New Hartford Public Schools

Board of Education Regular Meeting (In-Person)

Ann Antolini School – Library

7:00PM on Tuesday May 6, 2025

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

Board Members: Meagan Albert; Erik Perotti; Frank Rodenberg; Deirdre Tindall and Kristin Young

ABSENT: Penny Miller and Timothy Russell

Chairman Timothy Klepps called the regular meeting to order at 7:02PM.

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Order of Business

C. Communications to the Board of Education/Public Comment

Christine Mangini of 33 Red Clover Rd, expresses her sincere thanks the Board of Education and Superintendent Sousa for their support towards the students and staff.

D. Superintendent's Report

Dexter Cerruto and Emma Jack presented information on lunches provided at NHPS, which they have worked on with Dr. Kelly Carroll. The student representatives showed the Board of Education what is offered in the cafeteria. Items like rainbow tray are offered with fruits and vegetables and there has been taste testing of fresh foods from Vibrant Farm in Bantam. Students tried apple crisp made with apples from March Farm. The student representatives showed their favorite lunch. Students recently voted for new items to be added on the menu, the choices that were highly voted for were Taco Salad and a Charcuterie box. Samples were provided for those in attendance. Please see the student presentation attached.

Update on Central Office Staffing / PreK and Personnel Report

Superintendent Sousa celebrates and honors Administrative Assistant Janet Terenzi's retirement, after 20 years of service with NHPS, her last day is Friday June 6, 2025.

Marie Kitch, a longtime School Nurse of Bakerville School has announced her retirement, after 25 years of service with NHPS.

Update to CJR, Mr. Sousa gives credit to Director of Student Services, Michael Lynch, for his ability to have services continued by CJR to work with students, there is no cost to the school, the services are funded through health insurance of parents/families.

Mr. Sousa reported to the Board that at this time it is not feasible, but he continues to evaluate combining the position of Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and Administrative Assistant to the Director of Student Services, more updates to come in June.

Update on 2025-2026 NHPS Budget Reductions

Two positions have been reduced as of this meeting on Tuesday May 6, 2025. The Instructional Assistant and Clerical Aide are the two eliminated positions. The Board of Education has used funding from the non-lapsing accounts to keep other cuts that were previously proposed as eliminations in previous budget meetings.

Pre-K next year will require an additional kindergarten teacher. There will be an opening to another PreK section. Mr. Sousa announced there are currently 66 births recorded in the Town Clerk's office.

E. Board of Education Chair's Report

2025-2026 Budget Referendum voting closes today 5/6/2025 at 8:00PM.

F. Routine Business

Minutes – March 11, 2025; March 18, 2025; April 3, 2025; April 10, 2025

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION by Thomas Buzzi to approve meeting minutes from March 11, 2025 (Special); March 18, 2025 (Regular); April 3, 2025 (Special) and April 10, 2025 (Special). Second by Deirdre Tindall.

UNANIMOUS
Motion Passes

Expenditure Report

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

UNANIMOUS
Motion Passes

Thomas Buzzi questioned Mr. Sousa where the budget projection for the end of this year stands, Mr. Sousa replied that based on the measures currently in place at the end of the budget cycle, the Board of Education should be zero.

G. New Business

Explore Reductions to Operational Costs 2026-2027 School Year

Board Member Kristin Young requested this topic be added to the agenda. She discussed capital expenditures, reducing buildings (consolidation) and regionalization. She spoke about what actions the Board of Education may take, suggesting setting a deadline. Kristin's correspondence is attached to these minutes.

The Board had a lot of discussion, several topics mentioned were the closing of Bakerville School previously voted down to be consolidated in 2015, in addition to having more children at Bakerville than downtown at New Hartford Elementary School. The sprinkler system was a major factor in the decision to close Bakerville rather than New Harford Elementary. Student enrollment is down 10 students. The Board of Education cannot make this decision themselves; there must be a collective effort done to work with the Board of Finance and Board of Selectman. Could Bakerville School potentially be a senior center? Could there be a task force to

study these topics? Timothy Klepps noted that the Board of Education has done a great job understanding where the tax dollars are being spent, he feels there may not be the cost savings within the budget in the amount that Kristin is looking for without making change. By creating a cross-functional taskforce amongst multiple Boards there is the ability to collectively determine and study consolidation the correct way, how does New Hartford continue to offer good education at a cost the town can afford. Erik Perotti feels public opinion is most important, transparency in the process is the key to success. Deirdre Tindall emphasizes her desire to move forward with the "task force" or the Board of Education will be in the same position next budget year. Some suggested having Mr. Klepps and Mr. Sousa have a conversation with other Boards about exploring creating a task force or sub-committee. Thomas Buzzi stated many taxpayers at the budget meetings were willing to pay more in taxes, rather than ideas being discussed at this meeting, such as closing a school. Frank Rodenberg feels taxpayers will vote against the budget because they feel too much has been cut from education. More communication with the public may be beneficial, especially if the topic of consolidation is going to be pursued further in detail. Deirdre Tindall feels strongly that fundraising is a must, she suggested creating a foundation. Mr. Sousa and Mr. Klepps would like to have an open conversation with the other Boards to talk about cost savings, allow them to understand the school budget in further detail and educate the Board Members what it takes to properly provide good education to the students of New Hartford.

MOTION by Kristin Young to have Timothy Klepps (Chairman) and Jeffrey Sousa (Superintendent) begin discussions with other Boards (Finance & Selectman) within the town as to whether the Board of Education should create a task force to study reducing operational costs within the school system. Second by Deirdre Tindall.

(6-1-0)

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

Educational Specifications for New Hartford Elementary Roof Replacement

Hibbard&Rosa Architects of Middletown has looked at the educational specifications of the overall project.

MOTION by Erik Perotti to approve the educational specifications for the roof replacement at New Hartford Elementary School, in Summer 2025 FORM SCG-1030 with the amendments as discussed. Second by Kristin Young.

The Board discussed the removal of premature language regarding consolidation. The Board felt two sentences in Number 2 "Long-Range Plan", should be removed (*Consideration of consolidation of our elementary schools is being explored. This school would remain our primary PreK -2nd grade school.*) and change Center to New Hartford Elementary in Number 7.

UNANIMOUS
Motion Passes

H. Reports

EdAdvance

Deirdre Tindall announced EdAdvance received a 1.165-million-dollar grant for electric vehicles and a $650,000 grant for CT DPH smoking and cannabis sensation training.

Additionally, EdAdvance was informed last week that a federal student mental health grant has been cancelled as of December 31, 2025, which provides social workers for 30 schools in the Northwest corner including New Hartford and Bakerville, the rational is the priorities of the program are no longer in line with the priorities of the current administration.

Superintendents in the Northwest corner are coming together supporting EdAdvance in hopes to reverse this decision.

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

Catherine Hoerle – 315 East Cotton Hill Road feels there is a misunderstanding of why taxpayers are voting the budget down. She feels disheartened that the funds are in an account but are not being utilized and two positions were taken away. She suggested building a school "campus".

John Puz – 74 Troutwood Drive – Mr. Puz made some clarifying comments/questions on the budget referendum.

J. Adjournment

MOTION by Deirdre Tindall to adjourn the meeting at 8:34PM. 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: *(Filed with the Town Clerk and available upon request, or see links included if available)*

What's for lunch at NHPS? Student Representative Presentation
Kristin Young Correspondence (Board of Education Member)
Educational Specifications – New Hartford Elementary School Roof Replacement
EdAdvance – March Edition