

**New Hartford Public Schools
TOWN OF NEW HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, January 19, 2015 at 7:00 PM
Ann Antolini School
80 Antolini Road, New Hartford, Connecticut**

PRESENT: Josh Adams, Jen Benaitis, Stacie Cull, Cindy Duval, Sue Lundin, Mary Misiorski, Pat Spaziani, Jen Zenuh.

ABSENT: Penny Miller.

1. CHAIR TO OPEN MEETING:

Chairman Sue Lundin called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

2. CHAIR TO SELECT ORDER OF BUSINESS:

Ms. Lundin did not change the order of business from the previously posted agenda.

3. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT:

A. Budget Priorities and Assumptions for 2016-2017.

Superintendent of Schools Brian Murphy reviewed the priorities of the budget for the 2016-2017 academic year. Among the priorities he reviewed were: to ensure that safety and health standards are maintained and enhanced to improve student achievement, to provide adequate funding for instructional materials for teachers and students, to provide funding for transition of students to New Hartford Elementary School (NHES) and Antolini School, to provide adequate funding to support all academic programs and support systems, to provide a pilot full day Pre-K program for the New Hartford Public Schools, to provide funding for Talented and Gifted program for fifth and sixth graders at Antolini School, to provide funding for STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) program in Media/Technology curriculum, to maintain funding to support the arts, music, and physical education programs, to support funding to maintain adequate class sizes at all levels of instruction, to continue funding for technology with access and grade-level equity for all students through the capital budget, to continue with the commitment to instructional improvement supported by strong professional development initiatives, to respond to emergency repairs as necessary as a result of aging of equipment and deferred maintenance, and to replenish maintenance and custodial accounts every year.

Mr. Murphy then reviewed the Assumptions portion of next year's proposed budget. Among the assumptions were: that state and federal financial support of education will not increase, that the board is committed to maintaining programs to meet the needs of the New Hartford students and the community and will be adjusted as the educational needs of students change, that significant changes will be identified due to the closing of the Bakerville School, that overall certified and non-certified staffing levels will be adjusted based on enrollment/programming/facility considerations, that purchased services and supply accounts will be adjusted based on documented prices and trends, that there are increased responsibilities on the district that are either underfunded or not funded as a result of the demands of state and federal mandates, that to realize economy of scale, the board will fully investigate collaborative services for potential cost savings, i.e. fuel oil and school supplies, that salary accounts will increase due to negotiated employee contracts, that individual health insurance costs will increase due to contracted costs with ConnectiCare, that Special Education tuition account for out-placed students will reflect costs for New Hartford students currently receiving services outside the school district, that the Board will begin to budget for the annual tuition costs for the CREC Magnet School students, that budgetary accounts will be adjusted based upon current and previous budget years (2014-2016), that major initiatives for technology and renovations will be budgeted for in the capital budget, that pupil transportation costs will increase per the negotiated contract, and that unemployment costs will increase due to staffing reductions.

Mr. Josh Adams inquired as to whether Mr. Murphy had an estimate for the increases for transportation. Mr. Murphy responded that those costs have increased 3% over the last few years but three of the last five years, DATTCO had provided a \$10,000 credit. He noted that the budget amount for this year is \$504,000 and could likely expect a 3% increase for next year.

B. Bus Contract 2016-2017.

Mr. Murphy noted that the Board is in the final year of a five year contract with DATTCO. Mr. Murphy noted that there have been concerns with the length of a few bus routes, noting that the average is 45 minutes with a couple as long as 58 minutes. Mr. Murphy acknowledged the efforts of DATTCO in providing information to the Board as far as adjustments to bus routes with the consolidation and that they have participated with the Long Range Planning Subcommittee.

Ms. Jen Zenuh expressed reservation with entering into an additional contract in light of concerns that have been brought to the Board over the last few years.

