

Board of Finance

Hand outs for April 13, 2021

Minutes – March 23, 2021

Minutes – April 6, 2021

Communications to the Board:

Hilary Schibi – Email dated April 6, 2021

Kristen Kosiba – Email dated April 7, 2021

Melissa Wilczak – email dated April 7, 2021

Kristen Bakula – email dated April 7, 2021

Jane Allyn – Email dated April 7, 2021

Chris Hughes – Email dated April 7, 2021

Proposed budgets are available online

**New Hartford Board of Finance
Special Meeting via ZOOM
March 23, 2021 @ 7 pm**

Present: Chairman Regina Wexler, Members: Dan Charest, Kerry Guilfoyle, Steve Tuxbury, Ben Witte, Alternates: Ryan Bingham and Lou Helt and Recording Secretary Penny Miller

Also, present: Supt. of Schools Brian Murphy, BOE Chair Tim Goff, First Selectman Dan Jerram, Annie Witte, Tom Buzzi, Laura Garay, Conni Kremiski and Kathryn Boughton (reporter – Republican American)

Chairman Wexler opened the meeting at 7:02 pm

Seating of Alternates: Lou Helt was seated for Paul LeClair.

Chairman Wexler said for the record several pieces of correspondence relating to the proposed elimination of a 4th grade classroom teacher for the 2021/2022 academic year have been received by the board. These were letters received after the March 9th meeting. Correspondence needs to be in 24 hours in advance to be considered. The letters received are from: Leah Drouin, Melissa Ferrucci, Michelle LeClair, John Tavano, Lauren Lyn, Hillary Schibi, Brooke Harris, Erika Pratt, Meagan Rogers, Donna LaPlante and Marissa Klepps. Copies of these letters are available at the Town Clerk's Office.

Tonight's special meeting will include discussion of all 3 budgets.

Mr. Bingham asked if there has been any further discussion regarding the teaching position that is being eliminated in the BOE budget.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Wexler deemed the minutes of the March 9th meeting approved as there were no objections.

Chairman Wexler deemed the minutes of the March 13th special meeting approved as there were no objections.

2021-2022 Budget: Discussion (All aspects: Town, NH BoE, Regional & BoE, CAPEX etc.) and possible action on budgets for presentation at April 6, 2021 Public Hearing.

In response to Mr. Bingham's question BOE Chair Tim Goff said nothing has been discussed with the BOE Board at this point. It will come up at the next meeting. At this point they are taking a wait and see approach to their budget. He does feel it will probably be revisited. Mr. Bingham asked if that means an additional request or will you find methods in the existing budget to put the position back into the budget. Mr. Goff said he can't speak for the other members of the board. He hopes they will be able to work within the \$8,869,070 requested. He isn't sure which way they will decide to go.

Mr. Bingham said there was some correspondence on federal funds. Is there any update on what those dollars may be? First Selectman Jerram said he hasn't heard anything yet. He has asked Congressman Larson for some guidance but none has been received. They haven't heard when the release date for unrestricted municipal funds and how much it will be. In the last stimulus, we received \$48,000 in unrestricted funds - non-education. The BOE received different funding. In talking with the other Selectman in the 21 COG region of the Northwest Hills no one is putting in a specific allocation within their budget. Ms. Helt said in reading through all the guidelines it is as clear as mud. Mr. Jerram replied you have to apply to the state. There is a lot of unemployment money, small business money in there that will come out. There is no breakdown of the ratio. He hopes to hear something by the public hearing date.

Chairman Wexler asked Mr. Goff about the non-lapsing account. How does the \$100,000 we set aside fit into this fiscal year and next fiscal year budgets. Mr. Goff replied the BOE came to you in October with a deficit of \$190,000 for 2 special education children being outplaced. He said that Supt. Murphy has been able to mitigate some of that deficit but we will probably need that \$100,000 to cover the deficit at the end of this fiscal year. Supt. Murphy said we were able to reduce the \$190,000 so at this time we are looking for the \$100,000 but will continue to update the Board of Finance as time gets closer to the end of the year.

Ms. Guilfoyle asked if the \$190,000 is a known number. If you look at the Expenditures to date within the Special Ed line it doesn't show \$190,000 being overspent in that budget line. Is this just an estimate? Supt. Murphy said it was an estimate in the fall. It will be significantly lower than the \$190,000 but he will let the board know if they are in a deficit with the operating budget.

Mr. Tuxbury said he thought the \$100,000 was for Covid related expenses. Ms. Wexler said it was her understanding that it was unrestricted only to be distributed with BOF approval.

Mr. Jerram said for clarification that in the audit the surplus for the local BOE was \$108,276. He said you might want to consider moving the \$8,276. Chairman Wexler said they will keep in mind there is the extra \$8,276.

