

**New Hartford Public Schools
Board of Education Regular Meeting
7:00PM on Tuesday, September 15, 2026
Ann Antolini School - Library**

PRESENT: Superintendent Jeffrey Sousa; Chair Timothy Klepps

Board Members: Thomas Buzzi; Penny Miller (Secretary); Kirby Morante; Erik Perotti; Jon Puz; Frank Rodenberg; Timothy Russell and Kristin Young (Vice Chair)

Timothy Klepps, Chair of the NHPS Board of Education, called the regular meeting to order in-person at 7:01PM.

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Order of Business

MOTION by Penny Miller to add an agenda item under “New Business”, a discussion regarding Subcommittee Meetings (*pause until the Interim Superintendent and next Superintendent are seated*). Second by Kristin Young.

Aye: Timothy Klepps; Penny Miller; Kirby Morante; Erik Perotti; Jon Puz; Frank Rodenberg; Timothy Russell; Kristin Young

Naye: Thomas Buzzi

Abstain:

(8-1-0)

C. Communications to the Board of Education/Public Comment

Saquana and Steve Seltzer – Thanks Superintendent Sousa, August 19, 2026

Erica Mumm – Part-time Superintendent, August 19, 2026

Kristin Young – On behalf of SFU-TF, Candidates be Informed, August 20, 2026

Kristin Young – On behalf of SFU-TF - Questions for Board of Education, August 20, 2026

Jay Bailey – Superintendent Search, August 23, 2026

Michael Lynch – (*Director of Student Services*) Superintendent Search Committee, August 28, 2026

Aulay Carlson – Selection of New Superintendent, September 2, 2026

Sarah Gaedeke and Lisa LoPresti – Offer from New Hartford Education, September 2, 2026

Crystal Champeau – Classroom Transition & Middle School Readiness, September 9, 2026,

Champeau Family – 6th Grade, September 10, 2026

Name Redacted – Policy Update – School Lice, September 15, 2026

D. Superintendent’s Report

There were 426 students at the beginning of this school year, there were 17 new enrollments which happened over the summer for Grades 1-6. Kindergarten had to reduce a 1 FTE staff member, there were 3 sections instead of 4, which was originally planned. There are 60 students in the Kindergarten program. Additionally, a 1.0 FTE paraeducator was hired at Bakerville to ensure IEP hours are met for student needs. Freedom of Information requests have been included with responses.

a. School Security Plan Update

The yearly task to review the plan is complete, the plan is confidential. There have been high level updates made to the plan. Updates include moving to electronic emergency drill tracking forms, a vulnerability assessment, strengthen visitor management protocol and civilian response training for District leadership.

b. Indoor Air Quality Plan Update

The plan has successfully been submitted to the American Lung Association. The District will apply for additional grant funding for further Indoor Air Quality tests to help offset costs, similar to the last \$9,000 grant received.

c. CGSS 10-220 Facility Survey Update

This is a new legislative requirement, local and regional Boards of Education must report to the Commissioner of Administrative Services, on the condition of the school facilities. SP+A has completed this, based on their reviews of the buildings. This will be required every 5 years by the State of Connecticut, this has been successfully completed.

d. ARPA Updates

Superintendent Sousa presented a breakdown of the ARPA funds used to date, by Phase 1 and 2. Updates in Phase 2 consist of: Roof Patching, Electrical, Pavement, Landscaping, and various testing (*see ARPA Grant Breakdown for more information, Phase 1 and Phase 2 included*). The updates will go to the Board of Selectman, then the Board of Finance for final approval, although the funds have already been previously approved. There is **\$7,505.53** remaining after all these things have been done. The remainder of this funding has to be expended by December 31, 2026.

E. Board of Education Chair's Report

Freedom of Information requests (*all*) have been responded to in timely manners. The State FOIA has also been consulted for these requests to make sure compliance has been met.

Executive Session must begin by 8:30PM tonight. There are scheduled times to virtually meet with two potential candidates for the Interim Superintendent position.

F. Routine Business

- a. Approval of Minutes - Regular August 18, 2026, and Special September 2, 2026 (Virtual Only)
- b. Expenditure Report

MOTION by Thomas Buzzi to approve the August 18, 2026, **and** September 2, 2026 meeting minutes along with the Expenditure Report as presented. Second by Timothy Russell.

