

**New Milford Board of Education
 Budget Hearings & Adoption Minutes
 January 14, 15, 21 & 22 2025
 Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

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**Budget Hearing Minutes
January 14, 2025
 Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

Present:	Mrs. Leslie Sarich, Chairperson Mr. Eric Hansell Mrs. Tammy McInerney Mrs. Sarah Herring Mr. Dean Barile Mrs. Wendy Faulenbach Mr. Brian McCauley Mr. Tom O'Brien Mr. Randall Scofield Mayor Pete Bass, <i>ex-officio</i>
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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. Teresa Kavanaugh, Human Resource Director Mr. Matthew Cunningham, Facilities Director Mrs. Laura Olson, Director of Pupil Personnel and Special Services 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 6:30pm. by Mrs. Leslie Sarich, Chairperson. The Pledge of Allegiance immediately followed the call to order.	Call to Order Pledge of Allegiance
2.		Presentation of the Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 Budget Dr. Parlato stated the budget and presentation will give purpose, goals, and indicators of progress: overview of proposed budget; demonstrate impact of fixed costs; serve as a springboard for questions and dialogue; and showcase the efforts and progress, as well as common themes, of the district's direction and the work of the district.	Presentation of the Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 School Budget

	<p>Dr. Parlato displayed the Connecticut Association of Board of Education’s School Governance position statement from 2016: The Superintendent is responsible for preparing, advocating, and implementing the budget. It is to address the goals and meet the needs of all students and report regularly to the Board of Education on the status of the budget. Along with this, the mission statement is to prepare each student to compete and excel in an ever changing world, embrace challenges, and respect and appreciate others.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato continued by stating the budget development begins in October. During this time, enrollment projects are finalized, schools and departments submit their budgets, the Superintendent and Mr. Giovannone meet with the departments, and by December, a preliminary budget is created. The Superintendent and Cabinet members then decide what is included in the proposed budget, decisions are sent out to the departments, and in January the budget is proposed.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato stated the goals of the Board of Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Student Achievement● Family and Community Engagement● Budget Development and Fiscal Management● District and School Environment and District Workforce <p>The District Priorities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Support Pk-12 students to meet their academic growth targets.● Build and strengthen relationships with students, families and the broader community.● Foster a safe, welcoming and respectful school climate to support teaching and learning. <p>Dr. Parlato stated the proposed budget aligns with these goals and priorities. The district-wide concepts are the ideas we live by, including</p>	
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	<p>instructional core, defining what “on track” is, and the instructional keystones.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato reviewed accountability indicators that were part of the Board of Education workshop in November and stated they are making progress to align with these indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● English/Language Arts Performance ● Mathematics Performance ● English/Language Arts Academic Growth ● Progress Toward English Proficiency ● On Track to High School Graduation ● Four Year Graduation Rate ● Six Year Graduation Rate for High Needs Students ● Chronic Absenteeism Rate ● Arts Access ● Physical Fitness ● Preparation for College and Career Readiness ● Post-Secondary Entrance <p>Dr. Parlato reviewed the 2025-2026 Fixed Costs, explaining they are required items and elements that carry forward from one year to the next. 2025-2026 Fixed Costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Contractual Salary Increases for All Bargaining Units ● Contractual Benefits for All Bargaining Units (medicare, pension contributions, FICA, etc.) ● Bus Contract: Currently on year 2 of 5 of the contract, and has a 4% increase per year ● Utilities ● Other Insurance (student accident, cyber, liability for auto and property) <p>The fixed costs increase is \$2,481,672, 3.38% over the 24-25 budget. 78.3% of the entire budget is employee salaries and benefits. Other insurances are included such as student accident, cyber, liability, etc.</p> <p>The additional requests to be discussed are an increase of .55% or \$408,456. This is a total budget increase from last year of \$2,890,128, or</p>	
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3.93%. The 24-25 proposed increase was 4.46% and in 23-24 it was 5.03%.

Dr. Parlato proposed the following salary reductions from the current 2024-25 budget:

- 2.0 Certified Staff Grades K-5
- 5.0 Certified Staff Grades 6-12
- 3.0 Paraprofessionals Grades K-12

The total is 10.0 Full Time Employees (FTE) and a reduced salary amount of \$597,375. Dr. Parlato stated that even though there are fewer students in the district, there are proposed additions. Dr. Parlato stated there has been an increase of high needs students over time, a particularly large explosion of English Learner (EL) students from 2.7% in 2014-2015 to 9.4% in 2024-2025, and 1 out of 3 students is eligible for free or reduced lunch. The district has more need, even though fewer students are enrolled in the district.

In the presentation, Dr. Parlato noted the high needs students by school in 2024-25:

	Free & Reduced Lunch	Multilingual Learners	Students with Disabilities
HPS	40%	16%	15%
NES	31%	8%	16%
SNIS	35%	11%	19%
SMS	33%	9%	19%
NMHS	29%	6%	14%

Dr. Parlato reviewed the personnel requests for 2025-26:

- 1.0 Armed School Security Officer at New Milford High School (NMHS)
- 1.0 Career and Technical Education Teacher at NMHS
- 1.0 Social Worker at Schaghticoke Middle School (SMS)
- 0.5 School Psychologist at SMS

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1.0 Multilingual Learners (MLL) Teacher at SMS ● 1.0 Special Education Teacher at SMS ● 1.0 Special Education Teacher at Sarah Noble Intermediate School (SNIS) ● 1.0 Interventionist from Title I to the General Fund ● 0.5 School Psychologist at SNIS ● 0.4 Assistant Principal at HPS ● 1.0 Central Office Secretary <p>Dr. Parlato noted the Armed School Security Officer replaces some of the current Securitas personnel that are in place. The replacement makes it an almost budget neutral replacement. The 1.0 Career and Technical Education (CTE) teacher at NMHS is the old “Industrial Arts,” and is a restored position reduced in 24-25. The 1.0 Social Worker at SMS replaces the Effective School Solutions employee, giving more coverage for student needs and providing savings. The 1.0 Multilingual Learners teacher at SMS is being requested because of the need. Dr. Parlato explained she is requesting a 1.0 Special Education teacher at SMS, even though the number of students has remained stable, because the severity of the need has increased. There is a request for a 1.0 Special Education Teacher at SNIS because of the increase in severity of students with special needs and there is need for help with PPTs. Dr. Parlato proposed moving 1.0 interventionist from Title I to the general fund. The interventionist is a necessary employee that should not supplant the general fund by using Title funds. Dr. Parlato explained some positions will be moved from grant funding to general funds because they are essential to the functioning of the school. The 0.5 Psychologist at SNIS is for student needs. The 0.4 Assistant Principal is to make the current 0.6 Assistant Principal a 1.0 FTE. The 1.0 Central Office Secretary will be split between the Assistant Superintendent and the Superintendent. The role will cover registering students in one location so it is consistent and standardized. The secretary will also focus on residency and doing residency checks, along with the many tasks that exist in the office.</p>	
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Dr. Parlato noted that the K-3 Literacy Curriculum Materials did not make it into the budget. The reason is because it can be covered by the 2% set aside funding and end of year funds from the insurance line. Request for personnel that were not included are:

- 6.0 Kindergarten general education paraprofessionals
- 0.4 School psychologist HPS
- 0.5 Nurse paraprofessional HPS
- 0.5 Nurse paraprofessional NES
- 1.0 Music teacher SMS
- 0.6 Assistant principal SMS
- 0.5 Speech and language pathologist SMS
- 0.5 Library clerk SMS
- 1.0 Math and reading interventionist SMS
- 1.0 Social Studies teacher NMHS
- 1.0 Social Worker NMHS
- 0.6 Speech and Language Pathologist LHTC

The above positions were considered and are positions that would help student support and the functioning of the school district.

