



School Facility Utilization Task Force Special Meeting
7:00 PM on Thursday August 20, 2026
Antolini School Library
Agenda

Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/ssg-srxn-wyx>
Or dial: (US) +1 502-518-3268 PIN: 417 406 697#

- A. Approval of Agenda**
- B. Communications to the School Facility Utilization Task Force**
- C. School Facility Utilization Task Force Chair's Report**
- D. Routine Business**
 - a. Approval of Minutes - July 16, 2026
- E. New Business**
 - a. Bus Route Discussion with Jim McMellon, Assistant Vice President of School Bus
 - b. Review of Board of Education discussion on August 18 and guidance on task force next steps
- F. Public Comment - (For Task Force Business Only)**
- G. Old Business**
 - a. Final summary of staff stakeholder survey results
- H. Action steps for next meeting w/ date, location and time**
 - a. Regular Meeting - September 9, 2026 at 7:00 PM at Ann Antolini Library
- I. Adjournment**

Dedicated email for the task for is NHTaskForce@newhtfd.org

Dedicated webpage is <https://www.newhtfd.org/board-of-education/school-facility-utilization-task-force>

Sign up for e-mail alerts from the School Facility Utilization Task Force on the town website:

<https://www.newhartfordct.gov/subscribe>

Recording will be made available on the YouTube channel. You can subscribe here:

<https://www.youtube.com/@schoolfacilityutilization>

[NHTaskForce] To the task force from Shelley Lloyd

1 message

'SHELLEY LLOYD' via School Facility Utilization Task Force <NHTaskForce@newhtfd.org>

Thu, Jul 23, 2026 at 5:39 PM

Reply-To: SHELLEY LLOYD <shelleyhl@aol.com>

To: NHTaskForce@newhtfd.org

Dear Task Force Members:

I said many things in my comments at the last meeting. I thought it would be helpful to have all of this in writing for reference and clarity. The summary in the minutes doesn't capture the details of what I said.

1. Even if a building committee is established immediately, it is likely that it would take over three years to complete construction. That being the case, there will need to be maintenance priorities set for the school buildings while they continue to be used.
2. It is my hope that this process will lead to a facilities consolidation. I do not want to see this process end in nothing being done. Our schools are our largest infrastructure investment. I anticipate there will need to be some compromises made along the way. I'm hopeful that we can construct schools that our town can continue to be proud of.

As a homeowner, I feel having a strong school district, which includes facilities that are up to date, is something that adds value to my home. Young families considering moving to our town will consider the schools.

3. We moved to New Hartford in January, 1995. The school district where I worked had gone through a school consolidation process with us moving into an expanded and renovated primary school about a year prior. I want to note what the district where I worked gained in consolidating schools.

1. We didn't lose any classroom numbers, but we did add some flex spaces in the event additional classroom space was needed.
2. We gained a real library and media center, with an office and workroom for the library and media staff.
3. Art and music were given their own classroom spaces, with sufficient storage for their unique needs. This included the types of furniture, and surfaces needed for each of these areas of instruction.
4. A dedicated computer room was established for instruction.
5. There were a number of small group instructional spaces created.
6. There were additional gang bathrooms to accommodate the student needs.
7. Everything was ADA accessible, and up to code.
8. The main office area was created at the entry, with sufficient space for the office support staff, an office for the principal, a conference room, a workroom, a small waiting area, and a storage room. There was also a bathroom in this suite.
9. The nurse's office was built to accommodate multiple students with needs. There was space for a nurse and nursing assistant. A private bath was part of this suite, as well as locked storage areas.
10. Instruction space was created for support staff (e.g. OT, PT, Speech, Psychologist, Social Worker).
11. A faculty room with sufficient space for staff to eat was created. It had cooking facilities, refrigerators, cabinets. Adult bathrooms were located just outside this room.
12. Special education staff had their own work spaces instead of shared spaces.
13. There were rooms for storage of school supplies.
14. Each classroom space had a locked cabinet/closet for staff personal belongings.
15. Some support staff and the school administration no longer had to travel from school to school, thus increasing their time to meet student needs.

I want to note, these were things considered in a school building project that took place well over 30 years ago. I think it's very reasonable to expect the New Hartford Public Schools to consider the same things now, 30 years later.

The costs need to be clearly stated to our community. I anticipate some compromises will happen along the way. Right now, the costs seem staggering. There need to be clear explanations (once the time comes) for why these are needed investments in our schools. Doing nothing is simply kicking the can down the road, in my opinion. It is my hope that our school building situation will end up in a better place than it is in now once this process is completed.

We are fortunate to have excellent teachers. They really would benefit from having facilities to complement their fine skills.

Thank you for the work you are doing. It is not an easy task. I appreciate the dedication of this committee to this task.

Sincerely,

Shelley H. Lloyd
29 Pioneer Drive
New Hartford CT 06057

Sent from my iPad

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[NHTaskForce] Tak Force Focus

1 message

Aulay Carlson <acitaly2011@gmail.com>
To: nhtaskforce@newhtfd.org

Thu, Jul 23, 2026 at 2:00 PM

To the Task Force see attached letter

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**23 july letter taskforce letter.docx**
29K

To: New Hartford School Utilization Task Force

From: Aulay Carlson

Date: July 23, 2026 **Subject:** Misalignment of Task Force Focus and Proposed Path Forward for School Utilization

Dear Members of the Task Force,

I am writing to formally address the current trajectory of the New Hartford School Utilization Task Force. A review of the data, deliverables, and meeting materials published on your website indicates a concerning deviation from the committee's foundational mandate.

Rather than focusing on how to effectively consolidate populations to reduce the number of active school buildings, the Task Force's time and resources appear overwhelmingly consumed by baseline repair audits and expansion models for the existing footprint.

By definition, to "utilize" means to put something into service, make practical use of it, or employ it for a particular purpose. More importantly, it implies employing resources efficiently, strategically, or for a function beyond their original intent. True utilization is the act of making practical or profitable use of an asset. Spending public time and capital on maintaining or marginally upgrading the current three-school system does not result in the best utilization of our tax dollars.