Mr. Witte asked Supt. Murphy for information on the Pass-Through grant revenue. He said it is down significantly - about \$74,000. He would like to see the breakdown in prior budget years and the current budget year on the revenue side. Our expenditures are looking high. We cut back on Capital last year along with extra special ed costs. The town has 2 years wage increases because they were frozen last year. There are some big things on the expenditure side.

Chairman Wexler asked that Supt. Murphy send the information within the next few days for the BOF to look at before the next meeting.

Ms. Guilfoyle said it was mentioned briefly that maintenance and maintenance supplies have gone down. She asked if they are taking care of their properties or is that the right dollar amount? Supt. Murphy said they have had to make tough decisions. It is a 3.8% increase that the BOE is proposing. The maintenance line item had to take a hit. Mr. Goff said we are taking care of our schools. We have a facility subcommittee whose members have backgrounds in construction. They watch our capital and maintenance expenses.

Chairman Wexler asked if there were any motions to be made relative to the local BOE budget and none were forthcoming.

Municipal budget – Chairman Wexler said there were a couple of blanks when we talked at the budget workshop. First Selectman Jerram said the significant change since last time is that Region 7 has reduced their budget about \$40,000.

Mr. Charest said on the Revenue page Short-Term Interest is down \$55,000. First Selectman Jerram said the interest rates have been going down. Ms. Helt commented that Northwest Bank was giving us a premium rate for a couple of years. Ms. Witte said that the STIF account isn't paying as much as before and Northwest Bank is really down. We aren't making what we used to.

Mr. Jerram said a good place to start on the revenue is the collection rate. He said the Supt. Murphy and Mr. Goff would have more information on the REAP grants and others as that is their area.

Chairman Wexler said the collection rate is 96.5% for this year. She asked what is your best guess on where that will end up? The usual number is 97.5%. Will that generate part of the \$300,000 savings that was anticipated. Mr. Jerram said we haven't seen any erosion in collections. Ms. Helt said that last year our concern was because of Covid that people might not make their mortgage payments along with not paying their taxes. Mr. Jerram said our collections have remained strong. Chairman Wexler said the bad news is our grand list is a little bit light on commercial properties but that is our good news now on collections.

Mr. Witte said we have \$850,000 in surplus revenue that we put into this year's current year budget. We dropped that to \$389,000 because that is what we ended up with when we closed out the year. He would put a significant amount, like \$800,000 total for our surplus revenue this year, keeping in mind the \$389,000 - most of it came from expenditures being underspent. Then next year the collection rate could be taken up a percent.

Chairman Wexler said if the majority of the \$389,000 is underspending where did the bulk of that come from. Mr. Jerram said the largest single line was the local BOE. You saw \$20,000 came from revenue. In terms of the big hits, you had a light winter last year and saved on overtime. We were expecting a change in the resident state trooper, then we had a savings in snow/sand. There is \$100,000 right off the top. The winter drives the budget. You saved it in the highway department.

Mr. Witte said the \$389,000 includes the \$100,000 from the BOE which is coming out.

Chairman Wexler said the \$100,000 plus the \$8,000 that wasn't shifted over. Mr. Witte thinks we can change the number in the neighborhood of \$800,000 knowing we've had \$850,000 in prior years that will just increase the surplus if we don't draw it. Then change the collection rate next year.

Mr. Tuxbury agrees we should draw the surplus down. We are higher than we planned on being. In all honesty every year we do return quite a bit of money. We are overtaxing people even with the great job First Selectman Jerram is doing.

Motion: by Mr. Witte that we increase the Surplus Line item in the Revenue portion of the budget from \$389,873 to \$789,873. Seconded by Ms. Helt.

Mr. Bingham thinks this is prudent. You aren't expecting revenue but you know based on the trend line you are getting close to it. There is some comfort that there are some general dollars if there is an unforeseen expense.

Mr. Witte said the next step down is raising the collection rate next year. The collection rate gives us a nice little buffer. Mr. Jerram said it gets you to a 1.98% tax increase. You still have the residual CARES act funding. These are unrestricted funds.

Chairman Wexler said it looks like the intent is restricted to Covid related or Covid damage. One thing not restricted to Covid was water & sewer.

Mr. Jerram said with the Cares act funding you could use it to offset the cost of police, ambulance and health related district fees. If we don't have any additional requests before the meeting you will have additional surplus from the budget. Out of the money available we may get \$47,500. When you pass the motion, you should include a resolution to include the remainder of the Cares funding to offset the ambulance and public safety in the 21-22 budget year.

Unanimous

Mr. Bingham asked if the short-term interest line should be amended. Chairman Wexler said to wait. Mr. Witte said we may have some revenue from the school's pass-through grants.

