

**New Hartford Public Schools  
Board of Education Regular Meeting (In-Person)  
Ann Antolini Elementary School - Library  
7:00PM on Tuesday, February 4, 2025**

**PRESENT:** Superintendent Jeffrey Sousa; Chairman Timothy Klepps; Vice Chairman Thomas Buzzi

**Board Members:** Meagan Albert; Penny Miller; Erik Perotti; Frank Rodenberg; Timothy Russell; Deirdre Tindall and Kristin Young

**Also Present:** Kelly Carroll; Amy Kennedy; Heather Mathes and First Selectman Daniel Jerram

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

**A. Pledge of Allegiance**

**B. Order of Business**

**C. Communications to the Board of Education/Public Comment**

Kristen Kosiba of 40 Windsor Lane expresses her concerns on the affordability and quality of the food items provided by EdAdvance, Mrs. Kosiba is a room parent. Room parents often contribute extra funding for classroom parties, which is a concern Kristen has. Kristen feels it is inappropriate to discuss financial matters with amongst other parents. Kristen's letter is attached to these minutes.

Melissa Wilczak of 15 Spencer Brook Road voiced her concerns regarding the safety choices being made about student allergies to room parents, she is also a room parent. Room parents are no longer told if there is an allergy in the classroom, which they were in previous years. There is no flexibility in the new system. The parents who do not support the classroom parties (approximately 4 a year) put the burden on the room parent.

Daniel Jerram of 535 Town Hill Road thanked Superintendent Sousa and the members of the Board of Education for their dedication to the Town of New Hartford. The Board of Selectman have recently spoke about volunteer recognition, therefore he thanked the members for their efforts volunteering on this Board. Mr. Jerram expressed his support to keep Vice Chairman Thomas Buzzi on the Capital Subcommittee.

**D. Superintendent's Report**

Dexter Cerrutto reported that second graders in math are measuring in inches and centimeters and learning how to make line plots. In ELA, they are learning about what paleontologists do and how fossils are created. In Science, students are studying animal adaptations. The students said their favorite event was the field trip to the Yale Peabody Museum.

Emma Jack informed the Board that students will participate in a world read aloud day on February 5, 2025, to celebrate the art of storytelling. A special guest from the community will come into each classroom to read to the students. Some members are Board of Education members, First Selectman Daniel Jerram, Superintendent Sousa, the Lions Club, staff at Beekley Library and Mrs. Anita Barden. They each donate the book to the classroom. February 6, 2025, is the 100th day of school. Kindness week is scheduled for February 10-13, 2025. Monday is Peace, Love and Kindness Day, Tuesday is Work

Out Problems with Kindness, Wednesday is Dream of Kindness and Thursday is Love How Kind You Are - this week represents kindness, showing everyone that you care. This teaches students to come together, they are in a safe and supported environment.

**1. Tools for Schools** - The indoor air quality component is completed to meet State requirements, and all are available online for viewing via the Board of Education website. If you have any questions, please contact Superintendent Sousa. EnviroMed Services came into the schools to look for mold, dust and air quality. They found the schools were pristine, custodial crews do an extremely good job of keeping the buildings clean. They did not find any other schools that were as clean as New Hartford's. HVAC Reports - once available they will be posted on the Board of Education website for statutory requirements.

Superintendent Sousa gave a brief overview of the plans for Capital. In the 5-year Capital plan there are five items outlined: Indoor Air Quality and HVAC inspections, Technology Updates, Board of Education (Mini Van), Antolini Gym/Cafeteria Floor and Underground Storage Tank Replacement (4 in total; 1- Bakerville, 1-NH Elementary and 2-Ann Antolini). Mr. Sousa stated nothing here is concrete and this is a fluid document, meaning these items are not locked in. The tanks are currently single walled. One tank cost \$250,000 x 4 = \$1,000,000. In the year 2030 one tank must be replaced and in the year 2031 the other three must be replaced. Daniel Jerram suggested this may be a bonding project to the Board of Finance and to send them the message that this may be coming.

**2. IAQ Update** - There is an RFP that is out for companies to bid on transportation, New Hartford is soliciting proposals for transportation for all students.

**3. New Hartford Elementary Roof Project** - The Town graciously supported that the Superintendent of Schools can apply, accept or reject the grant regarding the New Hartford Elementary Roof. The roof is originally from approximately 1984; therefore, it meets the requirements of the grant due to the life expectancy. The next step forward is to have Mr. Sousa work with Daniel Jerram and the building committee. The roof is anticipated to be done this summer (2025). The steps in this process must be followed very strictly to receive reimbursement.

**MOTION** by Kristin Young to have Superintendent Sousa begin the process of collecting information to submit to the State of Connecticut for an approximate 50% reimbursement of the roof project for New Hartford Elementary. Second by Penny Miller.

