

**New Hartford Board of Finance  
Budget Workshop – Special Meeting  
March 17, 2018 @ 8:30 am**

**Present:** Chairman Jim Fitzgerald, Members: Dan Charest, Reggie Smith, Jr., Steve Tuxbury, Regina Wexler, Ben Witte, Alternates: Kerry Guilfoyle, Paul LeClair, Recording Secretary Penny Miller

**Absent:** Alternate Bart Baxter

**Others Present:** Supt. of Schools Regional School District No. 7 Dr. Judith Palmer, Others from Regional School District No. 7 BOE Chair Molly Sexton Read, Director of Finance & Operations James Gaskins and BOE Members Noel Gauthier & Rob Jerram; New Hartford Superintendent of Schools Brian Murphy, New Hartford BOE Chairman Josh Adams, First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Annie Witte, Mark Russo, Member of the Press Kathryn Boughton (Republican American),.

Chairman Fitzgerald opened the meeting at 8:32 am.

**Seating of Alternates:**

As the full board was present no alternates were seated.

**2017-2018 Northwestern Region 7 Board of Education budget presentation**

Copies of the Regional School District No. 7 2018-2019 Working Budget were distributed and a copy filed with the Town Clerk. Dr. Palmer said the 2018-2019 proposed budget reflects the same programs and staffing levels currently in place and the cost associated with it. There is a slight increase to the budget of 0.93% or \$192,000 increase overall about \$172,000 increase to the assessments. According to the State of Connecticut Accountability Index, Northwestern High School came in at second place for the state at 92.3. Student performance, teaching skills and program studies have resulted in greater opportunities for the students. The school was also named to the AP Honor Roll because they offer more AP courses and the number of students taking them has increased. The net current expenditure is \$17,402; about \$200 below the state average and comes up at the lower end of Litchfield County's school per pupil expenditures. The budget drivers are the salaries, benefits and special education. Two special education students have aged out for a substantial savings and one has left the district. There will be a need for additional support in mathematics for the incoming 6<sup>th</sup> graders into the middle school next year. Additional staffing hasn't been put in place. The class sizes should be maintained in a way that individual instruction can be offered for those students that need additional help. Mr. Fitzgerald asked if there was competitive bidding for Region 10 for the out-placement of the Vo-Ag students going to Wamogo. Dr. Palmer said basically the state is in charge of the tuition (\$6,823). Students do have a choice to go to Region 7. With transportation now running to Torrington, there are 27 students coming from there.

Ms. Sexton Read went through the various sections of the budget. She said the salaries are contractually based increases. The departments were asked not to make any additional increases to their last year's budget. Ms. Wexler asked why there wasn't a separate line item for surplus. Ms. Sexton Read says there isn't a legal reason but traditionally this is where it has always been carried. Ms. Wexler asked about the student population. What is the middle school population? How many students are on each team? What is the maximum amount of students that the team approach can handle with class sizes and have you set a break-off point if the population drops to a certain number that the team approach will need to be reevaluated. Dr. Palmer said there are 148 students in Grade 7

and 160 in Grade 8 and there are four teams. It drops off in 2021 - 2022. In 2019-2020 just from the member towns they are down 30 students but that doesn't include students from outside the region. We are not anticipating any changes in staffing for next year. Class size now is 14-15 students. If the student population drops we would drop a team. Mr. Tuxbury asked what the amount was for tuition per pupil. Dr. Palmer said for those regular ed students from Hartland it is whatever the cost per pupil expenditure being assessed to the towns. He then asked about the reimbursement for AG students. She replied \$6800 for tuition and the state gives another \$3200 for every AG students including those from our towns. Currently there are 94 students in the program and \$3200 is reimbursed from the state. From half of them we get the \$6800. Currently, the student population is 1071 and that includes the Highlander transition students – ages 18-21.