The most efficient path forward requires a structural realignment of our student populations, not just physical repairs to aging infrastructure. A highly practical solution that aligns with true utilization is to consolidate into a two-school model by moving the 2nd grade to Ann Antolini School and upgrading only one of the existing primary schools to house the remaining K-1 cohort.

This specific configuration achieves the following:

- **Strategic Resource Allocation:** It reduces the district's operational footprint and eliminates the redundant overhead costs of running three separate facilities.
- **Targeted Upgrades:** It focuses capital improvement funds on a single primary school rather than spreading tax dollars across multiple aging sites.
- **Fulfillment of Mandate:** It directly answers the charge of the Utilization Task Force by actively reducing the number of schools in service.

The public expectation is that this Task Force will deliver structural solutions for consolidation, not just a catalog of maintenance issues. I urge the Task Force to realign its upcoming agenda with the strict definition of utilization: the strategic, efficient, and practical consolidation of our school facilities.

Respectfully,



[NHTaskForce] Public Informatio

1 message

Aulay Carlson <acitaly2011@gmail.com>

Sat, Jul 25, 2026 at 2:24 PM

To: nhtaskforce@newhtfd.org

See attached

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 **final lettter requesting all info sent to Task Force be made Public.docx**

15K

To: New Hartford School Utilization Task Force
From: Aulay Carlson
Subject: Formal Demand: Transparent Posting of Public Comments

The Task Force is an open, public committee addressing critical issues concerning our public schools, including facility maintenance, utilization, and a declining student population. Historically, this community discourse occurred exclusively in open public meetings where people gathered, voiced their opinions, listened, and reached judgments together.

Today, we utilize virtual meetings and digital correspondence, and the Task Force has explicitly solicited public input via an email link. However, that input is practically worthless to the community if it is not published and openly shared. For example, I recently submitted material to the Task Force expecting it to be shared with the public. While you did publish one item, I found it completely by accident; it was posted in a manner that virtually guaranteed others would not see it.

Therefore, this is a formal demand that all emails, public comments, and information submitted to the Task Force be made readily, easily, and transparently available to all residents of New Hartford. We live in New England, the birthplace of the open town meeting and American democracy. If the Task Force intends to refuse this request for transparency, I expect a formal, public explanation as to why this information is being withheld from the public.

Aulay Carlson

[NHTaskForce] School Option

Aulay Carlson <acitaly2011@gmail.com>
To: nhtaskforce@newhtfd.org

Fri, Jul 10, 2026 at 1:51 PM

To the School Facility Task Force.
Attached is a cost effective solution to New Hartffords three school problem.
Aulay Carlson

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To view this discussion visit <https://groups.google.com/a/newhtfd.org/d/msgid/NHTaskForce/CABJ3daf5xn4zPMkZP3F3zCTHZDj5RzLKJO6QmtzigA4g-YP%3DQGQ%40mail.gmail.com>.

**9 Jul 2026 Moving 6 to region 7.docx**

47K

**Aulay Carlson
455 West Hill Road
New Hartford, CT. 06057**

9 July 2026

To: School Facility Utilization Task Force

Subject: Moving 6th Grade to Region 7

There is a real and cost-effective solution to the current dilemma of the three-school problem in New Hartford. The solution is to move 6th grade to Region 7. Currently the majority of the students at Region 7 come from New Hartford. Moving 6th grade to Region 7 would mean moving 6th grade to a school where there are children they know.

What is the impact?

Transferring the 68 sixth-grade students is the critical logistical factor that allows all remaining K–5 students to fit within the Ann Antolini School. The facility capacity model accounts for the departure of the Oak Hill program, which establishes a physical maximum footprint of 22 standard classrooms. By explicitly excluding the preschool (Pre-K) population from these enrollment models, the K–5 consolidation cleanly resolves the spatial deficit and fits entirely within the existing footprint. This avoids a massive capital expenditure, as procuring and installing modular structures on the school's sloped terrain to accommodate an expanded population would require between \$1.1 million and \$1.8 million in site preparation and base costs. Furthermore, removing the 6th grade frees up six to seven classrooms at Antolini, providing the necessary capacity to close other local elementary buildings.

There is a financial benefit to the town created by moving 6th grade to Region 7. The Region 7 roof needs to be replaced. The amount of state aid is dependent on the number of students in the school. More students, then more state aid. An estimate for the roof replacement runs from \$12 million to \$14,375 million. The fewer the students at Region 7 the more of the replacement costs will fall on New Hartford.

There are two primary statutory frameworks for executing this transition:

- **Formal Regionalization (Charter Change):** This is a permanent structural shift that requires amending the Regional District 7 agreement via a four-town referendum. Under this model, the 6th grade becomes a full part of Region 7, and New Hartford absorbs a significantly larger share of the total regional budget based on an Average Daily Membership (ADM) spike. This will take years to accomplish and not a good option.
- **Tuition-Based Agreement (Contract):** Functioning as a "Cooperative Arrangement" under C.G.S. § 10-158a, this is a contract negotiated between the

New Hartford and Region 7 Boards of Education. New Hartford pays a set per-pupil tuition rate, avoiding a regional referendum and keeping parents under the legal jurisdiction of the local board, though it introduces variable budget risks based on yearly enrollment volatility.

Moving the 6th grade out of the local system replaces local operating costs with higher secondary-level regional assessments with lower overall costs for the New Hartford taxpayer.

- The outplacement cost is driven by the Region 7 per-pupil rate, which is projected between approximately \$30,000 and \$33,610.
- For the projected cohort of 55 to 68 students, this shift results in a total annual transfer cost ranging from \$1,650,000 to \$2,285,480.
- Under a tuition agreement, New Hartford still remains financially responsible for out-of-district special education costs, 1:1 aides, and Planning and Placement Team (PPT) expenditures.
- The overarching demographic projections driving these long-term financial models are calibrated using a 1.18 birth-to-kindergarten ratio and an anticipated statewide student loss of 45,000 over the next decade.

