

**New Milford Board of Education  
 Budget Hearings & Adoption Minutes Revised  
 January 17, 18, 23 & 24, 2024  
 Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

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**Budget Hearing Minutes Revised  
 January 17, 2024  
 Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

Present:	Mrs. Wendy Faulenbach, Chairperson Mr. Eric Hansell Mr. Brian McCauley Mrs. Tammy McInerney Mr. Tom O'Brien Mr. Dean Barile Mrs. Sarah Herring Mayor Pete Bass, Ex officio
Absent:	Mrs. Sarich and Mrs. Rella

Also Present:	Dr. Janet Parlato, Superintendent of Schools Ms. Holly Hollander, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Mr. Anthony Giovannone, Director of Fiscal Services and Operations Mr. Jeffrey Turner, Technology Director Mrs. Anne Bilko, Sarah Noble Intermediate School Principal Mrs. Gwen Gallagher, Northville Elementary School Principal Mrs. Catherine Calabrese, Hill and Plain Elementary School Principal
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1.	Call to Order Pledge of Allegiance The budget hearing meeting of the New Milford Board of Education was called to order at 7:00pm. by Mrs. Faulenbach, Chairperson. The Pledge of Allegiance immediately followed the call to order.	<b>Call to Order        Pledge of Allegiance</b>
2.	<b>Presentation of the Superintendent's Proposed 2024-2025 Budget</b>  Mrs. Faulenbach stated there is an outline on budget proceedings available, noting that there is an opportunity for the public to be heard at the end of tonight's meeting. The following two evenings the public will have a chance to speak at the beginning and end of the meetings. On the last night, the public will be allowed to speak at the beginning of the meeting.  Dr. Parlato began by presenting the proposed 24-25 budget. The presentation discussed the	<b>Presentation of the Superintendent's Proposed 2024-2025 School Budget</b>

	<p>following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Overview of the budget;</li><li>● Fixed costs and how they impact the proposed budget;</li><li>● Items that are controllable and fixed;</li><li>● Use these as a springboard for questions and discussion;</li><li>● Create connections for district priorities and proposed items.</li></ul> <p>Dr. Parlato discussed the mission statement, and stated the new additions are the ideas the district lives by: Focus, Collaboration, Heart, and Creativity. Dr. Parlato gave the budget development timeline and stated it began in October, leading up to January. It is a collaborative effort, based on the needs of each school and the departments. The goals include working towards PreK-12 students academic targets, relationship strengthening, and creating a welcoming school climate.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato explained that budget priorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Student support;</li><li>● High quality teaching and learning, by using strategies and new programs to maximize student learning;</li><li>● Future-focused programming to build opportunities for careers and real world experiences.</li></ul> <p>Dr. Parlato went on to review the fixed costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Contractual salaries for all bargaining units;</li><li>● Contractual benefits for all bargaining units;</li><li>● Bus contract;</li><li>● Utilities;</li><li>● Insurance;</li><li>● Agriscience seats (3 more than last year).</li></ul> <p>Dr. Parlato stated this is an increase of \$2,157,470 or 3.05%.</p>	
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	<p>Dr. Parlato discussed the ESSER cliff and explained ESSER III funds are expiring September 30, 2024. All funds must be expended by that date. New Milford received \$2,588,252. A portion was spent on 13.5 certified positions. The positions were created to address needs that came from the pandemic: learning loss, incomplete learning, mental health challenges, etc., but those needs will continue after September. Dr. Parlato requested to move 7.5 of the 13.5 positions to the district budget. This includes 2 English Language Learner (ELL) positions, 1 Pathways Coordinator, 2 Grades K-8 Curriculum Specialists (Math and Reading/Language Arts), 1 nurse, 0.5 In-School Suspension Monitor, 0.5 Preschool Teacher, and 0.5 School Counselor. It is a total of \$641,130 for salary and benefits.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato continued, stating there are additional requests to increase the School Security Officer pay from \$25/hour to \$30/hour. Also, increase the budget for Athletics and Field Trip Transportation. With the bus system not being reliable for club and activity transport, the district has needed to go to more costly, outside vendors. Dr. Parlato proposed the district add Certified Nursing Assistant and Emergency Medical Technician Programs. This all connects to Pathways at the high school. Dr. Parlato also requested an increase to out-of-district placement tuition, non-bargaining unit employee salaries and benefits, and other miscellaneous items such as legal, etc.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato stated the overall proposed budget amount is \$73,883,539.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato went over the positions that would not be carried over once the ESSER funding expires in September 2024 and other proposed reductions of currently held positions not ESSER-funded. It is a reduction of \$561,494.</p> <p>Dr Parlato summarized the process is honest, transparent, and thoughtful. There are specific conversations about the budget. Important student needs are persisting and increasing.</p>	
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	<p>Dr. Parlato concluded by thanking her cabinet and administrators for putting forth fair and thoughtful ideas.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach opened it up to questions.</p> <p>Mr. McCauley asked if there are still math and reading coaches in the elementary schools. Ms. Hollander stated there are 4.0 at the K-5 level and 1.0 at 6-8 level. Mrs. Herring asked if the Pathways Coordinator is paid as a teacher and if they are working with students. Dr. Parlato stated yes, it is a school counselor position for career readiness. Mrs. Herring asked about the additional nurse for the transition program at The Maxx. Dr. Parlato stated if the student needs care urgently, yes. Mrs. Herring then asked about the 0.5 school counselor and where they would be. Dr. Parlato stated they will be at Sarah Noble. The district already pays half of it, and the ESSER grant pays the other half so that half will move to the school budget.</p> <p>Mr. O'Brien asked how many positions would be left with the reduction of 2 placeholders from the out placement tuition line. Mrs. Olson stated 5. Mr. O'Brien stated it is a risky move. Dr. Parlato agreed it is a risk but there are placeholders that still exist in the budget. Mrs. Faulenbach added it is a reduction from this year's budget. Ms. McInerney pointed out that the funds would have to come from somewhere in the operations budget if the outplacement line is exhausted and additional students require outplacement.</p> <p>Mr. Barile asked if there is a number for the students that pay tuition to attend New Milford Public Schools. Dr. Parlato stated yes and it will be reviewed by Mr. Giovannone.</p> <p>Mr. Hansell asked regarding the reduction of tutors, and if they were being fully utilized. Dr. Parlato stated the district had a hard time finding teachers to take the tutor positions. Mr. Hansell asked to clarify that it is not an educational loss. Dr. Parlato stated it is always a loss when positions are unfilled. Mr. Hansell stated the</p>	
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	<p>school based health clinics were using ESSER funds. Dr. Parlato stated the mental health component of that is covered by CIFC, the money from ESSER was for the construction of that medical piece and that money was not used. Mr. Hansell wanted to clarify that there would not be any public funds going towards that project. Dr. Parlato stated the only way funds would go towards it is if the district is billed for a secretary to help with the clerical piece of billing insurance. That would be what the district would cover.</p> <p>Mr. Hansell stated he wanted to make sure it doesn't become a taxpayer funded medical clinic. Dr. Parlato stated they have no plans for that.</p> <p>Mr. Hansell then asked about the ELL, increasing by 2 employees. Mr. Hansell asked, of the kids that come in, how long do they stay, and do they have the support to eventually transition out. It is a concern, if they don't need to be in there anymore, they should be transitioned. Dr. Parlato said they take assessments every year to see who can be moved out.</p> <p>Mrs. Herring stated she is concerned about losing 4 reading and math interventionists and tutors. Mrs. Herring stated she thinks funds should go towards direct work with the students. Dr. Parlato stated the Coaches will begin to take on interventionists roles in their duties.</p> <p>Mrs. Herring asked what books are being used in math for grades 7-8. Ms. Hollander stated they are making sure students are ready for 9th grade in 8th grade. Currently there is a disconnect, so it's being realigned and that is happening in 6th grade right now. Mrs. Herring asked if they're creating the lessons. Ms. Hollander stated they are trying to figure that out - if the district wants to purchase or create its own. Dr. Parlato added, circling back to Mrs. Herring's original question, that it is not eliminating interventionists totally, there are still interventionists in the General Fund.</p>	
<p><b>3.</b></p>	<p><b>Discussion of the Superintendent's Proposed 2024-2025 Budget including but not limited to,</b></p>	<p><b>Discussion of the Superintendent's Proposed 2024-2025 Budget including but</b></p>

