

**New Hartford Public Schools
Board of Education Regular Meeting
7:00PM on Tuesday, June 2, 2026
Ann Antolini School – Library**

PRESENT: Superintendent Jeffrey Sousa; Chair Timothy Klepps

Board Members: Thomas Buzzi; Kirby Morante; Erik Perotti; Jon Puz; Frank Rodenberg; Vice Chair Kristin Young

Absent: Penny Miller (Secretary) and Timothy Russell

Timothy Klepps, Chair of the NHPS Board of Education, called the regular meeting to order in person at 7:00PM.

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Order of Business

MOTION by Jon Puz to add "c. CABE" under item J - Reports. Second by Frank Rodenberg.

UNANIMOUS

C. Communications to the Board of Education/Public Comment

Alesia Kennerson – PreK Program, Chairman Timothy Klepps Responded

D. Superintendent's Report

a. 41st Annual CAPPS-LCSA (*Litchfield County Superintendents Award*) Student Recognition Program
Students Blake Bingham and Kaydence Wallace have been recognized for NHPS to receive the award.

b. Student Representatives

Daisy Jones and Vivian Tsai

First Grade took a trip to Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy. Second Grade took a tour with Fifth Grade to show them around Ann Antolini School. Band Players played at the Memorial Day Ceremony on the Green with Ms. Allison Melillo (*Teacher/Music*). The Celebration of Learning happened on May 28, 2026, where students conducted a Science or research project. The Ann Antolini Art Show was hosted by Ms. Rachel Savage (*Teacher/Art*). Fifth Grade took a field trip to Nature's Classroom. Students at Ann Antolini learned about Pi Day, March 14, 2026. Sixth Grade took a field trip to White Memorial. Fourth Grade has an upcoming event to visit the Capital. Third Grade will visit the Science Museum. Field day will happen at all three schools, with activities such as: *Radar Run with Trooper Fig, Kickball, Capture the Flag* and games that include water.

c. Personnel Report

- Elise Yost (*Teacher/SPED at Ann Antolini School*), has announced her retirement after 24 years with NHPS. She has a classroom pet, Pretzel, a Leopard Gecko (a student favorite).
- James Lathrop (*part-time Custodian at Ann Antolini School*) of five years has announced his retirement.
- Kelly Cravanzola (*Paraeducator at Ann Antolini School*) of six and a half years has announced her departure to a different endeavor.

d. [Profile and Performance Reports](#) (Subsection (c) of section 10-220 of the Connecticut General Statutes)

Official Performance Report – Superintendent Sousa explain how to gain access to this report.

e. Chlorination Project

The Chlorination Project at Bakerville Consolidated School has been completed to eliminate bacteria in the water, a place meter has been included. There are alarms installed in the event of failure, this project was installed by Ron Black, Mr. Black submits the necessary documentation to State of CT, and Department of Public Health for NHPS.

f. PreK Program Presentation (*Director of Student Services Michael Lynch*)

Mr. Michael Lynch provided a presentation on the makeup of the New Hartford Preschool Program. All school districts in the State of Connecticut have a preschool. The State of Connecticut, requires Special Education services and related services be provided to children beginning at age 3 (*this can be any time during the school year*). This is mandated by federal law (IDEA). The program is reverse main stream, the most allowed is 50% Special Education students to 50% Regular Education students, the best practice in NHPS is 30-40%. If 40% is Special Education or 17 students (*IEP or special needs*), this means there is an obligation to have 43 students in total. The number of preschool classrooms is evaluated each year using birthrates and preschool screening information.

The law has changed the age requirement to start Kindergarten from children must turn 5 years old on or before January 1 to children must turn 5 years old on or before September 1. As a result, the number of eligible students for preschool has increased. This means students who may have been in the program for 2 years are now in the program for 2.5 to 3 years, this has created the need for more preschool slots. Per Board of Education policy, the maximum allowed is 18 to a classroom (or “section”). Right now, there are 3 classrooms with 40% IEP’s, six students were added this year, averages from 4-8 additions each year. If there were only two classrooms the ratio would be at 70% (students who have IEP’s). The number of sections of PreK is determined by: the current preschool program, birthrates from the Town, preschool screening, sign-up and playgroup day, in April. This helps determine how many families are interested/possible preschool students for that year. A year ago, in March/April, there was a lot of students, and Mr. Lynch estimated the need for more students.

