

**SWEET HOME CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
OF AMHERST AND TONAWANDA**

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Michael V. Ginestre, Superintendent of Schools

FROM: Donald G. Feldmann, Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Plant Services

DATE: June 20, 2025

RE: Reorganization Meeting / Annual Appointments



Legal Counsel

I recommend the legal firms of Gross, Shuman, Brizdle & Gilfillan; Lippes Mathias; and Hodgson Russ for the 2025-26 school year. Gross Shuman's rate is \$215 per hour for the 2025-26 school year. Lippes Mathias' rate is set at a maximum of \$320 per hour for partners and \$305 for senior counsel. Hodgson Russ rates for the 2025-26 school year are \$347 per hour for partners, \$329 per hour for senior associates and \$312 per hour for associates. Hodgson Ross also handles District borrowing obligations and the fee is based upon the type of debt service and amounts involved. All firms have worked with Sweet Home over the past several years providing valuable advice on important district legal matters.

Claims Auditor

The District has contracted with Denise Kolber to do the claims auditing since February 2014. She has vast experience and thorough knowledge of her position and provides similar service to Niagara Falls and Ken-Ton Schools.

I recommend that Denise Kolber be reappointed as the claims auditor for the 2025-26 school year at a rate of \$23.75.

Ms. Kolber will continue to report directly to the Board of Education.



Feldmann, Donald <dfeldmann@sweethomeschools.org>

Re: {External} Fwd: EPA Passthrough Agreement

1 message

Feldmann, Donald <dfeldmann@sweethomeschools.org>
To: "John K. Rottaris" <JRottaris@gross-shuman.com>

Fri, Jun 6, 2025 at 10:30 AM

That's fine...thank you John.

Donald Feldmann

Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Plant Services
Sweet Home Central School District
1901 Sweet Home Road
Amherst, NY 14228
(716) 250-1406
www.sweethomeschools.org

On Fri, Jun 6, 2025 at 9:30AM John K. Rottaris <JRottaris@gross-shuman.com> wrote:

Don: For the remainder of 2025, they did not go up and are still \$205/hr. They will go up to \$215/hr on January 1, 2026 (unless that is an issue).

John

John K. Rottaris
Member Attorney



465 Main Street, Suite 600 | Buffalo, NY 14203
471 Delaware Avenue | Buffalo, NY 14202
Tel: 716-854-4300 x206
Fax: 716-854-2787



NOTE: Do not transfer funds by wire or cashier's check without verbal confirmation. If you receive an email from any person purporting to be from our firm requesting a transfer, please contact our office immediately and speak with the attorney managing that file for verbal confirmation.

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From: Feldmann, Donald <dfeldmann@sweethomeschools.org>
Sent: Friday, June 6, 2025 9:26 AM

May 30, 2025

Via Electronic Mail (abattaglia@sweethomeschools.org)

Ms. Amy Battaglia
Board President
Sweet Home Central School District
1901 Sweet Home Road
Amherst NY 14228

Re: Rates for 2025-26 School Year

Dear Ms. Battaglia:

We have been very happy to have had the opportunity to work with the Sweet Home Central School District, and very much look forward to continuing our partnership with the District in the 2025-26 school year. We have worked to provide the District legal services efficiently at reduced hourly rates that reflect the important public service that school districts provide our community, and with the highest level of responsiveness that we expected from outside legal counsel when we each previously served as General Counsel the City of Buffalo School District.

As the 2025-26 school year approaches, we reviewed our billing practices regarding the District's legal work. Based upon that review, we believe that billing school districts in six-minute increments for our legal services is the most cost effective and accurate way for the District to account for the legal services we provide to it. We have found that billing for legal services in blocks of time larger than a tenth of an hour (*i.e.* a 15-minute minimum increment) sometimes discourages school district officials from seeking legal advice because of the concern that the District will be billed 15 minutes for a telephone consultation that was only five to six minutes in duration – and that this understandable hesitancy to seek legal advice because of this cost concern often does not serve the District's interests best in the long term.