	<p><b>PK - Grade 5, Transportation, Benefits, Revenue, District-Wide Departments</b></p> <p>Dr. Parlato began by stating this is a great way to showcase the work of the schools.</p> <p>Mrs. Calabrese, Mrs. Gallagher and Mrs. Bilko gave a collaborative presentation.</p> <p>Mrs. Calabrese stated that at HPS, there are 35.95 staff members and HPS is projected to have 396 students next year. She then broke it down by grade for students and teachers.</p> <p>Mrs. Gallagher stated there are 40.85 staff members at NES. It is projected to have 434 students next year. She stated the numbers are on par with the current school year.</p> <p>Mrs. Bilko stated SNIS is projected to have 747 students next year and 4th grade has a slightly lower enrollment than the 3rd and 5th grades. Mrs. Bilko stated there are roughly 1,500 students between the schools and displayed some of the work that's been happening in the schools.</p> <p>Mrs. Gallagher discussed the Heggerty, UFLI and Science of Reading programs stating they focus on the five pillars of reading and strong Tier 1 instruction. It's in support of the students. Coaches are in the classrooms modeling and working with the teachers. Dr. Parlato added that if students are not reading at grade level by 3rd grade it is very difficult to catch up.</p> <p>Mrs. Gallager, Mrs. Calabrese and Mrs. Bilko showed the iReady fall vs. winter scores and showed that there was improvement across the three schools. Their efforts are making an impact. Mrs. Gallagher noted it is a diagnostic tool and the district can dive down deep and see where a student may be struggling.</p> <p>Mrs. Bilko stated iReady is a heavy lift. It is all new, and the transition has been a group effort. It was important to make sure teachers are prepared so they can teach to the kids. It's lots of</p>	<p><b>not limited to, PK - Grade 5, Transportation, Benefits, Revenue, District-Wide Departments</b></p>
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	<p>mathematical language so students can talk through the math problems.</p> <p>Mrs. Gallagher stated they have academic Interventions. Interventionists work with the tier 2 students a few times a week. Tier 3 students are seen each day.</p> <p>Mrs. Bilko stated there are related services through counselors and social workers, to help students with social emotional needs. This helps them manage emotions and frustrations so they can regulate and be ready to learn.</p> <p>Mrs. Calabrese showed the budget for the three schools and the percentage of what they are in the overall budget.</p> <p>Mrs. Gallagher stated the budget ensures to continue to help support students. Mrs. Bilko added that it is centered on the whole child learning and growing.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach thanked Mrs. Gallagher, Mrs. Calabrese, and Mrs. Bilko and asked if there were any questions.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney asked about the NES budget overview. NES breakdown of class sizes for PreK vs. HPS, and that there is a large difference. Mrs. Gallagher stated it is most likely a typo.</p> <p>Mr. Barile asked how the iReady compares to state standardized tests. Mrs. Bilko stated iReady helps gauge how students are doing throughout the school year. It's a snapshot in time, and given the scores they feel strongly that students will perform better on the standardized tests. Dr. Parlato stated it is one of the reasons the district selected iReady.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato thanked the PreK-5 team and acknowledged the assistant principals.</p> <p>Mr. Hansell asked when SBAC's are taken. Mrs. Bilko stated it is in April and results are released over the summer.</p>	
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	<p>Mrs. Faulenbach stated there will be a workshop on where the district is with test scores in February.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked what the amount is to move the 0.5 HPS from ESSER to the General Fund. Mr. Giovannone stated \$36,000 all in.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach began reviewing the budgets for the K-5 schools.</p> <p>Mr. Hansell asked for clarification on the 0.5 FTE on page 12. Mr. Giovannone stated it is going up 15.9%. If not for the addition of the 0.5 FTE, it would only go up approximately 3%.</p> <p>Mr. McCauley asked about the Special Education break out. Mr. Giovannone stated Special Education and Pupil Personnel is the same as it has been.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked if there were any questions about the NES budget. There were none.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach moved on to SNIS.</p> <p>Mr. Hansell asked on page 23, the addition from ESSER is the ELL teacher. Mr. Giovannone stated yes, it is absorbing one of the ELL teachers. Dr. Parlato stated one is SNIS and one is SMS. Mr. Hansell asked about the counselor. Mrs. Faulenbach and Dr. Parlato stated 0.5 is being taken from ESSER and being added to the General Fund, 0.5 was already in the General Fund.</p> <p>Mr. Hansell asked about the school counselors. Dr. Parlato stated there is increased anxiety in students, there is a mental health need for it. She hopes it dissipates, but doesn't think it is just from Covid. Mr. Hansell clarified stating, so there was already a need before Covid. Mr. McCauley stated there has always been a need for more counselors. Mr. Barile added that the specialists, once the teachers are up to speed, may not be needed as much.</p>	
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	<p>Mrs. Faulenbach stated the appendices are very helpful, and to readdress Mr. Hansell's question, it would be helpful to see what we have for support in the district. As enrollment has declined, some of the needs in these areas have actually increased. Concerns are brought up every year by the community and staff regarding support services in mental health.</p> <p>Mrs. Herring asked about the positions being removed, and asked if these people lose their jobs or get absorbed somewhere else. Dr. Parlato stated some may be absorbed depending on retirements and if some of them are more senior, they will have bumping rights.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney thanked them for presenting.</p> <p><b>Transportation:</b></p> <p>Mr. Giovannone presented the Department of General Administration. He stated there is an increase of 5.88% regarding stipends, salary/non-cert transportation and pupil transportation.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach, asked about pupil transportation. Mr. Giovannone stated it is for normal general education transportation. Mrs. Faulenbach asked what the size of the fleet is. Mr. Giovannone stated there are 47 drivers and the district is in year two of its five year contract.</p> <p>Mr. Hansell asked about tracking and swiping of student IDs, and stated that the cost is a concern. Dr. Parlato stated the swiping is not in her budget. Mr. Hansell stated there is a need for being able to track the bus, but is worried it will be a disappointment and essentially be diminishing returns because it will be more frustration than a benefit. Dr. Parlato stated the sample app the bus company provided was not good. She agreed it can be helpful but needs to be high quality. Mr. O'Brien asked what swiping is. Dr. Parlato stated it's when the students swipe as they get on or off the bus.</p>	
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	<p>Mrs. McInerney asked Dr. Parlato if the app the bus company has shown has met her satisfaction. Dr. Parlato stated no. Mrs. McInerney asked to confirm the district won't be funding it. Dr. Parlato stated that was correct, the district won't spend it unless it is worth the dollars.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked to clarify the 0.5 Courier position, if the cost is neutral. Mr. Giovannone stated yes, Mrs. Faulenbach noted it will be a zero increase to the overall budget. Mr. Giovannone confirmed yes.</p> <p>Mr. Giovannone continued by going over the benefits and stated some line items are provided by the state, some are provided by The Hartford and some by CIRMA, which does workers compensation. Mrs. Herring asked about the increase in pension and what is attributed to it. Dr. Parlato stated that is the town pension for non-certified staff. Mayor Bass stated in the year prior, the amount of return was much less than forecast, so this is to make up for that loss of return. Mr. Giovannone stated it is not based on participation change but investment change.</p> <p>Mr. Giovannone stated regarding health insurance, he anticipates an increase of 7%. Mrs. Faulenbach stated the Town and the Board have spent a lot of time reviewing this, and it's truly collaborative. Mrs. Faulenbach asked what the public trend is. Dr. Parlato stated she will provide that. Mrs. Faulenbach stated she would like to have that number as a comparison. The SPP grew because benefits are a huge topic. Mr. Giovannone stated there are conversations with Brown &amp; Brown on whether it's worth staying on SPP.</p> <p>Mr. Giovannone stated, regarding revenue, that excess cost is for outplacement for students including transportation. Mr. O'Brien asked when the district will get the actual number. Mr. Giovannone stated it is a long process. Mr. O'Brien asked to confirm it will not be until May that we will know that number. Mr. Giovannone stated yes. It is a projection from the state that could change.</p>	
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	<p>Mr. Giovannone stated, going though the budget, Medicaid has been changed based on actuals. The FOI fees are a legacy item, set to zero. Building use fees are changing slightly. The EXCEL tuition, Special Education tuition and DCF placed tuition are remaining flat. Admissions/athletic gate receipts and parking permit fees are flat.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney asked about the reduction in athletic gate receipts and if it's because students now get in for free. Mrs. Faulenbach stated yes. Mr. Giovannone confirmed that over the last 3 years parking fees went from \$215 to \$100. Mrs. McInerney noted that both those line items changed because people came to the BOE and spoke about it.</p> <p>Mr. Barile asked about the \$801,000 out of district costs budgeted and asked if New Milford was not bringing in as many students as it is paying to send out of district. He asked how we ensure students are residents. Dr. Parlato stated she will show him our residency procedures. Mrs. McInerney noted that the money for Sherman students goes to the town and that amount is not reflected in the district budget.</p> <p>Mr. Giovannone continued by going through the Department of Fiscal Services &amp; Operations. It is an increase of 7.32% and includes staffing. Mr. Giovannone noted the L.A.P. and Cyber Insurance is going up 9.88%.</p> <p>Mr. Giovannone then stated the BOE salary line item originally created was too high and the professional services line included an amount for police presence for board meetings and hearings that are not needed.</p> <p>Mr. Giovannone stated in the slide of the Office of the Superintendent, salary lines are per contract. Dues and fees lines went up because it was not enough to carry the line item going forward.</p> <p>Mr. Hansell asked who Board members should send additional questions to as they come up. Mrs.</p>	
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		Faulenbach stated to send them to Dr. Parlato and herself. Depending on the nature of the question, Mrs. Faulenbach asked to allow for some time, but they will make sure questions are answered by next Wednesday.	
<b>4.</b>		<p><b>Opportunity for the Public to be heard</b></p> <p>Megan Byrd, 2 Carlson Rd., stated in Dr. Parlato’s presentation there were two sections she wanted to address. For the ESSER funds, the ELL increase was cited as the reason to keep the ELL funds in there. Mrs. Byrd asked, isn’t ELL mandated. There is a certain number of staff per population. Shouldn’t that be considered a mandated amount as well and should be part of the non-negotiable. This is the same for the nurse who is specific to the special needs population, which is also mandated. They should be noted that they are mandated by the State so, if cuts are made, it cannot apply to those items.</p> <p>There still is a huge need for counseling, and she is not sure why they are considering cutting those positions. Ms. Byrd stated it stood out to her.</p>	<b>Opportunity for the Public to be heard</b>
<b>5.</b>		<p><b>Recessed to Thursday, January 18, 2023</b></p> <p>The budget hearing meeting of the New Milford Board of Education was called to recess at 9:06 p.m. by Mrs. Faulenbach, Chairperson.</p>	<p><b>Recessed to Thursday, January 18, 2023</b></p> <p><b>The meeting recessed at 9:06 p.m.</b></p>

**Budget Hearing Minutes**

**January 18, 2024**

**Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

<b>Present:</b>	Mrs. Wendy Faulenbach, Chairperson Mr. Eric Hansell Mr. Brian McCauley Mrs. Tammy McInerney Mr. Tom O'Brien Mrs. Olga I. Rella Mrs. Leslie Sarich Mrs. Sarah Herring Mr. Dean Barile
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<b>Also Present:</b>	Dr. Janet Parlato, Superintendent of Schools Ms. Holly Hollander, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Mr. Anthony Giovannone, Director of Fiscal Services and Operations Mrs. Laura Olson, Director of Pupil Personnel and Special Services Mr. Matthew Cunningham, Facilities Director Mr. Jeffrey Turner, Technology Director Mr. Raymond Manka, New Milford High School Principal Mr. Keith Lipinsky, New Milford High School Athletic Director Ms. Linda Scoralick, Schaghticoke Middle School Principal
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<b>1.</b>	<b>Call to Order</b> <b>Pledge of Allegiance</b> The budget hearing meeting of the New Milford Board of Education resumed at 7:00pm by Mrs. Faulenbach, Chairperson. The Pledge of Allegiance immediately followed the call to order to resume the meeting.	<b>Call to Order</b> <b>Pledge of Allegiance</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Opportunity for the Public to be heard</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● None</li> </ul>	<b>Opportunity for the Public to be heard</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● None</li> </ul>
<b>3.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Discussion of the Superintendent's Proposed 2023-2024 Budget including, but not limited to, Grades 6-12 and District-Wide Departments</b></li> </ul> <b>Middle School:</b> Mrs. Faulenbach stated the presentation will begin with Ms. Scoralick and SMS. Ms. Scoralick began by stating middle school years are important to provide the foundation for high school, college, and career. It is to help students embrace challenges, respect others,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Discussion of the Superintendent's Proposed 2023-2024 Budget including, but not limited to, Grades 6-12 and District-Wide Departments</b></li> </ul>

learn to contribute to society, and take on larger responsibilities.

Ms. Scoralick stated the demographic is shifting. There are more MLL (Multi Language Learner) students and more SE (Special Education) students. There is also an increase in the students qualifying for free or reduced meals. There is an increased level of financial need for families as well as a need for help with social skills/behaviors. There are currently 776 students, 917 members of the SMS community and 140 staff.

Ms. Scoralick stated there has been a major focus on improving climate and culture. Staff has been doing this by setting up clear expectations, fostering student and teacher leadership, improving the physical plant, and integrating fun with spirit days, such as pep rallies and non-academic activities.

The school has been working hard on improving academics. They are going back to basics, working on engagement and motivation for students. Another area of focus is Humanities: addressing gaps in communication and improving reading, writing, making arguments, etc. ELA has been focusing on vocabulary and vertical alignment for writing. For the MLL students, the focus has been to improve overall support, not through ESL classes but a push-in format with structured study. Ms. Scoralick stated the school is also completing an inventory to identify areas for growth. In math, they are working on unpacking data use, and building a model classroom with the 6th grade classroom. They are working on building general capacity with head teachers, working with EdAdvance. There has been lots of work with STEM, and a push to create additional courses that are more hands-on and relevant.

The budget priorities include maintaining current programming in academics, athletics, and clubs and activities. Costs have gone up drastically and there is a need for more supplies to support Unified Arts. There has also been increases to transportation costs with having to utilize coach buses.

Ms. Scoralick stated she is hoping for funds to improve course offerings specifically for technology courses. They are working on a new curriculum for STEM, to complement Project Lead the Way. Computer Science is currently being rewritten to make it more hands-on, with topics that are relevant. The school is introducing Digital Media, and is requesting funds for robotics and coding to support STEM classes.

Mrs. Scoralick concluded by stating she is requesting funds to broaden opportunities outside of the classroom and to give students a chance to find their voice. Student leaders recently collaborated with the School Climate Committee. There is a hope to give student leaders more opportunities so students can learn from guest speakers and network. Mrs. Scoralick stated she worked hard to bring back assemblies, but this requires funding to bring in guest speakers. She concluded by thanking everyone for the continued support.

Mrs. Faulenbach opened it up for questions.

Mr. O'Brien asked where guest speakers are in the budget. Ms. Scoralick stated under Professional Services. Mrs. Faulenbach asked what is the total dollar amount allocated to that, and is it already allocated or a new addition. Ms. Scoralick stated they found savings from other places to add dollars to that line item and estimates about \$12,000.

Mrs. Rella asked if the \$12,000 is embedded in Professional Services. Ms. Scoralick stated yes. Mrs. Faulenbach stated Mr. Giovannone can give an update on that and distribute it to the board members.