AMENDED-MOTION by Thomas Buzzi to approve the August 18, 2026, **and** September 2, 2026 meeting minutes as amended along with the Expenditure Report. The amendments to the August 18, 2026 minutes are: under Item G New Business, "5. *Two Schools, **Pre-K & Grade 1** plus Grade 2 through 6*" to read as "***Pre-K through Grade 1** plus Grade 2 through 6*" **and** change the following sentence, "*Bakerville and New Hartford Elementary have **succeeded** their useful life*" to read as "*Bakerville and New Hartford Elementary have **exceeded** their useful life*". Second Timothy Russell.

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G. New Business

- a. Discussion and Board Direction on School Facility Utilization Task Force Submitted Questions

Ms. Young reviewed with the Board of Education the administration input, on the questions submitted by the School Facility Utilization Task Force. This is preliminary input. Does the Board of Education agree or disagree? The School Facility Utilization Task Force requested from the Board of Education their priorities to help drive what they will advocate for and recommend.

• Question 1: Separate Gym and Cafeteria

Thomas Buzzi, Timothy Klepps and Frank Rodenberg advocated this is a priority. No member disagreed. The Board of Education agrees to support advocating for a separate gym and cafeteria, as a high-priority must have, while being mindful of cost. Explanation was provided by Mr. Sousa and Dr. Carroll, the issue is not total headcount, rather the availability to schedule the number of sections needed for all the tasks. Dr. Carroll said two grade levels having lunch at the same time, creates a very loud and overcrowded atmosphere. In addition, creates a problem of serving students, the student line would be in the hallway and the time for those to eat may need to be decreased from say 30 minutes to 20 minutes. This would heavily impact the student environment. This is currently an issue as it is, therefore adding more to the schedule would create severe scheduling conflicts. Kirby Morante asked about plans for joint recess, what would that look like? Assuming, there was two sections is this still the goal to mix students in early education, because they are at two locations, so there are less students. At Ann Antolini School, students in different grade levels don't mingle between grade level for recess.

• Question 2: Number of Pre-K Classrooms

The consensus of the Board of Education is three sections of Pre-K should remain to be planned for. Mr. Klepps, reminded the members of the cost to outplace a student. The cost of outplacements, far exceeds the cost to maintain three sections of Pre-K. Having a Pre-K program begins students early, decreasing the potential for outplacement needs. Timothy Klepps strongly advocated for at least three sections of Pre-K; Erik Perotti agrees. Mr. Perotti truly believes there is a complete benefit to the students. Kirby Morante asked if a fourth section will be needed due to the birth date change requirement. Mr. Sousa doesn't feel there will be a need for a fourth section because of said change, but each year this will be evaluated based on birth rates. The change to birth date requirements has already been absorbed. The number of sections for each grade are always based on the need, it shouldn't be different for Pre-K. The Board of Education supports the plan to maintain three Pre-K sections with enrollment and demand to be reviewed annually.

• **Question 3:** *Life Skills and Outplaced Special Education Services (previously used Oak Hill Classrooms)*

Timothy Russell asked if this would bring students in from other districts? Yes, potential revenue to consider as well. Mr. Russell likes the idea, but is hesitant without knowing the full cost. This option could potentially save money without consolidation but could cost if there was consolidation. If consolidated, this could reduce the number of students which would be able to be brought in. The current goal of the “Encompass Program” is to have 1.5 rooms for 1-6 students. This may save the outplacements cost for several students. Per student to outplace may cost \$200,000, which in-house could be \$70,000 per student. The program is for a specific profile student, examples include: wheelchair bound or non-verbal. Additionally, travel time and costs can be reduced, a student who is currently outplaced 45 minutes away could be brought back to New Hartford, which is much closer. This program comes with other benefits because each (*Canton and New Hartford*) have different pieces to add to the program. For example, New Hartford does not have a Facilities Manager whereas Canton does, both towns can mutually use both resources. There was discussion of having Pre-K and Life Skills together, so that rooms could “flex”, although there are constraints to size and needs. Flexibility is easier for sections of Pre-K, the flexibility to create a “Life Skills” is not, there is more requirements for specific staff and certain equipment needs. Timothy Klepps would advocate for Pre-K and Life Skills. There was no objection and the Board of Education consensus leans toward supporting in-district life skills. The opportunity to offer Special Education programming has potential for cost savings, although the need for space is acknowledged in the discussion of consolidation.

