

New Hartford Public Schools
School Facility Utilization Task Force – Regular Meeting
7:00PM on Thursday, January 22, 2026
Ann Antolini School - Multi Purpose Room

A. Welcome and Purpose

a. Introductions

All appointed members of the School Facility Utilization Task Force introduced themselves to those who were in attendance:

Michelle Miller (Project Manager SP+A), **Jeffrey Sousa** (Superintendent of NHPS), **Mary Beth Greenwood** (Board of Selectman), **Kerry Guilfoyle** (Board of Finance), **Alesia Kennerson** (Board of Selectman), **Eleanor “Penny” Miller** (Board of Education), **Carmen Neale** (Community Member), **Jon Puz** (Board of Education), **Samantha Wald** (VIRTUAL-Community Member), **Bernard Witte** (Board of Finance), **Kristin Young** (Board of Education)

b. Scope

There are two major efforts which are a part of the School Facility Utilization Study being conducted by Silver Petrucelli & Associates. The first is to retain current facilities and the second is reducing the total number of facilities, with the end goal of providing options for the community. Michelle Miller, the Project Manager from SP+A further described the second effort may include continuing to support the three-school structure, consolidating into two schools, consolidating into one school, constructing new school(s), or adding/constructing an addition to a school.

c. Structure / Roles up above

Michelle Miller described the study starting in the “fact finding” phase. Silver Petrucelli & Associates is an AEI firm (*Architecture, Engineers and Interior Design*). SP+A will evaluate the schools by having engineers observe the facility conditions and ultimately provide a report of what the schools need. The second phase will be estimating enrollment projections. SP+A has contracted MP Planning Group, LLC (Michael Zuba) to provide the 10-year enrollment projections for SP+A. If any of this process goes to the State of Connecticut, enrollment projections are required. In the Programming & Capacity phase, SP+A will meet with Superintendent Sousa to determine what is not working, and determine what the goals of the school district are over the next 10 years and into the future. The next step is Master Planning which uses graphically designed techniques, based on square foot costs compared to State data to determine reimbursements. Alesia Kennerson (BOS) voiced her concern with the mention of building a new school and questioned if this was part of the original Request for Proposal. Superintendent Sousa and Michelle Miller said this was included in the original RFP, the RFP included all options. Documentation pertaining to the Request for Proposal can be found on the New Hartford Public Schools webpage.

<https://www.newhtfd.org/district1/request-for-proposals>

Kristin Young (BOE) advocated that all options have to be explored. If the most cost-effective option is to build another school, that will be included in SP+A’s findings. Michelle Miller stated this is a standard part of a study of this nature, the study is to explore all avenues turning over every stone. Ben Witte (BOF) stated the priority should be a cursory overview, and if that includes such, it should be heard, but is not necessarily expressed as the desired choice of the members of New Hartford Boards.

d. Goals

Michelle Miller reviewed several goals she prepared for the SFU-Task Force to consider. What are the real drivers of the project? Michelle mentioned briefly a few goals: *determine what is efficiently utilized, modern state of the art-potential improvements for the learning environment, evaluations of building conditions, develop sustainable plans and goals and reposition to guide funding*. Superintendent Sousa also noted goals of the Task Force and NH Board of Education is transparency with the community, public input and a town wide vote. Michelle Miller (SP+A) recommended the Task Force go over the goals she provided to Mr. Sousa.

B. Routine Business

- a. There is a Timeline Check, individuals may check in to see the status, every meeting will have the opportunity for public comment. To date the **Initiation** process is completed and the **Facility Conditions** step is underway. SP+A has conducted site visits at all three schools, two schools were active at the time of the site visit. Bakerville School was not active at the time of their visit. SP+A will present their findings of the facility conditions currently anticipated at the March meeting, including a presentation of the existing capacity and initial concepts. The **Enrollment & Projections** has begun, in addition to **Programming & Capacity**. The next step SPA will do is meet with the principals.

Michelle Miller of SP+A mentioned additional meetings may be needed (in the blue section referred to as Master Planning, ranging from April-June). Michelle Miller will contact Superintendent Jeffrey Sousa to schedule the additional meetings as placeholders.

b. Scheduled Meeting Overview

Providing all goes as planned the goal is to wrap up this study by the end of June 2026. SP+A will provide a book at the end to put together the findings of the study.

C. Public Comment

- a. There is a dedicated email for the School Facility Utilization Task Force:

NHTaskForce@newhtfd.org

- b. Member responses to email

Michele Miller (SP+A) or Superintendent Sousa will be the only individuals responding to correspondence and there may be delay in response if research to the question is required.

- c. The dedicated New Hartford Public Schools webpage is:

<https://www.newhtfd.org/board-of-education/school-facility-utilization-task-force>

The community is also encouraged to subscribe to news and announcements for the **School Facility Utilization Task Force** on the Town of New Hartford Webpage (on the top right click “SUBSCRIBE TO NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS”). <https://www.newhartfordct.gov/>

First Selectman, Daniel Jerram voiced his desire for these meetings to be virtually broadcasted and posted. If the goal of this SFU-Task Force is to be open with the community, he feels the community should have the option to view the recording. Superintendent Sousa responded to Daniel Jerram this option was not budgeted for and the School Facility Utilization Task Force is supposed to be supported collectively by all three Boards (BOE, BOF and BOS). Several individuals had discussion. Jon Puz (BOE) offered to bring an owl.