Going forward – the bus contracts are up on two years. The Barkhamsted & Hartland buses are run by local businesses and depending on whether they continue will determine who the contracts are with. In foreign language a world language honor society is being added for \$800.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked about Purchased Services – actual vs budgeted. With an average of almost \$600,000/year he asked where that money goes. The transparency isn't there. Ms. Sexton Read will forward that information to Mr. Fitzgerald.

The budget workshop took a short break from 9:29 – 9:36 am.

#### **2017-18 New Hartford Board of Education budget presentation**

The New Hartford Board of Education budget was distributed and a copy filed with the Town Clerk. BOE Chair Josh Adams said by removing last year's anomaly the board is looking at a total of 1.5% increase over the last two years. We are looking to expand the Pre-K offering to more students by adding a class. We are reducing sections due to declining enrollments in certain grades. Looking at the previous 5 years of budget numbers and enrollment from 16-17 to 17-18, the budget went down by 1.8% but the enrollment went up by 2%. This year you will see a 3.5% increase in our budget over last year but looking at it over 16-17 and remove the anomaly year it is actually a two year total of 1.5% increase. Our projected enrollment is about the same as 2016-2017.

Mr. Fitzgerald said last year you had 442 total students including Pre-K. This year without Pre-K you have 411 students. Superintendent Murphy said the numbers sent to the state include Pre-K. The total cost of the program with a full-time teacher and full-time tutor is \$85,000 and tuition is \$30,000. We feel it is an investment in our education system and it was never meant to be self-sufficient. Mr. Fitzgerald said this year two positions were added back in that are not value-added teaching positions. Supt. Murphy said currently we have 33 registered kindergarten students but this number will increase. The 10-year projection was for 42 kindergarten students for the current year and we currently have 69. When asked for the per pupil cost, Mr. Murphy said it was \$17,021. This cost is less than the three other elementary school towns and Region 7.

Ms. Guilfoyle asked, with increasing our pre-school program, if a decrease had been seen in tuition dollars going out of town to magnet schools with Pre-K program. Mr. Murphy said the children who attended magnet schools last year for Pre-K didn't have to pay tuition. Going forward those magnet schools will be charging for Pre-K. We are competitive with our Pre-K tuition.

Mr. Murphy said the Curriculum Special Position is currently on hold. We have had some unanticipated costs in special education. The position is in the budget for next year. We will be hiring a math interventionist to meet the needs of our primary schools. Unfunded mandates are always an issue. The district in trying to keep health insurance costs down has changed insurance consultants. The RISE program, for students with specialized needs, has been started at Bakerville & New Hartford Elementary

School. This program has helped to keep out-placement costs down. Currently there are 18 CREC students with tuition at \$4,500/each.

This is the first full year of our Talented & Gifted program for 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> graders. One teacher runs this program after school. We are looking to expand this to grades 3 & 4 next year. Work is continuing with our STEAM program through the curriculum of our Media Specialist. This is a hi-tech program where students working hands-on, critical based, critical thinking skills and are improving in that area. Our Poet Laureate working with grades K-6 is a retired teacher and receives a stipend.

Mr. Murphy said that looking over historical data for the last few years of the budget it is almost negative 3% over the last 4 years. We are looking to change this trend and we need to move away from this as it has been difficult to maintain our programs in our school district.

Continuing on Mr. Murphy said the Budget Summary shows the major drivers in the budget. One of them is the 2.9% salary increase as a result of the teacher's contract. The Instructional Assistants were brought back into the budget this year but the hours will be reduced from by 3 hours/day for next year. In looking to reduce their costs the board is looking at using Kelly Services to arrange for substitutes. This would be an increase of \$10,000/year but the stipend currently paid would help slightly to reduce this cost. Currently we are paying substitutes \$80/day and at times we have a hard time finding substitutes because of our low pay. Mr. Fitzgerald asked what the logic was behind adding the two Instructional Assistants back in vs the curriculum specialist. Mr. Adams said the Board of Ed made that decision and the discussion focused on some uncertainty going forward about the curriculum special position and the amount of funds available for the rest of the year. The board felt with the budget available the Instructional Assistants were the best course of action.