MOTION: Mr. Adams, Ms. Pat Spaziani second, **to direct the superintendent to negotiate a one year contract with DATTCO for the 2016-2017 school year; Motion passed with Mr. Adams, Ms. Jen Benaitis, Ms. Stacie Cull, Ms. Mary Misiorski, Ms. Spaziani voting aye while Ms. Zenuh opposed and Ms. Cindy Duval abstained.**

C. C.R.E.C. Magnet School Tuition.

Mr. Murphy reported that for the current school year, \$67,000 is owed to C.R.E.C for the 2015-2016 school year covering the tuition of fifteen (15) New Hartford students attending there. He also reported that King & King Associates, the auditor representing the town and Board, recommends retiring this debt in the year that it is incurred. The auditor's recommendation is also to create a line item for this likely annual expenditure. Mr. Murphy advised the Board to pay this sum during this fiscal year through savings realized from the Health Savings Account, Regular Education Salary account, and Outplacement Tuition line items. Mr. Murphy underscored that at this time, it appears that the Board will have the funds available to pay off this debt without impairing the services and supports for the school district. He emphasized that this could change as the budget is a fluid one and noted that he would update the Board should the scenario change.

It was the consensus of the Board that the C.R.E.C Magnet School tuition be paid off by June 30, 2016.

D. Full Day Pre-K.

Mr. Murphy explained that a full-day, Pre-Kindergarten program would be a pilot program only and would be evaluated for benefits at the end of the 2016-2017 school year. He explained that this program has been proposed for four year olds and eligible three year olds with identified special needs. The program would be capped with twenty (20) students, supported by one full-time teacher and one full-time aide, according to Mr. Murphy. He noted that a tuition of \$3,000 would be charged to the families of the four-year-olds and students would be admitted on a lottery basis. Mr. Murphy noted that the goal of this program is to help students academically, emotionally, and socially. Mr. Murphy pointed out that this program is not one that is mandated but is instead an optional program for the Board to consider. Mr. Murphy noted that existing staff would be rearranged so that no costs for it would be added to the budget.

Mr. Murphy noted that bussing would only be provided for the students with the identified special needs while all others would need to be dropped off and picked up by families. Ms. Zenuh questioned whether these students would begin fifteen to twenty minutes later than all the other students, as was in the case in the past, to alleviate added traffic. NHES and Bakerville School Principal Dr. Roxanne Pangallo responded that those details have not been decided yet. Ms. Spaziani questioned whether there would be a maximum number of three year olds. Ms. Stacie Cull questioned whether an option for half day Pre-K would be available. Mr. Murphy noted that this could be reviewed.

Discussion ensued about the program. Dr. Pangallo requested that the board provide direction on the status of this program prior to the Pre-K Open House scheduled for February 25, 2016.

4. CONSENT AGENDA:

Ms. Spaziani requested that the Financial Report get pulled from the Consent Agenda.

MOTION: Mr. Adams, Mr. Spaziani second, **to approve the Consent Agenda, less the Financial Report; unanimously approved.**

A. Approval of Minutes from December 8, 2015 and January 5, 2016.

This item remained as part of the Consent Agenda.

B. Financial Report.

Ms. Spaziani had a question on the Financial Report that Board members received via email as part of their "board package" in advance of the meeting, specifically page 6, account number 210.2110.700.000.102, NSLP Assistance grant that appeared to be over budgeted by \$19,065.84. Fiscal Services Administrative Assistant noted that this represents a grant and was only over budgeted by \$.25. Ms. Spaziani then asked about the line item just below this grant. Mr. Murphy noted it included the cafeteria account which is reconciled at the end of the year as lunch payments help to defray this account. Mr. Murphy noted that while it should balance out at the end of the year, the last couple years have resulted in the cafeteria account resulting in a significant deficit, averaging \$15,000-\$16,000.

MOTION: Ms. Spaziani, Ms. Zenuh second, **to accept the Financial Report as presented; unanimously approved.**

C. Personnel.

This item remained as part of the Consent Agenda.

5. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION:

Communications to the Board of Education are identified as Addendum A attached to these Minutes and made a part herewith.

6. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Scott Goff voiced opposition when Ms. Lundin informed the crowd that according to the Board's bylaws, Public Comment is limited to a twenty minute maximum per topic, with a maximum allotment of five minutes per speaker.