**UNANIMOUS**  
***Motion Passes***

#### **E. Board of Education Chair's Report**

Chairman Timothy Klepps announced that the budget will be presented at the February 25, 2025, Board of Education meeting. The current target is for Superintendent Sousa to propose the budget to the Board of Education. Mr. Klepps highly encourages all Board Members to be present, if possible. Questions are to be funneled through Mr. Klepps who will compile the questions to be answered by Mr. Sousa at a follow-up meeting.

#### **F. Routine Business**

**Approval of Minutes:** January 7, 2025 (Regular Meeting)

**MOTION** by Frank Rodenberg to approve meeting minutes from January 7, 2025. Second by Erik Perotti.

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

**Naye:**

**Abstain:** Penny Miller

**Motion Passes**

### **Expenditure Report**

**MOTION** by Penny Miller to approve the expenditure report as presented. Second by Timothy Russell.

**UNANIMOUS  
Motion Passes**

### **G. New Business**

#### **Discussion and Possible Action Relative to Food Service**

The Board of Education had a lengthy discussion on food service within the school system. Chairman Klepps started the open discussion by asking the group what action does the Board wish to take? Does the Board want to survey the community? Are there other actions members would like to see such as limiting access to certain foods brought into the schools? Deirdre Tindall would like to either eliminate a la carte options or find healthier alternatives. Some discussion was had to see what other options are available. The options are limited to what EdAdvance can supply. Kristin Young would like to take no action and table any action regarding a la carte items. Kristin emphasized that no one is forced to buy a la carte items. An important reminder, a la carte items are cash only. Penny Miller agreed, Ms. Miller expressed it is not the choice of the Board to say what items children can and cannot eat, that should be left up to the parent of the child to either provide the cash or to not. It is not of the Board of Education's choice to determine what the children can and cannot buy. If parents or guardians do not want their children to have these items, the parents should tell them no. Other members agreed it is not the purview of the Board to manage this. Some further discussion led to the consensus that the government should be encouraged to improve food quality. Erik Perotti noted to all members that this is a national issue, not just a New Hartford issue. All companies are going to source from the same places, the same variety of products are approved for food service. Conversation was had regarding if New Hartford Public Schools did not contract food service with EdAdvance. The board themselves would have to take on this responsibility. Thomas Buzzi states this task would be a major overhaul - free and reduced lunch would fall on the New Hartford Board of Education. Frank Rodenberg suggested to survey parents; he wanted to be clear the Board was not speaking for themselves. Deirdre Tindall would like to see ingredients included in this survey. Mr. Rodenberg asked for options to be included as well. The responsibility of this survey would fall on the Community Outreach Subcommittee. Timothy Klepps stated, currently EdAdvance is the food service provider. Mr. Klepps agrees that it is not the ruling of the Board to make this decision but rather the parents; he would support a community survey. Penny Miller noted EdAdvance must follow strict guidelines as a vendor as to what can be sold. They cannot sell any items they are not permitted to. Board members collectively wish to know all the choices available through EdAdvance to determine if there are alternative choices, or not. Thomas Buzzi explained the Board needs to understand what EdAdvance options are, what can they sell? Because if EdAdvance can't sell the products, you don't want to survey the community to give options for items EdAdvance is not approved to sell. Mr. Buzzi expressed the importance of not surveying the community if they would prefer items EdAdvance is not approved to sell. To summarize the lengthy discussion, the first step the

Board would like to see is a list of alternatives that the Board would be allowed to choose from. Erik Perotti emphasized this process must be done through EdAdvance, because what is available for the consortium to purchase is the bottom line. Kristin Young feels this is a personal matter and the Board should not engage in this change. Thomas Buzzi agreed to get the process started and ask EdAdvance to provide the Board with a listing of what is approved to be sold and the ingredients. Timothy Russell feels the conversation is complicated. Erik Perotti brought up the letter written by Mr. Sousa, the New Hartford Board of Education Lobbies to Improve Food Served in the National School Lunch Program letter, Erik Perotti strongly feels this topic's resolution starts with this letter.

**MOTION** by Deirdre Tindall to ask Superintendent Sousa to send the New Hartford Board of Education Lobbies to Improve Food Served in the National School Lunch Program letter to State of CT Representatives. Second by Erik Perotti.

**UNANIMOUS**  
***Motion Passes***

Discussion was held about classroom parties and the food provided for these parties. Penny Miller asked when EdAdvance was contracted for these room parties, the answer: last year. Parents who organize and support these classroom parties are parents of the children, also known as room parents, the individuals who provide the food. Previously those parents were able to bring in products. Because the food is now contracted with EdAdvance for liability issues, the parents must choose from items EdAdvance offers. Room parents are frustrated with the EdAdvance contract because the food costs more and is checked by the school nurse regardless. Mr. Sousa explained that other school districts do not allow outside food in the classroom and these parties could be held without food if there was such an issue. It is acknowledged that parent participation is not easy to find, but the school district needs to protect themselves, as you wouldn't want a child to receive food they shouldn't. Concerns expressed during public comment were not just the food choices for parties but the cost. Mr. Sousa will reach out to Becky from EdAdvance to get more information regarding the classroom parties.