When looking at District Accountability Indicators from 24/25 vs. 23/24, there have been increases, perhaps low, but increases have happened. There have also been areas of decrease and there are steps to move forward to increase them all.

Year over Year Increases In:	Year over Year Decreases In:
+Overall District Performance +Overall English Language Arts +English/Language Arts: High Needs +Math: High Needs +Growth Target Met: English/Language Arts Overall	-Overall Math Performance -Overall Science Performance -Science Performance: High Needs -College/Career Readiness: % Taking Courses -College/Career Readiness: % Passing Exams

		<p>+Growth Target Met: English/Language Arts: High Needs +Growth Target Met: Math Overall +Growth Target Met: Math: High Needs +Progress Toward English Proficiency: Literacy +Progress Toward English Proficiency: Oral +Chronic Absenteeism Reduced Overall +Chronic Absenteeism Reduced: High Needs +Six-Year Graduation Rate: High Needs +Two- and four-year college entrance +Arts Access</p>	<p>–On-Track to High School Graduation –Four-Year Graduation Rate –Physical Fitness</p>	
<p>Dr. Parlato stated this is an honest budget that shows every line, every page. There is a responsibility to balance the district's needs with fiscal responsibility. The student needs are increasing and we are continuing to grow and improve. The goal is to maximize our staff for maximum impact and effectiveness.</p> <p>Mr. McCauley asked about having more than one adult in with kindergarteners and what it would cost to have the 6.0 paraprofessionals. Mr. Giovannone stated he would send Mr. McCauley that information.</p> <p>Mrs. Herring stated, regarding the salary reductions, she is concerned about cutting 7.0 teachers and 3.0 paraprofessionals. The current personnel requests are not direct teaching in the classroom. It's important to note the more we chisel away at other needs, we pull away from the classroom and the teachers. We add in people who don't work directly with students. Mrs. Herring then asked how the staff will be reconfigured with the elimination of staff at the middle school. Dr. Parlato stated it will mostly affect grades 9-12. Dr.</p>				

	<p>Parlato stated the Career and Tech Education teacher will have 120 students. The MLL teacher teaches MLL students in sheltered English, directly facing students. The Special Education teacher will also be directly facing students. Mrs. Herring replied by stating money should be put towards the general education of children. Money is being moved away from the direction of the general education child. We're taking that money away and making classes larger because we need more MLL teachers and Special Education teachers.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked if the overall personnel piece is a net 0.6. Dr. Parlato stated that is correct. Mrs. Faulenbach cross compared from the presentation last year and pointed out the reductions in enrollment. Mrs. Faulenbach stated she is pleased we're looking at the enrollment piece because it has been a topic of discussion in the past.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney asked if any of the reductions affect the pathways and new curriculum at SMS and NMHS, specifically the Social Studies teacher. Dr. Parlato confirmed the curriculum being adopted would not be affected by the reductions.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>Discussion of the Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 Budget including but not limited to, PK - Grade 5, Transportation, Benefits, Revenue, District-Wide Departments</p> <p><u>Presentation of Grades K-5:</u> Mrs. Calabrese, Mrs. Gallagher, and Mrs. Bilko thanked the Board of Education for their support and continued commitment. Together they explained that everything that is done in Hill & Plain School (HPS), Northville Elementary School (NES) and Sarah Noble Intermediate School (SNIS) is driven by our mission statement. It is important to help children to be respectful individuals who become a credit to their community and society.</p> <p>Mrs. Calabrese stated that HPS has 19 general education teachers, 3 Excel teachers, 4 Special</p>	<p>Discussion of the Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 Budget including but not limited to, PK - Grade 5, Transportation, Benefits, Revenue, District-Wide Departments</p>

