MINUTES
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 7

Superintendents Office
Board of Education Special Meeting
June 12th, 2026 – 3:00 p.m.

APPROVED 6.24.26

PRESENT: Chair Ms. Molly Sexton Read (B), Ms. Terri Kenneson (C) via zoom, Ms. Deb Bell (N) via phone call, Secretary / Treasurer, Mr. Noel Gauthier (NH), Ms. Lisa Fragale (C) via phone call, Director of Finance & Operations, Mr. James Gaskins, Mr. Keith Boyle, and Superintendent Steven K. LePage via phone call.
Absent: Ms. Kim Crone (N), Student Representatives, Mia Doyle and Amaya Washington, High School Principal, Mr. Gary Franklin, Middle School Principal, Mr. Ryan Cornelius, Mr. Robert Jerram (NH), Ms. Mimi Duran (B).

1.0 Call to Order

Molly Sexton Read called the meeting to order at 3:50 PM.

2.0 Discussion and Possible Action on the Solar Project Proposal

Summary of Building Committee Findings

Chair Sexton Reed briefed the full Board on the details gathered from the Connecticut Green Bank representative, Mackie Dykes, regarding the Direct Ownership model for the proposed solar canopy project:

- **Financing Structure:** The district would secure an 18-year loan from the Green Bank. No payments would be due until the system was fully connected and generating electricity, though construction interest would accrue during the development phase.
- **Revenue Generation:** The project would be structured with a 125% revenue-to-debt service cushion. Revenue from selling generated electricity back to the utility would completely cover the loan payments, yielding approximately $70,000 in gross annual cash flow back to the district.
- **Operational Requirements:** Direct ownership would require the district to maintain an Operations and Maintenance (O&M) contract (estimated between $8,000 and $12,000 annually), which would reduce the net benefit to around $55,000 to $60,000 per year.
- **District Risk:** The structural risk remains with the district. If the system fails to generate power as designed, Northwestern Regional School District No. 7 (NWR7) would still be contractually obligated to repay the loan in full. While the Green Bank reported a 95% to

99% historical fleet performance success rate across 100+ municipal and school projects, the financial liability would belong to NWR7.
- **Committee Punting:** Chair Sexton Reed noted that due to outstanding questions, the Building Committee chose to "punt" and chose not to vote definitively one way or the other, instead moving the project to the full Board for final deliberation. However, if forced to choose between the Aces Up third-party lease and direct ownership, the committee elements favored the Green Bank route.

Board Deliberation and Key Concerns

Board members engaged in an extensive conversation regarding the project's parameters, ultimately expressing profound hesitation across several areas:

- **Financial Return vs. Risk Profile:** Superintendent LePage and various board members noted that while the project represents a positive environmental initiative, the net financial impact is modest. The proposed array would only offset roughly 14% of the district's total energy consumption (worth approximately $190,000 annually). Members felt that taking on a multi-million dollar loan liability for a net return of roughly $50,000 to $60,000 per year introduced an unfavorable risk-to-reward ratio.
- **Imposed Time Constraints:** The looming July 4th regulatory deadline forces a compressed decision-making window. General contractor Aces Up requires a firm commitment at least two weeks prior to the deadline to order safe harbor materials. Board members expressed strong discomfort with "turning themselves inside out" and rushing into a major 20-year commitment under artificial time pressures without absolute clarity.
- **Sequential Logistical Issues:** Under the current compressed timeline, NWR7 would have to legally lock themselves into an Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) contract with Aces Up before knowing with absolute certainty that the Connecticut Green Bank loan approval process was finalized. Members compared this unfavorably to buying a house without a pre-approved mortgage.
- **Integration with Core Infrastructure:** Chair Sexton Reed and Superintendent LePage emphasized that the project is a standalone canopy system feeding directly into the general grid revenue pot, rather than an asset integrated into NWR7’s building energy footprint.

Future Sustainable Energy Outlook

The Board determined that a more logical, strategic approach would involve waiting to align solar investments with the upcoming major roof replacement project, targeted for **2027** or slightly later:

- The planned roof project will explore high-efficiency PVC roofing systems with fully integrated solar infrastructure.

- Waiting protects the district from current deadline pressures and allows NWR7 to see if future federal administrations offer refreshed tax credits or incentives for solar batteries and fuel cells after 2028.
- The Board expressed an explicit desire to cultivate a long-term planning relationship with the Connecticut Green Bank and Aces Up, exploring alternative options (such as municipal lease programs) without the stress of an immediate deadline.

Board Consensus and Action

Board members Noel, Deb, and Lisa explicitly voiced agreement with the consensus to bypass the current proposal due to the excessive number of "what-ifs," unknown variables, and the structural necessity of repaying the loan under catastrophic failure scenarios.

Because the Board reached a clear consensus to decline the proposal, it was determined that a formal vote to reject or table the motion was procedurally unnecessary. The administration will notify Aces Up that the district will not be moving forward with the canopy solar project at this time.

Superintendent LePage and Chair Sexton Reed expressed deep gratitude to Keith Boyle, James Gaskins, and the administrative staff for their exhausting, diligent work in collecting comprehensive data over the preceding days.

3.0 Adjournment

MOTION by Noel Gauthier, seconded by Lisa Fragale, to **ADJOURN** at 4:08 PM. **AYE:** Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Kenneson, Ms. Bell, Ms. Fragale**. NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None.