Region 7 budget

Mr. Tuxbury said they aren't adding any time for this education. They are adding teachers to teach less. They knew this was coming and they should have negotiated the contract better.

Mr. Witte said the bigger point they are making is they are eroding something in the contract. You are paying people more money & they are teaching for the same amount.

Mr. Tuxbury said the per pupil expense is increasing. They are losing students and their budget is going up. You will never get it back if you don't get it now. Mr. Charest said they did save about \$39,000 in debt service this year.

Chairman Wexler said the bigger question and the one she asks at every Regional 7 budget meeting is, when will we see the budget heading in the same direction as the enrollment. What are the cut-off numbers? We need bigger & more creative mitigation. Look at what Litchfield & Wamogo did. You have 2 towns cooperating. Whether it's consolidation or closing off part of the building. That's where we push them. What are the metrics you are using for when the plan will be implemented?

Ms. Guilfoyle said they need to work on a longer-term strategy. They know how many 6th graders exist. It was disingenuous when they say they don't know the incoming size.

Chairman Wexler said she has contacted the other Region 7 BOF chairs to get the number of 6th graders coming into Region 7. We might have to raise this with our Region 7 BOE members, Rob Jerram and Noel Gauthier, to be a better resource for us to get us these figures directly so we don't have to dig for them.

Chairman Wexler deemed the meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm

Respectfully submitted, Penny Miller, Recording Secretary

Available at the Town Clerk's Office letters from: Leah Drouin, Melissa Ferrucci, Michelle LeClair, John Tavano, Lauren Lyn, Hillary Schibi, Brooke Harris, Erika Pratt, Meagan Rogers, Donna LaPlante and Marissa Klepps.

**Town of New Hartford
Board of Finance Special Meeting
Public Hearing: 2021-2022 Budgets
Tuesday, April 6, 2021 - 7 pm via ZOOM**

Present: Chairman Regina Wexler, members: Dan Charest, Kerry Guilfoyle, Paul LeClair, Steve Tuxbury, Ben Witte, Alternates: Lou Helt, Bart Baxter, Ryan Bingham and Recording Secretary Penny Miller

Also Present: New Hartford Supt. of Schools Brian Murphy, New Hartford BOE Chairman Tim Goff, Region 7 Superintendent of Schools Dr. Judith Palmer, Region 7 BOE Chairman Molly Sexton Read, Director of Finance Jim Gaskins, Kathryn Boughton and several members of the public.

Chairman Wexler opened the meeting at 7:04 pm with the reading of the following legal notice - *Notice is hereby given that the electors and those entitled to vote in Town Meetings in the Town of New Hartford, CT are hereby notified and warned that a Budget Hearing for the 2021-2022 Annual Budget for the Town of New Hartford, CT will be held on Tuesday, April 6, 2021 at 7:00 PM VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM (check www.newhartfordct.gov or call 860-379-3389 for access link) at which meeting the proposed budget, including General Government, New Hartford Board of Education, Capital Expenditures and Regional School District No. 7 for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2021, will be presented. Any person may recommend the inclusion or deletion of expenditures at such meeting via public comment at the time of the meeting or via correspondence which must be received by Monday, April 5, 2021 at noon. Dated at New Hartford, Connecticut, this 16th day of March, 2021.*

Any correspondence received is posted with these minutes and available for viewing in the Town Clerk's office. Links to the budget files are as follows: [Town of New Hartford Proposed Budget as of March 17, 2021](#); [New Hartford Board of Education Proposed Budget Updated March 31, 2021](#); [Regional 7 Proposed Budget](#)

Presentation: 2021-2022 NWR#7 Board of Education Budget: Molly Sexton Read, Chair; Judith Palmer, Superintendent, and James Gaskins, Director of Finance

Region 7 BOE Chairman Ms. Read started the Region 7 budget by showing the historical expenditure increase overview. They are requesting a 1.5% increase overall in their budget. The Middle School teams will be reduced from 3.6 to 3 teams because of a drop in enrollment in that part of the school. The school plans to expand the STEP Program. This program is an after-school alternate program for those high school students who for a variety of reasons the day program isn't a successful place for them to be. Some of the Middle School teachers have been moved to the High School. There has been a reduction in force with a retirement in Special Education. That teaching position was removed and, in its place, a 10-month Supervisor of Special Education was added. Additional electives have been added to meet the state requirements for graduation.

The per pupil expenditure for the school in the Berkshire League is \$20,437 which is slightly above the state average (\$19,295). There are only two other schools below Region 7. The current enrollment is 999 - this includes students paying tuition from the towns of Winsted, Hartland, Torrington, Canton and Granby. The total also includes those attending Magnet schools and out-placements. HTA on the list is Highlander Transition Academy. This is a group of 16 students who have aged out of the high school but still need to be educated until they reach the age of 21.

