**UNANIMOUS
Motion Passes**

G. New Business

Policy 1327 - Relations with Youth Organizations (First Read) - This is a practice New Hartford Public Schools already engages in, the intent is to make sure information is only shared where it needs to, meaning there must be an educational interest.

Policy 4222 - Paraeducators/Title I Paraeducators (First Read) - Minor change in verbiage from instructional aids to Paraeducators.

Policy and Regulations 5131.81 - Electronic Devices (First Read) - This policy was gone through with a fine tooth and is the most scrutinized with very good intentions. The intent is to make sure students are acting in a safe manner and that the ramifications are understood. Cell phones are not permitted to be used on "school property", this includes the school bus. There is a great deal of strikeouts in this policy because this is for younger children specifically.

Bylaw 9030 - Commitment to Democratic Principles in Relation to Community, Staff, Students (First Read) - Minor update to the date.

H. Old Business

EdAdvance - EdAdvance does a lot of great work, there is a highlight each month about what's being done for more in depth information, please see attached.

I. Reports

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

MOTION by Frank Rodenberg to enter Executive Session to discuss School Security, Student Residency and to invite Superintendent Jeffrey Sousa to join at 8:54PM. Second by Thomas Buzzi.

**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 Superintendent Sousa to the Recording Secretary.

K. Executive Session - School Security, Student Residency

Executive Session ended at 9:17PM.

L. Adjournment:

MOTION by Thomas Buzzi to adjourn the meeting at 9:17PM. Second by Frank Rodenberg.

**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:
Aulay Carlson - 455 West Hill Road - Letter
District Engagement Plan
Nutritional Fact Sheets
EdAdvance - November Edition