**REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 7**
**Newbury Library Media Center**
**Board of Education Regular Meeting**
**February 25, 2026 – 6:00 p.m.**
**APPROVED 3.11.26**

**PRESENT:** Chair Ms. Molly Sexton Read (B), Ms. Kim Crone (N), Ms. Mimi Duran (B), Ms. Deb Bell (N), Secretary / Treasurer, Mr. Noel Gauthier (NH), Vice-Chair Mr. Robert Jerram (NH), Ms. Terri Kenneson (C), Director of Finance & Operations, Mr. James Gaskins, High School Principal, Mr. Gary Franklin, Middle School Principal, Mr. Ryan Cornelius, and Superintendent Steven K. LePage.
Absent: Ms. Lisa Fragale

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## 1.0 CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Ms. Sexton Read.

## 2.0 PUBLIC PORTION

None

## 3.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**Motion** Rob Jerram, seconded by Noel Gauthier, to **APPROVE** the minutes for the February 11, 2026, Meeting. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Duran, and Ms. Bell. Nay: none. Abstain: Ms. Kenneson.

## 4.0 PRESENTATIONS BY SUPERINTENDENT

### 4.1 Superintendent's 2026-2027 Budget Proposal

Superintendent LePage presented the proposed 2026-2027 budget.

**Key Discussion Points:**

- **Budget Commitments & Vision:** The proposal is driven by commitments to transparency, conscientiousness regarding resources, and maintaining high-quality education aligned with the "Vision of a Graduate" attributes.
- **Historical Context:**
  - Proposed Budget Increase: 2.10%.
  - Proposed Assessment Increase: 2.12% (minimized due to revenues and designated assessment offsets).
  - Prior 5-year average budget increase: 2.29%.
  - Prior 10-year average budget increase: 2.10%.
- **Budget Drivers & Cost Controls:**
  - **Special Education:** Outplacements are down compared to previous years. The district is budgeting conservatively regarding state Excess Cost grant reimbursement, projecting approximately 70% reimbursement.

    - **Benefits:** Initial Anthem renewal quotes were near 15%. Following negotiations and putting an RFP out, Brown and Brown reported that Anthem's rate has dropped to 11.5%.
    - **Salaries:** Contractual settlements remain high, but costs were mitigated via Board-approved retirement incentives. Salaries and benefits constitute roughly 67% of the total budget.
    - **Efficiency Measures:** The district is transitioning to a full suite of ADP programs for payroll, time/attendance, and insurance. While this implementation has related costs, it will result in immediate efficiencies, and ultimately a reduction in staffing needs within the business office.
- **School Highlights & Needs:**
    - **Middle School:** Focus on Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) for behavioral/academic support, mental health resources, and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) utilizing "PRIDE" tickets, acknowledging students for doing positive things within the school community.
    - **High School:** Highlights included the pep band, House of Heroes, theater productions, and the upcoming Financial Reality Fair. AP participation and exam numbers are up, with high success rates (scores of 3 or higher). SAT scores for the Class of 2026 show significant cohort growth, exceeding state averages.
- **Object Breakdown (Major Changes):**
    - **Salaries:** Net increase of $50,186 (0.4%), despite a 4.4% contractual increase for teachers, due to five retirements and the need to replace only one of those positions.
    - **Benefits:** Total increase of $368,098, representing two-thirds of the overall budget increase.
    - **Professional/Technical Services:** Increased nearly 10%, driven by Shared Services assessment (up 3.445%), ADP software implementation, and instructional technology cost increases.
    - **Property Services:** Increased 2.83%. Noted an increase in snow removal costs (9.28%).
    - **Other Purchased Services:** Declined by $203,334 or 5.65% due to lower special education transportation and tuition costs, combined with $242,000 in Excess Cost Grant offsets.
    - **Supplies:** Increased due to necessary textbook replacements for High School Science and Social Studies, among other supply account needs, due to increased costs of supplies.
    - **Capital Outlay:** Maintaining flat funding at $200,000.
- **Enrollment and Assessments:**
    - Net per-pupil expenditure is rising to approximately $32,705.
    - Enrollment has stabilized. While the district saw a bubble class graduate, and the incoming 7th grade class was smaller, overall trends suggest enrollment will remain within 10-15 students of current numbers for the next five or more years based on elementary data. Current total enrollment, including special programs (HTA) and tuition students, is 771.

**Town Assessments:** Based on shifts in Average Daily Membership (ADM)

- Barkhamsted: 2.62% increase.
- Colebrook: 1.54% decrease.
- New Hartford: 2.27% increase.
- Norfolk: 4.11% increase.

**Strategic Planning BOE Presentation** Superintendent LePage, Principal Franklin, and Principal Cornelius presented the action steps derived from the strategic planning process conducted by a 16-member committee. The plan focuses on four core strategies to prepare students with "durable learning" and uniquely human skills to remain competitive in an AI-driven world.

**Strategy 1: Organizational Capacity (Presented by Principal Cornelius)**

- **Goal:** Develop systems and roles to coordinate and align district improvements.

- **Rationale:** Stakeholders indicated a need for a specific structure to unify the curriculum and assessment systems.

- **Key Actions:**
    - Address the need for a system/role to align instruction, curriculum, and assessment via a proposed administrative realignment.
    - Ensure systemic alignment where BOE goals inform district, school, and department plans, ultimately fueling individualized teacher learning objectives.
    - Improve communication through quarterly updates to the BOE and expanding the district's public communication.
    - Continue 7-12 curriculum mapping, focusing on the Vision of a Graduate (VOG) competencies and establishing rigor indicators for each grade level.
    - Conduct a district-wide assessment audit to ensure assessments emphasize "durable learning" over traditional recall methods.