Mr. Barile asked what the books are under Improving Academics. Ms. Scoralick stated the books are geared towards student engagement and motivation. The goal is to have them aligned with what the students are learning. Mr. Barile clarified by stating the books are used to inspire students to want to learn the curriculum. Ms. Scoralick stated yes. Mr. O'Brien asked if the teachers were reading the books too. Ms. Scoralick stated yes.

Ms. Scoralick stated many students are not English speaking, so they are documenting where the needs are, and are working on growing so they can grow. Mr. Barile asked if the school would then use that metric to measure themselves against that growth. Ms. Scoralick stated yes.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked about moving things from ESSER to the General Fund and asked how the In-School Suspension Monitor works. Ms. Scoralick stated they monitor students in in-school suspension. There is a counseling process that incorporates things such as writing an apology letter. It's about education, growth, and reflection to prevent behaviors happening again.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked how this was handled before ESSER funds. Ms. Scoralick stated it was a rotating duty of staff. In the previous six-day model, there were up to 42 people in that position, making it hard to stay consistent with completion. Teachers would do it as a duty, so now they are able to be hall monitors and on cafeteria duty. Mrs. Faulenbach asked what the dollar amount is. Mr. Giovannone stated it is \$32,381.

Mrs. Rella asked if there is a way to get an explanation for the \$70,000 in Other Services. Mr. Giovannone stated he will break out those line items for the next meeting.

Mr. Hansell asked, in regards to the In-School Suspension Monitor, do we track student incidents and are they falling off since having the position. Ms. Scoralick stated yes, it spiked a bit last year with the new administration but it's beginning to trail off. Mr. Hansell stated it is important to let the town know the value of it and the improvement it's having. Dr. Parlato stated there is state legislation that happened to move away from out of school suspensions to in-school suspension.

Mrs. Herring stated there has not been a purchase of new programs or textbooks in years. Ms. Scoralick stated they are using the resources that the staff already has on hand. They are also creating the curriculum. Mrs. Ziu-Pires has been spearheading the instructional routines, and discussing mathematical thinking. Mrs.



Herring asked to confirm the school is developing it itself. Ms. Scoralick stated yes under Mrs. Ziu-Pires' lead.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked on page 27 of the budget, the increase in SMS besides contractual is \$80,000 for the entire school. Mr. Giovannone stated yes, if you take salaries out, the increase is \$58,238 dollars.

Mrs. Sarich asked about computer education, compared to last year. Ms. Scoralick stated they are writing new courses for that, like the Computer Science class. They are asking for robotics kits and bridge building kits for the STEM classes.

Mrs. Rella asked about the transportation expense for Field Trips. Ms. Scoralick stated unless the students stay in town and do it during school hours, they have to reserve a coach bus. Mr. Giovannone stated, of the \$69,550, \$45,900 of that is purely related to transportation, \$6,500 is insurance, and some for ancillary items. Mrs. Faulenbach asked if that is separate from what Ms. Scoralick just stated about coach buses. Mr. Giovannone stated no, that is part of it. Mrs. Faulenbach asked for a list of clubs and activities. Dr. Parlato stated she would provide that.

Mrs. Rella asked about the workbooks for languages. Since SMS eliminated a whole grade for language, why an increase. Ms. Scoralick stated the budget was created in October, and the hope is to be able to fill the position, so she budgeted for it. Mrs. Rella confirmed that without the teachers there won't be a need for it. Ms. Scoralick agreed.

Mr. Hansell asked if the extra ELL teacher was coming from ESSER and if it would be a second ELL instructor. Mr. Giovannone stated that it includes the 1.0 new FT ELL from ESSER. Mr. Hansell asked if ELL instructors have a language in which they specialize. Dr. Parlato clarified that ELL does not mean the teacher speaks a specific language, a bi-lingual teacher does. An ELL teacher is certified to teach others how to speak English.

Mrs. Rella asked if it is for two teachers. Mr. Giovannone stated yes. Mrs. McInerney added that

this is the addition of one ELL teacher and a raise for a second ELL teacher. Mrs. Faulenbach added it is for one position coming from ESSER, being pulled to the General Fund and one already in the General Fund.

Mrs. Rella asked for a synopsis of what the EL program entails. Ms. Scoralick stated ESL classes used to be a Unified Art. At the beginning of last year, they became core classes, so English is essentially their World Language class. Ms. Scoralick added that she is trying to support students and add in a structured study hall.

Mr. McCauley asked about ELL, and stated they are mandatory based on the number of students. Dr. Parlato stated she will send out more information about it but essentially if you have 20 plus students, then you need the bi-lingual teacher. Mrs. McInerney added that one is mandated (bi-lingial), and one is not state mandated (ELL) but needs to be addressed for the students.

Mrs. Herring asked about the increase of staff. Mr. Giovannone stated it is the ISS monitor, and contractual increases. If you back out the \$32,281 it would show an increase of 3% budgeted for existing people.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked about structured study halls. Ms. Scoralick stated 504 and MLL students can use structured study halls for identified needs. Mrs. Faulenbach asked where we are with the number of study halls. Ms. Scoralick stated she didn't have an exact number, but it has drastically decreased. Mrs. McInerney stated the structured study halls are necessary for students who need the time for schoolwork.

Mrs. Rella asked about the 20% increase in security. Mr. Giovannone replied that it has to do with the MoU for school security officers. Mrs. Faulenbach added it was discussed last night.

Mrs. Herring stated structured study halls shouldn't turn into a reteaching period. Ms. Scoralick stated it is being counted as one of the 5 instructional periods.

Mrs. Rella asked about the \$4,000 for printing student account. Mr. Giovannone stated it is mislabeled and is part of other services for Transportation. Mrs. Rella asked why it is new. Mr. Giovannone answered that it is for transportation for the new student leadership programs.

Dr. Parlato thanked the assistant principals as well.

**High School:**

Mr. Manka thanked his team and instructional staff saying they are doing great every day.

Mr. Manka stated they live by standards and are aware of the needs of students, staff, and stakeholders. It is important to compete and excel in the changing world. At NMHS there are currently 57 MLL students.

They are proud of the staff and student supported Wingman program. There's Pathways work leading to innovative programing and opportunities. They have introduced the Scientific Research Based Interventions and supporting students, it is a multi tiered system of support, responsive to the needs of students and staff. Mr. O'Brien asked what multi-tiered system support does. Mr. Manka stated they try to triage for root problems. With school avoidance, they have to find out why it is happening, then provide resources so that a student is comfortable with school and assist the child to be better equipped with tools.

Mr. Manka went on to review the budget and how NMHS was involved with the Vision of the Graduate. The focus is on academic components in the classroom as well as the social and emotional growth mindset, and self management.

Mr. Manka stated that with the Pathways program, they are looking for one staff addition for internships and career connected learning. He reiterated they secured a two-year grant with a two-year rewrite to explore new courses that would be early college experience. This would be advantageous growth since New Milford is one of the schools with the lowest amount of college experience or college credit. This is open to all students and there are over 50 teachers who

are interested in participating. Mr. Manka met with staff from Naugatuck Community College, and would like to return a pathway for CNA at NMHS utilizing resources from Naugatuck Valley.

Mrs. McInerney asked if it is the intention that all 8th graders will go through a pathway, or is it still optional. Mr. Manka stated it is not mandatory but could be something in the future. Mrs. McInerney stated she thinks it is one of the most exciting things for the district. Mr. O'Brien asked Mr. Manka if he could explain how incoming freshmen are exposed to this. Mr. Manka stated a great resource is Mr. Turner working with the staff, and putting it in the right website channels. It is also about talking to incoming freshmen about the course selection process. Mr. Manka stated he wants to make sure students know what it is and isn't, as well as the community and parents. It's about creating precise communication. Mr. O'Brien agreed it is very exciting.

Mr. Barile asked if it is different from where a counselor helped students find their pathway and how it is different from a ConnectEDU. Mr. Manka stated it is similar to other structures and models. The Pathways program provides a similar outcome and a realization for students to find their passion or know what they don't want. It can be costly for a student to spend two years at a college to then decide they are following a path they no longer want.

Mrs. Rella asked if they're planning to expand to trades. Mr. Manka stated yes, he is looking into allied health, manufacturing, education, and CNA.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked how the schools are promoting the Pathways Coordinator, which is a position coming from ESSER to the General Fund, and what communication is happening for the students going from 8th to 9th grade. Mr. Manka stated, when the time is right, it becomes part of the document for course selection in PowerSchool. He is also planning pop-up seminars that will be live and virtual, and recognizes that there is an element of marketing that has to happen. Naviance is also a critical tool that can be used.

<p>Dr. Parlato stated Naviance helps provide career interest inventories.</p> <p>Mrs. Rella asked if Naviance is talked about in the classrooms. Mr. Manka stated yes, it's done though the guidance counselors.</p> <p>Mr. Manka continued the presentation stating school wide programming includes the Wingman movement and the Peer-to-Peer program. There are 146 student leaders that oversee a student led activity based program. They utilize Google Forms for feedback that goes back to the staff. The Peer-to-Peer program has NMHS freshman mentees pair with an upperclassmen mentor to discuss topics including academics and communication with peers and teachers. Mr. Manka stated he is looking for a 1.0 FTE Pathways Program Coordinator.</p> <p><b>NMHS Athletics:</b></p> <p>Mr. Lipinsky stated that athletics is an extension of education. NMHS won the Michael's Cup award the last two years, which is centered around sportsmanship, community involvement, and positive spirit. He stated athletics is about teamwork, dealing with adversity, and learning to behave when things don't go your way. Mr. Lipinsky displayed a list of all athletics and stated there are 568 student-athletes participating in athletics. Mr. Lipinsky displayed a pie chart of the athletics budget. He asked for an increase in transportation since All-Star is not available after school and has had to look elsewhere to book buses. Mr. Lipinsky stated the data on GPA for athletes vs. non-athletes shows they are focused, driven, and want to succeed. Athletes are 1/2 GPA higher than non-athletes.</p> <p>The request for athletics will help with equipment for 28 athletic programs including transportation, dues, rental fees, and event staffing.</p> <p>Mrs. Rella asked why the athletic trainer went from \$67,000 to \$125,000. Mr. Giovannone stated it is a realignment. Originally, it was a contracted service and is now a direct hire. Mrs. Faulenbach asked if it was a cost benefit. Mr. Giovannone stated yes, since it is a</p>	
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direct employee. Mr. O'Brien asked to clarify that it is an increase in this line item but a decrease in the contract line item. Mr. Giovannone said yes, it's \$56,375 and the rest is contractual for a secretary within athletics. It is part of the non-certified salary line. Mrs. Faulenbach asked for the breakout of certified staff and secretarial staff. Mr. Giovannone stated he would break it out in the next meeting. Mrs. Faulenbach asked if that position has been taken out of contractual services and the \$56,000 is part of the \$58,000. Mr. Giovannone stated yes, they are adding \$56,000 for the Athletic Trainer and \$2,000 for secretarial.

Mr. McCauley asked where the transportation increase is. Mr. Giovannone stated it is in Athletics.

Mrs. Rella asked about the dues and fees. Mr. Lipinsky stated it is the dues to be members of the leagues such as CIAC, etc. Those fees have gone up, including tournament fees. Mrs. Rella noted in the salaries line, there is a 6.25% increase. Mr. Giovannone stated it is contractual and going to the highest step in the administrator contract.

Mrs. McInerney asked about Science, Transportation, and Field Trips. Mr. Giovannone stated it is mis-labeled in the book and will be relabeled in the board adopted book. This is for textbooks. The line item is correct but the explanation is incorrect.

