

**New Hartford Board of Finance
School Budget Presentations
Saturday, March 12, 2022**

Present Chairman Kerry Guilfoyle, Members: Dan Charest, Lou Helt, Paul LeClair, Charlie Neale, Ben Witte, Region 7 Representatives: Supt. of Schools Dr. Judith Palmer, Director of Finance and Operations / Business Manager James Gaskins, Region 7 BOE members: Molly Sexton Read, Rob Jerram & Noel Gauthier, Recording Secretary Penny Miller and Kathryn Boughton (reporter Republican American). New Hartford Superintendent of Schools Brian Murphy and BOE Chairman Karl Hermonat in at 8:50 am.

Absent Ryan Bingham, Krish Dasgupta and Allen Voghel

Chairman Guilfoyle opened the meeting at 8:01 am.

Dr. Palmer presented the 2022/2023 proposed budget. She said that due to the hardworking faculty, staff, students and community support that Region 7 has an exceptional Middle and High School. She is very proud of that and blessed to be there.

The 2022-23 Proposed Budget Overview that was handed out is available for viewing at the Town Clerk's Office. You can view their Working Budget or the Superintendent's Budget Presentation – 2022-2023 on-line at <https://www.nwr7.com/board-of-ed/budget-information>.

The total 2022/2023 Proposed Budget is \$22,917,944. The assessment to New Hartford is \$10,348,816 or 1.28%. Dr. Palmer said that Special Education absorbs 21% of their budget. Special Education alone is a 1.45% increase to their budget. The Middle School staff has been reduced due to declining enrollment. Those teachers were reassigned to the High School to meet the new 25 credit requirement needed to graduate. This was done at no additional cost.

Northwestern is one of only 10 High Schools to be recognized by the Connecticut State Department of Education as a School of Distinction. It has also been recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School for Exemplary High Performance, one of only 40 in the country.

The salary increase is 1.03%. This includes contractual increases. There were some retirements last year and the school was able to hire new teachers at a lower step. The school also used ARP and ESSER Funds to support learning outcomes. The benefit line increased 4.67%. The medical health insurance renewal of 6%. The school is part of a consortium to help reduce costs. The big increase is in the 500s – Other Purchased Services – 10.78%. This contains the expenses associated with the 6 new outplaced students. Most of the accounts were held at 0%.

The 700s – Property Object is up significantly. There is money in there for a new roof. The last payment for the bond is in June 30, 2022.

New Hartford's assessment history has been good the last few years. Last year it was down 2.12% and this year it is up 1.28%.

Ms. Guilfoyle asked about the zero (0) line item for the Library Technician Position. Dr. Palmer responded that it is being moved into the Technology Department. The ½ time position now in the Library Media Center will be a grant funded position after determining what the needs in Middle School will be next year.

When asked about the grants Dr. Palmer responded that anyone hired through the grants are in a 1 or 2-year position. It depends on the data and it mainly focuses on the Middle School.

Dr. Palmer said that in early discussions about for the bond for the roof if they wanted to include field drainage and plumbing down at the ball fields. The cost will need to be figured out and whether or not it is affordable. It will be one bond. Mr. Gaskins said that the roof will be done in 2 sections because the state grant eligibility has one section of roof being done then you will need to wait a few years until the flat roof section will be eligible for a grant. Approximately 50% reimbursement. They don't want to do anything until they are eligible for the grants.

The Region 7 presentation concluded at 8:38 am.

New Hartford Board of Education presentation started at 8:54 am with Superintendent of Schools Brian Murphy. A copy of their budget can be viewed at the Board of Education Office or with the Town Clerk. BOE Chairman Hermonat said it has been a difficult few years because of COVID. We are fortunate to have the funds needed for all the technology, distance learning and the hiring of a social worker. Ms. Helt asked how many special education students will be going from New Harford to Region 7 next year. Supt. Murphy said there will be three. The approved budget increase for 2022/2023 is 1.99%. The total budget is \$9,045,782 an increase of \$176,712. The biggest driver is Special Education costs. The Capital budget is higher than in the past because of line items cut in previous years.

Supt. Murphy said it's been a tough couple of years. The students have been fantastic and resilient. The other drivers in their budget are Employee Benefits, Plant Operations, Pupil Transportation and Additional Increases. The Additional Increases include Health Services, Technology, Library Media Center, School Offices and Central Office. One of the major increases is Health Services. He said that is very difficult to find and hire school nurses. Currently there are 4 sections of 6th grade. Next year there will be 3 sections of kindergarten. You will have 4 sections leaving and 3 sections coming in with a reduction of one teacher. Health education is being increased in the primary schools.

There were 4 negotiations this year with the administrators, secretaries, custodians and tutors. The 7% for the Administrators was higher than usual. The Special Education Director will now be working 215 days instead of the previous 205 days. There was a one-enhancement for the Administrative Team for 3 employees. This was needed to stay competitive with neighboring towns. Over the last few years their increase was only 2%. Teacher negotiations start this fall.

Because of COVID 12 children who were being home-schooled. Two of them have returned. Mr. Murphy feels that more will be returning next year. The student enrollment of 419 does not include the home-schooled children. The per pupil expenditure is the lowest in the area at \$21,105.

Mr. Murphy said that most of the line items are flat. Some new teachers were hired at a lower cost. The number of special education population has stayed the same. We are right around the state average of 16%. One of the identified students had a one-on-one nurse this year but that is not the case for next year. Some of the COVID money was used for maintenance supplies (cleaning). The heating oil was \$2.00/gallon last year. Currently \$2.73/gallon is budgeted. The school is part of a consortium and at this point the contract hasn't been locked in. A new 4-year contract was signed with DATTCO bus company. Currently there are 10 buses being budgeted.

Supt. Murphy said that the primary school district achievement results for 2020-2021 are meeting or exceeding goals for reading, writing & Mathematics. The district reading results for Antolini are meeting or exceeding goals. He said that we have a partnership in Advanced Manufacturing with Goodwin University for 5th & 6th graders. The 6th graders are going participating in a state-wide manufacturing day in April at Goodwin University. Our students are getting skills in computer programming. We are

building those skills in the lower grades. There is not another program in the state that is working with 5th & 6th graders. There is a new science program – Mystery Science and a new math program – Illustrative Math. He said they are looking to expand the Special Education program to keep those students in district. The ESSER money from the state has been used for a before school tutoring program to help with learning loss. It meets 3 or 4 days a week for ½ hour before school. It has been very successful. Technology wise every child has a Chromebook.

The meeting ended at 9:38 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Penny Miller
Recording Secretary

Filed with the town clerk for viewing:
Regional School District No. 7 2022-23 Proposed Budget Overview
New Hartford Public Schools 2022-2023 BOE Budget