**Strategy 2: Define Durable Learning & Assessment (Presented by Principal Cornelius)**

- **Goal:** Establish common vocabulary and expectations around the Vision of a Graduate (VOG).
- **Rationale:** Currently, VOG is perceived as an aspirational idea rather than the foundation of daily work.
- **Key Actions:**
    - Set common instructional vocabulary (durable learning, higher-order thinking, rigor, engagement) and educator expectations regarding VOG in the classroom.
    - Focus Professional Development (PD) and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) strictly on improving instructional practices.
    - Ensure VOG is a meaningful component of all curricular areas.
    - Develop tools to assess growth in VOG competencies (e.g., adaptability, collaboration) and determine creative, meaningful ways to report this progress to families outside of traditional report cards.

**Strategy 3: Integrated Curriculum & Flexible Pathways (Presented by Principal Franklin)**

- **Goal:** Integrate VOG into curriculum and instruction to support distinct learning pathways.
- **Key Actions:**
    - Current Work: VOG posters distributed to staff; currently engaged in a four-part VOG training series for teachers to reflect on current practices and plan integration.
    - Establish a regularly occurring, manageable yearly curriculum review cycle.
    - Evaluate and expand career pathways and partnerships.
    - **Upcoming Partnership:** The administration will be meeting with Ed Advance and the Department of Labor, who are interested in using RSD7 as a model district to pilot funded career pathway development.

**Strategy 4: Community Engagement & Coherence (Presented by Principal Franklin)**

- **Goal:** Engage the broader community to ensure long-term alignment and focus.
- **Rationale:** Ensure all stakeholders, including parents and community partners, understand educational trends and support the district's direction.
- **Key Actions:**
    - Explore the parent education series on topics like AI and VOG.
    - Improve community partnerships (noted recent outreach to fire departments, Stanclift Cove, and New Hartford Ambulance).
    - Maximize social media footprint to educate constituents, not just post announcements.
    - **Website Upgrade:** A plan is in place for technology staff to perform a major overhaul during Summer 2026 to make the site user-friendly.

**Administrative Restructuring Proposal (Presented by Superintendent LePage)** To implement the aforementioned strategic plan goals without overwhelming current staff, Superintendent LePage proposed a two-year administrative restructuring phase.

The first year would include tasking AP's with enhancing and expanding career pathways, as well as a review of the current curriculum and development of a focused curriculum. There may also be an expansion of the roles and responsibilities for the STEP program and the Athletic Director.

The district will initiate conversations with member towns about the possibility of creating a position for a K-12 curriculum director (Director of Teaching and Learning). This will require support in the idea and a collaborative process. Any implementation would happen in the second year of this restructuring. This position may have an impact on the structure of the current AP positions.

Discussion of the plan was held following the presentation. Board members expressed questions about the impact on students and the development of a message to be shared with the public. Further consideration of this plan will take place in subsequent meetings with consideration for approval at a later date.

**5.0 OLD BUSINESS**

- **Policy Review:**

**Motion** by Kim Crone, seconded by Deb Bell to **APPROVE** BOE Policy 1312 AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Duran. NAY: None.

**Motion** by Kim Crone, seconded by Deb Bell to **APPROVE** BOE Policy 1312.3 AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Duran. NAY: None.

**Motion** by Kim Crone, seconded by Deb Bell to **APPROVE** BOE Policy 1312.4 AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Duran. NAY: None.

**Motion** by Kim Crone, seconded by Deb Bell to **APPROVE** BOE Policy 1312.5 AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Duran. NAY: None.

**Motion** by Kim Crone, seconded by Deb Bell to **APPROVE** BOE Policy 1411 AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Duran. NAY: None.

**Motion** by Kim Crone, seconded by Deb Bell to **APPROVE** BOE Policy 3542.22 AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Duran. NAY: None.

**Motion** by Kim Crone, seconded by Deb Bell to **APPROVE** BOE Policy 3542.41 AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Duran. NAY: None.

**Motion** by Kim Crone, seconded by Deb Bell to **APPROVE** BOE Policy 5113.13 AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Duran. NAY: None.

**Motion** by Kim Crone, seconded by Deb Bell to **APPROVE** BOE Policy 5118.2 AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Duran. NAY: None.

**Motion** by Kim Crone, seconded by Deb Bell to **APPROVE** BOE Policy 5144.2 AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Duran. NAY: None.

**Motion** by Kim Crone, seconded by Deb Bell to **APPROVE** BOE Policy 5144.4 AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Duran. NAY: None.

**Motion** by Kim Crone, seconded by Deb Bell to **APPROVE** BOE Policy 6141.51 AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Duran. NAY: None.

**Motion** by Kim Crone, seconded by Deb Bell to **APPROVE** BOE Policy 6141.52 AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Duran. NAY: None.

**Motion** by Kim Crone, seconded by Deb Bell to **APPROVE** BOE Policy 6148 AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Duran NAY: None.

**Motion** by Kim Crone, seconded by Deb Bell to **APPROVE** BOE Policy 6172.1 AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Duran. NAY: None.

**Motion** by Kim Crone, seconded by Deb Bell to **APPROVE** BOE Policy 6142.101 AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Duran. NAY: None.

**6. New Business:**

None

**7. Correspondence:**

None

**8. Opportunity for the Public to Speak:**

None

**9 Adjournment:**

**Motion** by Rob Jerram, seconded by Noel Gauthier to **ADJOURN** the meeting at 8:30 p.m. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Duran NAY: None.