

**NEW HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
BOARD OF EDUCATION  
REGULAR MEETING  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2015 – 6:45PM  
ANN ANTOLINI SCHOOL**

**PRESENT:** Josh Adams, Jennifer Benaitis, Stacie Cull, Michael Linnetz, Sue Lundin, Penny Miller, Pat Spaziani, Jennifer Zenuh; Superintendent of Schools Brian Murphy, Ann Antolini School Principal Amanda Shaw.

**ABSENT:** Melissa Giaconi.

**A. CHAIR TO OPEN MEETING:**

Chairman Josh Adams called the meeting to order at 6:45PM. Mr. Adams called for suspending the Board of Education policy that typically imposes a twenty minute limit on discussion on any given agenda item in order to allow up to two hours to discuss Agenda Item C. Consolidation. Additionally, Mr. Adams noted that under Agenda Item D. Public Comment, questions would also be allowed and that the Board may respond to questions and/or comments.

**B. SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP:**

Mr. Adams explained that at the joint meeting that occurred on September 22, 2015 between the Boards of Education, Selectman, and Finance, a motion was made to form a subcommittee consisting of members from these three boards to investigate ways to consolidate services to benefit the Town of New Hartford. Mr. Adams noted that after conferring with Board of Finance Chairman Jim Fitzgerald and First Selectman Dan Jerram, his proposed recommendation for membership to the subcommittee to include two Board of Education members: Pat Spaziani and Sue Lundin. His recommendation also included extending an invitation to First Selectman Dan Jerram, Steve Tuxbury, Jim Fitzgerald, and Kate Reiger.

**MOTION:** Mr. Michael Linnetz, Ms. Penny Miller second, **to appoint board members Pat Spaziani and Sue Lundin to the subcommittee as well as extending an invitation to Dan Jerram, Steve Tuxbury, Jim Fitzgerald, and Kate Rieger; unanimously approved.**

**C. CONSOLIDATION:**

Mr. Michael Linnetz shared a power point presentation describing findings, assumptions, and recommendations of the Long Range Planning Subcommittee. Topics he covered included the motivation behind why the Long Range Planning Subcommittee is considering consolidation of two primary schools, the history of where the subcommittee started, proposed possible options, reasons behind the options, costs, savings and benefits of options as well as reviewing other options.

Mr. Linnetz noted that the public was invited in order to allow subcommittee to answer questions and garner feedback. He noted that the Board of Education is considering consolidating Bakerville School and New Hartford Elementary School due to the rising costs of education and a decreasing enrollment trend.

Mr. Linnetz reviewed that in 2012-2013, a town consolidation committee was formed to assess the options, the benefits and the costs of consolidating some of the elementary schools. He reported that the 2012-2013 committee adjourned with the understanding that it would make sense to consolidate at some point in the future. Mr. Linnetz commented that the Board of Education Long Range Planning Subcommittee reconvened, and picked up this effort in January, 2015. He noted that the town task force had concluded back in 2012-2013, it did not make sense to pursue consolidation because enrollment was not quite low enough as well as a resulting \$58,000 expense from an outstanding bond that would be incurred if consolidation occurred prior to 2015.

Mr. Linnetz reviewed what is now considered as options: close Bakerville School permanently, close New Hartford Elementary School permanently, consolidate the students into one school (NHES) but keep the Bakerville building open as a school building just for Central Office and Preschool, or keep status quo. Mr.