Mrs. McInerney asked why the salary went down for the Tech Ed Salary. Dr. Parlato stated there is potential for attrition. Mrs. McInerney asked why the Career Ed Salary is going up. Mr. Giovannone stated that is for the additional Pathways Coordinator coming from ESSER. Mrs. McInerney asked why music transportation increased. Mr. Giovannone stated it is for world championships. Mrs. McInerney asked if the dues and fees for music is for sheet music. Mr. Giovannone stated the budget is currently too low. Things like competitions are becoming more and more expensive.

Mrs. Rella asked about Transportation Field Trips and noted it is a \$30,000 increase. Mr. Manka stated fund raising efforts have been going towards transportation.

<p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked for clarification on transportation, if transportation is paid for through fundraising and if so, is it not covering as much. Mr. Manka stated fundraising is utilized to make things happen for students that otherwise would not be able to take place.</p> <p>Mr. Barile asked where the data from the Google Forms are housed. Mr. Manka stated Mr. Turner would have that. Mrs. Faulenbach stated they will get that. Dr. Parlato added that the district has Google Enterprise for Education.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach stated it's good to hear the updates on the programs. It's how we measure how we're doing. Dr. Parlato stated it is a gift to hear from the five schools, and see the showcase of the work being done.</p> <p><b>Technology:</b></p> <p>Mr. Turner stated the key priority regarding Technology is it should enhance teaching and learning, and should always have a long range plan in place. It is the thought process of what you want to do. The teaching is the same, it is the tools that change. It is important within the IT department to have a safe, private environment. The department works collaboratively to enhance teaching and learning. The vision is really looking at the learning tools, where they're used, and how it is tied into curriculum and sport.</p> <p>The tech department has 9.0 FTE serving 3,650 students in the district. Mr. O'Brien asked what Tech 1 is. Mr. Turner said that is day to day responsibilities, fixing chrome books, etc. Tech 2 is about purchasing hardware and making higher level decisions. Mr. Turner added there are also more than 700 staff they support within the district and more than 7,000 devices.</p> <p>The IT budget is looking at a .89% decrease which includes a continued concentration of infrastructure over a five-year plan using E-Rate funding for a 60% discount. Mr. Turner explained that by using money wisely or from Capital Improvement, it allows him to almost double the district's money. He is working to</p>	
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continually update switches and access points. The district was recently awarded an ECF grant giving the district an additional 3,000 chrome books. Mr. Turner stated that by using E-Rate and the ECF and Pegpetia grants, he has saved \$1,397,625.00. He will continue to apply for these grants for upgrades to the schools projectors, a podcast room, and more. Another planned project is to update the audio visual in the NMHS theater, the SNIS streaming studio, SMS cafeteria, SNIS gymnasium, and HPS gymnasium.

Mr. Turner then went over infrastructure, including the upgrades to switches, access points, servers, and phones, explaining it is done in a sequential way so it doesn't hurt the budget. Also, the E-Rate dollars are required to be used towards infrastructure.

Mr. O'Brien asked where E-Rate came from. Mr. Turner stated that it is a federal subsidy.

Mr. Turner stated he is working on upgrading educational technology, some of the PC's in the district are six to nine years old, and really should be swapped out every five years. This also includes capital improvements such as hardware.

Mr. Turner then explained that for software, Powerschool is the main database. The software is updating constantly but the staff is acclimating well.

Mrs. Herring asked how many chromebooks during Covid were not returned, or came back damaged beyond repair. Mr. Turner stated he has a decent idea, but not a number off hand. He added that going forward he would like to make it so any school chromebook that is not returned can be remotely locked with a note to anyone trying to access it that it needs to be returned.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked if the district offered insurance on chromebooks. Mr. Turner said they instead fix the devices in house. It is more cost effective. Mr. Turner added that the K-2 won't carry it to and from school. Grades 3-5 will have extras in the classroom. Mrs. Faulenbach asked how the district handles the financial responsibility to the student if a chromebook is stolen or damaged. Mr. Turner stated it is taken as a



case by case basis and using their best judgment. Also, taking into account if the student gets free or reduced lunch, but that he would like to come up with a more firm policy. Mrs. Faulenbach asked if it was fair to say they have recouped money. Mr. Turner said yes, and will get the exact numbers.

Mrs. Herring asked how the smart boards were holding up. Mr. Turner said the HS had 75%-80% replaced because of the fire and he is working to install more. The new ones have a 10 year life span. The model he is acquiring is on the lower end but has a high upside.

Mr. Barile asked about insurance on any chromebooks stolen or lost. Mr. Giovannone stated it is not covered under current policy because there is a \$10,000 deductible. Mr. Barile asked if they would include it when buying in bulk. Mr. Giovannone stated no. Mr. Turner said it's a tight limit and the repairs can take a long time when sending it out to a 3rd party to fix it.

Mrs. McInerney asked if the 1st line and 5th line on page 70 is a realignment. Mr. Turner said yes. Mr. Giovannone added that the Network Admin was budgeted separately, now it is realigned to be budgeted with Systems Analyst and IT Director. That shows up four lines down where you see the increase of 26.32%.

Mrs. Faulenbach stated there are notations regarding the 5 Year Capital that will be addressed later.

Mrs. McInerney asked if there's any savings to the Media line now that there is internal video recording and if they still need to utilize an outside vendor. Mr. Turner stated they are still using the outside vendor, and the contract goes to July 1st. Mrs. McInerney asked if it will be renewed. Mr. Turner stated that is a conversation that has to be had because if they do not use an outside vendor then it is him running the video recording. It comes down to who will run it.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked where data from School Messenger is stored. Mr. Turner said it's tied to PowerSchool. It comes from PowerSchool, goes out through PowerSchool, and you can see all the messages that went out. For security, it's in the

	<p>software package, and only certain people can see certain things.</p> <p><b>Human Resources:</b></p> <p>Mrs. Kavanaugh stated HR supports the mission through supporting the employees so they can support the students. HR handles employee relations, contract negotiations, Title IX, benefit administration, certification compliance, state reporting, talent acquisitions, and district volunteers all while following federal, state, and DOL laws/forms.</p> <p>Mrs. Kavanaugh stated that they have partnered with an outside vendor to help with getting volunteers in the schools. The district website has a QR code that leads to a Google Form that volunteers fill out. There is no more fingerprinting and the process is more efficient. With the new system, they have added over 100 volunteers. There is also a cost savings because they are not paying to fingerprint volunteers anymore.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach stated it is important to let parents know and have PTO also send out the message. Mrs. McInerney asked if parents have to pay for the background check. Mrs. Kavanaugh stated no. Mrs. McInerney asked if departments know about new processes. Mrs. Kavanaugh stated yes.</p> <p>Mrs. Kavanaugh went on to state that the district hired 91 total people this year. Some positions were filled twice and 73% of employees take benefits, plus dependents. Any time an employee needs assistance they can call the office.</p> <p>Mrs. Kavanaugh stated, when it came to hiring, she utilized career fairs, a few specifically for paraeducators. She also partnered with ESS and sat outside SNIS one afternoon and hired eight people. The department is conducting new strategies with exit surveys, which she noted is optional. If it is a certified staff member leaving, the state requires a report as to why. Mrs. Kavanaugh has started a Paraeducator of the Year program, which she hopes will invigorate that profession.</p>	
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<p>Mrs. Kavanaugh noted, in the budget, substitute salaries went up, mostly because of the minimum wage increase. The proposal going forward takes into account inflation and Mrs. Kavanaugh wants the district to be prepared for that. Professional services went down, which is a reflection of the new volunteer process. Most everything else remained flat, except for dues. Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) dues went up. Mrs. Kavanaugh stated she finds SHRM helpful because it can provide job descriptions, form templates, and more.</p> <p>Since she started almost a year ago, Mrs. Kavanaugh stated she has taken time to look at how she can streamline processes. Taking inventory of what we have and how we want to move forward. There are also changing laws, and mandates from the state that have to be accounted for. Mrs. Kavanaugh stated she is focusing on being ahead of the curve and taking a more proactive approach by having a bigger presence in the schools.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney asked if substitutes were paid per day. Mrs. Kavanaugh stated yes. Mrs. McInerney noted the district pays ESS and ESS hires the substitute. She then asked what the amount would be if it was done in-house. Mrs. Kavanaugh stated she will get that and that she just signed a new addendum with them today. Mrs. McInerney said last year substitute salaries went up, but because they utilize ESS it was a bigger jump.</p> <p>Mrs. Kavanaugh stated a full day substitute is paid \$120/day, and the district pays ESS \$159.60/day per substitute.</p> <p>Mrs. Kavanaugh stated ESS provides the substitutes. The substitutes do not work for the district, so there is no insurance. The district is not responsible for recruitment, and ESS does other add-ons like give a bonus to someone who comes in on a difficult day to fill.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach stated that was part of the conversation when it was done in-house. Mrs. McInerney asked if the \$120/day rate is for a building sub. Mrs. Kavanaugh stated it is the daily sub rate and building subs have the same rate. Mrs. Rella added the</p>	
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	<p>difference is that building subs just know they have a job every day.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach concluded that she has taken notes on questions that need to be answered coming out of tonight's meeting. She also noted that there will be an exploratory survey sent to parents of 6-12 grades regarding bus usage and any other questions should be sent out between now and next week's meetings.</p>	
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Opportunity for the Public to be heard</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	<b>Opportunity for the Public to be heard</b>
<b>5.</b>	<p><b>Recessed to Wednesday, January 24, 2024</b>          The meeting recessed at 9:26 p.m.</p>	<p><b>Recessed to Wednesday, January 24, 2024</b>          The meeting recessed at 9:26 p.m.</p>

**Budget Hearing Minutes**  
**January 24, 2024**  
**Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

<b>Present:</b>	<p>Mrs. Wendy Faulenbach, Chairperson          Mr. Eric Hansell          Mr. Brian McCauley          Mrs. Tammy McInerney          Mr. Tom O'Brien          Mrs. Olga I. Rella          Mrs. Leslie Sarich          Mrs. Sarah Herring          Mr. Dean Barile</p>
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<b>Also Present:</b>	<p>Dr. Janet Parlato, Superintendent of Schools          Ms. Holly Hollander, Assistant Superintendent of Schools          Mr. Anthony Giovannone, Director of Fiscal Services and Operations          Mrs. Laura Olson, Director of Pupil Personnel and Special Services          Mr. Matthew Cunningham, Facilities Director          Mr. Jeffrey Turner, Technology Director</p>
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<p>1.</p>	<p><b>Call to Order</b>  <b>Pledge of Allegiance</b>  The budget hearing meeting of the New Milford Board of Education was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mrs. Faulenbach, Chairperson. The Pledge of Allegiance immediately followed the call to order.</p>	<p><b>Call to Order</b>  <b>A. Pledge of Allegiance</b></p>
<p>2.</p>	<p><b>Opportunity for the Public to be heard</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunity for the Public to be heard</b></p>
<p>3.</p>	<p><b>Discussion</b>  <b>Superintendent’s Proposed 2024-2025 Budget including, but not limited to, District-wide Departments</b></p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach began by stating that the Board had received emails regarding correspondence and acknowledged that all the Board members got the emails.</p> <p><b>Department of Pupil Personnel and Special Education Budget</b></p> <p>Mrs. Olson thanked everyone for their support and dedication to her department, then went on to explain that IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) is a federal law protecting birth to 22 year olds. It is full of mandates so students get what they need and have opportunities just like everyone else.</p> <p>Mrs. Olson stated they support and embrace the mission, to compete and excel in an ever changing world while embracing challenges and showing respect to others. Mrs. Olson spoke about the six pillars of IDEA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All children can learn;</li> <li>• Students with Disabilities (SWD) are General Education students first;</li> <li>• In free and appropriate education;</li> <li>• In an Individual Education Plan (IEP);</li> <li>• Educating SWDs in the least restrictive environment;</li> <li>• Parents are integral to the team and their child’s strongest advocate.</li> </ul> <p>Mrs. Olson went over the structure of the two departments including staff.</p>	<p><b>Discussion</b>  <b>Superintendent’s Proposed 2024-2025 Budget including, but not limited to, District-wide Departments</b></p>

Mrs. Olson then explained how New Milford compares to the state average for SWD, and explained that New Milford hovers right below the state average. This shows that the district is doing comprehensive evaluations consistently. Mrs. Olson stated that although district enrollment is decreasing, SWD is increasing, and it is something to be aware of. Then Mrs. Olson showed the different classification of disabilities and where the district is with each one by the numbers.