Therefore, effective July 1, 2025, our special reduced hourly billing rates for local school districts will be as follows: Partners (\$320.00); Senior Counsel (\$305.00); Associates (\$295.00); and Paralegals (\$170.00).

Brendan P. Kelleher | Partner | bkelleher@lippes.com

50 Fountain Plaza, Suite 1700, Buffalo, NY 14202 **Phone:** 716.853.5100 **Fax:** 716.853.5199 lippes.com

New York: Albany, Buffalo, Long Island, New York City, Rochester // Florida: Jacksonville // Illinois: Chicago
Ontario: Greater Toronto Area // Texas: San Antonio // Washington, D.C.



We very much look forward to continuing our relationship with the District during the 2025-26 school year. As always, if you have any questions about the work we perform or any billing issue, please contact one of us directly by e-mail (bkelleher@lippes.com or nkuzma@lippes.com) or cell phone (716.228.5984 (Brendan Kelleher) or 716.704.8873 (Nate Kuzma)). Thank you.

Very truly yours,

Brendan P. Kelleher
Co-Leader, Lippes Mathias LLP
Education Practice Group

Nathaniel J. Kuzma
Co-Leader, Lippes Mathias LLP
Education Practice Group

cc: Dr. Michael V. Ginestre, Superintendent of Schools (mginestre@sweethomeschools.org)

Jeffrey F. Swiatek
Partner
Direct Dial: 716.848.1449
Facsimile: 716.819.4668
jswiatek@hodgsonruss.com



June 11, 2025

For Don

Michael Ginestre
Superintendent
Sweet Home Central School District
1901 Sweet Home Road
Amherst, NY 14228

Re: Rates for 2025-2026

Dear Superintendent Ginestre:

We are writing, as we do annually, to confirm our arrangements and rates for legal services for the upcoming school year. Effective July 1, 2025, our hourly rates will be \$347 for our partners, \$329 for our senior associates, \$312 for our associates and \$168 for our legal assistants. To the extent that we use law clerks, we will bill them at \$237 per hour.

We will continue to have special hourly rates for environmental and specialized tax and securities matters, as we have in the past. The hourly rate for such work will be \$414. We will continue to charge for our bond counsel services on a fixed fee basis to provide the predictability necessary for District borrowing, with the fee arrangements being spelled out separately in advance and payments being due when the projects are authorized and when the bonds or notes are subsequently sold. We will also continue to evaluate litigated matters, including complex administrative hearings, on a case-by-case basis to determine an appropriate rate. The other terms of our current engagement by the District will also remain in effect.

It is a great privilege to work with the District, and we take great pride in the contributions we believe we make to the operation of your District and to the educational community. We are confident that the depth, experience and efficiency of our legal practice provides a distinct advantage, and that our services are provided at the highest level on a cost-effective basis.

Should you have any questions about this letter, or if there is any aspect of our work with the District that you would like to discuss, please contact me or any other member of our Education Law Practice.

THE HODGSON RUSS EDUCATION LAW
PRACTICE GROUP, By:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeffrey F. Swiatek'.

Jeffrey F. Swiatek
Practice Group Leader



SWEET HOME CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

1901 Sweet Home Road
Amherst, NY 14228

Office of the Superintendent
Dr. Michael V. Ginestre
Superintendent of Schools
(716) 250-1402

To: Board of Education

Re: Reorganization Meeting Appointments

Date: 6/26/25

*MVG
6/27/25*

I am recommending the individuals listed be appointed to the following District positions for the 2025-26 school year.

