REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 7
Newbury Library Media Center
Board of Education Regular Meeting
March 11, 2026 – 6:00 p.m.
APPROVED -3.23.26

PRESENT: Chair Ms. Molly Sexton Read (B), Ms. Kim Crone (N), Ms. Deb Bell (N), Vice-Chair Mr. Robert Jerram (NH) via phone, 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 (C), Ms. Mimi Duran (B), Secretary / Treasurer, Mr. Noel Gauthier (NH)

1.0 CALL TO ORDER

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

2.0 PUBLIC PORTION

A presentation from the "Surprise Squad", led by Assistant Principal, Mr. Andrew Bakulski. A group of approximately 25 students presented the Board with gifts in honor of Board Appreciation Month. Mr. Bakulski read a message thanking Board members for their years of dedicated service to the district, and Mrs. Blazys and her culinary students provided a baked treat.

3.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Terri Kenneson, seconded by Kim Crone, to **APPROVE** the minutes for the February 25 meeting as amended. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Crone, Ms. Bell, Ms. Kenneson. NAY: None

Motion by Terri Kenneson, seconded by Kim Crone, to **APPROVE** the minutes for the March 4 budget workshop. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Crone, Ms. Bell, Ms. Kenneson. NAY: None

4.0 Reports

4.1 Student Representatives:

Amaya Washington:

- Campus Life: Senior courtyard is open; planning for new amenities (ping pong, corn hole) is underway.
- Clubs/Sports: NHS/FFA organizing volunteer events; Cheer placed 7th at States; Swim placed 3rd in Class S (Anthony Ficalora (backstroke) and Maeve Bean (diving) were Class S Champions).

Mia Doyle:

- Shared some of the projects and efforts of the High School Principal's Advisory Council, which included reviewing and proposing dress code revisions, among other subcommittee highlights; Juniors focusing on SAT prep, which is coming up soon.

4.2 Principal Reports:

Middle School (R. Cornelius):

- Testing: Grade 8 will participate in the NAEP assessment on March 17, since our district was one of about 200 schools selected for this year's testing. Significant time goes into preparing for the administration of this test, but we will not get any district-specific results.
- Community: NJHS is hosting a fun event for students in grades 3–6 from sending towns this Friday, March 19.
- Operations: New track uniforms delivered; scheduling for the 2026-27 school year and 7th-grade transitions are underway**.**

High School (G. Franklin):

- Testing: SAT, NGSS, and Seal of Biliteracy tests (Spanish, Italian, and Hungarian) are scheduled. The ELA and Math departments are offering after-school SAT prep sessions.
- Events: Graduation (June 15) and end-of-year activity planning are underway.
- Special Activities: Success with the Financial Reality Fair; Mock Interview Day for public speaking students scheduled for March 25.

4.3 Superintendent's Report (S. LePage)

- Strategic Planning: Met with NTA leadership (3/10) and Department Leaders regarding leadership realignments in 2026-2027 and 2027-2028, and impacts on the current leadership structure. A full faculty meeting is scheduled for 3/16 regarding Strategic Planning areas of focus and leadership restructuring/realignment plans.
- Budget/Staffing: A 3rd-shift custodial vacancy will not be refilled, saving approximately $95,000 in salary and benefits. These savings help offset a proposed $30,000 placeholder for an after-school/evening security position.
- Facilities: Baseball right field drainage (curtain drains) installed; grading/seeding to follow.

- District Repair (DRIP): Grant stands at $59,523.24. Certification of the grant was submitted by Mr. Lepage. Funding is expected to be released in May.
- Community: Mobile Penguin Plunge has raised $3,100 toward a $5,000 goal thus far; all are encouraged to support or sign up to jump along with Mr. LePage and several students and faculty/staff members. There will be a fundraiser for Kindness In Motion at the event as well.

4.4 Director of Finance and Operations (J. Gaskins)

- Operations: Updates provided on the ADP conversion and bond items related to roof non-payment.
- RFP: Interviews with the four lowest-bidding companies will be scheduled within the next two weeks.

5.0 Old Business:

5.1 2026-2027 Budget: Adjustments were made to the proposed budget reflecting the expansion of the Athletic Director position to become the Director of Athletics and Student Affairs, the reduction of a custodial position, and a placeholder for a proposed after-school/evening school security position. The Board was provided with an overview of the costs and benefits of an Armed Security Officer (an armed, retired police officer in good standing) versus an unarmed Security Guard. This discussion on which option would be preferred by the Board will continue at the next regular meeting, but it was agreed that there is a need for added security during these less structured and less secure periods in the day, and the $30,000 placeholder was maintained in the proposed budget. With everything factored in, the resulting budget increase is 1.99% with an assessment increase of 2.00%. The Board expressed agreement in moving this current budget forward to town presentations as the Board's Proposed Budget.

5.2 Strategic Plan: Discussion regarding the administrative personnel realignment with the BOE consensus that these shifts make sense for addressing the needs that were identified in the recent District Strategic Planning process.

6.0 NEW BUSINESS

- **6.1 Healthy Food Certification: Discussion of the certification for the 7.1.2026 to 6.30.2027 cycle.**

Motion by Kim Crone, seconded by Deb Bell to **adopt** the following: Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215 F. Regional School District No. 7 Board of Education, certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools, under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut nutrition standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2026, through June 30,

2027. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including, but not limited to, school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises, sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.
AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Crone, Ms. Bell, Ms. Kenneson. NAY: None

Motion by Terri Kenneson, seconded by Deb Bell, to **adopt** the following: The Regional School District No. 7 Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut nutrition standards, provided that the following conditions are met. 1) The sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on a weekend 2) The sale is at the location of the event, and 3) The food items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events, but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day" is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food sales.
AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Crone, Ms. Bell, Ms. Kenneson. NAY: None

6. New Business:

None

7. Correspondence:

None

8. Opportunity for the Public to Speak:

None

9 Adjournment:

Motion by Terri Kenneson, seconded by Deb Bell, to **ADJOURN** the meeting at 7:30 p.m.
AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Ms. Crone, Ms. Bell, Ms. Kenneson. NAY: None