Mrs. Olson showed how the SWD were by each school with an increase projected for next year. There is a state performance plan and New Milford has met all nine indicators for Early Childhood in its 14 plus consecutive years of having indicators. There is also a new law passing for Kindergarten Entry age, PL 23-208, which will impact three to four year old classes.

Mrs. Olson then went on to discuss the Litchfield Hills Transition Center, stating it services students up to 22 years of age, after they age out of high school, so they become active community participants. It keeps them in the community and it is a cost savings. It would cost approximately \$1,900,000 to send the students out of the district. There is also revenue from students brought in from other districts. Ashley Albanese is the Transition Coordinator and organizes community activities, building in recreation and leisure with learning. One new initiative is to afford students one year at NCC through the IDEA grant. They get a sampling of what it means to be a college student and some students have gone on to take more courses.

Mrs. Olson then segued into unfunded mandates. PA 23-137 requires BOEs to provide special education until an eligible student graduates high school or until the end of the school year when the student reaches 22, whichever occurs first. This went into effect July 1, 2023. This year the department is absorbing it through ODP (Out of District Placement). The numbers will increase each year.

Mrs. Olson stated the ESS program (Effective School Solutions) program, continues to be highly successful. It provides tier 3 services for the most at risk students,

but keeps kids in the district and in the schools if at all possible. ESS brings in counseling and therapy. It ends up being a cost avoidance because it is keeping students in district and helps us bring students back to the district. The ESS program is making a critical impact on mental health and creating cost savings for the district's financial health.

Mrs. Olson stated she wanted to address mental health issues. The statistics about youth suicide is a concern. Increased bullying is associated with mental health needs, some students may be hospitalized and school refusal becomes, and is, a big issue.

**Out of District Placements:**

Mrs. Olson stated that out of district placements is a huge budget driver. When she is asked why we have to place students out of district, it is because they have exhausted all in-district options and cannot meet the students' needs. It could be part of an expulsion, or a safety issue. If a student isn't safe towards others or themselves, they need to be in an environment that can handle that. The district also absorbed three students this year who moved to New Milford and were already placed out-of-district. Mrs. Olson said they really do exhaust all options. The cost for out of district placement is projected to go up. She puts in anticipatory placeholders. The placeholder for 24/25 is five spots at a cost of \$4,047,616. There are rising costs for out of district placements. There can be a waiting list, and her staff has to sometimes refer to three to four different programs. It's not an easy process.

Mrs. Olson noted that compared to the state, New Milford has 3.85% students placed out. State has a 6.55% prevalence rate, so New Milford is below the state level.

Transportation is another factor and there is an 18% increase in cost. New Milford has 15 runs and 18 schools that require transportation. The budget has five place holders for ODP students and transportation cost is \$30,000 for each student. There are fewer staff and drivers plus fuel and maintenance impacts. When a child is really unsafe, a van aide needs to be included, adding to the cost. Mrs. Olson stated the top 10 highest

place students, highest cost students, including tuition and transportation is \$2,435,865.00.

Mrs. Olson stated there are wonderful things happening in the district:

- The SWD is below state average;
- They are meeting targets for increased graduation rates;
- Met all targets for inclusion:
  - Increase regular class placements,
  - Decreased separate class placements,
  - Met all indicators for three to five years olds for 15 consecutive years;
- Met target for transition goals and services;
- Met target for timely and accurate reporting.

Current initiatives are focusing on co-teaching through EdAdvance and parent surveys after PPTs. They are looking to increase unified courses in NMHS, including exploring unified theater/music, aligning all individual learning centers, providing increased paraprofessional PD opportunities, and developing a district-wide threat and risk assessment protocol.

Mrs. Olson then showed slides of Yuki, the district therapy dog, along with slides of Unified Sports, showing the diversity and celebrating differences.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked if there were questions.

Mr. McCauley asked how many of the six placeholders we are using this year. Mrs. Olson stated it's not so much the number of placeholders but the fact they have not gone over budget. There are a few placements she is still working on.

Mrs. McInerney asked how the new Kindergarten age will affect the EXCEL preschool students with disabilities. Will the four year olds stay in the 4's program. Mrs. Olson stated the number is not large, it's more an impact for the three year olds and how they can differentiate it next year for them.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked about the \$541,967 from the unfunded mandate for 22 year-olds and asked if that was absorbed this year. Mrs. Olson stated it is absorbed when doing calculations out of district. Mr.



Giovanzone stated the \$541,000 is for 2026 and tied directly to the 22 year old extension. Mrs. Faulenbach stated it is a projection for two years from now and moving forward those are costs that have to be recognized. Mrs. Olson stated, in defense to a child, to end abruptly impacts the student, so now it's the end of fiscal year.

Mr. Hansell asked about the EdAdvance training. Mrs. Olson stated it is a RESC (Regional Educational Service Center). They offer training for a number of areas and co-teaching is one of them. It's a cost effective method and it has been over 10 years since it was last revisited.

Mr. Barile asked if there was a listing of classification for SWD, if he could see how many students fall into these categories and how it is determined. Mrs. Olson stated for a student to receive special education services, they go through testing and observation. Then staff and family have to meet, discuss findings, and go through criterias. Mr. Barile asked if it includes mental and physical disabilities. Mrs. Olson stated yes, there are many classifications under IDEA.

Mrs. McInerney noted that ESS is no longer at the high school and asked what is being done for students that have anxiety and depression and the kids who do not come to school due to these issues. Mrs. Olson stated there are layers of support. ESS was moved from NMHS to SMS to help with earlier intervention. NMHS has a well rounded counseling department and substance abuse counselor, so ESS was seen to be needed at an earlier age.

Mr. O'Brien noted the total tuition Out Placement, on page 51, is around \$4,497,000, which is more than the budgeted tuition on slide 21, and asked if that \$450,000 accounts for the placeholders. Mrs. Olson confirmed it is the placeholders. Mr. Giovanzone stated there are five tuition placeholders still there with the existing placements moving forward. Mrs. Rella asked to confirm that transportation was under transportation. Mr. Giovanzone stated yes, funds in the placeholder includes \$120,000 per student, which includes tuition and transportation.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked if anything could be done to keep students in district and run something similar to ESS in-house. Mrs. Olson stated that could be done if controlled and managed. It's a possibility but currently the program is running very well.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked what the cost is for the program. Mrs. Olson stated it is about \$159,000 and covers 1.0 social worker, licenses, etc., all overseen by a consultant and administrators. ESS pays for the benefits. Mrs. Rella asked if there were any other additional costs. Mrs. Olson stated no and added that they provide summer services.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked about the transportation for Litchfield Hills. Mrs. Olson stated the district purchased three vehicles over time. One was through a grant and one through ESSER funds. It helps so students can go out into the community. Mrs. Faulenbach noted it was good to have the vehicles. Mrs. Olson stated they are widely used to their fullest extent including jobs and even to Naugatuck Community College.

Mrs. Faulenbach stated she wanted to be clear that questions the BOE members ask are reflective of doing their own due diligence.

Mrs. Rella asked how many total students are outplaced right now. Mrs. Olson stated 36. Mrs. Rella asked if that includes 36 outplaced right now plus the five place holders. Mrs. Olson stated yes and she is projecting 32 next year with five place holders.

Mr. O'Brien asked why social worker salaries are not under Mrs. Olson's department. Mrs. Olson stated it was like that when she came into the district.

Mr. Hansell asked about the increase in Assistive Technology. Mrs. Olson stated it is no longer an option or add on, it's a way of life. It includes iPads and other tech devices. They are utilized during evaluations and it is mandated the district includes assistive technology in their evaluations and a student's IEP. Mr. Hansell asked if it was a hardware system. Mrs. Olson clarified that it is a contracted person doing this. Mrs. Sarich

asked if it is done annually. Mrs. Olson confirmed that it is.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked about the full-time nurse being paid through the ESSER fund for Litchfield Hills. Mrs. Olson stated all buildings have nurses except Litchfield Hills and there is a specific student who has medical needs. Should this student need medical care there is not enough time to call 911, the district has to protect and provide services. Mrs. Faulenbach asked if there is a classification of that nurse's category. Mrs. Olson stated an RN is what was recommended. Dr. Hack was consulted and approved the hiring of this RN. There is a benefit to having a nurse in the building and may have another student next year who will also require the RN.

Mr. O'Brien noted there was a big drop in professional services for the EXCEL program. Mrs. Olson stated the district contracted with IPP for years to provide support for extremely impaired students, but that is no longer being offered. They then went to RESC, EdAdvance took it on and it became a cost savings. Mr. Giovannone stated the remaining dollars is roughly \$120,000 in savings.

**Department of Instruction (DOI):**

Ms. Hollander reviewed the roles and responsibilities associated with Assistant Superintendent and stated her department oversees grants, Title IX, kindergarten report cards, state mandates, and now the new Kindergarten entry registrations. Success is due to strong alignment of systems. One example is iReady, it provides data so teachers can make instructional adjustments for their students. The foundation is on planning, executing, and refining. The DOI proposed budget supports district priorities. The increase to Professional Services reflects cost increases and not additions to the budget.

Some highlighted programs are MLL (Multi Language Learner), Summer offerings, AgriScience, and Adult Education.

MLL data is looked at three times a year so the district can see trends or anticipate needs. Mr. Hollander noted

that the numbers have increased. Once the district has 20 MLL students in a school who speak the same language, the district needs to have a bilingual teacher. All of NM schools qualify for bilingual Spanish teachers.

The plan is to offer summer school similar to last year; it is the Summer Learning Lab and Credit Recovery.

Educational opportunities to students in grades 9-12 include WCA of International Studies, Agriscience, and Abbott Tech.

Adult Education is also under the Assistant Superintendent's budget and is something to be very proud of. It supports workforce interest and last year 16 students graduated from the adult educational program.

Ms. Hollander stated with clarity, they can develop systems needed to address needs. On any given day, when a teacher is absent, a third of those teaching positions are not covered by a substitute. The school has to pull teachers from other parts of the building. There needs to be a focus on curriculum coherence, analysis to address needs, and support common language learning.

Ms. Hollander shared data points on teaching and learning to ensure students meet target growth. Prior to Covid, there was little growth in the district. Only in this past fall to winter is growth seen. She contributes this growth to careful selection and onboarding materials. Robust systems identifying students' needs through assessments. The same is seen for math. The 6th grade curriculum redesign is complete and the content and materials are now aligned to the K-5 materials. It puts students' strategies in the center.

Ms. Hollander then spoke about the Accelerated Math Pathways. Prior to this work, students were recommended to accelerated math and entered the program in 6th grade, but as the student went into high school, the growth became stagnant. Before there was only one entry point, but now students can enter at other times and it is through high school.