Stipend Positions:

Position	Name	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
District Clerk	Falon Derion				\$12,000
District Treasurer	Nicole Kuss	\$8575	\$8675	\$8675	\$10,500
Deputy Treasurer	Michelle Callowhill	\$2275	\$2375	\$2875	\$2,975

Other Positions:

Secretary to the Board of Education	Falon Derion
District Auditor, Extra Classroom Accounts	Nicole Kuss
Treasurer, Extra Classroom Accounts	Ariel Carlino
Deputy District Clerk	Lisa Cebulski



Sweet Home Central School District of Amherst and Tonawanda

1901 Sweet Home Road
Amherst, New York 14228

TO: Michael V. Ginestre, Superintendent of Schools

FROM: Donald Feldmann, Asst. Superintendent for Finance & Plant Services 

DATE: June 20, 2025

RE: Physician Reimbursement 2025-26

I would like to recommend the following reimbursement for services to be provided by Dr. Robert Kaplan and his staff for the 2025-26 school year.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| • Regular Student Physical | \$14.75 per exam |
| • Athletic Physical | \$14.75 per exam |
| • Working Paper Exam | \$15.75 per exam |
| • Employee Physical | \$50.00 per exam |
| • Travel Time | \$110.00 per hour |
| • Consultation time | \$155.00 per hour |

In addition, Dr. Kaplan agrees to provide the District with a maximum of 2.5 hours of consultation time each week for forty-eight (48) weeks of the school year (September 1, 2025 through July 30, 2026) for the sum of \$18,600. This retainer fee remains the same as the 2024-25 school year. Consultation time provided in excess of the 2.5 hours per week stipulated here, or provided during the month of August, will be billable at \$155.00 per hour as per the chart above.

I am also recommending that we continue with Occustar Inc. for all occupational health services. See attached form for the reimbursement schedule. DOT / 19A bus driver physicals are \$65 each, drug and alcohol tests are \$65 each and site visits are \$50 per visit. Physicals and testing rates increased by \$5 over the 24-25 school year.



Sweet Home Central School District of Amherst and Tonawanda

Business Office
1901 Sweet Home Road • Amherst, New York 14228
(716) 250-1406

Donald Feldmann,
Asst. Superintendent for Finance & Plant Services

Sweet Home Central School District Agreement for Physician Services Effective September 1, 2025

Robert E. Kaplan, MD of 69 Dorchester Road, Buffalo, New York 14222 agrees to provide contracted services according to the schedule below:

2025-26 Fee Schedule

Regular Student Physical	\$14.75 per exam
Athletic Physical	\$14.75 per exam
Working Paper Exam	\$15.75 per exam
Employee Physical	\$50.00 per exam
Travel Time	\$110.00 per hour
Consultation time	\$155.00 per hour

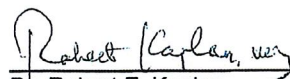
In addition, Dr. Kaplan agrees to provide the District with a maximum of 2.5 hours of consultation time each week for forty-eight (48) weeks of the school year (September 1, 2025 through July 30, 2026) for the sum of \$18,600. Consultation time provided in excess of the 2.5 hours per week stipulated here, or provided during the month of August, will be billable at \$155.00 per hour as per the chart above.

In the event that Dr. Kaplan is not available to provide the Physician services outlined above, he will arrange for other qualified physicians affiliated with Buffalo Pediatric Associates to provide said services.

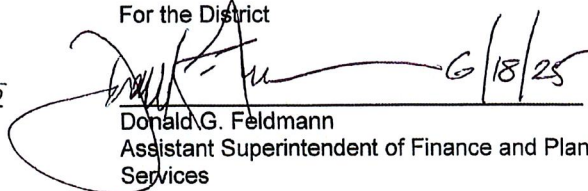
The fees listed above will be reviewed yearly to maintain fair and appropriate compensation for services rendered. All persons providing services under this contract will meet all requirements as set out by the New York State Education Department.

The terms of this agreement will remain in effect until Dr. Kaplan and the District mutually agree upon a successor agreement.