	<p>Education teachers, and 4 Unified Arts teachers. Projected enrollment is 351 with 45 in Preschool, 98 in Kindergarten, 92 in 1st grade, and 115 in 2nd grade. Projected class size would be 7.5 students in Preschool for 3 teachers, 16.3 students in Kindergarten with 6 teachers, 15.3 students in 1st grade with 6 teachers, and 19.3 students in 2nd grade with 6 teachers.</p> <p>Mrs. Gallagher stated Northville has 21 teachers, 3 Excel teachers, 5 Special Education teachers and 4 Unified Arts teachers. Projected enrollment is 407, with 58 in Preschool, 112 in Kindergarten, 106 in 1st grade, and 131 in 2nd grade. Projected class size is 9.7 for Excel with 3 teachers, 16 in Kindergarten with 7 teachers, 15.1 students in 1st grade with 7 teachers, and 18.7 students in 2nd grade with 7 teachers.</p> <p>Mrs. Bilko stated SNIS has 35 general education teachers, 11 Special Education teachers, 11 Unified Arts teachers. The projected enrollment is 757 students with 259 in 3rd grade, 259 in 4th grade, and 235 in 5th grade. The projected class size would be 21.6 students in 3rd grade with 12 teachers, 21.4 students in 4th grade with 12 teachers, and 21.9 students in 5th grade with 11 teachers.</p> <p>Mrs. Bilko stated SNIS is currently doing benchmark assessments and mid-year data will be coming soon. Mrs. Calabrese stated at HPS the students are doing daily work in several areas including STEM, reading, mathematics, culture and climate, writing, and more. Mrs. Gallagher stated the budget covers necessary materials such as UFLI, Science of Reading, Bookworms (a new program), Heggarty, iReady, STEM programing, and supporting Multilingual Learners (MLL), interventionists, and special education.</p> <p>Mrs. Gallagher showed a video that displayed all the programs that were covered by last year's budget. Mrs. Bilko stated, in addition to academics, the budget helps with other aspects. It's the other things we do so children are ready to learn. Our budget attends to guidance lessons,</p>	
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	<p>lunch groups, character assemblies, and recognitions. These are the things that look at the whole child and help them grow in character. It's important because these help them be in the right frame of mind to learn and grow.</p> <p>Mrs. Calabrese stated they have collaborated with organizations such as Camella's Cupboard, New Milford Social Services, and Litchfield Hills Transition Center (LHTC). They've worked together on the plastic-for-benches project and have raised money for Connecticut Children's Medical Center. Mrs. Gallagher added that they wanted to thank the PTO for all their support.</p> <p>Mrs. Bilko noted that combined, they are about 15% of the overall budget. Mrs. Gallagher stated this budget will help them stay on track to be successful. Mrs. Bilko noted it is about the student and ensuring they are ready for the transition from school to school and collaborating with families.</p> <p>Mrs. Calabrese explained that HPS is requesting a 0.4 Assistant Principal. This would make the current Assistant Principal position full time. Mrs. Calabrese stated the part time role does not allow for the needed consistency given the 6 day cycle. As the only certified staff member, if she is unavailable, it creates challenges. A full time certified staff member would allow for consistency for student support. It may not be a forward facing classroom position, but it will still help students, especially those facing challenges. There are 386 students and of those 386, 16% are Multilingual Learners, 40% are Free and Reduced Lunch, 15% have IEP's and there are special education students. These are all considered high needs learners. The position is necessary for student support and advocacy. The position works with building relationships with families, discipline and behavior challenges, crisis management, teacher support with professional development, data analysis and school improvement. It's important to understand the root causes of behavioral issues. This requires ongoing conversations with the families and nurturing the relationship. The Assistant Principal connects families with the</p>	
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	<p>school based health clinic, and is often a key point of contact during times of crisis. We are all managers of our buildings and instructional leaders. Being full time, there can be more support for the teachers, professional development planning, and effective teaching strategies. This is hard to accomplish with a disjointed schedule.</p> <p>Mrs. McNerney asked if NES had a full time assistant principal. Mrs. Gallagher stated no, she has a 0.6 Assistant Principal. Mr. O'Brien asked if it is shared with another school. Mrs. Gallagher stated no.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked if the 6 paraprofessionals that did not make the budget were meant to have 3 at NES and 3 at HPS for kindergarten. Dr. Parlato stated yes. Mrs. Faulenbach stated, looking at overall enrollment, HPS is down 24 and understands the intent behind moving things around, but is concerned about the support of 20 students in a class at that young age. Mr. Giovannone stated that a paraprofessional salary is roughly \$25,000 a year for salary only, not benefits. If a teacher is reduced and staff is moved around, there will be roughly 19 students per class at HPS.</p> <p>Mayor Bass asked about the HPS salaries for Physical Education. In 23/24, the actual was \$55,000, budgeted was \$72,711, and it is currently budgeted for \$74,000. Mayor Bass asked why it went from \$55,000 to \$74,000, and that he has the same question for Music and ELA. Mr. Giovannone stated it could be there is replacement staff coming in at different steps but would look into it and get the Mayor the specifics. Mayor Bass asked Mr. Giovannone for more detail regarding page 17 and the Principal Office from \$148,156 in 23/24 to \$243,036 in 25/26, and asked if it includes an additional person. Mr. Giovannone stated it was not for an additional staff member and would get the details for the Mayor. Mayor Bass asked for clarification for \$82,345 in 23/24 to \$107,943 in 25/26. Mayor Bass asked for breakout and details on what is current, and what we are with the trend line of today. Mr. Giovannone stated</p>	
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	<p>what is displayed on the page is budget to budget. Then asked to clarify that the Mayor is asking for the actuals for 23/24, the budget for 24/25 and and 25/26. Mayor Bass stated that was correct. Mr. Barile asked what caused the budget to come in so under. Mr. Giovannone replied, in many cases there are replacement staff that come in that may be higher or lower than the outgoing salary.</p> <p>Mr. Scofield asked if sharing one STEM teacher was enough. Mrs. Bilko stated she did not want to speak for the group but would welcome having a dedicated STEM teacher. Under the umbrella of the whole district, to be fiscally responsible, it was not something that could be done. Mr. Scofield asked about possible endeavors with non-profits. Mrs. Bilko stated Kimberly-Clark comes in and works with the students. Also, they offer clubs such as robotics. Mayor Bass suggested looking into partnering with Robotics & Beyond.</p> <p><u>Transportation:</u></p> <p>Mr. Giovannone reviewed Transportation, stating it is for general education busing for the district. It is going up 3.68% Y/Y. All Star is up 4%, the rest is not increasing at the same rate as the All Star contract.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney asked if the \$176,000 includes bus tracking. Mr. Giovannone stated that is just the base amount in the bus contract. Tracking is an additional \$7,560. Mrs. Faulenbach urged the board to discuss sending a survey to parents to see if they could sign a waiver to not use buses. It might open up an opportunity to reduce the number of buses used. We have 46 in the fleet. The survey would not cost anything and the waiver could be workable. The savings could be used towards staff reductions. Dr. Parlato stated there is a plan to send a survey at the end of January. Mr. Giovannone added a reduction of bus runs might free up a driver for athletic events, and it would be less than going out to bid for another company to complete the run.</p>	
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	<p><u>Benefits:</u></p> <p>Mr. Giovannone reviewed benefits, stating that there is a 5.35% increase. This includes FICA and medicare, which are functions of payroll and projected by the Town Finance Director. Unemployment represents an increase adjusted for prior year actuals. Workers' compensation is a 4.91% increase that is projected through CIRMA. Health insurance is provided by Brown & Brown. There are employees on State Partnership Plan (SPP). Partnership is based on premiums of enrollment. Brown & Brown is anticipating an 8-10% increase. This will happen in March and the district is using 8% for budget purposes. The line item for Health Insurance will not be a straight line of 8% increase. That is because Brown & Brown is looking at trend projections based on current experience. In our current year's health insurance budget, we have an amount over the budget requirement. This was passed by the Board of Finance and left in the budget. This is being currently transferred to fund other pieces of the budget. When we begin budgeting for 25/26 for health care insurance, we don't take the current year's budget number because that is already inflated by \$292,000. We start with the actuarial number, add an 8% trend, then control for any benefit packages, which will fluctuate based on the FTEs benefit packages that are hired for next year. That is the reason why we are using a projected trend increase per Brown & Brown but you do not see a true 8% from budget line item to line item. This is a large percentage of the budget in benefits. It is \$13,295,745. It is going up year over year approximately \$675,000. The biggest piece of that is the health insurance at \$409,000.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked if there were comparisons being done and asked when they last spoke to Brown & Brown. Mr. Giovannone stated the last conversation was in September and they will speak again in March. Mrs. Faulenbach recalled last year when they had a conversation with Brown & Brown, the projection went from 6% to 5% and it saved \$90,000 in reduction. Mrs. Faulenbach asked about ISF, noticing that it has not been used in the budget for two years. Mrs.</p>	
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	<p>Faulenbach asked what is currently in the ISF, and what is the threshold to fund it to keep that balance. Mayor Bass stated he would get that for Mrs. Faulenbach.</p> <p>Mayor Bass asked about the reduction from \$408,000 to \$409,000, using what the Board of Finance gave you to drive down the cost of that line. Mr. Giovannone stated the current year's budget for health insurance is \$9,598,448. When projecting for next year, that number was over by \$282,292, and had to first be backed out. After that, there is then a projection of an 8% escalator on top of that new number. Then we have two reductions for health insurance benefit packages corresponding to the FTE reductions in the overall. Mayor Bass stated, even in backing that out, that line is still robust of \$200,000. Mr. Giovanonne stated that was correct, for this year only. Mayor Bass noted that would be a safety net, in case the number escalates. Mr. Giovannone stated that is only in this current budget year of 24/25 and it is not being carried over into next year. It is why that number is not going up 8%.</p> <p><u>Revenue:</u></p> <p>Mr. Giovannone stated for revenue, the district is projected to get \$71,004 more next year than this current year. The largest piece is related to excess cost. That is to adjust for current placements continuing to next year and any anticipated new placements at the 68% reimbursement rate, which is the same rate used for this year. Medicaid was adjusted based on a three year prior average ending line balance. There is an additional 3% added for building use. The excel tuition is being adjusted down by \$7,000, based on prior year actuals. We have an increase in participation that qualifies for reduced rates. The special education tuition is projected flat. DCF tuition is \$85,000, and zero for next year. There was no collection in 23/24 or 24/25. This is for DCF students placed in the district. There is an \$85,000 increase to the budget because we're eliminating that expected revenue. The admission/athletic gate receipts and the parking permit fees are flat.</p>	
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	<p>Mr. O'Brien asked about Special Education tuition being flat. Mr. Giovannone stated the district charges out for students who are placed here that get special services, which is expected to continue. For that reason, we kept the expected revenue budget unchanged. Mr. O'Brien asked if it is the same students or just a placeholder that is filled by different students each year. Mrs. Olson stated it is for students placed at LHTC and the services they need, which is a formula.</p> <p>Mayor Bass asked about the ECS grant and taking 2% from the town side. Mrs. Faulenbach noted the agreement is to reimburse the town the 2% this year and going forward. Mayor Bass inquired about the Sherman tuition revenue and the revenue tuition. Mr. Giovannone stated the Sherman revenue tuition is less due to declining enrollment. For the tuition revenue, it is not in the Board's budget, but believes it was \$14,236 last year. This is the tuition the town receives from a staff member's child attending New Milford Public Schools. Teachers can pay tuition at ½ the cost and it goes directly to the town.</p> <p>Mayor Bass asked if the DCF tuition was for foster kids. Mr. Giovannone stated any child placed by DCF would be in that line, but there are none at this time. Dr. Parlato added that it depends on how DCF places them and what district the student belongs to. Mr. Giovannone stated this year it is expected to collect zero. In the past \$85,000 was listed as anticipated revenue, but they have not gotten it in the past, so the number is being reduced to zero.</p> <p>Mr. Barile asked about an excess cost breakout. Mr. Giovannone stated they are separate items. Special Education is for extra services for a child placed out of district at LHTC. Excess cost is transportation and tuition for out placed students. There is a formula through the state, and if a threshold is met, you are eligible for reimbursement. The reimbursement kicks in after the district has paid \$86,000 out of pocket. Afterwards, we are reimbursed .68 cents on the dollar. It changes constantly, making it hard to</p>	
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	<p>budget. The state allocates a certain amount of money, and they often run out. For example, instead of .68 cents on the dollar reimbursement, the district may only get .62 cents on the dollar.</p> <p>Mrs. Herring asked if the social security repeal would have a negligible impact on the budget. Mr. Giovannone stated that was correct. Mrs. Herring suggested looking at bus routes with the declining numbers. Mr. Giovannone stated the bus company does that but it has not been done since 2021/2022. Dr. Parlato noted the reduction of buses could add to the amount of time on the buses. Mrs. Faulenbach stated it is important to not violate board policy of time on the bus.</p> <p><u>Department of Fiscal Services:</u> Mr. Giovannone stated Professional Services covers Quickbooks, ACA reporting, MUNIS, etc. These are shared fees with the town along with the audit fee. Printing and travel are being reduced, supply lines are flat, and cyber insurance is projected by CIRMA.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked about the line item for MUNIS. Mayor Bass stated it is an annual cost for the platform.</p> <p><u>Board of Education Budget:</u> Mr. Giovannone stated it is a 2.3% increase. There is an increase for legal fees of 2% over prior year. Shipman & Goodwin is a 2% increase. Advertising for legal notices is increasing for projects. The dues and fees for CAGE are based on prior year actuals.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach stated she appreciated the increase in legal and taking into account fees for negotiations for the upcoming bargaining units happening.</p> <p>Mayor Bass asked which negotiations were already settled. Mr. Giovannone stated paraprofessionals and secretaries have been negotiated. They are currently in negotiations with nurses. Teachers and administrators are in the next cycle.</p>	
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	<p>Mr. Giovannone stated, on page 64, there is an increase for the Superintendent at 2.64% and 2.75% for salary non-certified. All others are flat.</p> <p>Mrs. Herring asked what is the benefit of C.A.B.E. Mr. Giovannone stated it is a yearly membership and that he would get details to the board. Mr. Hansell noted it would be useful to know how much it is utilized.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Opportunity for the Public to be heard Mrs. Megan Byrd, 2 Carlson Road, noted the budget is not on the website for public viewing. Dr. Parlato addressed this particular comment to let her and the public know it is traditionally posted after the first evening's presentations.</p> <p>Ms. Elizabeth Holton, 96 Lanes Road, stated she is a Kindergarten teacher at HPS. Ms. Holton asked the board to consider the importance of early intervention. General education teachers are dedicated and sometimes it is almost impossible to cover this and the proposed student facing rolls. It is important to meet the needs of all students. The student population is changing and it is important to keep class sizes small.</p> <p>Mrs. Alexandra Thomas, 187 Aspetuck Ridge Road, stated she has seen first hand the changes in the school culture. Mrs. Thomas stated the schools are doing a phenomenal job. The environment is so much more warm and seemingly happier. There is a worry about the kindergarten and paraprofessionals. It is critical that they get enough support to avoid future struggles. Our town is changing, our situation is such that we are an aging town but cultural changes in the community are very real. We will continue to have trouble funding the school as we need. We have to address the needs of all our students, not just the students who do well or have special services. Mrs. Thomas stated she would like to hear what the cost would be to include the kindergarten paraprofessionals.</p>	<p>Opportunity for the Public to be heard</p>

