

**New Hartford Public Schools**  
**Board of Education Regular Meeting (In-Person)**  
**Ann Antolini Elementary School - **Multi-Purpose Room****  
**7:00PM on Tuesday, March 18, 2025**

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

**Board Members:** Penny Miller (Board Secretary); Erik Perotti; Frank Rodenberg; Timothy Russell and Kristin Young

**Board Members Absent:** Megan Albert and Deirdre Tindall

**Additional Present:** Kelly Carroll; Amy Kennedy; Heather Mathes and many other members of the public

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**

Mr. Klepps opened the meeting acknowledging there have been 25 letters to the Board and reminding all those in attendance of the Board of Education rules regarding guidelines on public comment. There is a maximum of 5 minutes per speaker and 20 minutes per subject matter. The following individuals spoke to the Board of Education:

- **Melissa Wilzack of 15 Spencer Brook Road** – Ms. Wilzack is not in favor of the elimination of the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade music program. *\*see first (son) and second attachment*
- **Samantha Wald of 45 Robbins Road** – President of New Hartford PTO – Ms. Wald expressed the PTO cannot cover the shortages/eliminations, there is a 40% decrease in raised funds. She is not in favor of cutting the Instructional Assistant or Clerical Aide. *\*see second attachment*
- **Marcia Jones of 298 Ramstein Road** – Ms. Jones is the Instructional Assistant, she is not in favor of eliminating the Instructional Assistant, a 5 hour per day position. *\*see first and second attachment*
- **Kathleen Tancreti of 103 Beeney Road** – Kindergarten Teacher at Bakerville Consolidated School – Ms. Tancreti feels the Instructional Assistant should not be eliminated.
- **Emily Bernard of 20 Gibson Lane** – Assistant Principal in another district – Ms. Bernard is concerned about the reduction in staff and programs. She is not in favor of removing band/chorus, music is important for students who struggle in traditional academic settings.
- **Kristin Mangini of 33 Red Clover Road** – Ms. Mangini is not in favor of the elimination in the music program. There will be no instrumental lessons, there will be no band. Chorus program is part of the .6 FTE position to be cut. She feels every student who goes to region 7 should have an elementary level of knowledge in music.

**MOTION** by Frank Rodenberg to continue hearing from the community after 25 minutes into the meeting.  
Second by Kristin Young.

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

- **Dylan Pederson of 40 Carlson Drive** – Choral Director NWR7 – Mr. Pederson is not in favor of the elimination of the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade music program.
- **Kristen Kosiba of 40 Windsor Lane** – Ms. Kosiba is not in favor of staff cuts such as Instructional Assistant and Clerical Aide, and the decision to cut music education. She is deeply disappointed with the decision to cut funding in areas that bring so much value. One teacher to cover all three schools will have a negative impact. Having music after school will interfere with other extracurricular activities overlap with other activities. ***\*see second attachment***
- **Jillian Quinto of 414 Bruning Road** – Ms. Quinto is advocating for band; this elimination will be extremely detrimental to the community. The after-school session would not provide, and many students would not be able to attend. ***\*see second attachment***
- **Rebecca Binney of 184 East Cotton Hill Road** – Ms. Binney supports a few items back into the budget: Talented & Gifted/Math Olympiads, especially for those who need special education. She feels the elimination of the Instructional Assistant is disheartening to her as well as the band/chorus (she provided 48,000 + 5,5000 + 29,000 = \$82,000 her estimate that each person would pay \$20 dollars a year). ***\*see second attachment***
- **Rowan Ferreira of 4 Stub Hollow Road** – Ms. Ferreira is a junior at Northwest Region 7 – She is advocating for band and would like the Board to reconsider to keep supporting band and chorus. ***\*see second attachment***
- **Kristin Michalski of 20 Highview Terrace** – Ms. Michalski was a Kindergarten teacher at New Hartford Elementary School – her position was cut last year. She expressed the importance of the programs and what the cuts mean, the teachers are not the only ones, the cuts are impacting everybody.
- **Heather Twyeffort of 20 Lake Shore Drive** – Ms. Twyeffort is very disappointed that Talented & Gifted/Math Olympiads is an elimination. She said if a paraeducator position is cut you will have teacher burnout. Position being cut is more and more stress to the teacher workload directly effects the students. She is not in favor of cutting music either.
- **Trevor Mumm of 6 Barella Road** – Mr. Mumm advocated for band and choral program. He feels the elimination of the band/chorus is truly a disappointment. Additionally, teachers will be overwhelmed if the Instructional Assistant is taken away, he is not in favor of this elimination.
- **Erica Mumm 6 Barella Road** – Ms. Mumm would like to see the Board of Education go back to the drawing board and consider cuts at the higher administrative level.
- **Mia Doyle of 625 West Hill Road** – Ms. Doyle is not in favor of cuts to the music department. Not all students will be able to attend if the program is after school and this cut will affect the high school.
- **John Puz of 74 Troutwood Drive** – Mr. Puz has agreed with everyone who spoke, he noted there are many costs that were not in play 5 or 10 years ago. ***\*see first or second attachment***
- **Christine Barberet of 19 Deer Run** – Ms. Barberet is a retired assistant – She is not in favor of the Clerical Aide elimination; she has advocated for there to be more than one person in the office. ***\*see first attachment***

#### **D. Superintendent's Report**

March is Board Appreciation month; he expressed his thanks to all the members. The schools celebrated Pie Day, thanks to Heather Mathes, the Curriculum Specialist for all schools. The art show is scheduled for Wednesday March 26, 2025, 4:30PM at Town Hall-Third Floor. Mr. Sousa thanks Ms. Rachel Savage, the Art Teacher at all three schools.