For Buffalo Pediatric Associates


Dr. Robert E. Kaplan
Buffalo Pediatric Associates

For the District


Donald G. Feldmann
Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Plant
Services

Sweet Home Schools... Every Student, One Community, Ready for the Future

Occustar Workplace Compliance
539 Cleveland Dr
Buffalo, NY 14225-1080
+17162040798
Billing@OccustarofWNY.com



ADDRESS
Sweet Home CSD/Trans
Attn: Scott Kennedy
1741 Sweet Home Road
Amherst, NY 14228

Estimate 1389

DATE 06/15/2025

PO NUMBER
2025-2026 Quote

DATE	DESCRIPTION	QTY	RATE	AMOUNT
07/01/2025	Sweethome SCD - 19A Exam	1	65.00	65.00
07/01/2025	Sweethome SCD - Alcohol Test	1	33.00	33.00
07/01/2025	Sweethome SCD - Drug Test	1	65.00	65.00
07/01/2025	Sweethome SCD - Site Entry Fee	1	50.00	50.00
07/01/2025	Sweethome SCD - Regulated Post-Accident Drug & Alcohol Testing, Hourly Rate, On-site	1	90.00	90.00

Please call with any questions, clarification, or concerns. We are here to help.

SUBTOTAL 303.00

TOTAL \$303.00

Accepted By Accepted Date

Thank you for considering Occustar Workplace Compliance! We appreciate your interest.

**SWEET HOME CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
OF AMHERST AND TONAWANDA**

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Michael V. Ginestre, Superintendent of Schools

FROM: Donald G. Feldmann, Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Plant Services 

DATE: June 20, 2025

RE: External Auditor recommendation of Lumsden & McCormick, LLP

The District Audit Committee would like to enter into year one of a five-year agreement with the firm of **The Bonadio Group, LLC** to serve as External Auditor for the District. Please accept my recommendation that we commence our five year commitment with The Bonadio Group with the 2025-26 school year. **Bonadio will be paid \$29,000 for their services during the 2025-26 school year**, with the option to renew for an additional year.

If the District were to renew the contract for services with The Bonadio Group for an additional year, the cost for services breakdown would be as follows:

2026: \$25,500

The Bonadio Group is a large accounting/auditing firm with eight offices in New York State. Bonadio is currently the external auditor for one local district and has been recently named as an external auditing firm for another. Bonadio currently serves as auditing firm for Auburn Enlarged School District, Randolph Union Free School District, York Central School District and Trumansburg Central School District. Their governmental engagements include Monroe County, Onondaga County, City of Syracuse and Niagara County Community College.

The Audit Committee is confident that The Bonadio Group, LLC is the firm best suited to perform as the external auditor for Sweet Home Central School. I respectfully ask that you take this recommendation by the Audit Committee to the Board of Education for review and approval.

**SWEET HOME CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
OF AMHERST AND TONAWANDA**

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Michael V. Ginestre, Superintendent of Schools

FROM: Donald G. Feldmann, Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Plant Services 

DATE: June 20, 2025

RE: Internal Auditor recommendation of Tronconi Segarra & Associates, LLP

The District Audit Committee would like to enter into the first year of a five-year agreement with the firm of **Tronconi Segarra & Associates, LLP (TSA)** to serve as Internal Auditor for the District. Please accept my recommendation that we commence our five year commitment with Tronconi Segarra & Associates with the 2025-26 school year. **Tronconi Segarra & Associates will be paid \$15,375 for their services during the 2025-26 school year.**

If the District were to renew the contract for services with Tronconi Segarra & Associates for one additional year, the cost for services breakdown would be as follows:

2026: \$16,150

Tronconi Segarra & Associates, LLP is one of the Buffalo area's largest local accounting/auditing firms. TSA is currently the internal auditor for four local districts, while serving as the external auditor for six others. Tronconi is well versed in areas such as State Aid, Capital Projects Reporting, Special Aid/Grants, and Reserve Funding.

The Audit Committee is confident that Tronconi Segarra & Associates, LLP is the firm best suited to perform as the internal auditor for Sweet Home Central School District under the New York State Five Point Plan. I respectfully ask that you take this recommendation by the Audit Committee to the Board of Education for review and approval.