Mr. Reggie Smith opined that it was rude of the Board not to change locations of the meeting in light of the size of the crowd versus the size of the room.

Ms. Lourena Helt commented that the closing of Bakerville School was a hasty decision in light of findings of a Hazardous Mitigation Plan commissioned by the Northwest Council of Governments reflecting that of the eleven towns listed, New Hartford was the only town showing a large population increase over the next fifteen years. She noted that census information as well as the UCONN data were used in this plan. She reported that Bakerville residents feel as if their voices were not heard. Ms. Helt spoke about attempting to secure insurance for a vacant building like Bakerville School as well as the likelihood of bus rides lengthening as a result of the closing of the school.

Mr. Tom Buzzi addressed the board, reminding them that he was present at the meeting wherein the decision to close the Bakerville School was made. He reported that he and others had since gathered over 400 signatures, submitted them to the town clerk on this date, and submitted copies to the board, identified as Addendum B, attached to these Minutes and made a part herewith. He noted that residents he spoke to from Bakerville had actually settled there because of the Bakerville School. Mr. Buzzi opposed the lack of a plan for the building and opined that the community did not have a voice in the decision. Mr. Buzzi urged the Board to reverse their decision to close the Bakerville School.

Ms. Linda Goff questioned the Board as to why they had not considered closing the portable classrooms at Bakerville School as an alternative to completely closing it. Ms. Goff also questioned why redistricting was not considered, with sending only some of the students to NHES. Ms. Goff also noted that Dr. Pangallo, as principal of the primary school, will be down sixty (60) students and questioned whether her salary will accordingly be reduced. She had the same question as it would relate to secretaries and custodial staff. She opposed that this decision was not brought to a town meeting.

Ms. Erika Mumm expressed concern that the Board has lost their attention to their own vision and mission. She highlighted #5 of the vision, "...communicate regularly and effectively with town residents and respond appropriately to the community..." She also referred to items #3 and #4, "...to promote effective dissemination of information regarding school activities...solicit community opinions about the school system." Ms. Mumm shared with the board that she had recently written a letter to the editor of a local newspaper calling for their impeachment.

Ms. Amy Dambois questioned why the community is not included in the decision making process and allowed to have their ideas shared. She praised the teachers in New Hartford and opined that families will be seeking to purchase homes of aging residents and that the schools are likely to fill again.

Ms. Kate Radano reported that as she gathered signatures, the bulk of hers came from the Pine Meadow section of town who she characterized as equally dissatisfied as the residents of Bakerville with the closing of the Bakerville School. She noted that she heard concern about second graders being in the same school as older, sixth graders. She commented that a greater number of parents may be more likely to send their students to C.R.E.C. as a result of this decision.

Mr. Jerram thanked the Board for their volunteer service and submitted correspondence.

Ms. Janet Condon, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools, reported to the board that there have been no changes from the Personnel Subcommittee to her proposed contract, noting it provides for a 2.5% pay increase but also an additional obligation of 8% from her towards her health insurance along with an increase of her cost to her health savings account of 50%, resulting in a net loss of income of \$3,000. She noted that the Board's attorney had indicated that her contract should not be settled until the other Central Office employees had negotiated their contracts and requested that the Board defer voting on her contract until such time.

Ms. Gina Maroney provided copies of maps to the Board and followed with comments on the bus routes. Ms. Maroney requested that bus routes be reviewed.

Ms. Brigitte Seyer reminded the board that she was present at the meeting wherein they voted to close the Bakerville School and commented that her opposition was not as much with the result of the vote but instead the process. She opined that it lacked a sense of transparency as it was done at the conclusion of a closed, Executive Session without any public discussion or dialogue.

Ms. Nancy Butler, Physical Education Teacher, questioned whether only one teacher and one aide will be adequate for the proposed all day Pre-K program.

Ms. Kelly O'Dell spoke in opposition to an all-day Pre-K program, noting that she holds a Masters Degree in Early Childhood Education and as an educator for over twenty years, does not agree that an all-day Pre-K program for a three year old is developmentally appropriate. She further commented that they do not have the stamina and are unable to handle the rigors of a full day. She noted that while Dr. Pangallo would be able to provide many of the pros of an all-day Pre-K, she would be able to refute each one. She opined that in both cases of closing Bakerville and an all-day Pre-K program, only dollars and cents are being considered and not the best interests of children.