Preschool is not daycare, all teachers in the PreK program are certified preschool teachers and Special Education Certified. Preschool is important for many reasons: **1. School Readiness, 2. Social-Emotional Development, 3. Long-Term Outcomes, 4. Special Education Reduction.** In the past month two preschool birth-three students were graduated out of Special Education in their Kindergarten and First Grade year. The cost of preschool is a cost recovery to the legal obligations (*what is legally required to provide*). PreK tuition is regularly evaluated. The goal is to keep students in the school district, rather than attend out-of-district school such as a Magnet School. NHPS is charged Transportation and Tuition for those students who attend schools out of district, and if there is Special Education the town is charged for that, this is a cost savings. Thomas Buzzi had several questions regarding the legality ramifications is the maximum ration (per statute) at 50% is not adhered to. Legally, the IEPs in place would be out of compliance, an IEP is a legally binding document, therefore could lead to lawsuits. What are the consequences from the State? Is there a funding reduction? Legal ramifications? If the school district does not adhere to the ratio per State Statue, the school district is not complying with legal binding documents directly relating to the children. The Special Education students heavily benefit from being with other peers, especially in the early development. Special Education students rely on the Regular Education students. Next year the projection remains the same, requiring three sections of PreK. Estimated to be starting at 45 students, there are 2 students on the waitlist.

Erik Perotti asked if families are ever turned away? The answer is yes, even last year. In Mr. Lynch’s time as Director of Student Services, there has never been a year where families haven’t been turned away. Chairman Klepps asked Mr. Lynch to further clarify the legal obligation. There is legal obligation to provide services to students 3-fifth birthday (by September 1) if they have and IEP. If they turn 5 after September 1, they remain part of the PreK program rather than move to kindergarten. A student with a birthday on September 2, could be in the PreK program for 3 years. Again, there must be at least 50% Regular students and 50% Special Education students (no more). The State birth to three programs is referred to the PreK program. Kirby Morante emphasized the PreK program is “mitigating risk” and riding the exact 50% is not ideal, the school district should strive to be below that ratio. She asked how many students in town are part of one of the CREC schools? There are currently 2, when Sousa started there was 16. Erik Perotti asked if PreK could benefit from 4 sections. Mr. Lynch explained, not at this time. He uses the “Screening Day” to know ahead of time by

age 3 or age 4 who are interested in signing up to plan for the next year. The school district still pays for students who attend a CREC school, which is some NHPS already offers – so why turn students away just to pay for higher outplacement costs?

Other updates:

Supplemental Excess Cost Share (ECS), Mr. Sousa sent letters to Mark Anderson and Paul Honig, for their support, the Supplemental ECS is a step in the right direction, providing some relief.

Superintendent Sousa gave a huge shoutout to Ms. Savage for the Art Show. Superintendent Sousa also thanked the Board of Finance and Board of Selectman who worked together to approve a responsible 2026/2027 budget.

There are 12 more days of school, the last day of school Thursday June 18, 2026. The Board of Education does not have a regular meeting in July, the next meeting is Tuesday August 18, 2026.

E. Board of Education Chair's Report

a. New Hartford Board of Education Self Evaluation

Thomas Buzzi suggested this be conducted in-person to be more effective. Chairman Klepps concluded that an Executive Session will be included for this topic at the August 18, 2026 regular Board of Education meeting.

b. Town Memo Re: Records

The Board secretaries received a memorandum from Ms. Christine Hayward, regarding meeting minute attachments. The memorandum states the Town Hall is no longer accepting attachments with the recording of meeting minutes in the Town Clerk's Office. Chairman Klepps received correspondence from the Office of Public Record Administrator, Nicole Marino, specifically referring to the M1 General Administration Records, that agendas are required to be on file and stored for 1 year, and minutes for all government agencies is permanent storage which is maintained by the municipality. Are minutes sufficient without the attachments? The response from the OPRA, as of right now all attachments are considered as a part of the minutes. The Board of Education will reply back to Ms. Christine Hayward and the Town Clerk's Office, that attachments are still required to be accessible until the State of CT changes their requirements.

