

**New Hartford Public Schools
Board of Education Regular Meeting Minutes
Ann Antolini School
Tuesday, August 16, 2016 @ 7:00 PM
7:00PM**

Present: Josh Adams, Jennifer Benaitis, Cindy Duval, Mary Misiorski, Pat Spaziani, Jen Zenuh

Absent: Stacie Cull, Penny Miller, Sue Lundin

Administrators: Brian P. Murphy, Paula Gladu-Morabito, Erika Sacharko, Dr. Roxanne Pangallo and Amanda Shaw

A. Chair to Open Meeting

Vice Chairman, Jen Benaitis called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

B. Chair to Select Order of Business

No changes.

C. Old Business

1. Additional First Grade Class

Mr. Murphy updated the board on the location of the first grade classes. In June, Mr. Murphy presented a plan to the Board of Education to have two classes at Bakerville and two classes at New Hartford Elementary. The swing line was expanded and seven students were identified and letters were sent out. Unfortunately those students could not be redistricted to New Hartford Elementary. To meet the goal of smaller class sizes the plan then was to have 3 first grade classes at Bakerville and one at New Hartford Elementary. With that set up there would be 14-15 student in the three first grade classes and approximately 17-18 students at New Hartford Elementary. With that there were expectations from several stakeholders that the plan presented in June should be followed. So with that the change was made to go back to two and two. Mr. Murphy met with several parents, and he sent out emails to see if there were any parents who were interested volunteering to transfer to New Hartford Elementary. One parent could not make that move do to transportation issues. Mr. Murphy is still seeking volunteers to transfer to New Hartford Elementary. Class sizes will be 11 students in each class at New Hartford Elementary and 19-20 students at Bakerville. Mr. Adams stated that the decision to add an additional teacher was to reduce class size. He suggested that the Board should have a discussion about whether they were meeting the intent of adding the teacher with respect to educating the students in this town. Discussion ensued.

Motion by Josh Adams, 2nd by Mary Misiorski, to support the Superintendent in efforts to balance class size including, but not exclusive to, putting three classes at Bakerville, reaching out the NHE parents to transfer to BAK and reaching out to BAK parents to transfer to NHE. Those in favor: Josh Adams, Mary Misiorki. Those opposed: Cindy Duval, Pat Spaziani. Abstentions: Jen Zenuh, Jen Benaitis.

Motion fails.

D. Superintendent's Report

1. **Budget 2015-2016** – Mr. Murphy stated that there was a \$90,000 surplus from the 2015-2016 budget primarily because two special education students returned to district and there were additional savings in special education costs as well.

Motion by Josh Adams, 2nd by Jen Zenuh to return the \$90,000 surplus from the 2015-2016 budget to the Town of New Hartford. Unanimous.

Motion passes.

2. **Building Project** – Mr. Murphy stated that the building project is going according to plan and school will open on time on August 31, 201 for students and staff. The HVAC work has been completed, windows have been replaced and ADA compliance issues have been completed as well. There are some minor items that need to be completed but it will not impact or interrupt school.
3. **Capital Plan** – Capital projects should be completed by beginning of school. Purchased additional computer hardware and software and the new phone at New Hartford Elementary will be installed. A new stove and oven has been installed at Antolini and the ramp at the Antolini playground will be paved by the beginning of the school year. Septic system has been fixed. ME Carroll did a fantastic job. Thanked the Town and Selectmen for cleaning out the leaching fields.
4. **Staffing** – During the PPT process and after budget was approved in May additional students were assessed for services. Mr. Murphy would like to increase the .5 Special Education Teacher to .6. He also needs to hire a 1:1 tutor to meet the needs of a student. Mr. Murphy is also recommending adding a clerk at Antolini School in the main office part time for 24 hours a week to ensure the safety and security of students and staff at Antolini.
Motion by Jen Zenuh, 2nd by Josh Adams, to approve increase the Special Education Teacher position from .5 to .6, hiring the additional 1:1 tutor, and the clerk in the Antolini Main Office for 24 hours per week. Unanimous.

Motion passes.

E. Consent Agenda

Jen Zenuh asked to take out the Expenditure Report and the Personnel Report from the Consent Agenda.

