

New Hartford Public Schools
Board of Education Special Meeting
6:00PM on Tuesday, March 24, 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

Absent: Timothy Russell

Timothy Klepps, Chair of the NHPS Board of Education, called the special meeting to order virtually at 6:02PM.

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Communications to the Board of Education/Public Comment

Communications received regarding the decrease from (4) second grade classrooms to (3) third grade classrooms next year.

- **Sara (Monroe) and Zach Marcus** (March 4, 2026) & Response (March 5, 2026)
- **Sarah Giordano** (March 4, 2026) & Response (March 5, 2026)
- **Sarah Allen** (March 5, 2026) & Response (March 6, 2026)
- **Eden Tycienski** (March 6, 2026) & Response (March 9, 2026)
- **Greta Lindquist-Merlino** (March 9, 2026) & Response (March 9, 2026)
- **Rebecca Binney** (March 16, 2026) & Response (March 17, 2026)

Members had discussion regarding the letters mentioned above and the particular cohorts; and whether some students have increased levels of behavioral issues with IEP's or 504's.

Mr. Sousa stated the administrative team meets weekly to address these needs. Currently the second grade is not impacted with IEP's or 504's. There is no intervention needed at this time, nor are there any behavioral issues. This cohort has responded impressively well to new literary instructions.

Marrit Budny – NHPS Facebook

Communication received from Marrit Budny was regarding the NHPS Facebook page. She stated “likes” or “follows” to political representatives should be removed. Action is currently in place to do so, as the Board of Education must continue to be unaffiliated politically in all Facebook postings.

C. Discuss and adopt the revised 2026-2027 BOE Budget with BOF action

Last Tuesday March 17, 2026, Jeffrey Sousa and Kristin Young attended (*in-person*), and Jon Puz (*virtually*) attended the Board of Finance meeting. The Board of Finance motioned and approved a \$147,000 total cut from the Board of Education (**Operating Budget**), and an \$80,000 cut from the Capital Budget. The \$147,000 is equivalent to the contingencies provided by Board of Education in good faith within the budget process. This change brings the Board of Education budget to a 1.99% increase. The Board of Finance is looking to re-establish a good relationship with the Board of Education. The Board of Finance stated they would cover any shortages (*if there are*) next year. The areas within the budget where this \$147,000 is being removed from was explained by Superintendent Sousa.

First \$100,000 is cut from Tuition (*Page 19 Tuition with Outplacements*) and secondly \$47,000 is cut from Transportation (*Page 48, Special Education Transportation*) for the total of **\$147,000 (\$100,000 + \$47,000)**.

MOTION by Thomas Buzzi to adopt the New Hartford Public Schools 2026-2027 Board of Education budget with Board of Finance action in place dated 3/18/2026 at a value (*total budget*) of **\$10,530,472**, or a dollar variance increase of **\$205,796** or a **1.99%**. Second by Penny Miller.

Aye: Thomas Buzzi, Timothy Klepps, Penny Miller, Kirby Morante, Erik Perotti, Jon Puz, Frank Rodenberg

Naye: Kristin Young

Abstain:

(7-1-0)
Motion Passes

The non-lapsing account is statutory and has approximately \$160,000. Erik Perotti provided thoughts on the non-lapsing account. *Will the Board of Finance request the Board of Education depleted the non-lapsing account first before the Board of Finance provides assistance?* Mr. Sousa stated that the Board of Finance will want them to use the non-lapsing first depending on what the overage is for. *Will the Board of Finance deny a request?* The Board of Finance stated it would be illegal for funding to not be provided for any unforeseen Outplacement (*Special Education*) need. Discussion was had on the relationship between the Board of Education and Board of Finance and whether this information should be in a “written agreement”.

Jon Puz shared his perspective from attending Board of Finance meetings; he expressed appreciation was shown from the Board of Finance toward the Board of Education to bring a responsible budget forward and perspectives of the Board of Finance was given to the Board of Education.

There are a lot of pockets of contingencies that build up over time. The Board of Finance has to find the right balance to have money on hand in reserves and reduce taxes. The goal is to continue to centralize more reserves instead of bring in more tax dollars. Lastly, the Board of Finance wishes to collaborate more, as one team and partner together. Frank Rodenberg asked if the 1.99% request was because Region 7 was 1.99%. Kristin Young answered no, the numbers were simply a coincidence. Jon Puz clarified that Region 7 was at over 2% but they also had cuts to make. Both budgets were done in separate paths and concluded separately. Timothy Klepps clarified Board of Finance can direct a cut in the amount of X, but cannot direct where that “cut” comes from, where the cut comes from is up to the Board of Education.

Penny Miller expressed she doesn’t understand where “distrust” to the Board of Finance comes from. She states the Board of Finance is always willing to approve additional requested funding as far as she can remember.

To provide clarity the Board of Education non-lapsing account **is interest bearing** for the town, although the Board of Education cannot garnish the interest money itself, clarified by Mr. Klepps and Mr. Sousa.

Frank Rodenberg asked if the Board of Finance meeting minutes clearly stated this discussion and if the wording would suffice. Ms. Young questioned a scenario of the Board of Finance requesting the Board of Education use “un-spent” funds, there may be a time in the year where a line is unspent at the time of a request because said money is earmarked to be spent later in the cycle.

Mr. Sousa explained the Capital Budget (*Page 50*) changes. The line was changed by a reduction of \$80,000. The \$100,000 cut from the Oil Tank Replacements and the adjustment of moving up the snow tractor from year 2027-2028 to 2026-2027 (**\$145,575 - \$100,000 + \$20,000 = \$65,575**). The Board of Finance is more inclined to bond the

large oil tank replacement project depending on the outcomes of the School Facility Utilization Tax Force. With these changes the total Capital Budget this upcoming 2026-2027 year is \$65,575.

MOTION by Penny Miller to approve the revised Capital Expenditure request for 2026-2027 in the amount of \$65,575. Second by Thomas Buzzi.

UNANIMOUS

Jeffrey Sousa explained the 2026-2027 budget with actions taken will affect the 5-year capital plan and changes are expected.

The next Board of Education meeting is Tuesday May 5, 2026 (*also the date of the Town Referendum*).

D. Public Comment - (For Agenda Items Only)

E. Adjournment

MOTION by Penny Miller to adjourn the virtual meeting at 6:40PM. Second by Kirby Morante.

UNANIMOUS

*Respectfully submitted by,
Elizabeth Domas, Recording Secretary*

Attachments:

Communications regarding the decrease from (4) second grade classrooms to (3) third grade classrooms next year.

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- Greta Lindquist-Merlino (*March 9, 2026*) & Response (*March 9, 2026*)
- Rebecca Binney (*March 16, 2026*) & Response (*March 17, 2026*)

Marrit Budny – *NHPS Facebook (March 24, 2026) & Response (March 24, 2026)*

NHPS BOE 2026-2027 Adopted Budget (3/24/2026)

Recorded Reg. & Special BOE meetings will be posted to:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCX-_ZlomWmjG81dc_QM3rfg