Linnetz reported that the suggested proposal of the Long Range Planning Subcommittee is to move all of kindergarten and first grade to NHES, to move all of second grade to Ann Antolini, to move the Preschool from NHES to Bakerville and to move Central Office from Town Hall to Bakerville. He noted that under this proposal, Bakerville would remain open as a school building. Mr. Linnetz noted that additionally under this option, Antolini would still have the capability to hold school wide assemblies and to continue the four lunch waves at Antolini, with second graders joining the third graders lunch wave. Mr. Linnetz explained that the need to keep Bakerville to continue to function as a school building stems from the significant costs that would arise should a need to use it for students occurs. He noted that if Bakerville were to be closed as a school building, additional costs to meet code compliance would result in the event it ever be needed for an influx of students. By keeping this building operating as a school, it is "grandfathered in", according to Mr. Linnetz. He reported that the Board of Selectman, when approached with a question regarding alternative uses for this building, responded that there is no specific town need which is why they were not looking to assume financial responsibility for this building. Mr. Linnetz commented that the Board of Education is willing to consider vacating the building should the Board of Finance and/or the Board of Selectman indicate that they would like to repurpose the building for town use.

Mr. Linnetz reviewed the estimate of savings from the committee's recommendation to be \$66,000. His presentation depicted these savings deriving from decreased custodial, nurse, and administrative staff. He noted that while there would not be any annual additional costs, there would be some one-time costs associated with moving expenses and some rewiring that would be required in one of the work rooms at NHES. Mr. Linnetz reviewed the non-financial benefits of this option, too, as: having all grade level teachers in the same building would facilitate collaboration among teachers leading to better coordination of curriculum, better coordination of instructional strategies, and would increase efficiency of the specialized staff such as Special Education, Music, Art. Mr. Linnetz broke the savings down as they relate to staffing: .5 FTE (full time equivalent) for Administrative Assistant (\$19,000), Nurse (\$18,000), Custodian (\$28,000), Computer Lab Licenses/Media Resources (\$6,100). He noted that these cost savings are based on Bakerville School continuing to function as a half day Preschool only.

Mr. Linnetz reported that the subcommittee has spoken with the bus company, DATTCO, to gain an understanding of the options as related to costs and bus routes. He noted that DATTCO was able to develop a solution which incurs no additional costs and has only a minor effect on route times. Mr. Linnetz reported that bus rides currently average about forty to forty-five minutes, with some as low as thirty-five and some as long as fifty-five minutes. He noted that under the recommended option put forth, no additional buses would be needed, and although the bus stops and bus routes would change, the estimated maximum route time would not change. Mr. Linnetz reported that both the opening start time and closing time of the school day would get pushed back by five minutes. He noted that teachers have indicated that they are not opposed to this minor shift in the school day.

Mr. Linnetz then reviewed the other options although he noted that none were deemed feasible. As far as closing Bakerville School completely with no Preschool or Central Office use, Mr. Linnetz explained this was not recommended because it would result in NHES being at capacity. At capacity equates to every possible room used with only the conference room available should a need for an additional classroom arise. Foregoing that conference room would result in a lack of space for PPTs. Another drawback of this option, according to Mr. Linnetz, should the district ever need to reopen the Bakerville School as a school, a much greater expense would present in order to bring the building up to code. He commented that the code compliant costs might be prohibitively high that the district might even need to at that time explore other options to find the space. Additionally, Mr. Linnetz described why expanding the size of NHES is not an available option as it is located in a flood plain preventing any expansion out and structural aspects prevent it from expansion up.

Mr. Linnetz as well as Mr. Adams both fielded questions from board members before opening up the meeting to public comments.

**D. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**Ms. Kate Reiger** of 2 West Hill Road brought up two points for consideration: 1. The recommended option would result in a change to the working conditions of one of the principals and noted that she would not be surprised if that principal came to the board to say that her salary needs to change as a result of this change and opined that the Labor Board would likely agree with this; and 2. When town hall was built, Ms. Reiger was the First Selectwoman, was on the building committee and recollected that much money was put into building an office suite for the superintendent of school. Ms. Rieger opined that to empty these offices now seems like a waste of taxpayer money. She explained that the thought at the time was that the highest paid public employee should be visible and should be in a building where he can talk to the First Selectman and the Fiscal Authority of the town when the Board of Education spends 75% of the town's tax dollars.