c. Educational Cost Share (ECS) Supplemental Grant Memo

The State of Connecticut has made a change, as of May 2, 2026 for Fiscal Year 2026/2027, the general assembly passed an amended budget providing 100 million dollars across the 169 towns. **New Hartford received, \$173,240 for Education and \$22,147 for Municipal.** New Hartford had already had a passed budget. At this time, the understanding of the Board of Education was the Board of Finance allocated approximately 50% against the 2026/2027 budget to reduce taxes and the other approximate 50% back into the general fund. The exact application of funds will be determined when the Board of Finance minutes become available from the May 12, 2026 meeting (*the Town Referendum happened on May 5, where the 26/27 budget was passed*). The Office of Policy and Management had provided language about certain reporting, how the money is spent if the municipality already has an approved budget. The additional funds were received as a one-time allocation. These additional funds need to be held in a separate account for audit purposes. Tri-Board meeting happen every 4-5 weeks (routinely), Chairman Timothy Klepps met with First Selectman Daniel Jerram, Board of Finance Chair Kerry Guilfoyle and Superintendent Sousa. There are available ARPA funds which will expire by the end of the year (2026) in December. Originally the funds were allocated to the New Hartford Elementary roof (which is on pause), therefore these funds are available to use towards "deferred maintenance". Superintendent Sousa will come up with a "priority list", the amount is roughly \$110,000.

F. Routine Business

a. Approval of Minutes - April 14, 2026 (Special) and May 5, 2026 (Regular)

MOTION by Jon Puz to approve the Special meeting minutes from April 14, 2026. Second by Kristin Young.

Aye: Thomas Buzzi; Kirby Morante; Erik Perotti; Jon Puz; Kristin Young

Naye:

Abstain: Timothy Klepps and Frank Rodenberg

(5-0-2)
Motion Passes

MOTION by Frank Rodenberg to approve the Regular meeting minutes from May 5, 2026. Second by Jon Puz.

Aye: Thomas Buzzi; Timothy Klepps; Kirby Morante; Erik Perotti; Jon Puz; Frank Rodenberg

Naye:

Abstain: Kristin Young

(6-0-1)
Motion Passes

b. Expenditure Report

MOTION by Frank Rodenberg to approve the Expenditure Report as presented. Second by Kirby Morante.

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c. Line Item Transfers

Superintendent Sousa presented 7-line-item transfer requests before the Board of Education. The total of these line items transfers is \$261,000. These line-item transfer as presented are requested due to unanticipated absences and changes in outplacement tuition, within the medical and salary budget lines, these changes permitted additional unanticipated savings.

1. \$40,000 from **Tuition to Legal**

2. \$27,000 from **Medical to Legal**

3. \$28,000 from **Medical to Purchased Services Contract** (Silver Petrucelli + Associates)

4. \$74,000 from **Medical to Emergency Repairs** at Ann Antolini School

(Electronic door installation, pneumatic thermostats, man hole covers for oil tanks, Verkada Alarm System, back flow preventers, removal of power poles and installation, replace floors and shades in previously known as Oak Hill rooms, outdoor playground camera (already existing), new chairs and signage, fencing up behind basketball hoops)

5. \$62,000 from **Medical to Emergency Repairs** at Bakerville Consolidated School

(Spill container, piping and tank pad from Hughes Mechanical, gutters sensory and heat tape on the roof, alarm system, septic camera outlet, window trim, cafeteria tables and chlorination system)

6. \$18,000 from **Medical to Emergency Repairs** at New Hartford Elementary School

(Roof leaks, fire protection-sprinkler repair, wireless receiver, snow issues, electronic door install, burglar alarm system, repair post and rail which were damaged, roof repairs)

7. \$12,000 from **Medical to Equipment**

(Ann Antolini School-new to this year never existed before, playground security camera, intercom camera at entrance and exit doors, figure keys for security and access points with badges)

MOTION by Erik Perotti to approve the 7 line-item transfers as presented. Second by Frank Rodenberg.

This legal fee transfer request covers the legal fees which are outstanding to date. Superintendent Sousa clarified electronic door install for Ms. Young. Mr. Buzzi clarified that legal fees are over \$100,000 this year, yes, confirmed by Mr. Sousa *(roughly \$55,000 already paid plus the \$67,000 line-item transfer request with May and June remaining)*.

G. New Business

- a. REVISION - Policy 5112 - Ages of Attendance/Admissions/Placement (*1st Read*)
- b. NEW - Policy 5142 - School Safety: Preparation, Response, and After Action (*1st Read*)

The three are: *Safe and Secure School Facilities (3516)*, *Crisis Management Plan (5146.6)* and *Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness (6114)*, these three policies are no longer necessary by the adoption of Policy 5142, as recommended by CAFE. CAFE recommends reminding the three policies mentioned, and take the three different policies into 1, which is Policy 5142.