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

Chairman Timothy Klepps announced the budget timeline (see attached). The Board of Education budget was presented by Mr. Klepps and Mr. Sousa to the Board of Finance on Saturday March 4, 2025, at the budget workshop. Mr. Klepps encouraged all those with public comments to additionally address other Boards who play a part in the budget as well.

### **F. Routine Business**

#### **Approval of Minutes: February 25, 2025 & March 4, 2025 & Expenditure Report**

**MOTION** by Penny Miller to approve meeting minutes from February 25, 2025 & March 4, 2025. Second by Timothy Russell.

**UNANIMOUS**  
**Motion Passes**

**MOTION** by Thomas Buzzi to approve the expenditure report as presented. Second by Frank Rodenberg.

**UNANIMOUS**  
**Motion Passes**

### **Personnel Report**

With bittersweet emotion, Mr. Sousa announced his Executive Assistant, Janet Terenzi, has decided to retire after 20 years with the New Hartford Public Schools.

### **G. New Business**

#### **Vote for Healthy Food Certification:**

##### **Vote 1: Required vote for participation in healthy food option of HFC**

**MOTION** by Penny Miller to vote yes on Vote 1 *"Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the 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 published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups"*. Second by Erik Perotti.

**Aye:** Timothy Klepps; Penny Miller; Erik Perotti; Frank Rodenberg; Timothy Russell and Kristin Young

**Naye:** Thomas Buzzi

**Abstain:**

**(6-1-0)**  
**Motion Passes**

##### **Vote 2: Required Motion for Combined Food and Beverage Exemptions**

**MOTION** by Penny Miller to vote yes on Vote 2, *"The New Hartford Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food items are not sold from a vending machine or school*

store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food sales”. Second by Timothy Russell.

**Aye:** Timothy Klepps; Penny Miller; Erik Perotti; Frank Rodenberg; Timothy Russell and Kristin Young

**Naye:** Thomas Buzzi

**Abstain:**

**(6-1-0)**

**Motion Passes**

**Non-Lapsing Account** – Mr. Sousa announced the 2023-2024 audit has been completed by King & King. There is a total of \$107,838 left from last year’s budget, which can be placed in the non-lapsing account. The Board of Education must motion to place these leftover funds into the non-lapsing account for future use.

**MOTION** by Penny Miller to place the \$107,838 in surplus from the 2023-2024 school year into the Board of Education non-lapsing account. Second by Frank Rodenberg.

Penny Miller clarified the “new” non lapsing account does not require the Board of Finance approval to be used. There is money in two separate accounts with approximately \$100,000 in each. Penny Miller asked if the funding from the non-lapsing account could be used to fund the budget cuts for the 2025-2026 year. Timothy Klepps advised the non-lapsing statutory account is up to 2% surplus to be allowed to cover items that come up through the year that are unexpected – non lapsing funds cannot be used for recurring expenses. Penny Miller expressed what a detriment the band/chorus elimination will have and does not agree with cutting band/chorus, Talented & Gifted, Math Olympiads or White Memorial. Frank Rodenberg questioned the huge increase in Technology, is there a non-reoccurring expense that can be purchased now instead of next year. Mr. Sousa provided the explanation as to why Technology increased, the answers is specifically a position was moved from one bargaining unit to another.

**UNANIMOUS**

**Motion Passes**

## **H. Old Business**

### **2025/2026 New Hartford Board of Education Budget**

Mr. Sousa and Chairman Klepps gave a report, they presented the Board of Education budget and major drivers at the Board of Finance Budget Workshop on Saturday March 15, 2025. The Board of Education eliminations were shared with the Board of Finance. At this meeting Mr. Sousa and Mr. Klepps expressed to the Board of Finance the impact of these eliminations. The Boards spoke about the challenges there are as a town. The Board of Finance has letters through Saturday 3/15 and all letters will be available on the New Hartford Public Schools webpage. There were questions on mental health and the School Counselor. The School Counselor serves (34) students and CJR serves about (22) students. The next time there is an option for public comment is April 1, 2025, this is where the Board of Finance needs to hear from the public. Townspeople should make their voices heard at this meeting. Mr. Klepps said the Board of Finance can instruct the Board of Education to be at a certain level (either number or percentage) but cannot make determinations regarding specific line-items. The Board of Education uses their professionals to determine which should be reduced, not the Board of Finance. The Board of Education has previously motioned at the March 11, 2024, Special meeting to send the proposed budget of 4.99% to the Board of Finance and are waiting to hear back. Kristin Young thanked all those in attendance for their contribution to tonight’s meeting. Kristin Young feels the cuts of Band/Chorus, Instructional Assistant and the Clerical Aide are too steep and not worth the repercussions. Ms. Young feels the Board of Education should re-visit what they have submitted to the Board of Finance.