5.		Recessed to Wednesday January 15, 2025 The budget hearing meeting of the New Milford Board of Education was called to recess at 8:40p.m. by Mrs. Leslie Sarich, Chairperson.	Recessed to January 15, 2025 The meeting recessed at 8:40 p.m.
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**Budget Hearing Minutes
January 15, 2025
 Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

Present:	Mr. Eric Hansell, Vice Chairperson Mrs. Tammy McInerney Mrs. Sarah Herring Mr. Dean Barile Mrs. Wendy Faulenbach Mr. Brian McCauley Mr. Tom O'Brien Mr. Randall Scofield Mayor Pete Bass, <i>ex-officio</i>
Absent:	Mrs. Leslie Sarich, Chairperson

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. Teresa Kavanaugh, Human Resource Director Mr. Matthew Cunningham, Facilities Director Mrs. Laura Olson, Director of Pupil Personnel and Special Services 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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1.	Call to Order Pledge of Allegiance The budget hearing meeting of the New Milford Board of Education was called to order at 6:30pm. by Eric Hansell, Vice-Chairperson. The Pledge of Allegiance immediately followed the call to order to resume the meeting.	Call to Order Pledge of Allegiance
2.	Opportunity for the Public to be heard Mr. Rich McCoy, 12 Wishing Well Lane, stated he is a Data Specialist for New Milford Public Schools in the Fiscal Services Dept. His wife is one of the teachers being eliminated in the budget. Mr. McCoy stated he	Opportunity for the Public to be heard

