

**New Hartford Public Schools**  
**Board of Education Regular Meeting**  
**7:00PM on Tuesday, February 3, 2026**  
**Ann Antolini School - Library**

**Present:** Superintendent Jeffrey Sousa; Chair Timothy Klepps; Vice Chair Kristin Young

**Board Members:** Thomas Buzzi; Penny Miller (*Secretary*); Kirby Morante; Erik Perotti; Jon Puz; Frank Rodenberg; Timothy Russell

**Also present:** Kelly Carroll, Michael Lynch, Amy Kennedy, Sara Voghel, Lou Helt (*Board of Finance*) and Samantha Wald (*NH PTO, President & SFU-TF Community Member*)

Timothy Klepps, Chair of the NHPS Board of Education, 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**

**D. Superintendent's Report**

- a. Student Presentation, Daisy Jones and Vivian Tsai - *"What our New Hartford School Community is Doing Now!"*

Students are eating fresh vegetables in all three schools and Mr. Sousa is visiting the pre-school classes. Kindergarteners are using craft and science skills. First graders took a trip to an orchard and got apples. Second graders visited the Peabody Museum at Yale University. Third graders work on independent reading and went on a field trip to the Institute of Native American Studies. Fourth graders are learning math and reading skills. Fifth graders are testing new science experiments. Sixth graders have played a band concert and were visited by Region 7 chorus to talk about music opportunities.

- b. [Proposed 2026-2027 School Calendar](#)  
([District Calendar - New Hartford Public Schools](#))

**MOTION** by Penny Miller to approve the 2026-2027 school calendar. Second by Frank Rodenberg.

**UNANIMOUS**  
**Motion Passes**

- c. OSHA

There has been (1) visit conducted with CONN OSHA experts, at Bakerville School. Some actions to achieve and consider are: improved record keeping for safety training and onboard staff training, providing greater protective equipment for custodians by having PPE at every single location, updating all safety data sheets (which haven't been updated since 2012) and implement a policy manual to exist in every building. There will be other visits to the other schools in the next couple months.

**2024-2025 Budget Update** - The audit is still pending and waiting to be finalized. The auditors submitted a qualified report to the State of Connecticut for EFS, which was accepted. There is projected to be an approximated \$2,000 surplus from the 2024-2025 which will need a motion to transfer to the non-lapsing account.

- d. Superintendent's Budget Proposal 2026-2027

Please use the attached link to be directed to the NHPS webpage, regarding Board of Education Budgets ([BOE Budgets - New Hartford Public Schools](#))

**The 2026-2027 budget has been proposed by Superintendent Sousa at 3.96%, which is an increase in the amount of \$408,851. The total proposed 2026-2027 budget is a total of \$10,733,527.**

There are a total of 119 lines in the Board of Education budget: 50% of the budget lines decreased or stayed the same, more specifically 22% decreased (27), 28% stayed the same (33) and 50% increased (59). There are currently 446 students enrolled and the enrollment projection was 421.

The primary budget drivers are:

- **employee salaries (\$271,600)**
- **employee benefits (\$97,225)**
- **pupil transportation (\$22,145)** for a total of \$390,970.

This budget is proposed based on a grant offset of \$423,604 (*projected*). The Excess Cost Grant has never been fully funded. The increase requested would be this amount more without grant funding. The total five-year savings with the new contract with DATTCO has a total savings of \$513,680.09. If you compare transportation cost to other towns in the State of Connecticut, New Hartford is less than 75% of other towns. Fuel cost have been included in the contract, which saves approximately \$55,000 a year.

Educational Cost Share (ECS) is a grant program that funds approximately 30% of the cost of education. For 2021, 2022 and 2023 the amount remained the same at \$2,913,010. For the 2026-2027 budget the ECS amount will be \$3,011,733, which is the same as 2025-2026 but an increase of \$94,000 from 2024-2025 to 2025-2026. This funding formula hasn't changed since 2013, which means the cost per student hasn't changed in over 10 years. The Town does receive support from the State of Connecticut for Education. This money reimbursed by the State of Connecticut goes directly to the Town of New Hartford, not the Board of Education.

Net Request after State of CT Reimbursement to the Town	
2026-2027	\$10,733,527
2026-2027 Education Cost Share (ECS)	\$3,011,000
Net:	\$7,722,527

The 2026-2027 Preliminary Capital Expenditure Requests are a total amount of **\$166,275**.

- Indoor Air Quality (*HVAC Inspections*): **\$15,675**
- (45) Chromebooks & District WIFI System Replacement: **\$29,900**
- Oil Tank Replacement (*Remove & Replace*): **\$100,000**  
(4) tanks which much be replaced by 2031 (at a cost of \$250,000 per tank, a total of \$1,000,000)
- Antolini Classroom Refresh (25, 26, 29): **\$20,700**, these classrooms have been vacated by Oak Hill School.