**MOTION** by Kristin Young to re-submit to the Board of Finance a revised 2025-2026 budget that removes the eliminations of General Music, Instructional Assistant, Clerical Aide and Talented & Gifted/Math Olympiads from the budget presented. Second by Erik Perotti.

It is important to say this kind of request has never been made before. The next meeting on April 1, 2025, is the Public Hearing. Kristin Young feels it is in the purview of the Board of Education to re-submit the proposed budget based on what they have heard at the meeting tonight. Thomas Buzzi feels the opposite, he feels this could push the Board in the wrong direction, the time to reconsider is when the Board of Finance comes back to the Board of Education with their ruling. Kristin Young feels the Board of Education needs to advocate for the community and what information they have brought to this meeting tonight. Mr. Klepps did advise everyone that there will be another opportunity for the Board of Education to re-look at the eliminations based on feedback from the Board of Finance. Frank Rodenberg requested a letter be written to the Board of Finance. Frank Rodenberg expressed his concern that re-submitting a proposed budget could backfire. Mr. Klepps understands, although he does not know if the Town Charter would allow this to be done. Mr. Klepps feels if the Board of Education sends a letter to the Board of Finance, this could have the same effect as if they were to re-submit or revise the budget and does not agree with changing the course of regular protocol.

**Aye:** Erik Perotti and Kristin Young

**Naye:** Thomas Buzzi; Timothy Klepps; Penny Miller; Frank Rodenberg and Timothy Russell

**Abstain:**

**(2-5-0)**

**Motion Fails**

Erik Perotti said the Board should be mindful in the future not to sell the Board short next time and be more liberal in requests to the Board of Finance.

**MOTION** by Frank Rodenberg to send a letter to the Board of Finance, which emphasizes the community input and feedback; summarize the testimonials the Board of Education has received. Second by Timothy Russell.

**AMENDED-MOTION** by Frank Rodenberg to send a letter to the Board of Finance in 3 days to give additional time to receive further testimony from the public, which emphasizes the community input and feedback; summarize the testimonials the Board of Education has received. Second by Timothy Russell.

**Aye:** Timothy Klepps; Penny Miller; Erik Perotti; Frank Rodenberg; Timothy Russell and Kristin Young

**Naye:** Thomas Buzzi

**Abstain:**

**(6-1-0)**

**Motion Passes**

Mr. Klepps questioned the Board as to what should be included in the letter. Kristin Young requested to prioritize the programs impacting students that are not worth the cut, showing support to the programs which are potentially eliminated. Thomas Buzzi clarified this letter should not speak for "the Board" as not the whole Board agreed to this letter. Mr. Buzzi stated he does not think a letter should be sent and doesn't want his opinion included in the letter. Kristin Young expressed her desire to take a stand. Chairman Klepps agrees to send the letter summarizing the testimonies received as of Friday March 21, 2025. The consensus was to summarize the testimonies received for the Board of Finance in the event not all testimonies are read, the letter can summarize the general concerns with the proposed eliminations.

#### **I. Public Comment - (For Agenda Items Only)**

**Marcia Jones reminds all those in attendance to vote for what it is you really want.**

**MOTION** by Penny Miller to enter Executive Session and invite Superintendent Sousa to join at 9:08PM.  
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 Secretary to the Recording Secretary.*

#### **J. Executive Session – Award and Approval of Bus Contract**

**The Board of Education ended Executive Session at 9:34PM.**

**MOTION** by Penny Miller to waive and withdraw from the bidding/RFP process and authorize the Superintendent and/or designee to negotiate with the current contractor for a new contract, as it is in the best interest of the district. Second by Frank Rodenberg.

**UNANIMOUS**  
**Motion Passes**

**MOTION** by Timothy Russell to approve the new five (5) year contract with DATTCO for the provision of transportation services for New Hartford students, as presented to the Board by the Superintendent and subject to any further necessary contract review. Second by Penny Miller.

**UNANIMOUS**  
**Motion Passes**

#### **I. Adjournment**

**MOTION** by Penny Miller to adjourn the meeting at 9:36PM. 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, or see links included if available)*

Letters to the BOE  
[https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1742320558/newhtfdorg/Ingpzayewuose5etrmpa/LetterstotheBOE\\_3.pdf](https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1742320558/newhtfdorg/Ingpzayewuose5etrmpa/LetterstotheBOE_3.pdf)

Additional Letters  
<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1742996111/newhtfdorg/b1k4sdqwtvdm8t9thvc9/March182025.pdf>

Budget Timeline  
<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1742325136/newhtfdorg/aoliftt42t0vs7sdfjy/BudgetTimeline.pdf>