	<p>and his wife are proud to both live and work in New Milford. His wife left a teaching position of 20 years to work in New Milford. There are reasons to retain exceptional staff and they take great pride in being staff members of New Milford Public Schools. Mr. McCoy asked the Board to give consideration towards the job removal in the proposed budget.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>Discussion of the Superintendent’s Proposed 2025-2026 Budget including, but not limited to, Grades 6-12 and District-Wide Departments</p> <p><u>Schaghticoke Middle School (SMS):</u></p> <p>Mrs. Scoralick stated the mission statement is a major driver in the budget. Middle school is about preparing students to embrace challenges and contribute to society. As always, they keep in mind the ideas we live by: Focus, Heart, Collaboration and Creativity. SMS has 796 students and 140 staff members. The demographics are shifting rapidly. There is an increased need for students with social emotional needs. They have been working on climate and culture. The hallways are quieter, and the environment is more conducive to learning. They are fostering leadership opportunities and opportunities for fun. One initiative is Student Leaders for Change. It allows students to network with student leaders throughout the state. It’s a great opportunity that will be offered again this year. It creates an environment where students learn those skills and bring them back to the school community, like planning for 6th grade open house and the student/staff basketball game. There have been other school activities, such as color wars and a door decorating contest. They are working hard to improve academics through Social Studies, Mathematics, ELA, and Science. They are working on forms of assessments through disciplined literacy and having teachers teaching academic vocabulary so they can be successful in specific areas. This can identify gaps and help students grow. In Science, the department has been working with the high school so students can be successful moving forward. In ELA, they have been working on comprehension standards, standards alignment, and school-wide rubrics, such as speaking and writing. Social Studies has new standards with new project based learning, which will impact all three grade levels. Math is working on instructional-based</p>	<p>Discussion of the Superintendent’s Proposed 2025-2026 Budget including, but not limited to, Grades 6-12 and District-Wide Departments</p>

practices, designed to build critical thinking and problem solving with students. It's about getting kids out of their seats and working in small groups. They are seeing gains for students in this environment. Students are more successful and persevering in problem solving. They continue to build capacity with teacher leaders for core content areas to effectively lead their departments based on what support is necessary. They continue the work on redesigning the STEM courses and updating them to meet the needs of what's happening in the world.

Mrs. Scoralick explained the budget priorities are focused on the students. The biggest is maintaining and strengthening current programming. Daily items have increased in cost, and maintaining current activities such as clubs and athletics is a big part of the budget. There are equipment and materials that are at the end of life. They are asking for funds for the Moses platform for French and Spanish, which will help with instructional methods. They are requesting whiteboards for classrooms. They are looking to improve Computer Science (CS) courses and shifting from CS 6th grade, 7th grade and 8th grade, to CS 1, 2 and 3. The prerequisites for CS are important and breaking it out by grade level wasn't successful. They are requesting equipment to support CS 3 next year which includes robotics. Mrs. Scoralick displayed a picture of Mr. Fortuna, explaining that he speaks to the STEM class because he runs a haunted attraction. He had students build their own models for an attraction, using what they learned from him. They want to foster opportunities to learn outside the classroom which includes getting guest speakers and special programs into the school. Prior speakers have included Detective Mark Conway, Tyshawn Jenkins of the Wounded Warrior Project, and Jackson Olson of the Savannah Bananas.

Mr. O'Brien asked if the \$20,824 funds being requested were for CS. Mrs. Scoralick stated yes. Mrs. Faulenbach asked about the proposed additions, including the Social Worker. She asked if it was in place of the Effective School Solutions (ESS) clinician. Dr. Parlato stated yes, for ESS we use 3rd tier behavior support and the proposal will replace that

program with our own Social Worker. It allows for a larger case load, and being our own employee, more connected to our community. The savings will be roughly \$64,000. Mrs. Faulenbach stated this was brought up last year and we kept ESS because it was working well. Dr. Parlato replied that they were looking at the level of need and it was decided for this year to make the change. Mayor Bass asked Mr. Giovannone if he could provide some clarification for SMS salaries for page 28, line 51115 ELA Salary/Cert at \$944,644, and page 29, 51115 Social Studies Salary/Cert, to explain budgeted and actual. Mayor Bass also asked for clarification for page 28 ELL (English Language Learners). The 23/24 was zero and asked if that was staff that was added since it went up to \$26,658. Dr. Parlato answered they will be sending clarification for questions and will include this. The salary questions will include turnovers for clarification.

New Milford High School (NMHS):

NMHS Principal, Mr. Raymond Manka and NMHS Athletic Director, Keith Lipinsky, began their presentation. Mr. Manka thanked his team, department chairs, and staff. He stated their goal is to provide an environment that will allow students to excel and contribute to society. After displaying the budget for the Board, found on page 35, Mr. Manka stated they are continuing to work on Pathways, attendance, and the Wingman program. The high school has the following staff and enrollment:

Certified	Teachers: 106 (includes department chairs) Special Ed Department Chair: 1.0 Pathways Coordinator: 1.0
Support Staff	Social Workers: 2.0 Psychologist: 1.5 Substance Abuse: 1.0 Counselors: 6 Paras: 15 (2 vacant) SCW: 1 (1 vacant)

	S&L: 1.5 OT/PT: 2.0 shared
Projected Enrollment	Class of 2026: 285 Class of 2027: 302 Class of 2028: 249 Class of 2029: 281

Mr. Manka went through the Vision of the Graduate and stated the key is communication, collaboration, and flexibility. They have begun building language behind learning blocks and instructional rounds. This instructional core is being utilized to create meaningful tasks so students can excel. The committees work regularly to do analysis of data so others can understand what and why things are done. There are no accountability measures, but to make sure we understand the strengths and needs, using those to identify high leverage areas for each department and so goals can come to life. There is a push to secure grants to help supplement costs. Mr. Manka showed the initiative map to layout who is responsible for what. That they are all in communication and aligned with Board goals and the Vision of the Graduate. It's about forward progress while staying on track. There has been an effort to study other schools and see how they are helping get students in the classroom to meet their daily academic attendance. There is a push to reduce suspensions and apply for grants to help train staff and help students be more welcoming of others.

The Wingman Movement has 146 Student Leaders that fall in line with the CASEL aligned standards. It is about Social-Emotional Learning, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, Responsible Decision Making, Self-Management, and Self Awareness. This all leads to lessons that are crafted for what students need and the "Look Up, Look Out & Look After." There is a palliative and recognizable difference over the last few years. They want students to be engaged, not disengaged. The Pathways Program has been championed by Dr. Dwyer. Her efforts have included partnering with state agencies and local businesses to give strategic courses, with the hopes students will be able to earn college credits and work certifications.

<p>There are 11 potential pathways where students enter the Freshman Academy to start their path for internships and potential for certifications.</p> <p>Mr. Manka explained, on the schedule are tentative Early College Experience (ECE) courses. Two years ago there was a report that NMHS had the lowest values in the state with students who graduated with 3+ college credits, and was one of the lowest state-wide. There are now nine proposed classes going forward. They range from Social Studies, Mathematics, Exercise Physiology, and more. The cost will range from \$0 dollars, to \$65 for a three credit class. Students could potentially take up to six classes, that would then be transferable to that college or university. Mr. O'Brien asked how the courses are taken. Mr. Manka stated they would be part of the course selection process for students. Once scheduled through the scheduling process, students would have to register with the institution. For example, UCONN would send a liaison and the students can register on site. Mr. O'Brien asked if the courses would be in person. Mr. Manka confirmed they would be.</p> <p>Mr. Manka continued his presentation by highlighting the alternative education program, known as The Summit. It is a heavy lift for staff with planning and organizing, but it has allowed students to reach their credit accumulation and receive a diploma. The Summit supports social, emotional, and academic needs. It's all run with existing staff. The attendance has been outstanding. Students who may have had school avoidance now have near perfect attendance. Mr. Manka stated he is proud of the work of the staff and students.</p> <p>Mr. Manka reviewed the budget requests. There is a request for the return of 1.0 FTE Certified Technical Education teacher, add 1.0 Security School Officer by reducing 1.0 Securitas.</p> <p><u>Athletics:</u></p> <p>Mr. Lipinsky began his presentation by stating the mission of the district is a big part of the athletic program. Core pieces of the athletic program are competing fairly and getting recognized at the state</p>	
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level for sportsmanship and positive school spirit. Student athletes are learning to help others and seeing the benefits of being a leader. Athletics also helps in the classroom with life skills such as adversity, handling success or failure and managing time. New Milford offers 28 programs at the high school. There is close to 50% participation in athletics among the students. The biggest part of the budget is transportation, staffing for events, referees, scorekeepers, and there is the cost to rent facilities for programs such as golf, swim, ice hockey, etc. Smaller expenses include repairs and professional development. Something that is being done is grade checks for students and offering help to struggling students. The athletic budget will help pay for equipment, transportation, staffing, dues and fees, tournament entry fees, and rental fees for those that rent facilities off campus.