The primary financial benefit to the municipality is the ability to shutter and consolidate aging infrastructure.

- Eliminating the 6th grade directly reduces local operations by cutting three instructional sections and saving approximately \$349,413 in localized staffing.
- By making room at Antolini, the district can execute a "mothballing" strategy, closing both the Bakerville Consolidated and New Hartford Elementary schools to save on utilities, localized custodial services, and administrative overhead.
- When subtracting the new Region 7 assessment costs from the massive operational savings of closing two buildings, the net annual savings to the school budget is estimated between \$1,561,101 and \$1,690,000.
- Because the exact building-level line items are not published distinctly in the top-level district budget documents on the New Hartford Public Schools website, the operating costs below are estimated based on proportional allocations of the recently adopted \$10.53 million district budget, factoring in relative building size and staffing.
- The projections assume the consolidation and transition take effect in Fall 2026. Executing this shift requires a formal change to regionalize the grade structure to move the sixth graders, alongside the transition of the physical buildings.

• ***Table 1: Estimated 1-Year Facility Operating Costs & Net Savings***

Facility	Estimated Annual Operating Cost	Empty Building Maintenance	Estimated Net Savings (Fall 2026)
New Hartford Elementary	\$2,000,000	\$80,000	\$1,920,000

Bakerville Consolidated	\$1,500,000	\$80,000	\$1,420,000
Combined Total	\$3,500,000	\$160,000	\$3,340,000

- *Note: Operating costs are estimated baseline models derived from the total district budget. Net savings reflect the operating cost minus the fixed utility and maintenance floor required to safely mothball an empty facility.*

- **Table 2: 1-Year Cost of Sending 6th Grade to Regional School District 7**

Metric	Projected Value	Source / Methodology
Projected 6th Grade Cohort (Fall 2026)	55 Students	Advanced from current 5th-grade cohort size based on standard enrollment progression.
Region 7 Per-Pupil Tuition	\$30,000	Based on recent Regional School District 7 Board of Education financial presentations.
Total Outplacement Cost	\$1,650,000	Calculated as 55 projected students multiplied by the \$30,000 per-pupil cost.

- **Table 3: Estimated Overall Financial Impact (Fall 2026)**

Financial Action	Estimated Amount
Gross Savings (Closing both elementary schools)	+ \$3,340,000
New Expense (6th Grade to Region 7)	- \$1,650,000
Net Operational Change	+ \$1,690,000

- To move these estimates from proportional models to exact figures, the district's internal utility, individual building payroll, and day-to-day site maintenance ledgers for the upcoming academic year would need to be integrated into the final feasibility model.

To estimate the corresponding tax relief for New Hartford, the projected net savings must be measured against the town's Grand List revenue generation. Based on the town's 2026–2027 fiscal budget models, the value of one mill generates approximately \$901,512 in tax revenue. By applying the net annual savings range (\$1,561,101 to \$1,690,000) to the current value of one mill, the successful consolidation and transfer of the 6th grade would result in an estimated municipal tax reduction of **1.73 to 1.87 mills**.

This committee has an important task. You been asked to look at what is needed to support the school children of New Hartford. This is in light of the fact that at this time we have three underutilized schools. Two of which based on your studies need major repairs.

That support requirement must be done as required by “**Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) § 10-220: Duties of boards of education.**” Under statue (C.G.S.) § 10-220) a Board of Education must provide the following:

“**Student Accommodations:** The board must determine the number, age, and qualifications of the pupils admitted into each school. This is where accurate demographic modeling comes into play—tracking K-6 cohort survival, adjusting for precise student in-migration rates, and analyzing raw state birthrate trends are all necessary tools for a board to fulfill its duty to accommodate its current and future student population.”

What does that mean for your duties? It requires you to define the needs of the K-6 grade cohort. Nothing else. Adding in additional space for anything is not required under the requirements of (C.G.S.) § 10-220 falls outside of your mandate. It also falls outside of what is required of the citizens of New Hartford. A non-required prekindergarten cannot be used to drive the requirements for classroom space. Your review of space required must be based on legal requirements.

Yes, children with special needs as defined under **CGS § 10-76a & § 10-76d** between 3 and five must be provide educational services. Sadly, these needs cannot be planned for since these needs arise at random. To support these children does not require keeping a school building open, simply rent a commercial building or an existing home.

I formally request that you review and define the class rooms needs as defined by (C.G.S.) § 10-220). I formally ask that this letter be posted to the task force website.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aulay Carlson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Aulay" being more prominent than the last name "Carlson".

Aulay Carlson

Attachment 1 Region 7 Estimate Roof Replacement Costs

Attachment 1

To estimate the cost of replacing the roof for the main Northwestern Regional High School/Middle School building (Regional School District 7), we can use the building's approximate footprint and the district's most recent roofing cost data.

Current Roof Size and Cost Metrics

The main Region 7 school building is approximately **250,000 square feet**.

For baseline pricing, we can look at the district's recently approved 2024 roof replacement for the Agricultural Education (Vo-Ag) building, which had a total approved budget of **\$931,000**. During the planning phase for that project, the building committee reviewed three standing seam metal roof options:

- **Rib Standing Seam:** \$48.00 per sq. ft.
- **R-Mer Span Standing Seam:** \$55.00 per sq. ft.
- **R-Mer Shield Standing Seam:** \$57.50 per sq. ft.

Estimated Replacement Cost

Applying these recent local per-square-foot costs to the 250,000-square-foot main building provides a working estimate for a full replacement using a standing seam metal roof:

Roofing Material Option	Est. Cost per Sq. Ft.	Total Estimated Cost
Basic Rib Standing Seam	\$48.00	\$12,000,000
Mid-Tier Span Standing Seam	\$55.00	\$13,750,000
Premium Shield Standing Seam	\$57.50	\$14,375,000

Note: These estimates are extrapolated from the Vo-Ag building's quotes and assume a full replacement of a 250,000 sq. ft. flat or mildly pitched roof with metal standing seam materials. Actual costs would fluctuate based on the specific roof layout, required structural repairs, abatement needs, and inflation.