Sixty-five percent of the budget is salaries. Some are contractual raises of 2-3%. Other purchased services - outplaced students - they captured some big savings in that area. The health insurance renewal is capped at 6.95%. In the Professional/Technical Services section, the use of \$25,000 in excess

cost grant was used to offset special education expenditures through Shared Services. There also was the use of \$35,000 in Excess Cost Grant to offset special education professional and technical services. The Excess Cost Grant comes from the state for every student whose tuitions cost 4x the per pupil cost. Ms. Sexton Read continued by saying that there hasn't been any new borrowing since 2012. In June 2022 the final bond will be paid off. Region 7 is developing plans for future capital plans. Based on the October 1st enrollment New Hartford saw a drop in students from 484 to 450. The overall net assessment increase is 0.57%.

At a previous meeting information regarding federal Covid grants was requested. These grants came with specific guidelines as to how they were to be used. A budget was built to reach the requirements and then submitted to the federal government for reimbursement. They are as follows for 2020/2021 - ESSER I Cares Act \$24,123 (covered Language Art Support MS), Coronavirus Relief Fund I \$301,108 (covered duct cleaning, PPE, signage, plexiglass barriers, etc.), Coronavirus Relief Fund II \$247,962 (covered Chromebooks, laptops, technology). For 2021/2022 ESSER II Cares Act \$106,949.00 (planning stages, waiting for assessment data) and American Rescue Plan Act \$198,000.00 (estimated - waiting for more information). It is the district's intention that the priority is to start with the students and those funds will be used to help with any learning gaps that may have happened due to remote learning. It will involve mental health, social and emotional learning.

Ms. Sexton Read concluded by saying that Regional School District 7 provides a rigorous and comprehensive education program for all learners. They employ exceptional teachers, support staff and strong administrators. The absentee rate is extremely low at 3% during the hybrid model and 100% high school graduation rate.

The entire power point presentation can be found on the Region 7 website under Board of Education. As there were no questions from the Board of Finance or the public, Chairman Wexler thanked Region 7 for their presentation.

Presentation: 2021-2022 New Hartford Board of Education Budget: Tim Goff, Chair and Brian Murphy, Superintendent

Chairman Wexler welcomed Tim Goff & Brian Murphy and asked them to present their 2021/2022 New Hartford Board of Education budget.

BOE Chairman Goff said the New Hartford Board of Education budget was initially approved on February 16, 2021 and revised on March 31, 2021. Though changes were made between those two dates the requested increase of 3.89% did not change. Mr. Goff read the BOE's Mission Statement and Theory of Action. Some of the high points in Assumptions are the district's enrollment continues to increase, Special Education Costs will continue to increase significantly, overall certified and non-certified staffing levels will be adjusted based on enrollment/programming/facility considerations. Individual Health insurance costs will increase due to contracted costs with Anthem. The RISE program will continue to be funded. The special education tuition account reflects costs for New Hartford students currently receiving services outside the school. There are two out-placed students that are the main driver in this account increase. Oak Hill School will continue to be supported at Antolini School. This is the final year of the DATTCO bus contract. Bids have been received and will be reviewed by the Transportation Committee.

Some of the priorities are: ensure that safety and health standards are maintained and enhanced to improve student achievement. The New Hartford Public Schools have been fully open since the beginning of this year except for a couple of exceptions. Panic buttons were installed in all the classrooms and major common areas. The Illustrative Math program will continue to be implemented in grades K-6. Funding will continue for the Advanced Manufacturing Program for 5th & 6th graders. This program is done in partnership with Goodwin University. Electronic devices will continue to be replaced in the district. They will continue to partner with Project Playground.

Mr. Goff said last year the Capital plan was cut in half. This was done because of the Covid pandemic and to show an effort of good faith with the taxpayers of New Hartford.

The increase to the budget is \$331,964 or 3.89%. This includes increases of \$272,065 in Special Education Costs which includes SPED pupil transportation. Contractual salary increases of \$90,068. The remaining increase of \$96,835 is due to an increase in Health Insurance costs of \$55,146 and the Regular Education Bus lease of \$17,934. Decreases amount to \$127,004 with the major decreases being: Interventionist \$24,198, Tutor \$24,198 and Heating Oil \$16,225. Previously the board was going to eliminate a 4th grade teaching section. But after numerous letters were received by the board in opposition to this, the board listened to the public and added that section back in. In order to find the money to put that teaching section back an interventionist will be eliminated. The board also realized savings in the health insurance line and a slight decrease in the maintenance line.