<p>Ms. Hollander then went over the impact of the 24-25 budget. She stated she continues to use data to drive decisions for teaching and learning, meeting the state Department of Education standards and regulations.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach opened it up for questions.</p> <p>Mrs. Rella asked about the Agriscience slide and if the program is full. Ms. Hollander stated yes. Mr. Giovannone explained if a student has a spot for the Agriscience program, or one of the other schools such as Abbott Tech and they move, the district does not backfill them. Agriscience currently has 28 spots and that is increasing to 31, based on the required average.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney noted that tuition costs are broken down for Shepaug and WCAIS but not for Abbott Tech. Ms. Hollander noted the district does not pay for that. Mrs. McInerney asked if the district pays for the transportation and Mrs. Faulenbach stated yes.</p> <p>Mr. McCauley stated before Covid, they had a rep for the magnet school and it was mentioned in 2022 the program was going back to Danbury. Mrs. Rella stated that hasn't happened yet.</p> <p>Mr. O'Brien stated he realized last year how competitive Shepaug is and asked if the others are as competitive. Dr. Parlato stated that Abbott Tech is for sure, not sure about AIS. Mrs. Faulenbach stated in the past, there was a waiting list and that they would provide the board with the details for AIS.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked how the district communicates information about summer school to parents so they know what the schedule is and can plan accordingly. She has felt that in the past, it wasn't communicated as much as it could be. Ms. Hollander stated they started looking at data for each individual student. The teachers are speaking directly to parents, including it as part of conversation in conferences. For credit recovery it's a little harder. They try to look at who may need it and identify students so they don't get too far behind. All seats were filled last summer and once students finished the course they were debriefed and there was follow up once school started again. Mrs. Faulenbach asked about transportation for the summer</p>	
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school program. Ms. Hollander stated that the district provides transportation for them. Dr. Parlato noted that that doesn't happen in every district. Mrs. Faulenbach stated getting students there is part of the component.

Mrs. Rella asked how many students attended high school summer school. Ms. Hollander stated there were 20 seats available. Mrs. Olson added that her students utilized it too, and shared transportation costs with Ms. Hollander's department.

Mrs. Rella asked if any student that is struggling with having enough credits to graduate is eligible for this program. Ms. Hollander stated yes but there are limited seats. Mrs. Rella asked if counseling and others make recommendations. Ms. Hollander stated yes, there are some parents not interested in it. There are other options, one is a paid option, and an online option. Dr. Parlato asked to clarify there were 25 seats and 17 for Special Education. Mrs. Olson stated she believes so.

Mr. Barile asked if the curriculum specialists are working more with teachers or students. Ms. Hollander stated they are really working with teachers but are in the classroom looking at teacher support. Mr. Barile noted that a third of classes have no subs and asked why. Dr. Parlato stated it is a national problem. Mrs. Faulenbach added that they had to increase sub rates recently. Ms. Hollander stated when a teacher calls out, it's a big challenge to fill with subs.

Mrs. McInerney asked if a more legible accelerated math pathways slide could be sent out. It's important for people to see how those pathways exist. There is lots of talk about how that's going to get accomplished. Ms. Hollander stated there is a lot of focus for struggling students, but there also is a need to focus on the students that need enrichment. Before Covid, it was plateauing or regressing. Now it's growing. Mrs. McInerney asked if kids placed in accelerated math stay there. Ms. Hollander stated yes, they're identifying kids who are doing well up to 5th grade and helping them see beyond. Mrs. McInerney noted that was a good thing because some kids were skipping things like Pre Algebra and going straight into Algebra, and that can create issues. She stated it is

good for parents to see this road map and know the levels. Ms. Hollander stated a student can go into accelerated math in 7th grade now. Mrs. McInerney noted it's mostly accelerated in 6th, but there are kids pushed into higher levels and shouldn't have been. Mrs. Ziu-Piers (from the public), added the new criteria was put in place to avoid just that.

Ms. Hollander continued by stating she knew work had to be done for K-5; math was flatlining. Her team looked into what the criteria should be, set standards, and made sure students had opportunities. She met with other districts and listened to how they onboarded it. It was carefully implemented.

Mrs. Faulenbach stated on page 44 of the budget, there has been talk about what's being moved from ESSER to the General Fund and wanted to ask about the 50115 \$179,521. Mr. Giovannone stated that number represents the 2.0 Curriculum Specialists coming from ESSER to the General Fund.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked if the removal of the 3.5 tutors is a reflection of reduction. Mr. Giovannon stated yes.

Mrs. Faulenbach noted tutor positions have remained unfilled for more than one fiscal year. Ms. Hollander stated yes. Mrs. Rella asked how many have remained open. Ms. Hollander stated of the 9.5 positions, only two have been consistently filled. Mrs. Faulenbach asked about the 6.5 Special Education tutors. Mrs. Olson stated there are 3 vacancies. Mrs. Herring asked if there has been an increase in the hourly wage. Ms. Hollander stated they raised it once. It used to be a great way for certified teachers to get experience, but now the district cannot even fill classroom positions. Mrs. Herring suggested raising the pay to get a better pool of people. Mrs. Faulenbach added that in addition to the low wage, there is a need for the tutor to have a teaching certification.

Mrs. Faulenbach clarified that she asked about the tutors because it's about finding the best fit to allocate the dollars. The tutors and interventionists have been reduced from 12 to eight. Dr. Parlato noted there were already eight in the General Fund and four paid through ESSER, with a total of 12. Mrs. Faulenbach

noted that the proposal is to leave eight in the General Fund. Dr. Parlato stated yes. Mrs. Faulenbach asked which line is for the interventionists. Mr. Giovannone stated they are distributed throughout the schools' budgets. Mrs. Rella asked if the \$88,000 was for one interventionist position or two. Mr. Giovannone stated one. Mrs. Faulenbach asked if it is fair to say that the interventionists, coaches, and curriculum specialists are similar in cost depending on where they're located. Dr. Parlato stated they are part of the teacher's bargaining unit.

Mr. Hansell asked to clarify that the 3.5 tutor positions being eliminated were unfilled spots and the interventionists are all filled. Dr. Parlato stated yes. They are K-5 and considered a reduction in force. The people in those positions would have bumping rights because they would have more seniority than a newly hired teacher. The work of the four interventionists is being spread out to the eight that remain.

Mrs. Rella asked if some schools won't have interventionists. Dr. Parlato stated all schools will have interventionists. Mrs. Faulenbach asked for the exact breakdown by school. Dr. Parlato stated 1.0 was reduced at SNIS leaving 3, and 1.5 were reduced at Hill and Plain leaving 2.0. One is split between Hill and Plain and Northville, so Northville will lose 0.5 leaving 2.0 there. SMS has a reduction of 1.0 leaving 1.0 remaining. Mrs. Faulenbach confirmed that leaves eight total and noted the average salary is a base of \$85,000 with an additional \$25,000 for insurance.

Mrs. Rella asked about the ELL cut. Ms. Hollander stated that was a shortage area, they were using a certified teacher with the intervention model to give students support. They now have certified staff. So now that person has been re-deployed to a position within their certification range. Dr. Parlato stated she could not keep this staff member as an interventionist because she was not certified. Mrs. Rella wanted to confirm it was not a cut. Ms. Hollander stated no. Mr. Barile asked if that was reflected on the personnel page in the detailed staffing data. Ms. Hollander stated it was confusing because that staff member wasn't really an interventionist, she was EL support. Mr.



<p>Giovanzone stated it is broken down in Appendix C6 it is all captured there.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach stated she wanted to discuss the coaches. Ms. Hollander stated the district has a total of 5.0 coaches. There are 2.0 for K-2 math and literacy. 2.0 at SNIS for math and literacy and 1.0 at SMS for literacy (Humanities). Mrs. McInerney asked if the coaches work with teachers. Ms. Hollander stated they do, they model lessons and are working with kids alongside the classroom teacher. Mrs. Faulenbach noted some are paid from the General Fund and some from the Title 1 grant. Dr. Parlato stated yes, and clarified Title 1 is not part of the ESSER fund. ESSER is going away and Title 1 is not. Mrs. Faulenbach noted that it is not completely in Title 1. Ms. Hollander stated that was correct.</p> <p>Mrs. Rella asked if the Title 1 funds received changed. Ms. Hollander stated no, the percentages did not change. Mr. Barile asked what the percentage of the split is. Mr. Giovanzone stated some are 50/50; 2.0 are on the grant and 3.0 are the General Fund. Mrs. Faulenbach asked what the cost is for the 3.0 on the General Fund. Mr. Giovanzone stated \$128,000. There are 3.0 total: 2.0 are 100% on the General Fund and one is 50/50.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney stated in Appendix C, she would like a breakdown of coaches, interventionists and tutors. She does not see them under certified or non-certified. Mr. Giovanzone stated tutors and coaches are listed there and some are under the Department of Instruction. Mrs. Rella stated it would be helpful for the board to have Y/Y comparison spreadsheets, how they are allocated and dollar amounts. Mrs. Faulenbach stated that it was covered verbally. Mrs. Rella agreed but stated it gets confusing. Mrs. Faulenbach said they would try to put a spreadsheet together. Ms. Hollander stated some are under the Department of Instruction and some are under school budgets. Mrs. McInerney stated it is difficult to see that here. Mr. Giovanzone stated he would put something together.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach stated ESSER funds being taken and pulled into General Funds means the operational</p>	
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budget goes up. Some may be moved to the General Fund, some may be eliminated. Title 1 funds are paid for by Title 1, and the operational budget is not impacted in that case. Dr. Parlato clarified there are no tutors on ESSER.

Mr. Hansell asked when the district first got the ESSER funds and created these temporary positions, and hired great people, why didn't they slowly move them over to the school budget. They're making a big impact and now it's all coming in at once. The ESSER fund was meant for temporary employees but it wasn't used for temporary employees and now they need to be moved. Mr. Hansell asked if there was any way to offset the cost of the \$641,000 for those people.

Mrs. Faulenbach stated everything should be looked at in the budget and see what is relevant to the budget cycle. So when the positions are paid through ESSER, the total dollar amount has to be reviewed and determine what can be moved into the General Fund and what has to be pulled out. It requires going line by line and coming up with a number that advocates for the district while using taxpayer dollars wisely.

Mrs. Rella asked if they could reapply the tutor funds to other areas and asked for the dollar amount. Mr. Giovannone stated they are paid \$17/hour and there is a transfer request to utilize those tutor funds that we do not anticipate spending. They are looking at savings this year and corresponding to what can happen for next year.

Mrs. McInerney asked why they're keeping the tutor positions in the budget if there was such a problem filling them. Ms. Hollander stated she is hopeful she can fill them. Mrs. McInerney suggested shifting those monies to other positions. Dr. Parlato stated that's the board's decision. Mrs. McInerney asked if there's a way to add the 4.0 interventionists back into the budget. If there are not enough tutors, there needs to be someone forward facing to the students.

Mrs. Faulenbach encourages conversation and they should be drilling down. There are interventionists in the budget, but clearly there is a reduction. Dr. Parlato added there is a reduction in what was ESSER funded.

	<p>Mrs. McInerney replied that the bottom line is 4.0 interventionists will no longer be operating with students and she is not comfortable with that. The way students are currently growing indicates student support is needed.</p> <p><b>Facilities and Maintenance</b></p> <p>Mr. Cunningham gave a breakdown of the staff and said they embrace challenges with vigor. There are more than 200 acres occupied by the district. Nine ball diamonds and two turf fields are utilized not just by students, but year round by the community. Last year, they received more than 400 facility use forms. There are more than a dozen acres of sidewalks and more than 750,000 sq. ft. of commercial space. Summer is the busiest time. The team is quick to address issues.</p> <p>Mr. Cunningham stated he keeps costs down by addressing more projects in-house and embracing technology; for example, using drones to look at rooftops. Overall savings have led to the ability to purchase needed equipment such as a plotter. Now schematics can be scanned, shared easily, and archived. The doors installed at SNIS were supposed to cost \$25,000 and it came in at half that. The drone can also be used to make sure students and staff are flowing properly out of the building during a fire drill. It all ties back into the safety and security of students.</p> <p>Mr. Cunningham stated he is asking for budgeting for the ESC BMS (Building Management System) contract. ESC is the company in charge of the BMS. They were already hired before Mr. Cunningham was hired. ESG brought in ESC and it was part of their package. The district has an annual preventative maintenance contract with them. Also, the McCarthy Observatory, which is a district facility, needs physical maintenance performed on it.</p> <p>Mr Cunningham stated he is also asking for budget for annual fire hydrant inspections. In the past, this was performed by the water company. Now the responsibility falls to the district and they need to be able to absorb the cost.</p>	
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Budget drivers include an increase of 2% in the Repair/Building line, \$5,000 for The McCarthy observatory, and 2% in the Custodial Supplies line.

