

**Town of New Hartford  
Board of Finance Special Meeting  
Public Hearing 2019-2020 Budget  
Tuesday April 2, 2019 @ 7pm**

**PRESENT:** Chairman Regina Wexler, Members: Dan Charest, Reggie Smith, Jr., Steve Tuxbury, Ben Witte; Alternates: Bart Baxter, Lourena (Lou) Helt, Paul Leclair and Recording Secretary Penny Miller

**Others Present:** Superintendent of Schools Brian Murphy, BOE Chairman Tim Goff, Region 7 Superintendent of Schools Dr. Judy Palmer, Region 7 Director of Finance James Gaskins, Region 7 BOE Chair Molly Sexton Reed, First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Bookkeeper Annie Witte, Town Treasurer Gordon Ross, Kathryn Boughton (Reporter Republican American), Members of the Public Bill Baxter, Mary Beth Greenwood, Shelley Lloyd, and others.

**Absent:** Kerry Guilfoyle

Chairman Wexler opened the meeting at 7:01 pm. Mr. Smith read the Annual Budget Hearing notice that had been posted in the Hartford Courant.

**Seating of Alternates:** Lou Helt was seated for Kerry Guilfoyle.

**Opening Remarks:**

Chairman Wexler explained that the meeting was all about public comment. The job of the Board of Finance is to present the budget to the townspeople of New Hartford who will then vote on that budget.

**Presentation: 2019-2020 NWR#7 Board of Education Budget:**

A copy of their budget presentation is in the Town Clerk's office.

Ms. Reed showed a timeline of what has happened in the past. For this coming budget year there will be a 1.77% increase to New Hartford. The students have performed well with testing and at a high level. Compared to the other teams in the Berkshire League the school is either #1 or #2 in all of the areas. The Advanced Placement Courses give the high school student the opportunity to either earn credit or placement in advanced classes once they get to college. The CT State Dept. of Education is now evaluating the next generation accountability. There are 12 indicators of success for high schools and middle schools based on performance. Northwestern High School has earned the title of being a School of Distinction, one of 9 schools state-wide that has earned this distinction.

A new teacher has been hired for Special Education. Because the needs of the students were outpacing the staff in the building the position was added this year. This position is being labeled as new as it was not in last year's budget. The enrollment in the member towns is slowly declining. In 2018-2019 the enrollment is 971 and by 2021-2022 it is anticipated that the enrollment will be 833. The school is looking for ways to manage this decline and still be efficient. Students who come in through the Vo-Ag program and towns outside the region all pay tuition.

Ms. Reed explained along with the contractual salary increases the school will add a STEM teacher to help with the increase in credits necessary to graduate. Students will now be required to have 25 credits to graduate.

Ms. Reed said a decision was made by the board to place in the proper accounts money previously held in the Benefits line. This money covered Capital Improvements, Computer Technology Purchases,

Maintenance, Computer Repairs and Contracted Services and was transferred out at the end of the year. This change will reflect where they are now spending their money.

One of the grants still received from the state is the Excess Cost Grant. This grant is for Special Education students whose tuition costs more than 4-1/2 times their per pupil cost. The state reimburses a portion of that cost. That money doesn't appear as income or revenue but is used as an offset to their budget.

Property Services includes some of the reallocation along with a new snow removal contract. Sections 800 and 900 reflect the school's borrowing. She said one of their bonds will be paid off at the end of this fiscal year and there hasn't been any new borrowing. Under consideration is borrowing in 2022 for maintenance or renovations.

On the revenue side the tuition for regular education students will increase. An Ag-Ed grant is received from the state for all the Vo-Ag students.

The student enrollment from Colebrook and New Hartford is down while Barkhamsted and Norfolk is up. This year's assessment will be 2% less to New Hartford.

Mr. Smith asked what the definition is of the \$13,000 in supplies. Mr. Gaskins said it is for items that are considered consumables whether it be for maintenance or teaching supplies. Mr. Smith asked if the teacher retirement account includes all the pensions of the local board and Region 7. Mr. Jerram said he thought it was all inclusive.

Region 7 presentation ended at 7:33 pm.

**Presentation: 2019-2020 New Hartford Board of Education Budget.**

Chairman Goff started the local board of education presentation at 7:36 pm. A copy of their budget can be viewed at the Town Clerk's Office.

Mr. Goff started the presentation by highlighting some of the Priorities and Assumptions. He said that the state and federal financial support of education will not be increased. Special Education costs are increasing significantly. The RISE (Resilience/Inclusion/Student Centered/Excellence) Program will continue to be funded. The bus contract with Dattco runs for 2 more years. In the budget is the hiring of a Math Interventionist for Antolini School. The Unified Sports program will be continuing. This sports program brings together the traditional and non-traditional students. Chrome Books will be purchased for the fifth graders along with 4 Promethean boards. The Capital request for 2019-2020 is \$104,500. The total budget increase for 2019-2020 is \$392,271 or 4.93%. The big driver is the increase in Special Education at \$218,000. There are 2 students that are outplaced plus one student that requires more than normally done. Salary increases is the result of new contracts. The remaining increase of \$43,438 covers general operating budget increases.