Mr. McCauley asked about the increase of \$20,000 for Pupil Transportation and asked if it was part of the All Star contract. Mr. Lipinsky stated it is not. All Star cannot be utilized for any trip that departs the school before 4:40pm. The \$20,000 increase is to allot for the use of charter bus companies. Mr. Manka added that they have worked hard to try and not go over budget year over year. Dr. Parlato noted the better the team does, the more travel needs to happen, adding to the cost.

Mrs. Herring asked about the cutting of the Spanish teacher. Mr. Manka stated it is a world language position and it's yet to be determined what language it will be. Recently they had a Spanish teacher that passed away, and they have not been able to fill that position. It is one of the deficiencies and it has been decided to eliminate it.

Mayor Bass asked about revenue rental of the turf fields. Mr. Giovannone stated that is part of building use fees. Mayor Bass asked Mr. Giovannone to provide how much New Milford nonprofits pay for turf fields and details on the weight lifting area of the high school. Mr. Lipinsky stated there is \$7,500 to devote to equipment upgrades for the weight room. Mr. Giovannone noted the breakout is in the

appendix. There are two lines dedicated to athletics, \$7,500 in 25/26 for weight room upgrades, not part of the general fund budget request. They will use 5 Year Capital Reserve money to fund the \$7,500. Mrs. Faulenbach noted the uniforms were on a one year refresh cycle and alternate with something else such as the weight room. That request will eventually go before Town Council and Board of Finance. Dr. Parlato stated, if there is end of year money, we sometimes purchase things. There is also the Capital Reserve Plan that allows us to intentionally plan for certain things, such as the weight room. Mrs. Faulenbach stated it is listed, but it is not part of the operational budget. It's put in there to be fully transparent to show the intent of the board for the money left over to be placed in the Capital Reserve. Mr. Giovannone confirmed and stated these are not usually funded via end of year but they use end of year money that is unspent. It then goes through the audit, gets deposited into the Capital Reserve account and then approved by the Board of Finance and Town Council. Once approved it then comes back to the district and we fund the projects. Mayor Bass asked about the tennis court replacement of \$1,500,000. Dr. Parlato stated they do that now and revise as needs are seen over time.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked if the reductions were enrollment driven. Dr. Parlato stated it is based on the number of students each teacher had in a given department. It should be that each teacher should have 105-110 students. Some teachers were as low as 75, which shows there's room in that department for reductions.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked about details on The Summit program. Mr. Manka stated there are 10 students enrolled in the program. Mrs. Faulenbach asked about the \$77,144 increase on page 38 in the Tech Ed line and asked to get the cost of it with benefits. Mr. Giovannone stated he would get that but benefits depend on the level they are. Mayor Bass asked if it was for one person. Mr. Giovannone stated it is for the increase in contractual salary for one person and the cost of the additional proposed position. It is for two salaries.

Department of Instruction:

Ms. Hollander began her presentation stating the mission of the Department of Instruction (DOI) is to provide coherency and consistency. They look closely at programs and create an environment so there is partnership in learning and an instructional core. The roles and responsibilities are in two buckets: Operational and Instructional. It is currently supported by 1.0 secretary (currently an open position). One of the items Dr. Parlato proposed is a secretary at CO to support the Department of Instruction. This position will help create a centralized registration process which will help identify ELL students. The position will also take over the residency checks.

The DOI supports teaching, learning, curriculum, and instruction. Some of what is happening at DOI is Science of Reading, iReady, aligning of 6-8 mathematics curriculum, middle school math acceleration, the Pathways curriculum, K-5 STEM units of study, and the K-5 NGSS units of study. The Committee on Learning (COL) works hard to be transparent. Part of the educator evaluation system is about professional learning.

Ms. Hollander stated Systems of Coherence has been a personal goal for her. Taking into account the needs and responsive strategies it will bring to strengthen student involvement. There are certain things that need to happen, which include updating the report card process. This year has focused on teacher leadership. There are now lab classrooms, a Report Card Committee, Mathematics Vision Work, instructional rounds, and a classroom walkthrough model.

Ms. Hollander stated she hopes to have a Multilingual Learner position included in the budget. It is required by law to provide support to the MLL students. The position will not be part of the classroom but still a support to the teachers. Ms. Hollander displayed an historical lookback of MLL students over the years. In 2003-2004 there were 84 MLL students. For 2024-2025 there are 337 MLL students. There is a

<p>need for clarity and consistency in identification during registration. There are other supports needed, including building based programming and translation tools to meet state mandates. SMS has a need for an additional 1.0 MLL teacher. They have been making due with a part time tutor but the hope is to add the position. Ms. Hollander noted support for the MLL students and families are mandated by the state.</p> <p>Mayor Bass asked what additional resources the typical MLL student needs. Ms. Hollander stated it depends on the student, but typically includes translation services, social services, and helping them get acclimated and comfortable with the environment. Mayor Bass noted it went up after covid roughly 166% and asked if it's district-wide or if one school has a higher population. Dr. Parlato stated HPS is the highest at 16%. Ms. Hollander stated the high school has also increased. There are up to 17 languages spoken by the students. It is a transient population.</p> <p>Ms. Hollander continued by stating there is an audit of the programming, addressing key things such as transition from middle school to high school for servicing. Mrs. Herring asked what positions fall under DOI. Mr. Giovannone stated all staffing budgeted for DOI are in appendix C6.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked to clarify object 51210, the increase of \$35,539 for Salary/Non-Cert - Assistant Superintendent. Mr. Giovannone stated that it includes two pieces. There is the vacancy for the existing secretary, which was reset back to the midpoint salary range. The second piece is the request for the 1.0 secretary in the amount of \$51,100. The position will require benefits but that is not included in the line item. The \$100,224 is for both of the positions. Mrs. Faulenbach asked about tutors. Mr. Giovannone stated it is for five General Education tutors. After the reduction, there are now five tutors. Each tutor is budgeted for five hours a day at \$19 dollars an hour and 180 days. Mrs. Faulenbach asked how they were being budgeted after last year's reallocation. Dr. Parlato stated that is an increase in their rate. Mrs. Faulenbach asked to confirm it is not</p>	
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	<p>an increase in the number of tutors. Mr. Giovannone stated that was correct.</p> <p>Mr. Barile asked why the budget number went down so much for ELA, object 51115 on page 44. Dr. Parlato stated that it was from the ESSER reduction.</p> <p>Ms. Hollander stated she wants to take an interventionist from Title I and move them to general funds.</p> <p>Mr. Giovannone stated the difference between what was spent in 23/24 and 24/25 budget is reflective of the removal of interventionist positions that were paid through ESSER. The increase of 111% and 63% for Salary/Cert-English and 63% increase for Sal/Cert-Math represent existing salaries that are there, they are contractual salary raises. The movement in ELA of a .5 interventionist coming over from the grant and the other 0.5 is in math. So if you add up those two increases for 25/26 you get roughly \$103,000; \$4,900 is tied to contractual salary raises for existing staff members and \$98,000 is tied to the 1.0 FTE that will no longer come from the grant and be paid from the general fund.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked about the line item for student transportation in DOI on page 44, object 55110. Ms. Hollander stated it may be for homeless students.</p> <p>Mr. Scofield asked how many open tutor positions there are. Dr. Parlato stated 1-2 are currently open.</p> <p>Ms. Hollander continued her presentation by stating the Adult Education program is something to be proud of. Christy Martin has been instrumental and operated in the capacity of facilitation and a director role. Ms. Hollander stated she wants to make sure it is not all under Christy. The program staffing includes the following: 1.0 Program Director, 1.0 Program Facilitator, 1.5 Guidance Counselor, 1.0 Secretary, 1.0 Adult Education Evaluator and 12 Teachers. Many of the teachers are teachers who are in the schools during the day. The number of students has remained the same over the last three years. Some of the</p>	
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services offered are collaboration with Danbury. One example is giving students instruction for the GED in Spanish. The budget remains flat, the increase is for the salary of the additional person.