Mrs. Herring noted that the Larson House needs painting. Mr. Cunningham agreed and stated he put it into capital, noting the walkway needs to be repaired and they had to cover an area where an abandoned dry well was located. Mr. Cunningham stated he wants to work on roof and siding next. Mrs. Herring thought it might be a good student project. Mr. Cunningham stated given the age of the building it would need to be treated as a historical building. Also, given the traffic on Route 7, it wouldn't be safe. Updates need to be made to the farm house and observatory. Mrs. Herring asked about mice at SMS. Mr. Cunningham stated they have a pest management plan, and it's mandated by the state. It includes setting bait traps and is a downside to commercial buildings with food. Mrs. Herring asked about air quality at SMS. Mr. Cunningham stated that is coming from the state and they have encumbered money to pay for that. It includes bringing in a company to facilitate that project to measure indoor air quality.

Mrs. Herring noted that SMS was partially air conditioned with open classrooms. Now that they are not open any more, some rooms are freezing and some hot. She hopes the air can be redirected so it's more even. Mr. Cunningham stated it needs to be addressed. The end game is improving indoor air quality. The buildings are used year round too by Park and Rec and Youth Agency. Mr. Barile asked if it means a new air system or replacement of parts equal to heat and cooling. Mr. Cunningham stated he is looking into that.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked about the CoGen system and where it was in the budget. Mr. Cunningham stated the expectation is they will be able to pay for it with energy savings. Mr. Giovannone confirmed it is not in the budget.

Mr. O'Brien stated the doors at SNIS look great and inquired about the trades the Facilities staff specialize in. Mr. Cunningham stated they have several licenses. There's a low voltage person, licensed plumber,

<p>electrician, and HVAC. In all, there are five licenses on their team. Mr. O'Brien asked if Mr. Cunningham hires specifically someone with those licenses. Mr. Cunningham stated he does. Mr. O'Brien asked what the grounds crew does in the winter besides plowing. Mr. Cunningham stated they upkeep equipment and come into the buildings to do maintenance. They are utilized all year round.</p> <p><b>5 Year Capital Plan:</b></p> <p>Mr. Giovannone stated last year the 5 Year Capital Plan was always included in the budget book and is a very fluid document. Funding can be done on a project by project basis. There are monies coming out that have to be approved by the BOE, Town Council, and Board of Finance. They have to be broken out into several pieces including athletics, band, and music.</p> <p>Mr. Turner stated technology is included for theater upgrades. It's a large number but over five years, a full upgrade can be accomplished. Line items one and four are tied to E-Rate, which more than doubles the purchasing power. AV is a reduction. Mr. Turner stated he is using the Pegpetia grant and SNIS and SMS will be the next areas to tackle.</p> <p>Mr. Cunningham stated the capital request had money encumbered for security enhancements. It includes updating alarm panels, vehicle replacement, and a scissor lift that will go higher than 40'. Hill and Plain needs septic tank improvements. The state is pushing for bottle filling stations. The Northville roof is at end of life and can no longer be patched, same for the roof at the Larson House. There is also a need to get air conditioning to the large areas in school, such as the gyms and cafeterias.</p> <p>Mr. Giovannone stated in total, the 24/25 for projects totals \$714,000 and is nowhere in the operational budget request of \$73,000,000. Mrs. Faulenbach added that if we did add these capital projects to the General Fund budget, it would add 1% to the budget overall. Mr. Giovannone stated the last line in the 5 Year Capital Plan is for projects which cannot be fully supported by the district alone. They include roof projects, paving, etc. There are other large projects</p>	
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	with large dollar amounts that the district will need to work on with the town.  Mrs. Faulenbach stated Central Office and staff have done a tremendous job.	
<b>6.</b>	<b>Recessed to Thursday, January 25, 2024</b>  Mrs. Faulenbach recessed the meeting at 9:45pm.	<b>Recessed to Thursday, January 25, 2024</b>  <b>The meeting recessed at 9:45pm.</b>

**Budget Hearing Minutes**

**January 25, 2024 (January 24th was postponed due to inclement weather)**

**Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

<b>Present:</b>	Mrs. Wendy Faulenbach, Chairperson Mr. Eric Hansell Mr. Brian McCauley Mrs. Tammy McInerney Mr. Tom O'Brien Mrs. Olga I. Rella Mrs. Leslie Sarich Mrs. Sarah Herring Mr. Dean Barlie
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<b>Also Present:</b>	Dr. Janet Parlato, Superintendent of Schools Ms. Holly Hollander, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Mr. Anthony Giovannone, Director of Fiscal Services and Operations Mrs. Laura Olson, Director of Pupil Personnel and Special Services Mr. Matthew Cunningham, Facilities Director Mr. Jeffrey Turner, Technology Director
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<b>1.</b> <b>A.</b>	<b>Call to Order</b> <b>Pledge of Allegiance</b> The budget hearing meeting of the New Milford Board of Education was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mrs. Faulenbach, Chairperson. The Pledge of Allegiance immediately followed the call to order.	<b>Call to Order</b> <b>A. Pledge of Allegiance</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Public Comment</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walter O'Connor of 3 Portland Drive, stated he wanted to note in the last decade and a half how underappreciated the Board of Education is and most people don't realize the amount of work they do.</li> </ul>	<b>Public Comment</b>

<p><b>3.</b></p> <p><b>A.</b></p>	<p><b>Discussion of the Superintendent’s Proposed 2024-2025 Budget including, but not limited to, wrap-up issues and questions</b></p> <p><b>Discussion and Possible Action:</b></p> <p><b>A. Monthly Reports</b></p> <p>Mr. Giovannone stated that there is no big surprise on the Purchase Resolution. The district is spending down some appropriated 5 Year Capital money. There is a request for two transfers, previously mentioned. The first is to move money to purchased services from salaries for nursing. The second transfer request is to fill the line item for cybersecurity. This year's tutor line is not expended, and those funds can be used to fill the gap for cyber insurance.</p> <p><i>Mrs. McInerney moved to approve the monthly reports: Budget Position, Budget Transfer Request and Purchase Resolution D778, seconded by Mrs. Sarich, passed unanimously.</i></p> <p><b>B. Capital Reserve Withdrawal - McCarthy Observatory</b></p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach stated the observatory is considered a jewel in New Milford and at this time she is bringing forward a motion to help fund their telescope project. The town has matched, so it’s a split collaborative contribution.</p> <p>Mr. John Gebauer from the observatory stated the observatory opened December 2, 2000, and has been in operation since. It is just one of two observatories located at a public high school in CT. The mission has been to share the wonders of science to the community. Exposing students to science at a young age enhances curiosities. People can experience all the observatory has to offer free of charge. Even people who are vision and hearing impaired can experience astronomy. In 2005, they filed as a 501c3, and there is an MoU with the New Milford Board of Education to keep operations going.</p> <p>The observatory has had 50,000 visitors, mentored students, and discovered four asteroids. It is a town asset but rapid changes in technology have put them</p>	<p><b>Discussion of the Superintendent’s Proposed 2024-2025 Budget including, but not limited to, wrap-up issues and questions</b></p> <p><b>Discussion and possible action</b></p> <p><b>A. Monthly Reports</b></p> <p>Motion made and passed unanimously to approve the monthly reports: Budget Position, Budget Transfer Request and Purchase Resolution D778 .</p> <p><b>B. Capital Reserve Withdrawal - McCarthy Observatory</b></p>
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	<p>behind the curve and portions of the equipment are in need of replacement. In December of last year, they began a fundraising campaign to help keep the observatory operating for the next 25 years. They are seeking to replace the telescope mount, optical tube, and scientific imaging camera. It is a multistage plan to replace one component at a time and increase incremental improvements. The goal is to raise \$75,000. So far they have received a donation from an anonymous source, \$10,000 from a foundation, as well as other donations. The new equipment will allow students to understand and seek out orbits of potentially hazardous asteroids. They will continue to mentor students to be involved in the sciences. Several students have graduated and gone on to universities and careers in a scientific path. He thanked everyone for their support.</p> <p><i>Mrs. Rella moved to approve the Capital Reserve Withdrawal of \$12,500 for the McCarthy Observatory, seconded by Mr. O'Brien and passed unanimously.</i></p>	<p>Motion made and passed unanimously to approve the Capital Reserve Withdrawal of \$12,500 for the McCarthy Observatory.</p>
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Vote on Adoption of the 2024-2025 Board of Education Budget</b></p> <p><i>Mr. McCauley moved to approve the Adoption of the Superintendent's 2024-2025 proposed budget, seconded by Mrs. Sarich.</i></p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach stated that we will begin with a basic discussion. Mr. O'Brien wanted to say thank you to Dr. Parlato for putting together a tight and transparent budget that fits the district's needs. One concern he has is losing the interventionists, but trusts Dr. Parlato's judgment and supports the budget.</p> <p>Mr. McCauley agreed with Mr. O'Brien, at first looking at the increase he was surprised, but a fixed cost increase of 3.05% is in line with inflation. Especially knowing the ESSER cliff is coming and the fact that Danbury asked for \$125,000,000. He thinks New Milford used ESSER funds well. It created positions that they couldn't have in the past and thanked the team.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney stated she is grateful for the administrators who have presented. It's a huge task.</p>	<p><b>Vote on Adoption of the 2024-2025 Board of Education Budget</b></p>



<p>She believes it is a fiscally responsible budget but is nervous about reducing interventionists and wants to have conversations about that. They serve the most disenfranchised students. She is otherwise willing to listen to what anyone has to say before making a decision.</p> <p>Mrs. Sarich thanked the cabinet and administrators, noting this was a lot of work.</p> <p>Mrs. Rella thanked the cabinet, principals and administrators for doing a great job and explaining everything with their budgets.</p> <p><b>Mrs. Faulenbach made a motion to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2024-2025 budget by decreasing it by \$90,442 for the purpose of decreasing the line item from DOGA BAZ25043. Seconded by Mrs. Sarich.</b></p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach stated insurance has been discussed. It fluctuates and she reached out to see if that number could change. After a meeting with the town, the Mayor, and the actuary, they are authorized to reduce it by 1% and that is the \$90,442. Mrs. Faulenbach noted that there is a risk on insurance, but is going by what our actuary has allowed. She stated she feels confident with it. There was an opportunity to review insurance numbers and now they can adjust it rather than take away a position.</p> <p>Mr. O'Brien asked how they estimate that it's ok to lower the \$90,000. Mr. Giovannone stated it has to do with state partnership plans. Earlier in the week the state partnership gave an update. After looking to mimic the number from the state it was and confirmed the district can move down 1%.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato stated it is claims history in the state partnership plan and making a projection based on that.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach added she always goes back to verify things, and this is one of them. She was appreciative she could sit down with the town and work this out.</p>	<p><b>Motion made and passed unanimously to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2024-2025 budget by decreasing it by \$90,442 for the purpose of decreasing the line item for DOGA BAZ25043.</b></p>
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Mrs. Rella asked if Dr. Parlato was comfortable with the reduction. Dr. Parlato answered she was comfortable with doing it. Mrs. Faulenbach added that the 1% is actually a conservative number and it has been memorialized.

Mr. McCauley stated he appreciated Mrs. Faulenbach's extra work and how she dives deep.

**Amendment passed unanimously**

**Mrs. Faulenbach made a motion to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2024-2025 budget by decreasing it by \$228,238 for the purpose of decreasing the line items identified as: BDZ10007 by \$37,909, BLD10002 by \$76,212, BLB10000 by \$30,570, and BDZ10002 by \$83,547. These are the 3.0 coaches not to remain in the General Fund and not paid by Title 1. Seconded by Mr. Barile.**

Mrs. Faulenbach stated this is not easy. This does not eliminate all the coaches. The ones paid by Title 1 are remaining, but this was a component she wanted to explore. Mrs. Faulenbach opened it for discussion.