H. Old Business

- a. REVISION - Bylaw 9221 - Filling Board Member Vacancies (*2nd Read*)

MOTION by Kirby Morante to approve Bylaw 9221 - Filling Board Member Vacancies. Second by Jon Puz.

Legal counsel has reviewed this bylaw in great length, and the Attorney advised an add on for clarification, this bylaw went through multiple revisions. There is a follow-up “how to guide”, step 1,2,3,4. Mr. Sousa recommend the Board of Education to adopt all together. This bylaw is as specific as it can be based on the current law.

AMENDED- MOTION by Kirby Morante to approve Bylaw 9221 - Filling Board Member Vacancies (*including the Vacancy Appointment Decision Framework*). Second by Jon Puz.

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I. Public Comment - (For Agenda Items Only)

Alesia Kennerson (198 Gillette Road) – Ms. Kennerson was asked to email her request to the Board of Education

Ms. Kennerson requested several items from the Board of Education:

- Number of PreK Special Education to PreK Regular Education ratio for the last 5 years
- Total cost and total tuition for PreK for the last 5 years
- How much of each time is spent in PreK, by individual staff member
- PreK presentation and line-item transfer document be available

J. Reports

- a. EdAdvance

N/A

- b. School Facility Utilization Task Force

The School Facility Utilization Task Force has had two meetings: 1-regular meeting and 1-public informational meeting. The goals of the task force are to understand where the process at, and what should be explored more deeply and determine the feasibility. The goal is to narrow down and understand the viable options. Michelle is investigating the readability of building on the sites and how renovations will affect the school year. There has been a survey distributed to faculty and staff. The community will receive a survey once there are more concrete options, there are too many options for a survey at this point in time. Additional summer meetings in July and August will be announced at the next SFU-TF meeting. The next meeting is Monday June 8, 2026 (Special). Something not in scope of work of SP+A is a Civil Engineer, which is TBD by the Task Force, as this will come with a cost. Kristin Young will meet with Mike Lucas (Town Planner, Planning & Zoning) and SP+A for a preliminary discussion on site conditions at the schools. The work for Michelle Miller (SP+A) is nearing completion. The next step is to gathering information from task force members on what other information they feel the Task Force needs to make a recommendation. what other information have. The

extra meetings will not necessarily be required for SP+A. Jon Puz brought up PreK being a topic previously discussed and has requested more information on “shared services” from Superintendent Sousa. Chairman Klepps suggest community input be obtained before spending money on a Civil Engineer – to determine if there is even interest. Jon Puz emphasized, there is no option that is a zero-dollar option, regardless there is still large amounts of maintenance that is still necessary.

c. CAFE (added by a Motion at the beginning of this meeting)

Kirby Morante presented updates for CAFE, the 16th Annual CAFE summer leadership conference is August 6, the Delegate assembly is November 19, CAFE and CAPPs convention is November 20 and 21 and New Board Member orientation is December 10. There is a webinar on June 17 to discuss CT school funding changes. Numerous finance webinars at varying dates. There is a link on the website for all newsletters and dates.

K. Executive Session

MOTION by Frank Rodenberg to enter Executive Session at 9:01PM and to invite Superintendent Sousa to join.
Second by Jon Puz.

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*Everyone in attendance left the meeting.
The Board of Education members in attendance and Superintendent Sousa remained for Executive Session.
Motions following Executive Session were provided by Superintendent Sousa to the Recording Secretary.*

- a. Discussion of the evaluation/performance of the Superintendent.
- b. Discussion regarding a confidential attorney-client privileged communication concerning response to statements by a community member about the Superintendent.
- c. Personnel matter related to the request for an extended unpaid leave and to cover the cost share for medical and dental insurance for the remainder of the unpaid leave.

Executive session ended at 10:19PM.

MOTION by Erik Perotti to extend Superintendent Sousa’s contract from 7/01/2026 to 6/30/2029 with a 2% increase for 2026-2027. Second by Frank Rodenberg.

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MOTION by Frank Rodenberg to extend unpaid leave and to advance the cost share for medical and dental insurance for the remainder of the unpaid leave for NHPS employee. Second by Kirby Morante.

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L. Adjournment

MOTION by Kristin Young to adjourn the meeting at 10:21PM. Second by Frank Rodenberg.

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*Respectfully submitted by,
Elizabeth Domas, Recording Secretary*

Recorded Reg. & Special BOE meetings will be posted to:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCX-ZlomWmjG81dc_QM3rfg