The total school budget is \$8,869,070. An increase of \$331,964 or 3.89%. Similar to the Region 7 budget, half of the local school budget is in salaries & benefits. The personnel changes for next year are a decrease of a Full-Time Tutor and a Full-Time Interventionist. The contractual increases are Administrators 2.0%, Teachers 2.9%, Tutors 2.0%, Custodians 2.0%, and Secretaries 2.0%. Currently negotiations have been started for the non-certified staff.

Total class enrollment projected for next year is at 436 up from 421. The per pupil expenditure is \$19,268 putting New Hartford as the lowest compared to Barkhamsted, Region 7, Colebrook, Winchester, Hartland and Norfolk.

At this point Supt. Murphy continued with the presentation. He highlighted some of the line item changes. He said they have been able to hire new staff members at a lower rate. Many of the items are flat-lined or reduced. CREC tuition has gone down 6.3%. Special education is up 6.4%. A social worker was hired at a higher rate than anticipated. Special education tutors are down because of one position being eliminated. Outplacement tuition went up because of 2 unanticipated students being outplaced. There has been a decrease in electricity costs with the lights being changed to LEDs. The school district as part of a consortium for the purchase of heating oil and they were able to save \$16,225.00.

BOE Chairman Goff said the school's Capital budget includes the purchase of 80 Chromebooks & 4 Promethean Boards at \$40,000. Other Capital items include: replacement of floor tile in one of the rooms at Antolini School and security upgrades (doors), at Bakerville School - sidewalk repair, along with foyer/gym/classroom painting, and at New Hartford Elementary boiler replacement, painting/classroom and playground equipment at both Bakerville & New Hartford Elementary for a total Capital request of \$163,000.00

Finally, Mr. Goff said that the district successfully navigated the COVID-19 pandemic. They implemented 1:1 student device for the entire district. Expanded the Advanced Manufacturing Program to 5th grade. Thousands of free meals are being given to the students during the Pandemic because of a federal reimbursement program. Free breakfast is available at Antolini School along with free lunch at all 3 schools.

Chairman Wexler said Sue Lundin in an email brought up the point of the \$100,000 in the non-lapsing fund. Mr. Goff said last year with savings realized from busing reductions and COVID restrictions, \$100,000 was placed in a non-lapsing account. It can be applied year after year to the BOE budget. Because of the 2 outplaced students coming into the school district this current year a deficit of \$190,000 was realized. The district has been able to mitigate \$90,000 of that. It is hopeful that they can mitigate most of the remaining \$100,000. If they can't it would be up to the BOF to apply it to the deficit from last year. If they can then it would be up to the BOF as to what they would do with the \$100,000 in that account. Superintendent Murphy is looking to mitigate significantly lower the \$100,000. They are realizing some savings with DATTCO with one less bus and fuel costs. Also, some extra money from the state for COVID costs.

Aulay Carlson wrote about the Pre-K program. Supt. Murphy said he thanks the Board of Finance for their support in this Pre-K program. Usually there are 17-18 students in that class. These students are part of the New Hartford Public Schools and included in the October 1st census sent to the state. Mr. Tuxbury said the lack of capital in the Board of Education budget last year was their choice. The maintenance is being deferred and you will see it in next year's budget. Supt. Murphy said we had to make some tough choices. We will have to follow through in the capital with the maintenance and keep our buildings maintained.

First Selectman Jerram said the majority of the 18 letters received were about the class size and the elimination of the 4th grade teaching section. He went on to say thanks to the members of the Board of Finance, Board of Education, Supt. Murphy and Board of Selectmen who all work to put together a good budget to meet the needs of the town.

Chairman Wexler said she wanted to reiterate for the members of the public on this call who haven't attended all the budget meetings, that the Board of Finance, when it comes to the Education budget, doesn't have any line-item authority to add or subtract anything to that budget. The Board of Finance either gives a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down to the BOE proposed budget to either cut or add to their budget. The school board has the discretion to spend within their general operating & CAPEX budget.

Jessica Chicoski, 207 Stub Hollow Road – said she one of those who had written about not eliminating the 4th grade teacher. She feels they did the right thing. Many parents including herself wants to keep the interventionist. No one wants to see an increase in the budget but she feels the education of the children is worth it. Her worry is that you will request further cuts and anymore cuts will be detrimental to our children and their education. Her specific worry is money allocated to the playgrounds will be cut. The Playground Committee has raised \$130,000. With a couple more fundraisers they are sure they will have enough money to purchase and install the playgrounds at Bakerville, New Hartford Elementary and the Pre-K at New Hartford Elementary. The \$20,000 in the BOE Capital is for the cost of the engineered wood fiber surfacing and fencing. Without the funding the playgrounds cannot be utilized without those safety items in place.