To explore how these costs change with different materials or a phased replacement plan, you can use the interactive tool below.

[NHTaskForce] Demographic and Educational Analysis

1 message

Aulay Carlson <acitaly2011@gmail.com>
To: NHTaskForce@newhtfd.org

Wed, Jul 29, 2026 at 12:45 PM

see attached letter

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**29 july letter taskforce letter.docx**
35K

From: Aulay Carlson
29 July, 2026

Subject: Demographic and Educational Analysis – July 16 Minutes and Enrollment Projections

Dear Task Force Members,

I am writing to address a statement in the July 16, 2026 meeting minutes regarding my demographic analysis. The minutes state that SP+A concluded they could not effectively evaluate my data because it "does not meet the standards required for enrollment projections for the State of Connecticut." I am requesting clarification on exactly what specific state standards my report allegedly failed to meet, especially considering SP+A did not challenge or dispute the actual student numbers provided in the analysis.

When SP+A presented their enrollment PowerPoint, I informed the Task Force that I had run the Cohort Survival Method three times and could not replicate their figures. My model incorporated New Hartford's birth rates, the actual median age, and projected ages for the next ten years. It also factored in Connecticut's projected student loss rate and estimated birth rates, while strictly excluding preschool populations to ensure an accurate K-6 baseline. If SP+A conducted a comprehensive study to generate their PowerPoint, the Task Force should have received a copy of that underlying study to support the presentation. Has this study been provided to the Task Force? If so, it should be made publicly available on the website for transparency.

I provided my report to give the Task Force an alternative, data-driven look at the out-year numbers. Over the last 20 years, the K-6 student population in New Hartford has consistently declined. Yet, in the data presented by SP+A, the student population inexplicably begins to rise in 2031 and continues increasing through 2036. No one on the Task Force questioned this deviation from historical trends, which is exactly why I submitted my independent analysis.

Are the numbers SP+A presented valid? Historical data suggests they are not. My analysis directly follows established, long-term historical trends. History will ultimately determine which projections are accurate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Aulay Carlson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Aulay" and last name "Carlson" clearly distinguishable.

Aulay Carlson

[NHTaskForce] open communications

2 messages

Aulay Carlson <acitaly2011@gmail.com>
To: Task Force <NHTaskForce@newhtfd.org>

Sat, Aug 1, 2026 at 8:15 PM

Attached is a request to allow all of us to see what clothes in New Harford are concerned about.

Thank You
Aulay Carlson

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 **letter to task force requesting all comm be made public.docx**
41K

Kristin Young <youngk@newhtfd.org>
To: Aulay Carlson <acitaly2011@gmail.com>
Cc: Task Force <NHTaskForce@newhtfd.org>

Thu, Aug 13, 2026 at 10:30 AM

Mr. Carlson -

Thank you for your communication. Our standard procedure for communications sent to the task force is to include copies of those communications with the meeting agenda for the subsequent meeting. All meeting agendas are posted on the task force's website, located here: <https://www.newhtfd.org/board-of-education/school-facility-utilization-task-force>. We typically file our agendas with the town 7 days in advance of the meeting, so any interested parties can review updates to the communications prior to attending the meeting. During each meeting, we review a complete list of the communications received and task force members typically have a discussion of the communications as warranted.

Best,
Kristin Young

[Quoted text hidden]

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Kristin Young
Vice Chair, Board of Education
Chair, School Facility Utilization Task Force
New Hartford Public Schools
530 Main Street PO Box 315
New Hartford, CT 06057
youngk@newhtfd.org

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Subject: Public Access to Community Comments and Email Submissions

Dear Members of the New Hartford School Utilization Task Force,

I am writing to you today regarding the Task Force's published guidelines on community engagement. I appreciate that the Task Force recognizes community input as a critical component of its work and has outlined clear avenues for public participation, including structured comment periods and written email submissions.

However, a significant gap in transparency currently exists in this process. While the Task Force is actively collecting questions, feedback, and perspectives from residents, these written submissions and emails are not being made available for the rest of the community to review.

To genuinely fulfill the Task Force's mandate to "facilitate community engagement throughout the process" and "ensure comprehensive evaluation," the public must have the opportunity to see the full scope of community input. It is difficult for the community to engage meaningfully—or for elected boards to make fully informed decisions—if the feedback shaping the Task Force's analysis is kept out of public view.

Therefore, I respectfully request that all written public comments and email submissions provided to the Task Force be promptly published and made continuously accessible on the Task Force website. Making these records publicly available is a standard best practice for municipal transparency and will greatly aid the community in understanding the educational, municipal, and financial implications of the scenarios being examined.

Thank you for your time, your service to the town, and your attention to this request. I look forward to seeing these public communications made available online.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Aulay Carlson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "A" and "C".

Aulay Carlson

The Newberry County (S.C.) School District consolidated multiple administrative facilities into a single office as part of a broader effort to improve operational efficiency and facility utilization.
McMillan Pazdan Smith

BEYOND THE NUMBERS

Deciding to consolidate school facilities requires a look at more than enrollment data.

By Ben Thompson

Lake Wylie High School, set to open later this year in the Clover (S.C.) district, is the result of long-term planning that considers evolving educational needs to create school facilities that can adapt over time.
McMillan Pazdan Smith

School consolidation discussions are becoming more frequent and more charged. Changing enrollment trends, aging facilities and mounting pressure to use public dollars more efficiently are pushing school systems to ask hard questions: Which buildings should we maintain, reinvest in, or close? But the decision to consolidate is not always clear-cut, and reacting to limited or simplistic datapoints rarely leads to the right answer.

School facilities are long-term investments that are shaped by educational delivery, community identity, and financial obligation for decades to come. If evaluated too narrowly, districts often fail to see options that become visible only through hindsight.

