

New Hartford Public Schools
Board of Education Regular Meeting
7:00PM on Tuesday, March 3, 2026
VIRTUAL ONLY

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: Sara Voghel

Timothy Klepps, Chair of the NHPS Board of Education, called the regular meeting to order virtually at 7:03PM.

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Order of Business

C. Communications to the Board of Education/Public Comment

Samantha Wald - Question's Regarding: *Poverty Levels, Who Can Apply for Grants & Snow Tractor*

Eric & Tara White - Request Regarding Third Grade Section - The request was to maintain (4) sections in the 2026-2027 budget, rather than reduce to (3) sections. Three sections will be 20.3 students per classroom and up to 25 students for third grade is allowed per the Board of Education class size policy.

D. Superintendent's Report

March is Board of Education Member Appreciation Month; Superintendent Sousa thanked all staff at NHPS and the Board Members of the New Hartford Board of Education. Daylight Saving Time is on Sunday March 8, 2026.

Superintendent Sousa provided clarification regarding the number of Pre-K sections from the 2025-2026 to 2026-2027 school year, and to correct false information. The Board of Education discussed the additional hire at a Board of Education meeting on May 6, 2025; Mr. Sousa publicly stated the additional staff hire and addition of third Pre-K section.

Superintendent Sousa played a video clip from the Board of Education meeting that occurred in person on Tuesday May 6, 2025 at Ann Antolini School, exactly from the recording (at 18:17 - 19:27) in the Pre-K report, ***“in the next year we will absolutely be hiring another Kindergarten teacher, because we’ll have a tremendous amount of births. There are currently 66 recorded births at the Town Clerk’s Office” ... “what we are going to do is we are opening another Pre-K section because we have so many students that are on a wait list, and that is a strategic move so we don’t permit those students to then go on to a magnet school and then be left with tuition bills or other things in the kindergarten and on years”.***

This move was a **cost neutral** addition to the 10.3-million-dollar budget as the program is tuition based. This also allows NHPS to have an individual for more than one year, it is more attractive to hire. The referendum failed on May 6, 2025 with the proposed cuts to the Clerical Aide and Instructional Assistant, the Board of Finance restored those cuts on May 13, 2025. The Board of Education adopted a revised budget on May 19, 2025 and the second referendum passed the budget on June 10, 2025. The information was discussed at a public meeting regarding the additional third section of Pre-K. The \$66,000 which was proposed as a cut, was restored specifically for the Clerical Aide and Instructional Assistant. There were potential allegations that the third section of Pre-K was added after the referendum and in fact that is not the case, nothing was done by the Board of Education after the fact, all was done above Board prior to referendum. The failure at the first referendum was

in fact because of the Clerical Aide and Instructional Assistant cut, which was then added back and the budget then passed at referendum.

Frank Rodenberg questioned if the additional staff member was “cost neutral”, the answer is yes. What does cost neutral mean? Cost neutral means the cost of hiring the additional teacher was covered by the Pre-K tuition.

[May 6, 2025 Board of Education Meeting - YouTube](#)

[2025-05-06 Pre-K Clip](#)

[May 6, 2025 Meeting Minutes](#)

E. Board of Education Chair s Report

- a. BOE Communication to the Community

F. Routine Business

- a. Expenditure Report

The expenditure report was reviewed at the last Board of Education meeting on February 24, 2026, no review or motion is needed at this time.

G. New Business

- a. REVISION - Policy 3516.5 - Sexual Offenders on School Property *(1st Read)*

This policy was adopted September 16, 2008. The New Hartford Public Schools must post a Registered Sex Offender List on the school districts website, in accordance with Connecticut State law. This is a standing policy already, just a revision to take into effect what is currently done.

Chairman Klepps asked if these policies were recommended or mandatory and if they came from CABA or the State of Connecticut. If it is mandatory, it would say it at the top. The method by which this information is recommended to be distributed is not to have the Superintendent send the information directly to parents but rather have a link available for parents to find on the district website.

Timothy Russell, asked if a Sex Offender is allowed to attend an open house event and are they chaperoned? Superintendent Sousa reassured if a parent (who was a registered sex offender) was at an open house event, the individual would always be accompanied by a staff member. Mr. Russell is hesitant/uncomfortable to allow sex offenders to attend an open house event. Mr. Russell asked if this was standard practice to allow this? Ms. Young clarified, any time a parent who is on the sex offender registry is going to be present at a school; *there must be prior approval by the principal*. Chairman Klepps also reminded Board Members that registered sex offenders also have to follow State mandated rules issued to them by the State of Connecticut, such as, an example not being allowed to be around children under the age of 18, therefore this means said individual would not be allowed to attend the open house per State of Connecticut ruling.

- b. REVISION - Policy 3541.313 - Video Cameras on School Transportation *(1st Read)*

The changes listed are revisions to align closer with current procedures done today. School bus video (inside) is stored in the cloud by DATCO.