District highlights for 2025-2026 are: NHPS school performance on smarter balanced assessment shows New Hartford being higher than the State average. In addition, there have been invested security upgrades and collaboration with the Parks and Recreation department to provide enrichment opportunities for students.

Kristin Young suggest to Mr. Sousa to label the grant breakdown annotating if the grant is a Federal or State sourced grant. Kirby Morante questioned if there is a chance the tank replacement could exceed 2031, the answer is, not allowed—the tanks must be removed and replaced. Penny Miller inquired if there is still the discussion of converting from oil to gas. The tanks must still be removed even if the burners were converted. Mr. Sousa noted a conversion is expensive and it would be several years before seeing a savings, if any. The cost benefit was not sufficient last time Mr. Sousa looked into this subject roughly two years ago.

Frank Rodenberg asked if the staffing is the same from this year to next year. Mr. Sousa confirmed staffing will remain the same. This proposed budget is based on the estimated projection of 441 students (Pre-K to sixth grade). There are (66) students coming into kindergarten next year based on the birth rates. Thomas Buzzi requested to include the actual dollar increase be added to the historical budget data, for example: a 3.96% increase = how many dollars. Timothy Klepps requested Mr. Sousa list what items can be changed and what cannot be changed. The contractual and legal obligations cannot be changed—they are set. The contingencies can be changed. Listed contingencies provided by Superintendent Sousa are: Special Education Tuition (\$100,000) (outplacement), Special Education Transportation (\$45,000), Legal Fees (\$20,000) and Emergency Repairs (\$32,000) for a total of **\$197,000**. These items are unable to be exactly predicted. Some (not all) listed Contractual and Legal Obligations are: Salaries, Benefits, Insurance, Transportation and Heating Oil. Timothy Russell questioned the cost of an average out-placed student. Mr. Sousa stated this could range approximately from anywhere in a range of \$100,000 - \$160,000 per student. Jon Puz requested

more clarity for the public to show the year-to-year increase in students who require Special Education. Mr. Sousa will provide some further information at the next budget workshop.

Employee benefits could have been at 15%, although because of negotiations or changes to employees taking the insurance, the health insurance is only at 6%. Penny Miller questioned if Mr. Sousa has thought of requesting the Board of Education to use the non-lapsing funds to lower the budget increase. The non-lapsing account has approximately \$189,000 (after \$28,500 to SPA is paid). Superintendent Sousa does not feel that is necessary at this time.

Chairman Klepps asked the Board Members have their questions submitted by end of day on February 17, 2026. This gives roughly a week for answers to be completed for the next meeting on February 24, 2026 (*Budget Workshop #1*).

SP+A has visited all three schools, to determine what's working and what's not. The water project for the chlorination system at Bakerville School will begin in 45-60 days.

#### **E. Routine Business**

- a. Approval of Minutes - January 15, 2026

**MOTION** by Thomas Buzzi to approve minutes from January 15, 2026 with the amendment of Board Member Kirby Morante was in attendance of the meeting—virtually. Second by Penny Miller.

**UNANIMOUS  
Motion Passes**

- b. Expenditure Report

**MOTION** by Penny Miller to approve the Expenditure Report as presented. Second by Jon Puz.

**UNANIMOUS  
Motion Passes**

#### **F. New Business**

- a. CABE Board Representative - New Hartford Board of Education Member Nomination and Appointment

Board Members Kirby Morante and Kristin Young have expressed interest.

**MOTION** by Kristin Young to appoint **Kirby Morante** as the CABE Board Representative for the New Hartford Board of Education. Second by Penny Miller.

**UNANIMOUS  
Motion Passes**

- b. School Facility Utilization Task Force Chair / BOE Liaison Member Nomination and Appointment

Penny Miller, Jon Puz and Kristin Young are the three Board of Education members on the School Facility Utilization Task Force.

**MOTION** by Jon Puz to appoint **Kristin Young** as the School Faculty Utilization Task Force Chair / BOE Liaison Member. Second by Penny Miller.

**UNANIMOUS  
Motion Passes**

- c. REVISION - Policy 3320 - Business/Non-Instructional Operations - Purchasing Procedures (*1st Read*)
- d. REVISION - Policy 4152.6 / 4252.6 - Personnel - Family and Medical Leave Act (*1st Read*)
- e. REVISION - Policy 6171 - Instruction - Special Education (*1st Read*)

- f. REVISION - Policy 9132 - Bylaws of the Board - Standing Committees (*1st Read*)

**MOTION** by Thomas Buzzi to remove the Community Outreach Sub-Committee as a standing committee. Second by Penny Miller.