Ms. Maria Moore shared that she found it completely inappropriate that the Board is considering an all-day Pre-K program. Ms. Moore asked whether the floating Pre-K teacher could be better utilized for a Talented and Gifted Program as part of the school day rather than as it is currently being proposed. She also commented that as a former Board of Finance member, she is aware of the fact that they are catching grief over putting pressure on the Board of Education to close the Bakerville School. Ms. Moore sought to clarify that the pressure is not around closing a school but instead pressure to cut costs. She noted that what should be looked at is the fact that there are 465 students and 5 full-time administrators.

Ms. Kelly requested that the Board vote no to Ms. Condon's contract until the contracts of her counterparts have been reached.

Ms. Tricia Brett thanked the Board for their service. She noted that there are groups in town that are trying to bring businesses to town which will generate revenue which in turn will help the students.

Ms. Marsha Jones noted that she has lived in town for thirty years, having put seven children through Bakerville School, and is vehemently opposed to closing it. She noted that she does not like that the vote was taken without public comment. Ms. Jones also took objection with the Board for not granting the First Selectman's earlier request to modify this meeting's agenda. Ms. Jones also noted that she agrees with the idea of impeachment of the Board.

MOTION: Mr. Adams, Ms. Zenuh second, **to extend the period of time for public comment with regard to the Bakerville School closure by sixteen minutes with a maximum of two minutes per person speaking; unanimously approved.**

Ms. Lisa Bombara questioned how the petition with 411 signatures will be handled by the Board, and more specifically, whether the decision is done.

Mr. Tim Goff urged someone on the Board to make a Motion to Reconsider.

Mr. Glenn Phillips questioned how savings are going to be derived when considering that the district will now be driving kids from the far side of Bakerville all the way down to NHES. He also questioned why the school can do mass calls for notifications and multiple emails for delayed openings but yet he had received nothing in terms of communication about a vote occurring to permanently close a school.

Ms. Mumm again addressed the Board noting that she had yet to ever hear them discuss the issues and concerns raised as a result of Opportunity for Public Comment. She also strongly urged the Board to meet with Michelle Gallant for her feedback about this Pre-K program.

Ms. Brett again addressed the Board and questioned what happened to the idea as presented at the October meeting by Michael Linnetz to move Central Office to Bakerville School, which would have it remain open and potentially house the Pre-K program there. This option would have allowed the school to remain grandfathered in terms of code issues, according to Ms. Brett. She also questioned what would occur with the Charter Oak School that is presently housed in Antolini.

Ms. Laura Wearne questioned what action the Board will now take after having an opportunity to hear from the public. Ms. Lundin responded that as appropriate, they will discuss it but that it is not a requirement.

Mr. Jason Beechinor requested that someone on the Board make a motion.

Mr. John Kurkiewicz commented that it appeared that it was time to take legal action and offered to contribute \$10,000 to begin a legal fund to this end.

7. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Budget Transfers 2015-2016.

Mr. Murphy reviewed proposed budget transfers, noting that this is a practice of the board occurring in January and June annually. He explained that the "Salaries: Paras, Regular Ed" account needed a \$10,100 transfer due to a reduction in Title I funding. He noted that this could be offset from the "ConnectiCare Medical Insurance" line. Secondly, Mr. Murphy explained that again the "Salaries: Paras, Regular Ed" account needed an additional \$21,121.17 transfer again due to a Special Education student who moved into the district and necessitated a one-on-one tutor. He noted that funds will be transferred from the outplacement tuition account to cover this cost. Mr. Murphy noted that the Custodial salary account had a deficit of \$9,800, the Fiscal Services Administrative Assistant salary account had a deficit of \$2,500, and the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent had a deficit of \$2,400. He explained that these accounts had deficits due to this year being a leap year and the method by which pay periods are calculated. Mr. Murphy explained that his proposal includes covering these deficits with a line item transfer from the health insurance account again, which is found with a surplus because of retirees and those staff members not taking health benefits from the district. Mr. Murphy concluded with the last line item reflecting a \$17,000 deficit: legal. He noted that negotiations have been protracted due to salary negotiations and legal opinions sought on the consolidation and C.R.E.C. tuition questions. He noted that this line will be offset again by the health insurance account.

