

**New Hartford Public Schools
Board of Education Meeting
Antolini School
Multi-Purpose Room
August 17, 2021 @ 7:00 p.m.**

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCX-ZlomWmjG81dc_QM3rfg

Present: Karl Hermonat, Penny Miller, Tom Buzzi, Tim Klepps, Heather Tomala, Kelly O'Dell Longhi, Mary Stempien, Tony Persechino

Other-Brian Murphy

Absent- Tim Goff

A. Chair to Open Meeting- Vice Chairman Karl Hermonatt opened in person meeting at 7.03pm

B. Pledge of Allegiance - The board joined in the pledge of Allegiance which included a moment of silence to remember Volunteer Fireman Colin McFadden and the families of New Hartford who were affected by the recent fire in the center of town.

C. Chair Select Order of Business- No Change

D. Superintendent's Report

1. COVID-19 Funds/ARP

Mr. Murphy began by informing the board that the New Hartford school district was approved to receive the previously discussed COVID 19 funds in the amount of \$119,394. Mr. Murphy told the board that the funds would be used to hire an additional tutor in this school year, two tutor positions in the following year (2022/2023) and another in the following (2023/2024) school year. Some of these funds were also used in this year's summer school which incurred increased costs as a result of higher enrollment.

Mr. Murphy also updated the board that as a result of an additional grant received by the New Hartford Schools, the district will be providing before school tutoring to identified students who faced learning loss as a result of the pandemic. A full plan of this new program will be presented to the board at the September meeting.

2. Capital Projects/Update

Mr. Murphy updated the board on the capital projects with the following information:

- i. The district received the additional 80 chrome books that were approved in the capital plan budget. As a result, every student in the district will be issued one at the beginning of the school year.
- ii. As an impact of low supply due to the pandemic, the four promethean smart boards will not be shipped to the district until September.

- iii. The tiling in room 17 has been completed.
- iv. Nine new doors have been installed at Ann Antolini to keep in line with security measures. Mr. Murphy thanked Tim Klepps for facilitating this project.
- v. The sidewalk repair at Bakerville School has been completed.
- vi. The foyer at Bakerville school is on schedule to be completed before school starts.
- vii. The new playground at Bakerville School has been installed and is already in use by members of the community. Mr. Murphy thanked all parents to volunteered their time to help complete this project
- viii. The date for the New Hartford Elementary is still to be determined. The committee is working diligently to push for completion before school starts.
- ix. Painting at both schools will be completed before the start of school.
- x. The project to replace the faulty boiler will not take place until the Spring of 2022.

E. Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes-June 1, 2021

2. Expenditure Report

3. Personnel

Mr. Murphy welcomed the new staff that will begin their new positions this school year.

Stephanie LaPointe has accepted a new position at another district and will be leaving the New Hartford Schools after school starts.

New teacher orientation will take place on Thursday 19th August from 9am-12pm.

Motion by Penny Miller to approve the consent agenda as presented. Buzzi seconded.

Unanimous.

F. Public Comment/Communication to the Board

The in person public comments were as follows:

David Bean 251 Cedar Lane, New Hartford requested clarification as requested in the 6.1.2021 meeting regarding the legal and financial implications of voting against the current mask mandate put in place by the State of Connecticut current mask mandate in place for all Connecticut School Districts.

William Marcano 96 Arrow Head road, New Hartford, asked the board and Superintendent Murphy what the implications would be if his child showed up to school and removed their mask? This question was addressed later in the meeting by Mr. Murphy who said that any child who refused to wear a mask would be sent home from school.

Liz Pattison, 383 Charles Street, came to show her strong support for unmasking Connecticut children in schools.

Kerry Guilfoyle 251 Cedar Lane, New Hartford, asked if the recent reopening survey results were based on local or state responses and also asked the board to vote masks optional for New Hartford Children.

David Zucker Keller Road, New Hartford, commented about the fear parents and children have as a result of the pandemic and the new Delta variant and requested the board reinstate the “remote option” for parents? This was addressed later in the meeting by Mr. Murphy who responded that there is no remote option this year for students.

Ms Zucker, Keller Road, New Hartford. Supporting the previous comments of her husband and requesting that more clarity and thought is put into the decision the board decides to take regarding whether or not they will vote in favor or against wearing masks. She requested transparency in the decision making and asked the board to go beyond political views and perceptions of the media.

Kristen Kosiba 40 Windsor Lane, New Hartford requested the board vote against the current mandate and remove masks from school children in New Hartford.

Deirdre Tindall 258 Litchfield Turnpike, requested the board vote against the current mandate and remove masks from school children in New Hartford

Christopher Gangne 9 Timber Line Road, New Hartford, requested the board vote against the mandate to remove masks from school children in New Hartford.

Jesse Campbell 38 Maple Hollow Road, New Hartford, gave a statement which expressed concern with masks on children causing a distraction to their learning environment.

Two letters were also received by the Board that will be included in the meeting minutes.

G. New Business

1. Review of Reopening Plan-2021-2022 School Year

Mr. Murphy explained the process of the reopening plan to the board and parents. The committee is made up of a selection of parents, staff and board members who were tasked with reviewing last year's plan and making any necessary updates before submitting to the state. Mr. Murphy told the board that this plan was approved prior to tonight's meeting and while the vote was not unanimous, it did pass.

Mr. Murphy went on to highlight the changes made to the plan following this year's recommendations. The main change being that just today (8/23/2021) an announcement was made by Governor Lamont that mandates all children will be required to wear masks for at least the first thirty days of school.

Chairman Goff, did request information from the district attorney regarding the legal and financial implications of voting against the mandate. The response was shared to all board

members and was summarized by Vice Chair Hermonatt who stated that if the district chooses not to follow the current mask mandate, they could be subject to liability in a case of negligence and recommends the New Hartford Schools abide by the current guidelines.

Buzzi disagreed with the response from the lawyer and requested a motion to change the reopening plan to that masks would be “optional” for New Hartford Students for 2021/2022 school year. Seconded by Klepps for discussion.

The board then moved to further discussion regarding the reopening plan and shared their opinions on whether or not to approve the current reopening plan as presented. Tomala asked if there was a way to introduce a mask “waiver” that would prevent the district from being liable? Karl Hermonatt stated that these options are not shown in the guidance given by the attorney. Tim Klepps voiced his concern with the reopening plan and questioned its validity. Mr. Murphy acknowledged all concerns and comments however stated that these mandates and laws have been put in place by Governor Lamont and supported by the CT Department of Education and the Farmington Valley Health District.

Motion by Buzzi, to make masks optional for New Hartford children for the 2021/2022 school year.

Aye: Buzzi, Klepps, **opposed:** Stempien, Persechino, Hermonat, Miller **Abstained:** Tomala, O'Dell Longi

Motion Failed

Motion by Klepps to table the reopening plan until more information could be provided. Seconded by Tomala.

The board went on to discuss when the next meeting would take place. Mr. Murphy made a point to the board that he supported further discussion; however, there would be no changes as far as state mandates or legal guidance during this time.

Motion by Klepps to hold a special meeting on August 24th to further discuss and vote on the 2021/2022 school reopening plan. Seconded by Tomala. Aye: Tomala, Stempien, Klepps, Buzzi, O'Dell Longi, Miller Opposed: Persechino, Hermonat

Motion Passes

H. Adjournment

Motion by Buzzi to adjourn meeting at 9.10pm. Seconded by Klepps

Unanimous

Respectfully Submitted,

Laura Fritch
Recording Secretary