Mrs. McInerney stated she's wondering where these coaches are located. Mrs. Faulenbach clarified that from the General Fund there are 2.0 full time coaches, a 0.5 and a 0.5. Mrs. McInerney asked how much of an impact that will have on curriculum and training curriculum. Mrs. Faulenbach stated that she's looking at all the proposals. There's no doubt when you move items around there's impact. She's looking to hold on to some of these components by utilizing Title 1. There will be impact because when dealing with a base of 3.05% on fixed costs, everything has an impact. She is planning to hold on to some of the other curriculum supports. Mrs. McInerney stated she appreciates the discussion, but wants to make sure there will be support in place if these positions are removed.

Mrs. Faulenbach stated she personally will not have a motion in any other instructional reductions.

Mrs. Rella asked if these were ESSER positions. Mrs. Faulenbach stated they were not. Mrs. McInerney

**Motion made and passed unanimously to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2024-2025 budget by decreasing it by \$228,238 for the purpose of decreasing the line items identified as: BDZ10007 by \$37,909, BLD10002 by \$76,212, BLB10000 by \$30,570, and BDZ10002 by \$83,547. These are the 3.0 coaches not to remain in the General Fund and not paid by Title 1.**

<p>stated they were from the operational fund and it is a reduction in force. Mrs. Faulenbach stated it is a challenge when faced with the ESSER cliff and 13 positions. Mrs. McInerney clarified these coaches are academic coaches that help deliver curriculum to the classroom.</p> <p><b>Amendment passed unanimously.</b></p> <p><b>Mrs. Faulenbach made a motion to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2024-2025 budget by decreasing it by \$37,000, for the purpose of decreasing the line item identified as BTZ27143, object code 55110. Seconded by Mrs. Rella.</b></p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach stated we do have instances where we may have a transportation case or a situation where we have a certain run that a student cannot be accommodated in a vehicle, that amount is roughly \$37,000, and paid to make sure those services are met. She stated she wants to find a way to be able to have that fleet address that situation or work with the bus company. It is a circumstance that can be corrected and she wants to take it out.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney asked if that was being pulled from the \$480,600. Mr. Giovannone stated yes. Mrs. Faulenbach stated it's difficult when transportation is challenging enough and it takes time to work through it. It's part of the transportation budget but it needs to be corrected.</p> <p><b>Amendment passed unanimously.</b></p> <p><b>Mrs. Faulenbach made a motion to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2024-2025 budget by decreasing it by \$45,000, for the purpose of decreasing the line item identified for 1.0 General Education and 2.0 Special Education tutors, based on the unfilled positions. Seconded by Mrs. Sarich.</b></p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach stated some of these positions have not been filled. Mrs. Sarich noted that it has been multiple years they have not been filled. Mrs. Rella stated 6.5 haven't been filled. Mrs. Faulenbach noted it does not reduce the line in its entirety. Those areas have been held open and can't be filled so the money should be put elsewhere.</p>	<p><b>Amendment made and passed unanimously to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2024-2025 budget by decreasing it by \$37,000, for the purpose of decreasing the line item identified as BTZ27143, object code 55110.</b></p> <p><b>Amendment made and passed unanimously to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2024-2025 budget by decreasing it by \$45,000, for the purpose of decreasing the line item identified for 1.0 General Education and 2.0 Special Education tutors, based on the unfilled positions.</b></p>
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<p><b>Amendment passed unanimously.</b></p> <p><b>Mrs. Faulenbach made a motion to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2024-2025 budget by decreasing it by \$20,350, for the purpose of decreasing the line item BGZ22343 object code 54420. Seconded by Mr. Hansell.</b></p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach stated for copiers, there is room for reduction in usage based on more digital use. That item can be moved and it does not affect the instructional component.</p> <p>Mr. O'Brien stated the figure is staying the same in the proposed budget and if we are returning copiers. Mr. Giovannone stated it has to do with usage. Previously, the district did not have the full scope of usage and we now have that from Base Technologies. With that information, Mr. Giovannone stated he feels ok to make the reduction based on what anticipated actuals will be going forward.</p> <p><b>Amendment passed unanimously.</b></p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked what the dollar amount is in reduction. Mr. Giovannone stated it reduces it by \$421,030.</p> <p>Mrs. Sarich thanked Mrs. Faulenbach for digging deep. Mrs. Faulenbach stated there is a lot and it's a direct result of everyone working together. Mrs. Faulenbach stated she appreciated looking at some of these things. There was already a \$500,000 reduction before it came to the Board. Mrs. Rella noted all together it is a million.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney asked how the remaining eight interventionists will be dispersed throughout the K-8 schools to help the students who need it. The interventionists pull groups of kids aside for extra support. The test scores were heartbreaking and Mrs. McInerney wants to ensure we can support these students with the remaining interventionists.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato stated she feels we have appropriate coverage. There could always be more, but believes</p>	<p><b>Amendment made and passed unanimously to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2024-2025 budget by decreasing it by \$20,350, for the purpose of decreasing the line item BGZ22343 object code 54420.</b></p>
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<p>with the eight remaining interventionists, there's enough coverage. Mrs. McInerney asked if Dr. Parlato was willing to own that decision. Dr. Parlato stated yes.</p> <p><b>Mrs. Herring made a motion to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2024-2025 budget by decreasing it by \$179,549, for the purpose of decreasing the line item identified as BDZ10000 for the 2.0 K-8 Curriculum Specialists. Seconded by Mr. Barile.</b></p> <p>Mrs. Herring stated in her experience, the classroom needs more direct interaction with the students. She has worked with coaches and interventionists, but curriculum specialist is new verbiage, and she doesn't think this much money is necessary to implement new curriculum. Mrs. Herring stated she does not feel the money is necessary to spend at this point. It also adds another layer of someone else coming in and telling teachers how to do their job. In the past, these people had less experience than she did in the subject areas.</p> <p>Mr. Barile added it is a carryover from ESSER and the district is now picking up that money. ESSER funds are temporary funds for a reason. As Mrs. Herring stated, it may be an extra layer not needed.</p> <p>Mr. O'Brien asked Ms. Hollander to comment on the motion. Ms. Hollander stated curriculum, instruction, and accountability go hand and hand. Our teacher workforce has changed and with it so has learning how to teach. There is a need to have experts with deep knowledge of the content. We were in silos before, and we have to come together. We do not have the ability to take teachers out of the classrooms. They need the materials and pacing as they work with their students. Having the curriculum specialists is important and there is evidence of impact. It's an investment in students and gains.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach stated she wasn't planning on going further on instructional reductions. She has tried to hold on to recommendations made and does not want to take these two components out. She understands it is ESSER related, but thinks this is important for staff support.</p>	<p><b>Amendment made and failed to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2024-2025 budget by decreasing it by \$179,549, for the purpose of decreasing the line item identified as BDZ10000, the 2.0 K-8 Curriculum Specialists.</b></p>
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<p>Mr. Barile understands scores can fluctuate, and it's hard to say the curriculum specialists have a direct impact.</p> <p>Ms. Hollander stated the curriculum specialists are writing their own curriculum; the other option is to purchase materials. These are very expensive programs because you have to develop them. The district is saving money by building its own. They have met with the State Department and local officials and have been acknowledged for it. Dr. Parlato stated there is excellence in our work.</p> <p>Mrs. Rella noted that the reading waiver hasn't been approved. Ms. Hollander stated yes, but it is being reviewed, what was originally submitted is different from where we are now. The district is seeing growth in the students and hopes the state will recognize the efforts and accountability.</p> <p>Mrs. Rella asked what happens if the state comes back and doesn't approve and the district has to purchase the program.</p> <p>Ms. Hollander stated we have another year to implement the curriculum.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato stated they are asking to resubmit because the work has grown so much over the last several months and have asked Senator Harding to help legislatively. The strategy is to hope for a resubmission.</p> <p>Mrs. Rella asked if there is an estimated cost of what a program would be.</p> <p>Ms. Hollander stated she doesn't have an exact number, but can get a few quotes to see what it would cost. Dr. Parlato stated it is over \$300,000.</p> <p>Mr. Barile noted it would be 2 years it would pay for itself.</p> <p>Mr. Hansell asked if the district is looking for a waiver from the state to not have to buy materials. Ms. Hollander stated yes, as long as you can show the</p>	
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	<p>necessary components. Mr. Hansell asked if any districts have been successful. Ms. Hollander stated some who have written their own have been more successful. There are also districts that purchased programs and are struggling more. Districts that developed their own are seeing more success.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney stated this topic is near and dear to her. Curriculum is one of the most important things we oversee as a board. There are new Pathways being introduced at the HS and new curriculum at SMS due to the world language issue. Curriculum needs to be more consistent and needs to be tied together. The district is at a precipice and needs to support the curriculum. The curriculum specialists are critical to the students' success.</p> <p>Mrs. Herring noted that these are K-8 positions, not high school. Ms. Hollander stated that K-8 are working with the department chair at the high school, bridging grades 8-9.</p> <p>Mr. Hansell noted that the district will have to make hard choices going forward over the next few years because of the increasing unfunded mandates. The district is seeing the MLL students explode and it's all coming at a cost, since MLL is unfunded as well. The board will have to start looking at staffing like this because we can't keep going to the taxpayer. Maybe not this year, but someone will lose something. It's because of these unfunded mandates and how we vote.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach stated we already have been affected by it. Every year we make these decisions. We have seven bargaining units. The town has 3. Our staff are compensated through those negotiations. When looking at discretionary, what's left over of \$500,000 in a \$74,000,000 budget, that's not egregious, but Mr. Hansell is right because we have to start thinking outside the box. This is why we had the insurance conversation today. Each year we make tough choices. The whole board takes into consideration the taxpayer. The core of the budget is based on contracts, busing, health insurance, staffing, legal, etc., and surprises from the state. It's frustrating and it's why municipalities and BOEs are struggling.</p>	
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	<p>Mrs. McInerney stated she agrees with Mr. Hansell, it's important to keep spending low. We have done our duty and she does not think curriculum is where we want to start cutting. Taxpayers want children in town to have a good education.</p> <p>Mr. Barile agreed with Mrs. McInerney that everyone wants what is best for kids. Reduction does not mean less care. It's a balancing act. It's a fair motion and Mr. Hansell is correct. Over the last 10 years, the budget has gone up \$13,000,000 and there are 800 fewer kids.</p> <p>Mrs. Rella thanked Ms. Hollander for the explanation.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked if the 2.0 Curriculum Specialists are moving from ESSER to the General Fund. Ms. Hollander stated yes.</p> <p><b>The amendment failed 2-7.        Aye: Mrs. Herring and Mr. Barile.        No: Mrs. Rella, Mrs. Sarich, Mr. Hansell, Mrs. Faulenbach, Mrs. McInerney, Mr. O'Brien, Mr. McCauley.</b></p> <p>Mr. Giovannone stated the budget stands at \$73,462,509. 3.87% and was reduced by \$421,030.</p> <p><i>Mrs. Faulenbach moved to adopt the 2024-2025 budget in the amount of \$73,462,509 as amended by the Board. Seconded by Mrs. McInerney.</i></p>	<p><b>Motion made and passed unanimously to adopt the 2024-2025 budget in the amount of \$73,462,509 as amended by the Board.</b></p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Adjourn</b></p> <p><i>Mr. O'Brien moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:17 pm, seconded by Mr. Barile and passed unanimously.</i></p>	<p><b>Adjourn</b></p> <p><b>Motion made and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:17 p.m.</b></p>

Respectfully submitted:

Mrs. Tammy McInerney  
 Secretary  
 New Milford Board of Education