Tuition:

Ms. Hollander stated the Shepaug Agriscience program has 29 seats, and the total tuition cost is \$197,867. Western Connecticut Academy of International Studies in Danbury has 18 seats with a total tuition cost of \$39,501. Henry Abbott Technical High School has 17 seats on average from SMS, and anywhere from 70-100 district-wide.

Ms. Hollander stated they are staying the course. They continue to commit to high quality data driven decisions, observing how students are engaged in their learning through Science of Reading and other methods.

Ms. Hollander displayed a graph showing the growth of 3rd graders over time. The same group of students over the last three years have grown in ELA through literacy and numeracy. Reading instruction is complex and the teachers teach where the deficiencies are. The 3rd grade students are getting foundational skills they need as opposed to two years ago.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked about the open position in the DOI office. Ms. Hollander explained the work was done by a mighty and skilled individual. Looking at it, it is a lot of jobs for one person. The addition of a second secretary will handle residency, registration and help with other projects as needed for the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent's office. Mrs. Faulenbach stated she thought they were doing ok with registration and knew the Board had concerns over residency. Ms. Faulenbach stated she understood the initiative to make it more cohesive. Dr. Parlato stated the position will shift registration from the schools to Central Office. Ms. Hollander stated they are planning to have people re-engage with proof of residency. The district looks into the sales of homes, and other methods. Once everything is verified, they send a letter of disenrollment.

<p>Mayor Bass asked how other districts handle residency. Dr. Parlato stated most have a centralized registration and residency. Mayor Bass asked if someone checks the addresses at the house. Dr. Parlato stated there are methods, which can include an investigator. Ms. Hollander stated that it is self serving, and making sure all the boxes are checked, planful, and clear.</p> <p>Technology:</p> <p>Mr. Turner stated the mission is to have every student compete and excel in an ever engaging environment that is safe while using devices. He explained he works collaboratively with the schools by meeting with principals to see what is needed in the district. The department has 9.0 FTE: 4 Tech positions, 1.0 Secretary, 1 District Database Administrator, 1.0 Tech 2, 1.0 Network Systems Analyst, and 1.0 IT Director.</p> <p>Mr. O'Brien asked what a Network Systems Analyst does. Mr. Turner stated it is a very proactive employee that keeps things running.</p> <p>Mr. Turner continued his presentation by stating they are continuing the 1:1 program. Grades 3-12 use devices at home and at school, K-2 chromebooks are staying in the classrooms and they are no longer being taken home. They are looking to upgrade the NES gym sound system and the HPS stage and cafeteria sound system. Mr. Turner stated he continues to apply for grants. The district has been fortunate to receive the PEGPETIA grant. The SNIS LMC has been upgraded from it, and now they can have author visits and the visit can be streamed directly to classrooms, allowing all students to participate rather than just a few classes. They are using budget and capital improvement to update hardware optimal daily.</p> <p>Mr. Turner explained infrastructure updates include switches, access points, servers, and phone systems. Switches and access points are part of the E-Rate savings. They are looking to go cloud-based, and that will allow for faster internet and less chance of crashing. Software includes library, Parent Square, Clever, HR software, etc.</p>	
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Communication upgrades include an upgrade to ParentSquare. The district has 3,571 students, 741 staff, 4,451 parents and 30 guests on ParentSquare. Guests are typically people such as BOE members or members of the town.

Virtual Reality (VR) goggles are being used in classrooms for students and teachers. The SNIS library is utilizing them for STEAM stations. Dr. Parlato noted they did a collaboration at the public library to show residents the national parks through the VR goggles.

Mr. Turner noted AI tools are the wave of the future. He will work with Ms. Hollander on programs such as Canva, Gemini, and Adobe. This allows for learning differentiation and more engagement from students. Dr. Parlato stated AI is the frontier and the Board will be involved with the process.

Mr. Turner stated there are additional Audio Visual Projects for the SNIS multipurpose room, Northville gymnasium, HPS Gym, SMS cafeteria, and more. In the next 2-3 years, there will be major projects.

Mayor Bass asked about the cloud-based phone system for \$150,000 in the 5 Year Capital Plan and if they spoke to the company the town used. Mr. Turner stated he is looking at companies and he has spoken to them. Mr. Turner stated technology for the classroom is a big item. The IT department is looking to offer an all-in-one desktop or docking station for teachers. Mayor Bass asked if the district uses Microsoft Office. Mr. Turner stated they use mostly Google but use Office 365 occasionally.

Mr. Scofield asked if the IT department had looked into leasing options to stretch capital. Mr. Turner stated chromebooks have a long lifespan if they are taken care of. The techs can do repairs in-house. Mr. Turner explained he has done leases before, but there is an obligation of a yearly payment and you get stuck in a cycle.