**Mr. John Burdick** of 220 Town Hill Road noted that he shares in Ms. Reiger's opposition to moving the Central Office and inquired about the capacity for future growth available for classrooms at Antolini School and NHES. Superintendent Brian Murphy responded that Antolini has twenty-seven (27) rooms including the media center and noted that currently seventeen (17) classes exist presently, along with a media center, a special education classroom, Art, Music, and Spanish. Also, there is an additional one and a half classrooms leased out to Oak Hill, a special needs student program, according to Mr. Murphy.

**Mr. Jim Fitzgerald** of 30 Kinsey Road spoke about capacity figures at the three schools and concurred with Ms. Rieger regarding Central Office. He recommended the closing of Bakerville School and noted that with current student population decrease as the trend in town, it is likely that the board could consider closing two schools (Bakerville and NHES) soon.

**Ms. Lisa Bombara** of 2 Country Lane inquired whether the board has reviewed the class sizes and commented on the present situation that affords students a great deal of one on one time with their teachers. Mr. Linnetz responded that class sizes would not be changing.

**Ms. Christine Nelson** of 29 Highview Terrace agreed with Ms. Bombara, echoing that class size and keeping the good quality teachers should be a strong consideration. She noted that a tendency to make class sizes bigger with fewer classrooms in a building.

**Ann Antolini School Principal Amanda Shaw** addressed the figures put forth by Mr. Fitzgerald and offered some clarification. She noted that with any type of consolidation plan, students would continue to have Art, Music, Library, Band. She noted that currently there are seventeen classrooms, one Spanish room, and two Special Ed classrooms accounting for the building's twenty classrooms. She noted that there is also a Science Room used for Health and Intervention. She noted that there are no extra classrooms and that if second grade were to come to Antolini during the 2016-2017 school year, Antolini would actually lose one classroom. She explained that the only flexible space then is Oak Hill.

**Ms. Laura Polakow** of 195 Cedar Lane commented that if Bakerville School were to be closed without a contingency plan, it would be devastating to the neighborhood. She requested that a visual aid be drawn up of the school showing where the classrooms and all the Specials will be located.

**Ms. Alesia Kennerson** of 198 Gillette Road questioned Mr. Linnetz's comment from his presentation indicating that the bus routes are going to change. She asked how they will change and whether the board is trying to consolidate them with fewer stops. Mr. Adams commented that discussion did not occur regarding specific bus stops. He noted that each school would have separate buses, so the practice of a bus dropping students off at one school and then traveling to another school would no longer occur. If a family had two children with one in first grade and another in sixth grade, the two children would likely ride on two different buses, according to Mr. Adams.

**Ms. Patricia Brett** of 450 Town Hill Road commented that she shares in Ms. Polakow's concern that Bakerville School is not closed and remain vacant. Ms. Brett also had concern with class sizes growing if second grade is brought to Antolini School.

**Ms. Amy Ouellette** of 27 Stonegate Road asked whether the board had considered the placement of Pre-K and kindergarten at Bakerville and then have first and second graders attend NHES.

**Ms. Erika Mumm** of 522 Steele Road agreed with and expanded upon the point that Ms. Reiger brought up regarding the extra work load brought upon staff as a result of added students, specifically as it would relate to Administrative Assistant and Nurse. She wondered whether potential salary increases as a result of increased work load is factored into the figures used to arrive at projected savings. Ms. Mumm reminded the board of her work with the Pre-K initiative and noted that while the idea of moving the program to Bakerville had been discussed previously, it was not for just nine students. She suggested that the program be opened up to possibly Torrington, which might result in the award of a grant. Ms. Mumm also expressed concerns with bus routes.

**Mr. Troy LaMere** of 20 Shady Brook Road inquired about the amount of income generated from the Oak Hill School lease. Superintendent Murphy responded that the figure is \$52,000 annually.

**E. ADJOURNMENT:**

**MOTION:** Mr. Linnetz, Ms. Miller second, **to adjourn at 7:44PM; unanimously approved.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Pamela Colombie**  
**Recording Secretary**