Jane Allyn, 101 South Road, asked about out-placement tuition costs. She remembered seeing that some portions of that cost are reimbursed. She isn't seeing it in the BOE budget. If the reimbursement isn't included does that increase the bottom line for the BOE budget? Chairman Wexler said the ECS is a wash. Mr. Jerram said those reimbursements aren't in the BOE budget but in the back page of the Municipal budget under Excess Cost for Special Education. They are counted for but in a different place. Mr. Witte explained how the excess costs are calculated. We know we have this coming and we budget for it. We know we have some revenue to cover that expenditure. Ms. Allyn asked is that decision made by the Board of Finance or by the town as to how it is reflected. Mr. Murphy said the Excess Cost reimbursement goes directly to the town. It isn't part of the BOE budgeting. Mr. Jerram said that this year there is \$50,000 in the municipal budget.

Marissa Klepps, 94 Shafer Road, said she has been following the BOE meetings. As a taxpayer and a parent, she expresses her support of the BOE budget.

Presentation: 2021-2022 New Hartford Municipal Budget: Dan Jerram, First Selectman

First Selectman Jerram started his presentation by saying that pay raises for town hall employees, police & public works were deferred until this year and next. As proposed, there is a \$419,944.45 in spending or a 1.98% increase in taxes. The items that caused the increase are: General Gov. Operations up \$164,728.45, General Gov. Capital up \$56,000, Local BOE Operations up \$329,964, Local BOE Capital up \$82,500, Region 7 Operations down \$128,118, Debt Service down \$10,351 and Revenue Estimates down \$213,127. The town took part of the Covid savings last year from Region 7.

The increase this year is a result of town employees not receiving raises last year, restoration of a part time position in the tax collector's office and modification in the funding & staffing of the assessor's

office. A certified assessor is being brought in who will provide training to the new employee in that office. General Government insurance is up \$21,620, Paving is up \$20,000, Legal is up \$17,000. This is due to the owner transfer of the Sewer & Water assets to Aquarion. Labor, insurance, paving and legal make up the majority of the increase in the budget. Of the 148 lines in this budget 101 were either held steady or reduced.

The Grand List is up \$7,687,275 from new construction. At 30.63 mills, that equates to \$235,461.20 in new tax dollars.

The Fund Balance is up to \$4,412,138. Last year there was \$389,873 in operating surplus which includes the \$100,000 from the local BOE. The remaining came out of the General Government budget.

The bond for New Hartford Elementary and some Open Space will be paid off in 2027 and the approved sale of assets will retire the WWTP bond.

The cause of the size of the total tax increase can be attributed to Special Ed needs in the local BOE budget. Collections remain strong even during the pandemic and the Collection Rates remains at 96.5%. A sizeable decrease in revenue last year funded operations with \$850,000 from savings. The Regional 7 reduction is helping but some of the savings have already been realized.

First Selectman Jerram went through the New Hartford General Government draft copy dated March 8, 2021. The increase in the General Government Budget is \$164,728.45. With Debt Service, Capital Expenditures, Education and the BOE Pass through Grants/REAP the total budget including Education is \$460,781.45.

Health insurance is forecasted to go up to \$446,000. The total Education increase is 1.1%. The detail for the Education budgets is in each individual budget. There have been recent state mandates for body & car cameras for the troopers. There hasn't been a lot of guidance from the state on this yet. The town has been working with State Trooper Figueral and they will be in compliance to have all the equipment that is needed.

RRDD#1 has an increase of \$3,819. All of our trash goes from RRDD#1 to MIRA (Materials Innovation and Recycling Authority) in Hartford. MIRA is scheduled for decommissioning and at this time the state doesn't have an answer as to what will be done when it closes. While there is a slight increase here, First Selectman Jerram believes that residents will see a rise in sticker prices this coming year.

Bands have been booked and the concert series will continue this summer at Brodie Park. There is a slight increase in fees for the beach because the state raised the minimum wage. New canoe & kayak racks have been built.

Under Debt Service there hasn't been new bonds in a couple of years. The older bonds that were refinanced - 2016 Gen OBL Bond retires in 2026, the 2017 Gen OBL Bond which was renovations & ADL at Antolini School & the Carpenter Road Bridge retires in 2037. The WWTP bond which upon completion of the sale will be paid off.

The Senior Bus is being used constantly. It's a twelve-passenger bus but because of Covid restrictions you can only allow one or two people at a time on the bus.

The Capital Budget request is \$441,000 for the General Government. With the BOE Capital of \$154,000 the total Capital budget is \$595,000. Included in the town's capital request is: Charging Station, DPW Pick-up Truck, the 2nd payment for the Large Plow Truck, Technology at the Town Hall, Recreation Capital, Rails to Trails, Town Hall Equip. Replacement (core infrastructure), DPW Skid Steer (currently renting one & used daily), DPW Mini Excavator, Downtown Improvements (maintaining sidewalks, infrastructure, lighting) and Bridge Improvements (includes repair of the Cedar Lane Bridge).