1. **Approval of Minutes – June 21, 2016**

Motion by Josh Adams, 2nd by Pat Spaziani, to approve the minutes of June 21, 2016. Unanimous.

Motion passes.

2. **Expenditure Report**

Jen Zenuh questioned Mr. Murphy about some expenses in the Professional Development Line.

Motion by Pat Spaziani, 2nd by Mary Misiorki, to accept the Expenditure Report as presented. Unanimous.

Motion passes.

3. **Personnel Report**

Mr. Murphy reported that Marie Bate has been hired as the nurse at New Hartford Elementary. Karen Pfeffer has been hired as the new Library Media Specialist and Rachael

Juliano will be returning to New Hartford Public Schools as a 5th grade teacher. Jen Harris will be returning to her position as School Psychologist at the beginning of the school year.

F. Communications to the Board

Jen Benaitis read a letter from Chairman, Susan Lundin, announcing her resignation from the Board of Education. Jen Benaitis will take over as Chairperson until 2017. Nominations for the Vice Chairman position will be held at the next meeting.

G. Opportunity for Public Comment

Lisa Dyer – Grew up in this town. Swing line is not new to this town. Wasn't notified about problem with class size. Questioned why seven families dictate what happens to the town. Doesn't want her child to be number 20. Wanted to know why she wasn't given an option to change schools.

Melissa Preece – Concerned and disappointed with placement of first grade teacher and the glaring inequality of class size. The education needs of our students are not being met and this needs to be fixed. Asked that Board members put their personal agendas aside and put the needs of the children first. The purpose of hiring the additional first grade teacher was to reduce class size.

Julie Quinto – One of seven parents who received redistricting letters. Concerned that Board member Cindy Duval violated several Board policies and used her position on the board for her own personal gain and is biased in her decision-making. She asked for her resignation.

Bridget Seyer (*4th Grade Teacher and NHEA Co-President) and Christine Sullivan (1st Grade Teacher) –Very disappointed in the outcome and the lack of leadership and direction. The inequality in class sizes should not continue and the educational needs of our students are not being met. Concerned about the significant inequality for teachers at Bakerville with twice as many students. Asked the Board to reconsider their decision and to redirect Superintendent Murphy to create balanced class sizes. Give all students the opportunity to succeed. She also requested that a teacher be put on the Ad-Hoc Enrollment Projection Subcommittee.

Kelly O'Dell Longhi – Thanked Josh for his motion, as it was in the best interest of the students, and academically it made sense. The Board needs to give the Superintendent the respect and the ability to make those important decisions. He has all the students' needs in their best interest.

Carolyn Solak – If this situation is not resolved what happens for second grade? It's not too late, and it still can be changed and adjusted to meet the best interest of all the students.

Tom Buzzi – Commented on Ms. Duval's email that the Bakerville coalition is a bully. The goal of the coalition is to post what was going on in the school system. He started that we have three terrific schools in session this fall. He described the Ad hoc committee that was formed. He stated that everyone was unengaged last year with what was going on and he wanted to keep everyone informed. Goal of the coalition was to unite, to keep the schools together, it was never to divide the schools; however, emails like Cindy Duval's divide this town. A class of 22 and class of 10 doesn't help anyone. Seconded the motion from Mrs. Quinto that Mrs. Duval tender her resignation.

Alicia Boucher – Parent of a first grader at NHE, lives in the swing area. Supports the decision to have two first grade classes at New Hartford Elementary. She advocates for smaller class size. The swing zone is the tool by which this equality can be achieved; it's the nature of the beast, and that it is a bigger deal for the parents than the children.

Erika Mumm – Sad to be here yet again discussing a controversial issue. This town wasn't divided previous to this situation and what it has become now. Stated that this Board is so focused on the Board of Finance dictating where we are going, and asked how can they justify to the Board of Finance one teacher for 10 students?

Maria Moore – Got the list of membership of the Ad Hoc committee and there are no parents from the New Hartford Elementary section of Town. Just for the perception and for the composition of the subcommittee she would like to urge them to add a parent with a child attending New Hartford Elementary. She would also like clarification of how agenda and minutes are communicated.