Supt. Murphy continued the presentation by saying that Regular Education is down due to a teacher being hired at a lower step. Salary and benefits makes up about 70% of the budget. Next year there will be one less teaching section in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. A nurse has been added at \$42,000 for a special education student for next year. There were contractual increases for administrators. There was a one-time equity adjustment for the Special Education Director and the Primary School Principal. Per pupil expenditure at \$17,290 is low for this region. Many of the line items do not see an increase and some are seeing a decrease. Currently tuition is being paid for 19 CREC Magnet School students and next year there will be 17. There are 2 outplaced special education students that need a specialized program. The tuition breakdown is as follows: student A is at \$99,663 and student B is \$97,000. He said there were questions about the Excess Cost Grant. He gave an example saying that the numbers are just estimates

for the next school year and they will probably change. The money received goes back to the town to defray education costs. It does not come back to the local BOE.

Under Plant Operations the part-time custodian salary was increased so that they are paid the same hourly rate as the full-time custodians. Winchester and Thomaston was added to the medical / dental consortium which helps to drive down costs.

The total Capital request is \$104,500. Included in that request are: 4 Promethean Boards, a Chromebook Cart (30 Chromebooks per cart) and 54 Chromebooks for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and an Intercom/Camera System at Antolini. At Bakerville School repairs to the outside stairs, acoustic barriers (café/gym) and furniture. In New Hartford: a new mower and furniture.

Under District Highlights Mr. Murphy noted improvements in the Standardized Assessment Scores/Smarter Balance Assessments with Math up 6% and English Language Arts up 4%. They are hoping to expand the Unified Sports Program down to the primary schools. The breakfast program at Antolini is now in its 2nd year and very successful.

Mary Beth Greenwood, South Road, asked if an Energy Efficient Study had been done at the buildings. Mr. Murphy said there hasn't been one done but there is new LED lighting in all the schools with savings in the 20-25% range.

The local Board of Education presentation ended at 8:13 pm.

**Presentation: 2019-2020 Town Government Budget.**

First Selectman Jerram started his presentation at 8:14 pm. A copy of the budget can be seen in the First Selectman's Office.

Mr. Jerram said the vast majority of the line items are at 0% or coming down. The General Government budget increase is \$200,130.41. The contractual salary increase for all unions is 3%. One of the changes for next year will be a unified tax office with the tax collector and the tax assessor working together. The Tax Assessor is being trained to work in that office. Linda Sheffield, retired tax collector, has agreed to stay on as a consultant for the next year in that office. The other consultant is in the Planning and Zoning Office. The total consultant fees are around \$15,000. The teacher pension allocation in the budget is anticipated to be \$42,270. If the proposed budget is accepted there will be a bill coming from the state. Under Public Safety the state trooper line is going up \$24,476.95. This increase covers salary and benefits. The Deputy Fire Marshal is up \$500 as requested by the Fire Marshal for training of the Deputy. Bill Baxter, Steel Road, asked if the ambulance had presented a financial report. Mr. Jerram responded that they had in the past.

Under Libraries, Bakerville Library will receive a stipend out of Operations to help with a heating request.

Health, Sanitation, Welfare – MIRA will be raising the tipping fees. In response to this, RRDD will increase user fees from \$85 to \$100.

Parks & Recreation – at Brown's Corner the field had an issue with grubs last year. The Youth Sports leagues have asked for some money to help with restoring the fields.

Debt Service – there are 3 bonds and one of them will be paid off next year.

Capital – there is a request for an engineering study for the wash bay. Garage Equipment at \$165,000; the GIS Mapping for MS4 requirement is shown at \$20,000. All of the town's underground conduits will need to be mapped. This is part of a federal mandate. The total Capital is \$435,000.

Mr. Baxter asked if there was any money in Capital for the town garage assessment. He said it has been cited numerous times for its location and inability to keep it clean and safe. Mr. Jerram said they have invested about \$100,000 over the last couple of years at the town garage. Currently there aren't a lot of environmental concerns. He said the Wash Bay will be by the sewer plant.

Mr. Jerram continued with the Revenue Page. He said they are seeing escalating interest rates and are estimating a large increase in short-term interest. One of the largest revenue sources is education. Last year in Revenue we took in \$4.8 million and this year it will be \$4.67 million. The biggest line on the Revenue page is the decrease in the ECS grant from \$2.92 million to \$2.82 million, a decrease of \$106,193. This results in a proposed mill rate of 30.46 and a 1.55% increase in taxes.

Rob Jerram, West Hill Road, said given the increases for the Resident State Trooper do we get to a point where it would make sense to have our own Police Department. First Selectman Jerram said that it is cost prohibitive. An autonomous police department would be too pricey. Board member Baxter said could we regionalize with Canton. Is this allowed? Mr. Jerram said he doesn't know if there is anything prohibiting us from doing that. Member Baxter wondered what the cost difference would be. Mr. Jerram said he wasn't opposed to regionalization.

The Town's presentation was over at 8:53 pm.

**MOTION:** by Helt to adjourn at 8:53 pm; seconded by Charest.

*Unanimous*

Chairman Wexler said the next Board of Finance meeting is April 9<sup>th</sup>. That will be the time to discuss any issues that have come up from and may prompt the board to make any changes to the budgets.

Respectfully submitted:

Penny Miller  
Recording Secretary  
Annual Budget Hearing Notice  
Region 7 Presentation  
Town of New Hartford BOE Budget