There has been a decrease in short-term interest because interest rates from the banks have fallen. The Pass-through grants do not impact the bottom line.

When it's all put together you get into the calculation of revenues and expenses and the mill rate required to tax our residents. After the adjustments made at the last meeting (a decrease from Region 7 and increasing the surplus allocation to \$789,873) it brought the tax increase down from 4% to just under 2%.

Mr. Jerram said for the record he has read all the letters received and public comment. He said it was great that the BOE addressed the needs of the majority of the letters received. The last couple of letters dealt with town government issue. One addressed salary increases. He said that last year Town Hall employees did not receive any raises. The other one had a different perspective. Last year was a huge challenge but we made it work. The same level of concern from all the volunteers on the Board of Finance was exhibited whether they were in person or not and did the best that they could. They rose to the challenge. To say they were not trying to do their best is not representative of what happens around here.

Motion: by Witte to close the public hearing. Seconded by Guilfoyle.

Unanimous

Chairman Wexler thanked everyone for participating. The Board of Finance, as a whole, felt very uncomfortable with the lack of a referendum last year. It wasn't a responsibility that they wanted. It was the most uncertain budget season. She hopes our economy continues to improve and our grand list continues to increase. She said she appreciates all the public input. All letters received can't be read out loud but that tonight they addressed questions that hadn't been answered by the Board of Ed or the Board of Finance. She encourages the public to send in their input more than 24 hours before the meeting so it becomes part of the minutes.

Chairman Wexler asked for any objections to adjourning at 9:33 pm. There were none.

Respectfully submitted, Penny Miller, Recording Secretary

Handouts

Region 7 budget – available on the Region 7 website

New Hartford Board of Education – available at www.newhctfd.org & at the Supt. Of Schools Office

New Hartford Town Government – available at newhartfordct.gov & the First Selectman's Office

The following are available for viewing at the Town Clerk's Office

Stephanie Genao-Reyes, dated March 8, 2021

Jane Allyn – dated March 8, 2021

Marissa Klepps – dated March 8, 2021

Donna LaPlante – dated March 9, 2021

Megan Rogers – dated March 11, 2021

Heather Morin – dated March 11, 2021

Erin Kenney – dated March 11, 2021

Erika Pratt – dated March 13, 2021

Hillary Schibi – dated March 13, 2021

Melissa Ferrucci – dated March 11, 2021

Brooke Harris – dated March 12, 2021

John Tavano – dated March 12, 2021

Lauren Lyn – dated March 12, 2021

Leah Drouin – dated March 12, 2021

Michelle LeClair – dated March 12, 2021

Julie Albert – dated March 29, 2021

Sue Lundin – dated April 5, 2021

Aulay Carlson – emailed 4/5/2021 (dated March 26, 2021)

Christine Hayward

From: Hillary Coan <hillscoan@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 6, 2021 9:24 PM
To: Christine Hayward
Subject: BOE budget

Dear Board of Finance members,

I wanted to write because I was having technical difficulties on the zoom call earlier this evening and wasn't able to speak. I just want to thank you all for your time and consideration for this upcoming budget. I wrote a letter to the BOE about the 4th grade teaching position and putting it back into the budget. I feel it's so crucial for that class to have 4 sections especially with the past school year and all the hurdles and challenges they faced the administration and teachers have done a phenomenal job so our children could have a successful school year.

I also wanted to mention that I'm on the PTO board and other numerous volunteer committees, one including the Project Playground. We have worked so hard to raise the funds for the playground and hope that you approve the budget for the playground line items. These kids deserve to have a fun and safe place to play.

Thank you for your time,

Hillary Schibi

Christine Hayward

From: Kristen Fox <kfox1984@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 7, 2021 10:42 AM
To: Christine Hayward
Subject: Attn: Board of Finance

To whom it may concern,

I attended the call last night regarding the budget and I am requesting your approval of the Board of Education Budget.

Any further cuts to the budget will be detrimental to our education system and our children.

One of my main focuses would be keeping the money allocated to the playground. I moved to New Hartford a few years back because of the community and the great school system. However, I remember when I was enrolling my son into Bakerville and noticed the poor excuse for a playground. Project Playground had already raised over 120,000 on their own and the additional money would help ensure the safety of the children, which should be the boards top priority.

In each of last nights presentation it was focused around the social and emotional learning and mental health for our students. Physical activity and unstructured playtime on a playground serve as a healthy way to help children deal with their emotions and stress levels. Not only can play serve as a distraction from their problems, but happiness is a natural byproduct of outdoor activities.