Reshaping the conversation

Several factors are converging to bring facility planning into sharper focus. First, many buildings constructed in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s are reaching the limits of their useful life. Rising energy costs, deferred maintenance and updated code requirements make continued operation increasingly expensive. In some cases, renovation at the level required to meet existing needs effectively involves rebuilding significant portions of the facility. The building has not necessarily failed, but it may have outlived its ability to justify continued investment.

Demographic shifts also are reshaping enrollment in ways that do not follow a uniform pattern. Some districts are contracting because of population movement; others are seeing uneven growth across attendance zones. These patterns push districts to examine how space is distributed across their whole systems, not just within individual schools.

A third factor often is underestimated: Educational delivery has changed in ways most older buildings were never designed to support. Most students do not learn best through lecture-based instruction alone. Schools in the 20th century were



designed primarily with that style of instruction in mind.

Because of what we expect today from a student outcomes perspective, learning methodology engages with material through multiple modes, including discussion, application, iteration and project work. Facilities designed around rows of desks and a teacher at the front may struggle to support the collaborative, interdisciplinary instruction that many districts are working to provide.

Analyzing enrollment decline

Declining enrollment is usually what starts the conversation — but it should not end it.

Effective facility planning considers a range of factors: a building's physical condition, use and utilization levels, demographic forecasts, operating costs and long-term capital investment needs. Looking at these together helps districts understand how each facility contributes to broader system goals and where the greatest needs exist.

Some underutilized buildings still provide long-term value because of their condition, adaptability or location. Others require increasing investment just to maintain basic functionality. The difference between those two situations cannot be determined from enrollment figures alone. It must be established through analysis.

Underutilized vs. obsolete

One of the most consequential distinctions in facility planning is the difference between a building

that is underutilized and one that is functionally obsolete. The two are not interchangeable.

An underutilized building may have excess capacity relative to current enrollment but still be in good condition and capable of supporting evolving programs or future growth. Closing it prematurely means giving up a usable asset.

Functional obsolescence is a different problem. It describes facilities where layout, infrastructure or building systems limit adaptation to contemporary educational needs. These buildings also may carry operating costs that have become unsustainable, not because of one bad year, but because the trajectory is clear.

Conflating the two can lead to poor decisions in both directions: maintaining facilities that no longer support educational goals or closing ones that still can provide long-term value.

Beyond consolidation

When districts evaluate facilities across their entire system, additional options often emerge alongside consolidation. These may include reconfiguring grade levels across schools, adjusting attendance boundaries, modernizing existing buildings or introducing specialized programs that make better use of available space. Each of these approaches can improve efficiency while preserving assets that continue to provide value.

A comprehensive planning process typically considers multiple factors together, including historical enrollment patterns, demographic forecasts,

Alabama School of Cyber Technology & Engineering in Huntsville provides flexible, interdisciplinary learning environments designed to support collaboration and applied learning.

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facility conditions, utilization levels and long-term capital investment needs. Looking at these inputs collectively helps districts understand how each building contributes to broader system goals and where reinvestment will have the greatest effect.

Cleveland County Schools in North Carolina had several elementary schools operating below capacity. One facility was nearing the end of its useful life and required significant reinvestment to remain viable. Some areas in the district were declining while others were stable. Through an assessment of economic and enrollment trends, districtwide teacher surveys, facility conditions and long-term capital needs, planners explored options on how to redistribute students to save annual operating costs and near-term major renovation costs.

The solution combined three schools into two stronger-performing schools, both of which had the capacity and physical condition to support future demand. While doing so, the district also established an educational specification to evaluate all of its attendance zones so it could optimize all its facilities. This approach improved utilization across the district, reduced operating costs and avoided a major capital investment in a building that no longer provided long-term value.

In a high-growth area in the upstate of South Carolina, several aging schools were looking at multiple renovation projects to accommodate enrollment increases. Instead, a broader system-level analysis of facility condition, program needs and projected capacity brought about a more effective and less costly solution.

By constructing a single new high school and reallocating grade levels among existing facilities, the district was able to modernize its highest-cost building type while extending the useful life of other school facilities. High schools tend to be among the most complex and expensive educational facilities to construct, given their size and specialized program spaces. Even so, this approach proved more cost-effective than renovating four separate buildings. Evaluating options at the system level clarified the most practical long-term investment strategy and put the district on a sustainable facilities path for the next 30 years.

In both scenarios, decisions were shaped by a broader understanding of how facilities function together rather than individually. The goal of this type of analysis is to be data-informed, not data-driven. Data helps define the parameters of the conversation, but it's only part of what defines the outcome.

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At Wagener-Salley High School in the Aiken County (S.C.) district, the planning and design process included community workshops that gathered stakeholder input and helped guide long-term facility planning decisions.





Spartanburg (S.C.) District 4 decided to construct Woodruff High School after evaluating long-term facility modernization, enrollment needs and educational programming at the district level.

Community engagement

School buildings carry meaning beyond their square footage. They anchor neighborhoods, hold institutional memories and shape how communities see themselves. When consolidation is on the table, the response is often emotional, and that should be expected.

The most productive approach for district decision-makers is often the most direct: Share the data, name the constraints and present real options, including ones the community may not want to hear. Sugarcoating the situation tends to erode trust. Clear, direct communication, even when uncomfortable, tends to build it.

Effective engagement does not stop at a single public meeting. Ongoing sessions, surveys, focus groups with educators and structured conversations with parents enable districts to draw attention to concerns that data alone will not show. Decision-making authority rests with school boards, acting on recommendations from district leadership and planning professionals, but decisions made through a genuine, ongoing process tend to be better understood and more durable.

Long-term relevance

Facility decisions made today will shape how effectively schools support instruction for decades. This makes it important to consider not only whether a building has sufficient capacity, but also whether it can adapt as educational approaches evolve.

Many districts are placing greater emphasis on collaboration, applied learning and interdisciplinary instruction. These

approaches often require spaces that support multiple teaching formats rather than environments designed around a fixed classroom configuration. Flexible layouts, varied room sizes and shared breakout areas enable educators to adjust how space is used as curriculum needs change.