**Policy 9274 Bylaws of the Board - Board Member Code of Conduct - 1st Read**

**Policy 9273 Bylaws of the Board - Conflict of Interest - 1st Read**

**Policy 6163.3 Instruction - Live Animals in the Classroom - 1st Read**

#### **H. Old Business**

- **Policy 1327 - Relations with Youth Organizations - 2nd Read**

**MOTION** by Deirdre Tindall to approve Policy 1327 - Relations with Youth Organizations. Second by Frank Rodenberg.

**UNANIMOUS**  
***Motion Passes***

- **Policy 4222 - Paraeducators/Title I Paraeducators - 2nd Read**

**MOTION** by Deirdre Tindall to approve Policy 4222 Paraeducators/Title I Paraeducators. Second by Timothy Russell.

**UNANIMOUS**  
***Motion Passes***

• **Policy and Regulations 5131.81 - Electronic Devices - 2nd Read**

**MOTION** by Penny Miller to approve Policy and Regulations 5131.81 - Electronic Devices. Second by Deidre Tindall.

**UNANIMOUS**  
***Motion Passes***

• **Bylaw 9030 - Commitment to Democratic Principles in Relation to Community, Staff, Students - 2nd Read**

**MOTION** by Penny Miller to approve Bylaw 9030 - Commitment to Democratic Principles in Relation to Community, Staff, Students. Second by Deirdre Tindall.

**UNANIMOUS**  
***Motion Passes***

**I. Reports**

**EdAdvance** - Deirdre Tindall informed the Board that all executive directors got together to discuss how many individuals they are servicing. Two items were also discussed: the minimum wage increase and the new sick leave law.

**Community Outreach Subcommittee** – Thomas Buzzi reported the Community Outreach Subcommittee met on January 21, 2025, where they discussed the history and purpose of the subcommittee, the intent is not to operate in a vacuum. The topics discussed were how to get more people engaged at meetings and how to obtain more input from the community. Since remote meetings became available the average viewing is 61 people provided by Jeffrey Sousa. There are 221 followers on Facebook, 215 on Instagram, and the Town Clerk provided there are 623 residents that sign up for the email blast. The subcommittee decided a once-a-year meeting would suffice.

**J. Public Comment - (For Agenda Items Only)**

Kara Desantis of 382 Gillette Road is a parent and the Recreation Director. She expressed the lack of indoor space for recreation. She emphasized in a small town like New Hartford it would be unreasonable to expect the taxpayers to support the expense of constructing such a facility when there are three schools in our town with adequate space. Kara informed the audience that in the Board of Education - Community Relations - Policy 1330, *“New Hartford Board of Education recognizes that the district school buildings and surrounding grounds are vital community resources. The Board is committed to making these facilities available to the community as much as possible under proper and appropriate conditions”*. The hours after school for recreation programs decreased from 6 hours to 1.5 hours. There previously was a contracted custodian second shift (2-10PM). COVID took this position away. EdAdvance uses the gym until 5:30PM. This leaves the Town of New Hartford Recreation Director from 5:30-7:00PM. This year because the timeframe allotted is only 5:30 to 7:00PM (1.5), the number of children who signed up for basketball could not be accommodated because of lack of practice space and time. Therefore, some children had to be turned away. Kara discussed the option of a custodial staff

from 1:00 to 9:00PM but was unsuccessful due to custodial contracts. Leading back to Policy 1330 the use of school facilities - scheduling #7 states “*New Hartford Public Schools custodial staff or other staff designated by the Superintendent, has responsibility for the security of the school facilities when the community groups use them as a result, a custodian or designated staff member will be assigned to every schedule use of school facilities by outside organizations*”. Kara has consulted with the First Selectman’s Office who agrees she, a Town of New Hartford employee, should have the credentials to meet this requirement, given both are under the same umbrella for insurance. Kara Desantis has asked the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools to consider this request to have a custodial staff from 1:00 to 9:00PM or to name Kara Desantis, the Town of New Hartford Recreation Director, to be the designated town employee responsible for the security of the school when the recreation department runs activities.

**K. Executive Session - School Security**

**MOTION** by Penny Miller to enter Executive Session to discuss School Security and to invite Superintendent Jeffrey Sousa to join at 9:01PM. Second by Frank Rodenberg.

**AMENDED-MOTION** by Penny Miller to enter Executive Session to discuss School Security and to invite Superintendent Jeffrey Sousa, John Reed (Executive Vice President-Client Services) and Michael Mully (Vice President, Operations-Protective Services) from Arrow Security to join at 9:01PM. Second by Frank Rodenberg.

**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 the Board of Education Secretary to the Recording Secretary.*

**Executive Session ended.**

**L. Adjournment**

**MOTION** by Thomas Buzzi to adjourn the meeting at 10:05PM. 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](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCX-ZlomWmjG81dc_QM3rfg)

**Attachments: (Filed with the Town Clerk and available upon request)**

*Kristen Kosiba Letter*

*5 Year Capital Plan*

*Food Service Letter by Mr. Sousa*

*January Report (EdAdvance)*