

**New Hartford Public Schools
Board of Education Meeting
Antolini School
Multi-Purpose Room
September 14, 2021 @ 7:00 p.m.**

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCX-_ZlomWmjG81dc_QM3rfg

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

Absent: Tom Buzzi

Others: Brian Murphy

A. Chair to Open Meeting- Tim Goff called the meeting to order at 7.01pm.

B. Pledge of Allegiance - The board joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. Chair Select Order of Business- Tim Goff requested a change to the agenda to include the opening of school report as section 3.

D. Superintendent's Report

1. Oak Hill Update: Emily Carrin, Classroom teacher and Josh Black, Classroom Program Assistant from the Oak Hill School gave a brief presentation to the board regarding the program which is currently held at Ann Antolini School. The program currently has 9 students enrolled aged between 4-12 years old. The purpose of the program is to provide students with a range of disabilities, the opportunity to attend a public elementary with non-disabled peers while also receiving comprehensive services through Oak Hill's Program.

Board members asked questions to the Oak Hill Staff following the presentation. Persechino asked if the children were all from New Hartford. Carrin responded that the program serves many towns across the district to which identified students are outplaced to New Hartford. Goff asked where staff saw the program going and if it would grow in the future? Black responded that twelve has been the highest number of enrolled kids but because of staffing and specific student needs, it could become challenging for enrollment to increase especially now more than ever because of a lack of staff due to the current pandemic. Board members congratulated Carrin and Black on the successes of the program and thanked them for their service to the children and the positive presence it has at Ann Antolini and the New Hartford Public Schools.

2. Tutoring Program -2021-2022

Principals Kelly Carroll and Amanda Shaw and Curriculum Coordinator Heather Mathes presented their plan for a new tutoring program which would provide reading and math intervention to identified students for one hour before school. A copy of the presentation has been included with the board minutes.

3. Opening of School Update-

Mr. Murphy updated the board on the opening of schools. Mr. Murphy explained that the opening has been very challenging with multiple positive COVID-19 cases confirmed across the district. Mr. Murphy told the board that he consulted with the Connecticut Department of Public Health into the reasons why so many cases are spreading through the district. The reasoning was that New Hartford had the highest infection rate out of all towns in the Farmington Valley and because of the new delta variant, which is attacking children at a higher rate. Mr. Murphy went over with the board, the new quarantine “test out” option. This means, if a student has to quarantine because of being exposed or identified as a close contact, they can test out and return on day eight, as long as they are asymptomatic and use either a PCR or antigen rapid test with results provided to the school. This is a change from last year, when students had to quarantine for ten days. Mr. Murphy explained that the reason for the change is to get children back into classrooms quicker and to return to in person learning. Teachers who test positive but are asymptomatic, would return to the classroom and teach asynchronously to those in quarantine. If a portion of the class is in quarantine, the teacher will teach live with the kids in the classroom and those at home would be learning through google classroom. Mr. Murphy clarified that the teacher would not be teaching in person and online. This is another change from last year.

E. Public Comment/Communication to the Board

Rebecca Welsh, 45 Maillet Lane, New Hartford. Concern with bus incident which took place on 9.13.2021

Heather Rhea, 16 Greenwoods Road, New Hartford. Request to research other districts methods of covid guidelines and quarantine requirements. Request to update website with screening protocols.

Kristen Kosiba, 40 Windsor Lane. New Hartford. Expressed concern regarding curriculum and not discussing 9/11 anniversary in schools. Also questioned the Superintendent and board on decision-making during the quarantine process.

F. Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes – August 17, 2021, August 24, 2021

Hermonat requested to pull minutes from the August 17th meeting. Adjustments were as follows:

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

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 (Hermonat) 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.

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 (Hermonat) 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.

David (Damon) 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 (Drive), 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.

Ms (Anissa) 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.

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

Motion-By Miller, to approve revised minutes from August 17th. Seconded by Stempien. **In favor:** Tomala, Stempien, Persechino, Klepps, O'Dell Longhi, Hermonat. **Abstained:** Goff

Motion Passes.

Tomala requested to pull minutes from the August 24th meeting. The changes were as follows:

Tim Goff asked Mr. Murphy to explain to the board the consequences of not wearing a mask to school. Mr. Murphy said the student would be sent to the Principal's office and would be sent home and marked as absent for the day. There would be no suspension and the child would be given homework to make up for not being in the classroom. Tim (Tom) Buzzi challenged this stating that it went against School Policy #151 and disagreed with the decision made to send a child home for refusing to wear a mask stating that he would not approve a reopening plan that “discriminated” against a child who refused to wear a mask.

Further discussion followed between board members regarding the plan and if the consequences of no masks should be included in the reopening plan. Tim Klepps and Tim Goff shared their personal opinions on the relevance to the voting off the plan since the requirement of marks (masks) and other mitigations in place as a result of the current

pandemic where a result of the Government and State Department of Education therefore must be followed.

Motion- by Miller to approve revised minutes from the August 24th meeting. Seconded by Stempien,

Unanimous.

2. Expenditure Report

3. Personnel

Mr. Murphy informed the board of the following personnel updates:

Lisa Goldberg is the new nurse at Ann Antolini School. Megan Daigle will begin maternity leave on September 17th until the end of the school year. Rachel Savage will begin maternity leave on September 30th for three months. Laura Fritch has resigned from her position as board secretary effective September 14th. The position will be posted.

Motion- by Miller to approve Megan Daigle's maternity leave to the end of the current school year. Seconded by Stempien.

Unanimous.

Motion- by Miller to approve the consent agenda. Seconded by Persechino.

Unanimous.

G. Adjournment

Motion- by Miller to adjourn meeting at 8.02pm. Hermonat seconded.

Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

**Laura Fritch
Recording Secretary**