

New Hartford Public Schools
Board of Education Special Meeting
6:00PM Tuesday, September 22, 2026
VIRTUAL ONLY

PRESENT: Superintendent Jeffrey Sousa; Chair Timothy Klepps

Board Members: Thomas Buzzi; Penny Miller (*Ms. Miller joined at 6:50PM*); 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 special meeting to order at 6:00PM virtually.

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Review and Action on Interim Superintendent Employment Agreement

MOTION by Kristin Young to approve the Interim Superintendent employment agreement.
Second by Kirby Morante.

Jon Puz had some concerns about the way the contract read regarding working days and vacation days. Chairman Timothy Klepps explained further the process of a per diem employee documenting working days and hours. Working days are physically in town and in the office, this does not consist of “remote” work. Mr. Puz had concerns that a simple task on a vacation day could turn into a working day. Thomas Buzzi felt if the employee is on vacation, they cannot also be on call. The per diem employee is either on the clock or not. Kristin Young feels the expectation is that when you are not working, it is not necessary to answer calls unless designated an emergency. This would avoid a vacation day turning into a per diem day. Frank Rodenberg and Kristin Young reminded members of the Board of Education policies which state the chain of personnel who is to step in or be contacted during an emergency, if for example the Superintendent or “Interim Superintendent” is unavailable. Mr. Klepps also reassured that legal counsel has reviewed this agreement. Prior approval by the Board of Education would be required for any expenses beyond what is included in the contract.

UNANIMOUS

C. Seating and Appointment of Interim Superintendent of Schools

MOTION by Timothy Russell that the New Hartford Board of Education appoint **Dr. JeanAnn Paddyfote as Interim Superintendent of Schools**, effective September 24, 2026, and continuing through March 3, 2027, or until such time as a new Superintendent of Schools begins work in New Hartford, whichever occurs first, subject to the following condition:

1. approval of the Commissioner of Education in accordance with section 10-157 of the Connecticut General Statutes;
 2. satisfactory completion of all statutory requirements concerning the hiring of Board of Education employees;
- and

MOVED FURTHER, that the Board Chairperson be authorized to finalize and execute an employment contract with Dr. Paddyfote on behalf of the Board and that Dr. Paddyfote’s appointment is further conditioned on finalization and execution of such employment contract. Second by Thomas Buzzi.

UNANIMOUS

D. Reduction in Force in accordance with Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-151

MOTION by Kirby Morante that the New Hartford Board of Education, pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §10-151(d)(5) and Article XII of the collective bargaining agreement between the New Hartford Board of Education and the New Hartford Education Association, confirm and ratify the termination of the contract of employment of Brittany Sulvester due to the elimination of her teaching position, which termination was effective June 30, 2026. Second by Thomas Buzzi.

Aye: Thomas Buzzi; Timothy Klepps; Kirby Morante; Timothy Russell

Naye: Erik Perotti; Jon Puz; Frank Rodenberg; Kristin Young

Abstain:

(4-4-0)
Motion Fails

Kristin Young asked if there were thoughts of keeping this teacher because of rising numbers. Kindergarten section are foreseen to have 3 sections instead of 4. When there is reduction in staff there are multiple items looked at: *certifications, date of hire and bumping rights*. The savings from this reduction will assist in the nurse's salary increase and for the additional Paraeducator hired, at Bakerville to support students needs and meet IEP hours in the 3 sections. There are currently 60 students in the 3 sections. The staff member was made aware of the lower enrollment numbers back in April, and was aware of potential unemployment. Frank Rodenberg voiced concern because a reduction in force is a Board decision by policy. He is upset this reduction was not brought to the Board first. Policy in summary states the Superintendent must bring the termination to the Board for their vote. Superintendent Sousa states that the bargaining unit contract was followed and legislation changed on 7/1/2026 regarding termination of teachers. Mr. Sousa is following the guidance of legal counsel on how to ratify the situation. Both Kristin Young and Jon Puz agree with Mr. Rodenberg, this should have been brought to the Board for discussion first. Superintendent Sousa was watching student enrollment week by week, and unfortunately couldn't predict the numbers. There have been no complaints from Kindergarten or Grade 3 sections, regarding the number of students. Thomas Buzzi also reminded the full Board about difficulties at budget time. From this discussion Erik Perotti wished to change his vote. Discussion led to the motion back on the floor with a slight change.

MOTION by Timothy Klepps that the New Hartford Board of Education, pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §10-151(d)(5) and Article XII of the collective bargaining agreement between the New Hartford Board of Education and the New Hartford Education Association, confirm and ratify the termination of the contract of employment of Brittany Sulvester due to the elimination of her teaching position, which termination was effective June 30, 2026 *and with the subsequent knowledge of the experience and well-being of the children in the Kindergarten program*. Second by Thomas Buzzi.

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

Naye: Frank Rodenberg

Abstain:

(8-1-0)
Motion Passes

E. Adjournment

MOTION by Tom Buzzi to adjourn the meeting at 6:57PM. Second by Jon Puz.

UNANIMOUS

*Respectfully submitted by,
Elizabeth Domas, Recording Secretary*

Attachments:

Letter to Commissioner Regarding Seating Interim Superintendent (September 23, 2026)