Mr. Tuxbury asked about the duties of the Curriculum Specialist. Mr. Murphy said they help with evaluations, model lessons for teachers, work with administrators looking at data, look to improve student achievement, etc.

Mr. Witte asked about the increase in Regular Education Professional Staff when no additional teachers were added. Mr. Murphy said two teachers went up a step. Ms. Wexler asked about retirements and Mr. Murphy said there are none so far. Mr. Tuxbury asked if there is any way we could be one of the towns to start our teacher's negotiations earlier. Then we could be a trend setter instead of being a follower for increases.

Mr. Murphy continued on with his review of the budget. When asked about the Stand-Up Desks, Mr. Murphy said they are used to students with specialized learning needs. Starting this year we have a Unified Arts Program for students with specialized needs working through our Physical Education Program during the school day. We have identified and non-identified students working together. A Breakfast Program has been started at Antolini School which is successful and had made a couple of hundred dollars.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked if the board has looked into making some structural changes to reduce the cost of the entire budget for the elementary schools. The student population is down over 200 students in the last 9-10 years. The entire population was at Antolini at one time. Why is New Hartford immune to closing a school? The entire school population of 411 plus 34 Pre-K students you could fit in one school. There are 26 classrooms at Antolini. Mr. Adams said the board is evaluating the budget and the priority is educating our students. A few years ago the board tried to make structural changes. They had pushback from the town by a 2 to 1 margin not to close the school.

The budget workshop took a break at 10:41 and reconvened at 10:48 am

**2017-18 New Hartford Town Government budget presentation**

The town budget draft dated 3/17/2018 distributed and available at the First Selectman's Office. First Selectman Jerram went through the modified Capital Project List 2017-2018, with the Town Clerk. He said the Board of Education numbers are soft numbers. He has done interviews for a new state trooper and the number put in is the best number so far. The ECS number is in the air. The governor has put out what he feels is the best number. The pension plan is at an all-time high, now at \$4 million. The real driver of this budget is the debt service associated with Antolini.

Starting with Administration, Mr. Jerram said this could be classified as a recovery budget and they are trying to get back to where they were. The town contracts are aligned at 2.75% increase.

Administrators have been changed for the Health Insurance. One significant variation is the \$6,000 in Data Processing and Supplies is a net change of \$3500. This is due to a change in the Tax Office for mailing out tax bills, etc.

Ms. Wexler asked if you take out the \$10,000 for Legal Fees in Board of Finance why there is an increase. It was determined that it was a mathematical error.

Mr. Jerram was asked about a comment Barkhamsted First Selectman Stein made about working with New Hartford and sharing the resident trooper. Currently the Barkhamsted trooper is required for the supervision of the School Resource Officer at Region 7. He said he isn't looking into doing this at this time but is still open to discussion on this.

The Resident State Trooper number is soft. A new ambulance has been received. Mr. Fitzgerald has received their ambulance budget from Nick Maltby. Under Department of Public Works most line items are at 0% increase. There are the increases in salary per their contracts.

Planning & Development – there is nothing except for salary increases per contracts.

Libraries – these are accessory uses to the town. We reduced them last year and we are hoping to do more this year. Mr. Charest asked if they are being funded or are you holding back. Mr. Jerram said we are holding them back and hope to bring them up by the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. Mr. Witte asked when they will learn about the holdbacks. Mr. Jerram said they have all been told – the holdback includes all non-profit agencies. We don't get a lot of information from the Foothills Visiting Nurses. They are looking for them to share who they see with the town so in the event of an emergency the town can check on them.

Recreation – the Recreation Director is trying to work with what she has.

Debt Service – Mr. Fitzgerald said on the Principal, the request for 2018-2019 is \$639,634 an increase of \$175,863. The bottom line is accurate.

Discussion continued on changes to the budget with comparisons between the Budget Request for last year and the Governor Proposed Budget. Mr. Jerram said the budget presented today is a working budget.

**MOTION:** by Smith, second Charest to adjourn at 12:16 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Penny Miller

Region 7 Budget  
New Hartford Board of Education Budget