Thomas Buzzi questioned the reason for the recording to only be stored for 20 days. There is no specific reason, but this is how long DATTCO has agreed to store the data. Mr. Buzzi feels the 20-day window seems short. Is there room to move that up? The 20 days (standard practice) is based on DATTCO's private network storage. The M-8 is a general education retention schedule.

c. NEW - Policy 6144.1 - Instruction - Exemption from Instruction (1st Read)

This policy is not mandated but is recommended by Superintendent Sousa, Exemption from Instruction is 100% a parent right, whether it be medical or religious. The practice is the school administrative team will meet with parents to respectfully plan for their children. Mr. Sousa felt strongly that parent's rights be included within the Board of Education policies as it has not been included prior.

d. REVISION - Policy 9221 - Filling Board Member Vacancies (1st Read)

This is recommended and a revision. The main change is to update independent to unaffiliated as that is the correct party term. The candidate must be part of a party for 3 months and no party can be more than 2/3 of the Board of Education. Jon Puz suggested to clarify the policy to amend the policy to say Regular or Special meeting to be held within 30 days. He suggested specifically saying both meeting types in the policy. Thomas Buzzi suggested the Board of Education will have a meeting within 30 days, not shall. Ms. Miller suggested a change for the second read. Chairman Klepps suggested to make the policy clearer include the actual statute, so it is known if the Board of Education does not appoint an individual within 30 days, the Selectmen can then appoint someone. Jon Puz also suggests to clarify how the actual three-month rule works, Statue 9-59. The Board of Education must have no more than 2/3 of a party, Statute 9-204, this should be specified that the Board of Education is a (9) person Board, because the ratio could change depending on the number of members.

H. Old Business

a. Budget Workshop #2 - Discussion and possible motion to adopt Superintendent s Proposed Budget as the New Hartford Board of Education Budget

The Board of Education motioned at the last meeting on Tuesday February 24, 2026, to have the Superintendent reduce the overall proposed 2026-2027 budget to a 3.5% increase or a reduction of \$47,500.

Superintendent Sousa informed the Board Members the current 2026-2027 proposed budget after the Board of Education requested reduction, is at **a 3.43% increase or an increase of \$354,651 for a total budget of \$10,679,327.**

- Operating 2026-2027 Budget = **3.43% or \$354,651 increase from 2025-2026**
 - Series 1200 - Special Education, 1200 Line 560 Tuitions - (Page 19)
 - **Reduced by \$50,000**, in the outplacement line, changing budget line from \$460,000 to \$410,000, a contingency within the budget
 - Series 2200 - Improvement of Instruction, Line 320 - Purchased Services/Teacher & Student Recognition - (Page 26)
 - **Reduced by \$250**, changing budget line from \$1,000 to \$750
 - Series 2600 - Central Office, Line 616 - Office Supplies - (Page 36)
 - **Reduced by \$1,000**, changing budget line from \$3,000 to \$2,000
 - Series 2600 - Central Office, Line 642 - Educational Periodical - (Page 37)
 - **Reduced by \$200**, changing budget line from \$400 to \$200

- Series 2700 - School Offices, Line 616 - Office Supplies - (Page 39)
 - **Reduced by \$1,800**, changing budget line from \$5,800 to \$4,000
- Capital Budget: = **\$145,575**
 - Removed Classroom Refresh from Capital (*former Oak Hill classrooms = 25, 26 & 29*). Reduced \$20,700 from Capital - (Page 50)
 - Added NHES Roof to 5 Year Capital Plan (*pending SFU-TF outcomes) - (Page 51)
 - Added NHES Snow Tractor to 5 Year Capital Plan \$20,000

Mr. Klepps asked Mr. Sousa for clarification regarding the 1300 series, Adult Education (Page 22) which calculated incorrectly. Mr. Sousa said this was from a clerical entry in 2025-2026, where \$7,806 should have read \$7,086 but this cannot be changed now.

Superintendent Sousa provided an update to enrollment projections, the method has been changed to provide further clarity. The projections were changed to be by grade and include the projection versus the actual current enrollment, as of January 1, 2026 (*currently 445*) by moving those students forward. The 66 comes from the Town Hall, which is the births recorded with the Town Clerk's office. Remember, these are projections – not an exact science.

MOTION by Jon Puz to adopt the 2026-2027 proposed budget as presented by the Superintendent at an increase of 3.43% for a total budget of \$10,679,327 which is an increase of \$354,651 from the prior year. Second by Penny Miller.

UNANIMOUS
Motion Passes

Kristin Young clarified the amount of kindergarten teachers, Mr. Sousa clarified, “yes”, staff may be moved by grade to accommodate the class sizes needed. If a teacher is needed, they may be moved around, this is the backup plan, commitment is to the lower grades. Staff could be bumped up or down a grade depending on their certification. New Hartford teachers are aware that someone is going to move a grade level, up or down, which comes with the challenge of learning a new curriculum. This happens every year because the small nature of the school district. Ms. Miller had several questions for Mr. Sousa regarding teachers moving grade levels and if there were any planned retirements. Mr. Sousa stated he would work with the NHPS administrative team to see which teachers are needed where at that time, and make decisions based on certifications. He also expressed there are no planned retirements at this time, but sometimes these things aren't planned for.

I. Public Comment - (For Agenda Items Only)

J. Reports

a. School Facility Utilization Task Force Update

The next School Facility Utilization Force Task meeting is Wednesday March 11, 2026, at 7:00PM at Bakerville Consolidated School in the Cafeteria. Erik Perotti asked for a status update regarding the broadcasting topic. Ms. Young had no update. Jon Puz advocated for Ms. Young, it is not a lack on her part, but rather these processes take time. The meeting on March 11, 2026 will most likely be broadcasted and recorded via the owl.

b. EdAdvance

The last EdAdvance meeting was cancelled and a Special Meeting was called to sell the Workspace CT property in Bethel. There will be another meeting later this month.

K. Adjournment

MOTION by Penny Miller to adjourn the meeting at 8:10PM. Second by Jon Puz.

**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:

2026-2027 Board of Education Adopted Budget

EdAdvance (February 2026)

Republican American

Daniel Jerram ("ECS Advocacy" 2/27/26)

Samantha Wald ("Opportunities" 2/24/26, "NHPS-BOE Thank you" 2/27/26, "Healthy Food Certification (HFC)" 3/03/2026)

Eric & Tara White ("Concerns Regarding Proposed Third Grade Class Consolidation for 2025-2026 School Year" 3/03/26)