Facilities that cannot accommodate this level of adaptability may require significant reinvestment sooner than anticipated. In contrast, buildings designed to support a range of instructional approaches are more likely to remain viable and adaptable as educational models evolve.

Considering how spaces support teaching and learning helps districts make capital decisions that provide value over a longer time. That reduces the likelihood that a district will have to resort to major modifications to keep a facility viable.

School systems are experiencing change at an accelerated rate in multiple dimensions. Restating and clearly defining the purpose of any individual school within a system requires engagement and sometimes debate. Involving partners to prepare a well-informed discussion on what a vision for the district's future should look like will help untangle fact from fiction. School consolidation decisions are rarely about a single building. They are about how an entire system can best support students, educators and communities over time.

Looking beyond enrollment enables districts to better evaluate how facilities contribute to educational outcomes, operational efficiency and long-term financial stewardship. With a clear understanding of facility performance, projected demand and capital priorities, decision-makers can focus on making the best use of available resources — today and in the future. ■

Ben Thompson, AIA, ALEP, leads the K-12 practice area from the Charlotte, N.C., office of McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture.

School Facility Utilization Task Force
Special Meeting
7:00PM on Thursday July 16, 2026
Ann Antolini School – Library

All appointed members of the School Facility Utilization Task Force were in attendance except for: **Kerry Guilfoyle** (Board of Finance), **Carmen Neale** (Community Member) and **Bernard “Ben” Witte** (Board of Finance).

Those members in attendance were:

Mary Beth Greenwood (Board of Selectman), **Alesia Kennerson** (Board of Selectman), **Eleanor “Penny” Miller** (Board of Education), **Jon Puz** (Board of Education), **Samantha Wald** (Community Member), **Kristin Young** (SFU-TF Chair / Board of Education) and Michelle Miller (Project Manager SP+A).

Kristin Young, the School Facility Utilization Task Force Chair called the **Special** meeting to order at 7:03PM.

A. Approval of Agenda

MOTION by Mary Beth Greenwood to approve the agenda, and move item “B” after item “F”, to get to New Business first. Second by Samantha Wald.

Aye: Mary Beth Greenwood, Penny Miller, Jon Puz, Samantha Wald and Kristin Young (5)

Naye: Alesia Kennerson (1)

Abstain:

(5-1-0)
Motion Passes

B. Communications to the School Facility Utilization Task Force

Moved after item F.

C. School Facility Utilization Task Force Chair’s Report

An enrollment analysis was presented to the task force by Mr. Aulay Carlson (New Hartford resident). SP+A was asked to review the documentation submitted by Mr. Carlson, and concluded they couldn't effectively evaluate the analysis because the study completed by Mr. Carlson does not meet the standards required for enrollment projections for the State of Connecticut. There are assumptions that were more specific to the State level and not the Town level, therefore unable to be used as part of this study, a comparison is unable to be derived because the reported information is not the same. Mr. Carlson’s analysis did not include a grade-by-grade breakdown of the classrooms. There is an analysis provided by the hired consultant (SP+A); if the task force cannot combine or compare, then the analysis must be put aside. The task to compare or evaluate the studies together is out of scope for work by SP+A and members of the task force are not qualified to do a comparison, given the different methodologies.

For those interested, all documentation that has been communicated to the School Facility Utilization Task Force is available on the New Hartford Public Schools website.

Ms. Young plans to meet with the Superintendent of NHPS, Jeffrey Sousa, to identify “priorities”. She will request the Board of Education conduct a “first pass” at the options presented by SP+A so far, and gather a conclusion on what the Board of Education would recommend at this time. The Board of Education will be asked to provide further recommendations on what are “priorities” they’d like to see, as the Board of Education is responsible for maintaining the facilities. There should be discussion in further detail of what projects they may wish to begin now, and how long those may take. Ms. Young proposed

having more information from the Board of Education for the next August 20, 2026 (Thursday) School Facility Task Force meeting.

Some further discussion on the programming requests needs to be had at the Board of Education level (these options add additional costs), these programming requests are being incorporated into the new configurations or “options”. This could allow for the School Facility Utilization Task Force members to gain more information about the clear priorities of the programming needs. What are the trade-offs? The idea is to consider what items are being handled inadequately now that need to change, a must. These discussions need to come forward now, before making a recommendation, there is potential to address issues now rather than later. There is a Board of Education meeting schedule for August 18, 2026 (Tuesday) and then the next School Facility Task Force meeting is August 20, 2026 (Thursday). The Board of Education will be asked, how would they prioritize the work that needs to be done, what are the definite needs versus the nice to have? There has been a lot of effort to accommodate programming, a big component of how the building is manipulated. What would the Board of Education support base on all the presentations to date by SP+A? There have been discussions at the task force level that should be discussed at the Board of Education level as well because they are big changes to programming, those changes are structural changes outside the purview of the task force, and it is important to get an idea from the Board of Education if these ideas would be supported or not.

The task force is considering all options as the goal is to determine: how are the schools being utilized? How can education be made more cost efficient? Discussion regarding bussing was suggested. The intention of the request is to gain more information for the task force to narrow down options, to have a better understanding of what exactly the Board of Education is looking for. There are deficiencies, some have to be addressed and others are optional.

Ground boring at Ann Antolini School has been questioned several times, after discussion with SP+A this is premature, the project would provide a better understanding of how usable the site is, but without a real plan this task would be a waste of money. The Town could explore a limited preliminary geotechnical assessment. This assessment is outside the scope of SP+A. This would be something to conduct when there is a recommendation for the site to the Board of Education, which could then be further vetted before making a final design or recommendation to the Town.

In conclusion information regarding an energy switch from oil to propane for example, is out of the scope of SP+A, the energy modeling and actual costs is not a part of this study. The true cost for conversion would be another step, and also discussed further in the early design phase. Engineers and designers would further determine such information. A building committee would be a more appropriate level to have these specific discussions. ENERGIA was mentioned to be discussed at the next Board of Selectman meeting.