MOTION: Ms. Zenuh, Ms. Benaitis second, **to approve the Proposed Budget Transfers; unanimously approved.**

B. School Calendar 2016-2017.

The proposed 2016-2017 school calendar was reviewed. Mr. Murphy noted which days were aligned with the school calendar of Northwestern Regional District #7.

MOTION: Mr. Adams, Ms. Zenuh second, **to change December 23, 2016 from a full day of school to a half day of school; Motion Failed with Ms. Duval and Ms. Zenuh voting aye, while Ms. Spaziani, Ms. Misiorski, Mr. Adams, and Ms. Benaitis opposed, (Ms. Cull abstained).**

MOTION: Ms. Misiorski, Mr. Adams second, **to accept the proposed New Hartford Public Schools Calendar for 2016-2017; Motion passed with Ms. Cull, Ms. Spaziani, Ms. Misiorski, Mr. Adams, and Ms. Benaitis voting aye while Ms. Duval and Ms. Zenuh opposed.**

8. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Discussion and possible action concerning the tentative agreement reached with the New Hartford Administrators' Association for a successor collective bargaining agreement (discussion proposed for Executive Session).

MOTION: Ms. Spaziani, Mr. Adams second, **to enter into Executive Session at 9:03PM for the purposes of discussing the Administrators' Association for a successor collective bargaining agreement; unanimously approved.**

MOTION: Ms. Spaziani, Ms. Zenuh second, **to come out of Executive Session at 9:17PM; unanimously approved.**

MOTION: Ms. Zenuh, Ms. Cull second, to accept the agreement between the New Hartford Board of Education and the New Hartford Administrators' Association dated July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2019; Motion passed with Ms. Cull, Ms. Spaziani, Ms. Misiorski, Mr. Adams, Ms. Benaitis, and Ms. Zenuh voting aye while Ms. Duval abstained.

B. Discussion and possible action concerning the appointment and employment of a secretarial position (discussion proposed for Executive Session).

Ms. Lundin reminded the board that Ms. Condon has requested that the discussion occur in an open meeting. She reminded board members that they have a copy of the Notice of Benefits for this position that had been previously emailed to them. Ms. Zenuh sought clarification to the clause pertaining to "at will employee", specifically the language regarding, "termination without cause". Ms. Lundin explained that an "at will employee" is different and defined as such, where the employer can terminate without cause just as the employee can leave without notice. In response to Ms. Zenuh's comments that she is uncomfortable with the language, Ms. Lundin explained that the language has been reviewed by the attorney.

MOTION: Ms. Zenuh, Ms. Duval second, to table discussion and action on the appointment and employment of the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent; unanimously approved.

9. REPORTS:

A. Committee Assignments.

Ms. Lundin assigned memberships into the following standing committees:

School/Community Relations and Policy: Ms. Benaitis (chairperson), Ms. Cull and Ms. Misiorski;

Personnel and Negotiations: Ms. Spaziani (chairperson), Ms. Benaitis, Ms. Duval;

Long Range Planning: Mr. Adams (chairperson), Ms. Penny Miller, Ms. Misiorski;

Student Health and Safety (Wellness): Ms. Miller (chairperson), Ms. Duval, Ms. Cull;

Facility and Transportation: Ms. Zenuh (chairperson), Ms. Spaziani, Mr. Adams, Ms. Miller.

Ms. Lundin advised that because most board members are employed during the day, meetings would ideally be held in the evenings to accommodate them. Additionally, she noted that while she had listed a chairperson, it was up to the committee to determine their own chairs.

10. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: Ms. Zenuh, Ms. Misiorski second, to adjourn at 9:38PM; unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

**Pamela Colombie
Recording Secretary**