These children have suffered enough this past year and deserve to have a playground at their school. If you were to cut the playground funding from this budget you would be adding to the problem of not helping these children deal with emotional and mental stress that they have been dealing with. They DESERVE this, do not take it away from them.

If you have any questions or comments, please fee free to contact me.

Thank you,
Kristen Kosiba
5162042779

Sent from my iPhone

Christine Hayward

From: Melissa Wilczak <mellie8381@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 7, 2021 10:42 AM
To: Christine Hayward
Subject: Board of Education Budget - Att Board of Finance

Good morning.

I am writing to you this morning as a concerned member of the New Hartford community and parent of a child at Antolini School and Bakerville School. We are concerned about the Board of Education budget and are hopeful that changes do not affect the current money allotted to the schools and money to be given to Project Playground. The group of parents in Project Playground has worked extremely hard to raise funds for our children, with very little help from the town and would significantly be impacted should this money not be provided. I support this money to be provided to Project Playground, as the children do deserve and require a safe space to play.

Thank you for your time.

Kind regards,
Melissa Wilczak

Christine Hayward

From: Kristen Bakula <ckbakula@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 7, 2021 10:54 AM
To: Christine Hayward
Subject: Approval of the Board of Education's Budget

To the Board of Finance,

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed Board of Education budget as it was presented in the meeting I attended last evening. As a tax payer in the town of New Hartford and a parent of two children who attend Bakerville School, I feel it is the Board of Finance's responsibility to ensure enough funds are allocated to the Board of Education to protect our youths educational experience. I feel strongly that any further cuts to the current proposed budget would be detrimental to my child's education. Furthermore, as a member of the Project Playground committee, along side the countless other members of the community who have worked tirelessly to make these playgrounds a reality for our kids, I sincerely hope that the importance of these funds to achieving our goal is strongly considered.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Kristen Bakula

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

Christine Hayward

From: Jane Allyn <janeallyn2@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 7, 2021 1:20 PM
To: Christine Hayward; Brian Murphy; gofft@newhtfd.org
Subject: BOE Budget presented 3/6/21

Dear members of the Board of Finance,

I wanted to express my support for the BOE budget that was presented during the 3/6/21 Budget Hearing. I appreciate that Brian Murphy and the members of BOE responded to the public requests to put the additional 4th grade teacher back into the plan. While I am disappointed that this required a reduction of a tutor and interventionist, I believe it is heading in the right direction. I am hopeful that the BOF will agree with this and not request further reductions.

Thank you for your time.

Jane Allyn

Christine Hayward

From: Chris Hughes <chughes@bmwwestspringfield.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 7, 2021 7:16 PM
To: Christine Hayward
Subject: Support of the Board of Ed proposed Budget and capital items

To New Hartford Board of Finance,

My name is Christopher Hughes of 34 Hickory Knoll, Bakerville.

My wife and 3 children moved to New Hartford 4 years ago. We were instantly drawn to the community and all it has to offer our kids, especially the school systems.

When we were asked to volunteer and become members of the Project Playground Committee, we joined instantly. The playgrounds are out of date, non inclusive, non ADA compliant and out of code, not to mention not interesting or imaginative at all...and our kids and community deserve better.

We have spent the last two years, along with many other dedicated families volunteering to obtain the funds to revamp not only one, but both playgrounds in town. The support and outpouring from the town, its families and businesses was infectious. It proved our choice to come here was a good one.

The playground committee is made up of busy, dedicated families that have given their time, their money and their spirit into making what seemed and impossible goal of \$160,000.00 - attainable, which is amazing.

Everyone shows when it is time for fundraisers, people rallied around the idea sharing, and intensity it took to get is from \$0 to \$120,000 in a very short time and even during a incredibly challenging time, during a Covid19 pandemic.

Local families have donated even though times are very financially stressed for most. Local businesses donated profits even though their expenses are up, budgets are cut and business has been slowed due to the pandemic.

As a group and a town, we have done more than our part to get us 80% to goal and now need the BOF/BOE help to cross the finish line - a commitment that was understandably taken from us after being promised during last years budget.

New playgrounds are detrimental to the growth and education of our kids. We need the improvements to keep young families coming to New Hartford, to keep our community and property values strong and to secure a strong, safe and diverse New Hartford for the future.

I fully support the current proposed budget staying as is, as the money allocated in the line items are all necessary to improve and further our children's education, imagination and safety. Any further cuts would be detrimental to our education system, especially if those cuts affected the allocated playground funds.

Kindest Regards,

Christopher Hughes

General Sales Manager
Certified Pre-Owned Specialist
BMW of West Springfield

Message Sent from my iPhone