Tim Goff - Was sincere in his appreciation of Sue Lundin's service to the Board of Education. He stated that this Board is at a crossroads. There is a severe problem in that the Town voted on a budget to reduce class sizes. By not doing that this Board is going against taxpayers. This is not what was intended when the Board voted to add an additional first grade teacher to reduce class sizes. This issue needs to be addressed tonight. In addition, there is a Board member who used her knowledge on being on the Board of Education to push her personal agenda. If you trust the Superintendent with the financials, trust him to do his job to balance out the classrooms. Trust him to make the right decisions.

Karl Hermonat – Sent a communication to the Board, dated June 23, 2016, regarding answering questions during Public Comment. Appreciates the back and forth and encourages more when possible. More drastic measures need to be taken against Ms. Duval.

Erika Mumm –what Mrs. Seyer said, sending out a letter is not addressing the teacher-student issues with regard to testing, special education, and needs in the classroom. The board needs to take ownership of this. Mr. Murphy needs to take ownership of this and he did. This should be a moot point. Why the board did not support equal classrooms when that was the goal is beyond understanding what your purpose of a board is. To hear Mrs. Seyer speak about all the negative pieces from small classrooms to big classrooms is a slap in the face to the teachers and kids in this town. She is so disappointed.

Melissa Preece – Inquired what was in Mr. Murphy's letter that would change the situation.

Christine Sullivan – It's not fair to the teachers and it's not fair to the students and the families.

Lisa Dyer – Still has no idea where her son is going and what her options are.

Tim Goff – You have 10 days, 10 business days, school starts in 10 days.

Melissa Keplinger – Son is entering as a first grader. Stakeholders making decisions is an inadequate explanation; education experts should decided what is best for the children in New Hartford. The Board is instituting educational inequality and it's shameful. She urged the board to do something tonight. Leaving the situation the way it is inexcusable. Do the right thing. Find a solution. Stakeholders should not be allowed to alter the decision of the educational leader.

Christine Nelson – Son is in first grade at New Hartford Elementary. Her son will be with the exact same class as last year. She is advocating for her side of town.

Linda Goff – You need to let Mr. Murphy do his job. Your letting this Board dictate to you. Do your job. That's why we hired you. They're supposed to do what best for the town. You're being paid to do that and we want you to do that. You need to stop letting them tell you how to do your job. You need to tell them this is what is best for our students.

Glen Philips – Biggest problem is communication between the Board. This Board needs to communicate more. You are not in unity together; it's a very divided Board.

David Beam – Board needs to take action tonight. Suggested that one of the Board members take the position and lay out the facts, support it and let's move on.

H. New Business

Motion by Jen Zenuh, 2nd by Josh Adams, to reconsider the additional first grade class sections under New Business. Unanimous.

Motion passes.

Discussion ensued. Josh Adams stated that the intent of hiring an additional first grade teacher was to reduce class size. Mr. Adams stated that the Board of Education needs to give the support to the Superintendent to make these educational decisions as the CEO of New Hartford Public Schools. Josh then asked for Mr. Murphy's educational opinion as to what would be most beneficial. Mr. Murphy recommended three classes at Bakerville and one class at New Hartford Elementary to reduce class sizes. Let's just do what's right

Motion by Josh Adams, 2nd by Jen Zenuh, to support the Superintendent in efforts to balance class size including, but not exclusive to, putting three classes at Bakerville, reaching out the NHE parents to transfer to BAK and reaching out to BAK parents to transfer to NHE. Those in favor: Josh Adams, Mary Misiorki, Jen Zenuh. Abstentions: Cindy Duval, Pat Spaziani, Jen Benaitis.

Motion passes.

I. Reports

1. Adhoc Enrollment Projection Subcommittee

Karl Hermonat discussed the first meeting of the Adhoc Enrollment Projection Subcommittee. It consisted of introductions, they reviewed the role of the committee, which is to review the school enrollment analysis and bring recommendations to the board for the future use of our schools. At this meeting a Chairman was selected, Mr. Karl Hermonat, and secretary, Lila Tuxbury. Future meetings will have minutes. Next meeting is in October just before the formal report is provided.

J. Adjournment

Motion by Mary Misiorski, 2nd by Josh Adams, to adjourn at 9:32 p.m. Unanimous.

Motion passes.

Respectfully submitted by Janet A. Terenzi, Recording Secretary