**UNANIMOUS  
Motion Passes**

Thomas Buzzi (*Chair of the Community Outreach Sub-Committee*) does not think the committee is effective based on the outlets they have. Timothy Klepps suggested "Community Outreach" be an agenda item for the Board of Education, twice a year or more if requested. Frank Rodenberg advocates this topic should be of discussion at the Board of Education level, there should be one voice. Erik Perotti feels Superintendent Sousa has increased NHPS informational postings, which are very well received through the New Hartford Public Schools Facebook page. Kristin Young is hesitant to have Board Members be held accountable for posting to the community, when this is a full Board responsibility to involve the community, not just certain individuals. Kirby Morante agrees this topic is important to keep the communication open and should be an agenda item.

- g. REVISION - Policy 9230 - Bylaws of the Board - Orientation of Board Members (*1st Read*)

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

**Jay Bailey - 575 Main Street** - Mr. Bailey expressed his desire to have the three vacated classrooms enhanced (*maintenance=flooring, paint*), which Oak Hill School vacated from, to be available for students now. Mr. Bailey feels these classrooms could accommodate the second grade. He inquired if the Board was planning on moving forward in doing such. Mr. Klepps will add this to be answered at the next meeting.

**Samantha Wald - 45 Robbins Road** - Ms. Wald informed certain posts may not be sharable from certain groups, the individual would have to share directly from the source (in regards to Facebook sharing). Ms. Wald advocated there should definitely be an agenda item for "Community Outreach" every regular meeting at the Board of Education level, with the SFU-TF there will be more communication floating around in the community.

#### **H. Reports**

- a. EdAdvance

The School Based Mental Health (5-year grant) which was cut by the federal government in April 2025, has been reinstated by the State of Connecticut. The State of CT will cover the remaining time of the grant for \$830,000 to provide 18 mental health staff to 32 schools in the Northwest Corner, including New Hartford. There is another prospective buyer for the Workspace CT property in Bethel, the sale previously fell through and there is now another deal in the works. The sale would take place in the next few weeks. EdAdvance meets once a month, virtually.

- b. Outreach Subcommittee

Thomas Buzzi reported the Community Outreach Sub-Committee met on January 7, 2026 with First Selectman Daniel Jerram, where they discussed the priorities of the subcommittee. Topic which was discussed at this meeting was improving the setup of Board of Education meeting agendas, so the public has more information about what will be discussed. For example: previously an agenda item may have been "*CABE Board Representative*", after this discussion the agenda item now reads "*CABE Board Representative - New Hartford Board of Education Member Nomination and Appointment*" to provide the community more information (descriptions) within the agenda posting. This effort is to provide the general public with more information and have less misinterpretations. Thomas Buzzi says discussion was had to include the SFU-TF meetings on the outside boards at Ann Antolini School and Town Hall.

- c. School Facility Utilization Task Force Update

Please use the attached link to be directed to the NHPS webpage, regarding the School Facility Utilization Task Force ([School Facility Utilization Task Force - New Hartford Public Schools](#))

Kristin Young has been appointed as the Chair of the SFU-TF. Ms. Young stated the first SFU-TF meeting was on Thursday January 22, 2026, and the full School Facility Utilization Task Force was in attendance. The first meeting was set up to "*figure out the*

process". Michelle Miller (of SP+A) worked through the study timeline and suggested a member of the Board of Education to be the Chair of the SFU-TF. Superintendent Sousa will be moved from the director of the task force to the audience. Moving forward, Michelle Miller and Kristin Young will run the SFU-TF meetings.

How will the communication be distributed? Questions must be directed directly to the task force, to be transparent. There is a dedicated email for community communication. Email [NHTaskForce@newhtfd.org](mailto:NHTaskForce@newhtfd.org)

The process this time is different, this time a strong set up process has been established to move forward. Timothy Klepps suggested the processes document Ms. Young has created be sent to Michelle at SP+A. Daniel Jerram and Timothy Klepps may join in conversation amongst the School Facility Utilization Task Force members (9). Jon Puz will bring an owl to the next SFU-TF meeting on Thursday February 19, 2026. Public comment should be in person or via the task force email, public comment should not be virtual. Thomas Buzzi strongly feels if the Town is spending \$50,000 on this study, the School Facility Utilization Task Force meetings should be broadcasted and recorded just as the Board of Education meetings are rather than having a member use an owl.

Two additional meetings have been added for the **School Facility Utilization Task Force**, those meetings are scheduled for **April 22, 2026** and **May 27, 2026**.

## I. Adjournment

**MOTION** by Penny Miller to adjourn the meeting at 9:20PM. Second by Kirby Morante.

**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:**

*Student Presentation – Daisy & Vivian*

2026-2027 School Calendar ([2026-2027 School Calendar](#))

EFS Rep Letter

2026-2027 NHPS Budget Presentation ([2026-2027 Budget Presentation](#))

2026 NHPS Superintendent's Proposed Budget ([2026-2027 NHPS Superintendent's Proposed Budget](#))

Contractual & Legal Obligations / Contingencies ([Contractual & Legal Obligations / Contingencies](#))

EdAdvance (January 2026 Edition)

2026 School Facility Utilization Meetings – Updated ([2026 School Facility Utilization Task Force Meetings](#))