Ms. Young requested information from Superintendent Sousa, an analysis of the cost savings if consolidation occurred. The data is unknown at this time, because there are too many viable options. Mr. Sousa could review further once there are fewer options on the table.

D. Routine Business

- a. Approval of Minutes - June 8, 2026 (Monday)

MOTION by Mary Beth Greenwood to approve the minutes from June 8, 2026. Second by Jon Puz.

AMENDED-MOTION by Mary Beth Greenwood to approve the minutes from June 8, 2026 with an amendment to Alesia Kennerson’s previous motion from May 27, 2026. The amendment changes “**without program changes**” to “**no major additions**”. Second by Jon Puz.

Aye: Mary Beth Greenwood, Penny Miller, Jon Puz, Samantha Wald and Kristin Young (5)

Naye:

Abstain: Alesia Kennerson (1)

(5-0-1)
Motion Passes

E. New Business

- a. Silver Petrucelli & Associates delivers Potential Configurations: Phasing, Scheduling and Cost Estimates

Michelle Miller from SP+A presented on construction phasing for the options previously presented, and the associated costs and scheduling. New construction and additions are \$1,000 a square foot, and renovations are \$850 a square foot. These costs add in: *demolition, asbestos, temporary costs for phasing construction*.

Phase school construction is an approach which the renovation of spaces is completed in multiple stages while portions of the school remain operational and occupied by students. It's commonly considered in educational facilities because of continuity and a priority keep students where they are. Temporary facilities are usually impractical and undesirable. Phasing can reduce disruption associated with displacing a school, but does add complexity and operational constraints. Phasing really only works when adding onto a building and much more challenging when not.

Unoccupied school construction is where you are relocating the entire school (most likely off site). This option does enable work to go quicker, but there's a cost associated with moving an entire school population for 30 months or more. In Connecticut, renovation projects in PreK through 12 during the last 15 to 20 years, typically have some degree of phasing. Most schools and additions on available sites are constructed while the existing school remains occupied and students then move into the new building or that new addition and then components are demolished. The complete vacating of a building is uncommon because few districts have an empty school to move students in or wish to spend millions of dollars that portable school's cost. Most of the design durations are 12 to 15 months. The more complex designs are 15 months. There is a three-month period for bidding and contract award. Then construction durations are based on the architect's assessment of each of these options. However, final durations would be determined by a construction manager later on in the process.

• Option A5 (Renovate as new Bakerville School, and facility conditions to New Hartford Elementary)

In this scenario the goal is to replace the modulares with an addition, there's a four-classroom addition but first, the new septic fields must be installed. The modulares would stay to phase in this building. These two areas would be renovated. So, when this is built, these students move into these classrooms. These students would move and shuffle through the building in about three phases. This option removes the modulares, while maintaining New Hartford's three school model. There are drawbacks of three schools with inefficiencies throughout, there is staff travel, duplicated programs and there is no cafeteria or gym separation. There's no improvement to the Special Education and there is the problem of septic displacement. Bakerville School does have asbestos. Phasing work must happen at the right times. Occupied construction does add additional time and associated costs.

• Option B (Combine PreK-2 into One School; New Hartford or Bakerville then Renovate as new Antolini)

B1 New Hartford: two-story addition on the back with a couple additions throughout the school, all within the setbacks, but all within the flood plain. Some benefits are: *to utilize the existing buildings and have two buildings; one on each side of town*. This allows of the program to be expanded for Special Education. The entire building is brought to new condition. The drawbacks are: *flood plain and this option will require some additional engineering for foundations*. Kindergarten does not have individual restrooms. The site is a bit constraint there is limited space for parking, playgrounds, and drop-off. This is the option where first grade is upstairs, they must have their own dedicated stair. There are multiple additions which add some expense to the overall costs.

Ben Witte inquired if the courtyard at New Hartford Elementary could be closed off and use that space for offices only. There are classrooms that ring around and would be hindered to receiving the daylight required. There are classrooms that need the courtyard light because they are blocked on the other side by the corridor; the layout is too tight.

B2 Bakerville: there is no way to have an occupied (phase) construction for this option. The portables cannot be maintained and build the addition at the same time. The site is too small to have other portables. So, occupied construction benefits are: *utilizing the existing building, expanding the program and bringing that entire building up to new*. The drawbacks are: *Bakerville has a small building site (beyond what the site can handle), the gym and cafe cannot be separated, construction displaces the*

septic system and the building has asbestos. Unoccupied construction adds additional time to locate portables at New Hartford Elementary School for roughly 30 months. The overall cost to doing that, is an immediate drawback. The phasing over 28 months is proposed to happen in three phases. The plan is to build the addition first and then split the building in half and start renovating. This option utilizes the existing building and renovating as new. The gym will provide better opportunities for scheduling lunch waves and Physical Education. This provides the town with a standard elementary gymnasium, removing the underutilized tier multi-purpose room.

- **Option C: (New Construction, one side of town) “Unoccupied Construction”**

There is a longer phase time of 15 months for the design of a new school. The benefit of new construction is there is no impact during construction. The benefits are: *modern design layout, separate wings, meets all program requirements, and high performance.* This option creates a district campus with a proposed separate bus and parent drop-off areas in a more secure location. The drawbacks: *larger costs and less reimbursement, increased site work (to address bus load) and road utilities, potential ledge and taking away from the town hiking areas.* The benefits: a new gym with better scheduling and can incorporate Central Office, which improves the administrative efficiencies. The existing components which remain needing maintenance are phased construction. This option puts all grades at Ann Antolini School, all options for Ann Antolini: A, B and C are all interchangeable. There is \$750,000 for site development included, although this does not include the road.