• **Question 4:** *Grade Configuration (Grade 2 with Grades 3-6)*

The Board of Education recommends the grade configuration maintain as is and the implementation of Grade 2-6 not be pursued. This question relates to consolidation. The administration feels a Grade 2-6 configuration is not ideal, and the Board of Education agrees. This is not a common configuration. Erik Perotti asked if Pre-K through Grade 2 could fit at one of the current schools. There is no way to do this configuration without additions. The possibility just does not fit, there are 2 classrooms that would require some sort of expansion at either school. Portables have not been explored as the current planning is for permanent construction. No Board member advocated for the Grade 2-6 configuration.

• **Question 5:** *Separate Art and Music Spaces*

Currently at Bakerville and New Hartford Elementary the spaces are combined, at Ann Antolini the spaces are separate. The recommendation is to have separate spaces. Timothy Russell feels this is a “nice to have” but not a priority. Timothy Klepps feels if the Town is going to spend a large sum of money to any renovation, then this should not be cut out. He is not aware of any district that would cut this, if you are going to do the project, then you do it with all the needs being met. Consensus was to have one dedicated Art room per school and 1 or 2 music rooms. There is especially a need for a second music room for Grades 5 & 6 for band practice and to have 1 health room per school.

• **Question 6:** *Bringing Back Previously Offered Programs*

Frank Rodenberg advocated for world languages to be included in a K-12 curriculum. He believes New Hartford Public Schools needs to preserve the ability to meet that need. Kirby Morante advocated that Sign Language is just as important as Spanish or another language. The Board of Education wishes to maintain the flexibility to offer these languages long-term as a low priority, a “nice to have” rather than a must.

• **Question 7:** *Central Office in a School Building*

The Board of Education has the desire to have Central Office combined within the school system, although a “nice to have”, but not a must have. The current configuration feels disconnected with the administration located at the Town Hall, they see benefit to being together within the school building. The combination is ideal, not necessary. This configuration requires additional square footage. Thomas Buzzi feels it is important to have the administration in the school building. Frank Rodenberg agrees. Timothy Klepps feels if consolidation into one school is decided, it is absolutely ideal for a one school model. If there is consolidation into two schools, staff will still need to travel between the two schools, although if there was a one school model, travel costs would be significantly reduced.

- b. REVISION - Policy 0521 - Nondiscrimination (*First Read*)
- c. REVISION - Policy 5141.22 - Communicable/Infectious Diseases (*First Read*)
- d. REVISION - Policy 5141.221 - Pediculosis (*First Read*)
- e. REVISION - Policy 9325.3 - Parliamentary Procedures (*First Read*)

- f. Subcommittee Meetings (*during Permanent Superintendent search*)

MOTION by Penny Miller to pause Board of Education Subcommittee meetings (*not deem an emergency*) until after the search for the next Superintendent is completed, and the next Superintendent is seated (*the permanent position*). Second by Kristin Young.

The School Facility Utilization Task Force is not considered as a subcommittee for the purpose of this motion.

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H. Reports

MOTION by Kristin Young to table Reports. Second by Jon Puz.

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- a. EdAdvance
- b. CABE

I. Public Comment - (For Agenda Items Only)

N/A

J. Executive Session

- a. Discussion concerning the evaluation of candidates for the position of Interim Superintendent
- b. Discussion regarding employment terms/contract strategy for the position of Interim Superintendent

MOTION by Penny Miller to enter Executive Session at 8:33PM and 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.

Executive Session ended at 10:29PM.

MOTION by Jon Puz to extend an offer to *JeanAnn Paddyfote* to be the Interim Superintendent. Second by Kristin Young.

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K. Adjournment

MOTION by Frank Rodenberg to adjourn the meeting at 10:29PM. Second by Penny Miller.

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*Respectfully submitted by,
Elizabeth Domas, Recording Secretary*

Attachments:

ARPA GRANT (BOS, BOF, BOE) Phase 1 & 2 last revised 9/08/2026
Freedom of Information Requests & Responses
SFU-TF Questions with Administrative Answers