Information regarding the “process” was explained to those present after questions arose. The discussion summarized the School Facility Utilization Task Force may recommend to the NH Board of Education upon determination of findings from SP+A. The Board of Education does have the authority to close a

school, although the desired avenue of the NH Board of Education is to have the School Facility Utilization Task Force provide a recommendation to the NH Board of Education then proceed to a town-wide vote. Public input in the process is very important. Superintendent Sousa stated the goal is to have full public transparency. Kerry Guilfoyle (BOF) advocated for encouragement to have as much public input as possible. Alesia Kennerson (BOS) feels a town vote is absolutely necessary, which is the desire of the NH Board of Education as well.

Community members discussed sharing information via their personal social media pages. Superintendent Sousa encouraged the community follow the official “**New Hartford Public Schools**” Facebook page, which will have shareable posts. No comments will be allowed as the desire is to keep public input be submitted via email rather than Facebook. Facebook will not be a monitored place of public input, those who wish to provide public input should email or attend meetings in person. The SFU-TF will not respond to any comments via social media, all public input should come through public comment at a meeting or via email.

The NH Board of Education, has a subcommittee, the Community Outreach Subcommittee which has discussed spreading information.

Alesia Kennerson (BOS) requested the School Facility Utilization Task Force members tour the schools during school hours. A community member strongly feels it is important for the SFU-TF to view the classroom at a count of 15 students versus a classroom at a count of 25 students. Superintendent Sousa did mention this visit probably will not work “unannounced”, there will be a disruption to the learning environment if the students are not given prior warning. Students will be confused and interested in the unknown individuals in their classroom. Another community member feels education will be disrupted by individuals entering the classrooms, and suggested the SFU-TF look in the door, if proceeding with a tour during school hours.

Alesia Kennerson (BOS) requested the Board of Education, do not have any large projects completed until after the results of this study and discussion. Alesia also discussed the classrooms at Bakerville school, which Oak Hill was using. Superintendent Sousa stated the classrooms are not being used, and would need a refresh before being used by students. Jon Puz (BOE) also agreed the classrooms are in rough shape. Discussion was had on how many classrooms are used and by how many students. The PTO has a list of this breakdown. SP+A will provide a floorplan diagram of the schools and what the areas are used for.

Kerry Guilfoyle (BOS) expressed the information desired from the SP+A study is not just about the conditions of the buildings and mechanicals but also the utilization, she advocated all options should be presented and to have everyone see the bigger picture, specifically academics, what is it that the program needs?

Daniel Jerram expressed how important transportation costs are. Mr. Sousa has already requested from DATTCO, based on different scenarios how bus routes/times would look. Based on options provided by SP+A, what impact will this have on transportation? Members also briefly discussed what else Bakerville School could be used for, for example, a town building such as a Senior Center. Michelle Miller (SP+A) says it is within the scope of this project for SP+A to provide a brief overview with cost estimates for such idea.

Kristin Young (BOE), member of the School Facility Utilization Task Force requested documents related to meetings be sent out in advance for review.

Samantha Wald (Community Member) asked if there was any access to information from the past mistake of attempting to close Bakerville School. Jon Puz (BOE) and Samantha Wald have searched through documents in the Town Hall, but haven’t found much in regards to the previous actions to close a school. Michelle Miller suggested researching to find those individuals who were on the committee at that time. Ms. Guilfoyle (BOF) stated that public opinion was not wanted or considered at the time. The vote to close a school was done in Executive Session. Previously, when the Board of Education attempted to

close Bakerville School, there was no study conducted, there was no public comment. Publication was mailed out to residents from the Board of Education. Residents felt they were not treated with respect. Regardless if there is difference of opinion, this time around all opinions should be heard and considered. The poor communication is where the failure started last time this avenue was explored. The Board of Education and School Facility Utilization Task Force strongly wish to have as much public input and transparency as possible.

D. Action steps for next meeting w/ date, location and time

The next School Facility Utilization Task Force meeting is February 19, 2026 (Thursday) at 7:00PM, at New Hartford Elementary School (Gymnasium).

Michelle Miller (SP+A) recommended the New Hartford Board of Education appoint a Board of Education member who is a part of the School Facility Utilization Task Force to be the Chair of said Task Force.

Superintendent Sousa will have the action to appoint a Chair for the SFU-TF be on the agenda for the next regular Board of Education meeting scheduled to take place on Tuesday February 3, 2026 at Ann Antolini School, in the library.

E. Adjournment

The regular meeting adjourned at 8:12PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Elizabeth Domas, Recording Secretary

Attachments:

School Facility Utilization Task Force Meeting Dates

NHPS – School Facility Utilization Tentative Timeline

<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1768574064/newhtfdorg/xbi3ei7hm44p6eeltgfe/NewHartfordUtilizationTentativeTimeline01132026.pdf>

New Hartford Utilization Timeline – Status Tracking

<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1768574195/newhtfdorg/gt5raberwnsxj2cd70v/NewHartfordUtilizationTimelineTracking.pdf>

Sample Goals