- **Option D (One district-wide school at Ann Antolini School; 449 students)**

This option adds a PreK through grade 2 structural addition. There would be a gym, added parking and a PreK drop off, this is estimated to be a 48-month project, pretty substantial. The project would need to happen in a few phases, but the benefits: *is you can build the addition with very minor interruption to the school.* Some construction fencing would be needed. The connection could happen later, once the wing is built then the connection can happen when ready. Renovating occupied existing schools are not easy. This option, rear addition has a little impact on the school during construction, which would house PreK through grade 2 students in a separate wing. The option meets all program needs, as well as a separate PreK drop-off in a secure location. The same drawbacks are: *increased site work and road utilities (with potential ledge).*

- **Option E (Two schools, PreK -1 at New Hartford Elementary (E1) or Bakerville (E2), & Grade 2-6 at Ann Antolini School)**

E1 New Hartford: This option is a reduced program configuration, there is limited expansion of Specials, which includes minor front and side additions only at New Hartford Elementary. None of the bump outs are large enough to be classrooms; this is a renovate as new. The benefits are: *a building on each side of town*, but the program expansion is limited, the entire build is renovated as new. The drawbacks are: *Specials do remain in one classroom with the three uses, all programs cannot fit.* The two classrooms where the placement is unknown, are included in the estimate. The Special Education and intervention services were not met and the gym and cafe are not separated. Additionally, Kindergarten doesn't have separate restrooms. The site does have multiple additions at an added expense, phase construction adds time and lastly the flood plain at New Hartford Elementary.

E2 Bakerville: Same scenario, to add additions, the four classrooms have to be removed from the beginning, essentially impossible to keep the school active while doing the proposed construction. So, unoccupied construction and place portables at New Hartford Elementary (because they can share the gym). There is a more functional gym added, downsized from Option B but equal to what New Hartford Elementary has. The entire building is renovated as new. The drawbacks are: *Specials remain in one classroom for three uses and the building is large compared to the site, there are space limitations, a displaced septic system and asbestos.* Antolini is renovated as new with additions using phase construction. The gym is added because there is no way they could meet the Physical Education needs and lunch waves. There is undesirable grouping outside of mainstream school design in this option, meaning that Grade 2 through 6 being combined (early elementary school students with pre-adolescence), is just not typical. The configuration cannot support the lunch waves and gym class, in addition to no added intervention or Special Education. Toughest will be for second graders. There is limited expansion for the life skills program, instruction is heavily focused, and not able to address those with intensive behavioral needs. Moving in second grade doesn't now allow for the life skills program. The playgrounds for the age group will need to be adjusted. There

are so many obstacles at Bakerville. The asbestos issue is the biggest problem. Any changes will require sprinklers be added which is a huge expense and the portables must be replaced and the school has to be kept a school for 20 years. Regardless of if fiscally responsible, the site is small. Moving second grade to Antolini and having another school PreK through 1 is not desirable or a “standard”.

MOTION by Kristin Young to strike the option to consolidate PreK through Grade 1 at Bakerville Consolidated School from the configurations. Second by Alesia Kennerson.

UNANIMOUS

b. Discussion on New Hartford BOE Employee Survey Results

Members reviewed the staff survey results, it was determined that a front page to a survey result analysis is important, describing the methodology how the survey was administered, methodology meaning: a preface, what was done, when it was done, and the background on the question. They distributed 97 surveys and got 57 responses, which is a reasonable response rate. There are those pending factors of the survey happening at the end of the school year and a short turnout time. Top highlights were in favor of some form of consolidation, either consolidating to two schools or one school. There was a small group that wished to maintain current standards. There were concerns noted about costs, and this may be from staff concerns about staffing cuts. The staff sees the benefits of consolidation but also wish to preserve the neighborhood school structure. Major concerns were: *staffing changes and layoffs, facility capacity, and increased classroom sizes*. The Board of Education has the caps of classroom sizes. A big concern was the overall condition of the general classrooms. When you talk renovate as new, that exactly what they are looking for. Items like outlets for newer technology setups or temperature control. Results of the survey will be distributed.

F. Public Comment - (For Task Force Business Only)

Shelley Lloyd (29 Pioneer Drive) — Ms. Lloyd expressed her desire to form a Building Committee, building maintenance has to happen now. She gave sentiments of her previous experience with this kind of situation. She doesn’t feel the requests are unreasonable, but what she doesn’t want to see is that nothing comes of the research and utilization study of the schools, leaving the town in the same boat as 10 years ago. Ms. Lloyd feels removing Bakerville as an option is a good idea, the district needs to think forward even though the costs are troubling. She hopes a building committee would design something that is going to last, not just what’s cheap. Sometimes you have to invest in infrastructure and the cost is not going to be desired regardless — but ultimately what is going to provide better education.

Aulay Carlson (455 West Hill Road) — Are there other options for school consolidation that do not consist of repair and/or building? Could other options be explored? Mr. Carlson feels the Board of Education added PreK classrooms without consulting the Board of Selectman and Board of Finance.

Alesia Kennerson left the meeting at 9:13PM.

G. Communications to the School Facility Utilization Task Force
(Previously item B)

The School Facility Utilization Task Force received one communication from the public since the last meeting.

Mr. Carlson proposed an effective solution to New Hartford's three school problem. His recommendation is to consider moving Grade 6 to regional 7 and renting the space out. That consideration is not within the scope of this task force. The recommendation is to have Mr. Carlson bring that proposal to the Board of Education, to pursue further. The thought process behind the analysis was appreciated, and is posted on the website.

H. Old Business

a. Update from Stakeholder Engagement Subcommittee

N/A

I. Action steps for next meeting w/ date, location and time

- a. Special Meeting - August 20, 2026 (Thursday) at 7:00PM at Ann Antolini School - Library

J. Adjournment

MOTION by Samantha Wald to adjourn the meeting at 9:16PM. Second by Penny Miller.

UNANIMOUS

*Respectfully submitted by,
Elizabeth Domas, Recording Secretary*

Dedicated email for the task for is NHTaskForce@newhtfd.org

Dedicated webpage is <https://www.newhtfd.org/board-of-education/school-facility-utilization-task-force>

Sign up for e-mail alerts from the School Facility Utilization Task Force on the town website:

<https://www.newhartfordct.gov/subscribe>

Recording will be made available on the YouTube channel. You can subscribe here:

<https://www.youtube.com/@schoolfacilityutilization>