<p>4.</p>	<p>Opportunity for the Public to be heard Mrs. Alexandra Thomas, 187 Aspetuck Ridge Road, stated she wished more people watched the budget hearings. It speaks to the professionalism of the district. Tomorrow morning at 9:30 is the last of the school tours. Mrs. Thomas stated The Summit Program is incredible. What was shown tonight was how different we need to care for our students – the number of support staff, psychologists, and special needs staff. It is more expensive and needs to be taken into consideration. The tour of SMS was very different in how it felt vs. last year. When kids are happy to be at school, they will want to be there and want to learn. Mrs. Thomas stated the right things are happening.</p> <p>Mrs. Megan Byrd, 2 Carlson Road, thanked Mrs. Scoralick for including the TAG students in her budget. We identify them, but the state does not mandate we service them in any way. Mrs. Byrd stated she is grateful we are servicing the TAG students, but that we are losing them in our high school. They are not getting anything they need for the future in high school, and that struck home to her tonight. The Summit Program is outstanding and is needed. We’re losing a lot of potential in the gifted kids because we do not service them beyond the 8th grade. AP classes are not enough. It is a small percentage of the population, but those 5-6% are the kids that we are not pushing to their fullest potential.</p>	<p>Opportunity for the Public to be heard</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Recessed to Wednesday, January 21, 2025 The budget hearing meeting of the New Milford Board of Education was called to recess at 8:45p.m. by Mr. Eric Hansell, Vice Chairperson.</p>	<p>Recessed to Wednesday, January 21, 2025 The meeting recessed at 8:45 p.m.</p>

**New Milford Board of Education
 Budget Hearings & Adoption Minutes
 January 14, 15, 21 & 22 2025
 Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

Present:	Mrs. Leslie Sarich, Chairperson Mr. Eric Hansell Mrs. Tammy McInerney Mrs. Sarah Herring Mr. Dean Barile Mrs. Wendy Faulenbach Mr. Brian McCauley Mr. Tom O'Brien Mr. Randall Scofield <i>arrived at 6:38pm</i> Mayor Pete Bass, <i>ex-officio</i>
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Also Present:	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 Mrs. Teresa Kavanaugh, Human Resources Director Mr. Matthew Cunningham, Facilities Director Mr. Jeffrey Turner, Technology Director
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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 6:30 p.m. by Mrs. Leslie Sarich, Chairperson. The Pledge of Allegiance immediately followed the call to order to resume the meeting.	Call to Order Pledge of Allegiance
2.	Opportunity for the Public to be heard There was none.	Opportunity for the Public to be heard
3.	Discussion Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 Budget including, but not limited to, District-wide Departments <u>Department of Pupil Personnel and Special Services:</u> Mrs. Olson thanked everyone for their support and dedication, 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. Mrs. Olson recognized Debbie Clark and Lauren Bergner for all their hard work.	Discussion Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 Budget including, but not limited to, District-wide Departments

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. One of the things we know is that all students can learn. We just have to adapt to them. Students With Disabilities (SWD) are first and foremost general education students. Special Education is not a place, it's a service that includes Individual Education Plan (IEP) and education with the least restrictive environment. The parents are an integral part and their child's best advocates.

Mrs. Olson went over the structure of the two departments, including staff, stating they help with nurses, school psychologists, social workers, and speech language pathologists. An additional person is the Inclusion Facilitator. This position facilitates learning, PPT's, help with issues that arise, and assumes other duties.

Mrs. Olson then explained how New Milford compares to the state average for SWD. New Milford hovers right below the state average but the numbers are incrementally increasing. There has been an increase in dyslexia, autism, and ADHD. This is seen in all the schools, not just one area. Dr. Parlato added that each case has a different level of complexity, so it is not just the number of cases.

Mrs. Olson stated the district is projecting 86 students (includes 16 referrals) for the Excel Preschool program. This year there were 70 students (includes 10 referrals). If a student is identified as SWD, by the time they turn three years old, they have to be in a program in one of our schools. Another piece that impacts the preschool number is the new state mandate for kindergarten age.

Mr. McCauley asked, if this current year has 70 students in Excel identified as SWD, what was last year's projection for this current year. Mrs. Olson stated it was very close.

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, the hope is for them to become active community participants. It

keeps them in the community and it is a cost savings. It would cost approximately \$1,800,000 to send these students out of the district. There is also revenue from students brought in from other districts. There is a membership through grants with New Milford Fitness & Aquatics Club as well as the Animal Welfare Society, Stew Leonards, and the Maxx Culinary. Students can also take advantage of the one year experience with Naugatuck Community College.

There is an unfunded mandate, PA 23-137, that 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. The impact to the district over the last few years and going forward is as follows:

23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27
\$131,480	\$257,376	\$511,321	\$541,967

Mrs. Olson stated in 23/24 there were 84 outside evaluations. Evaluations can take many forms. It is for complex learners that cannot be evaluated by resources that we have in the district. We've done our testing but there is a need for a clinical diagnosis from the outside. There is also a sharp increase in bilingual evaluations, and that often needs to be outsourced. This year, there have been eight bilingual evaluations, which have an average cost of \$4,500. The ML learner evaluation is a very important piece.

Out-of-District-Placements:

Mrs. Olson explained Out-of-District (OOD) Placements means we've exhausted all our in-district options. It's a process that takes time. It can be decided to place a student out of the district because an expulsion becomes permanent, there are significant safety concerns for students, or sometimes the students move into district and they are already placed out. To keep things as normal for the student, they are kept at their placement. There is mediation or due process. If the family is not happy with our school setting, we

<p>have attorneys that help with mediation to place those students OOD. We do have students that are placed right now because of mediation. Last year OOD placement costs were \$4,496,985. Next year it is projected to be \$4,559,937.</p> <p>Mrs. Olson stated, for each year, the placeholders have been used in the budget, but we do not always know how many students it will be.</p> <p>Every year the OOD placements vary. In 22-23 it went up to 39, so projected is a hard number to come up with. The district does work these cases to make sure we are doing everything we can do to help the students before placing them out of the district. Even after the student is placed, we still monitor them. The district remains responsible for their PPTs and visits them with the hope we bring them back to the district.</p> <p>Mr. Scofield asked if there was something that could be done to avoid outplacement of students. Mrs. Olson stated they have discussed building programs in-house, but it's extremely costly. So far, they have done a good job placing only students that absolutely need to be. Over time, many of them return. Mrs. Faulenbach asked how many of them return. Mrs. Olson stated it depends on the student's grade. Usually a return happens in a transition year, going from middle school to high school. Mayor Bass asked Mrs. Olson about the y/y comparison between 2020-2021 and 619 total students as well as the projected number for 25/26 at 633, noting it is an increase of 17% . Mrs. Olson stated it is how you view it. It is a total number. Mayor Bass asked which school had the highest population. Mrs. Olson stated it is the high school with 166 students with it trending higher each year. Mayor Bass asked how the projection for the model is built. Mrs. Olson stated it is based on historical projections, and they are fairly accurate. Dr. Parlato stated one of the assumptions we use is there will be a certain number of kids who exit, which is the goal. The students with a severe level of need may be outplaced. Mayor Bass asked if it was mostly older students that were placed OOD. Mrs. Olson stated it depends. It is a fluid number with some being declassified. Dr. Parlato stated she would</p>	
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<p>provide the Mayor with a breakout of students placed OOD by grade level. Mr. Barile asked about students who transition out of a placement, noting some may never transition out and how that is decided. Mrs. Olson stated the district does three year evaluations.</p> <p>Mayor Bass asked how many people are on staff. Mrs. Olson stated there are approximately 50 Special Education Teachers, 98 paraprofessionals, and 18 student care workers.</p> <p>Mr. Scofield asked how many outplaced students are currently placed OOD. Mrs. Olson stated it is 32. Mr. Scofield asked if placing OOD is the best option. Mrs. Olson stated there will always be a need for OOP for some students. Some of the programs available through OOP are exceptional for that particular student. All of the districts in CT have some % of students placed out. New Milford is currently meeting the needs of a very diverse population. Dr. Parlato added, the decision to outplace is made by a team. Mr. Scofield stated he wanted to ensure the district was exhausting all options before outplacement. Outplacement is very expensive. Dr. Parlato explained that there is a careful documentation process. In the current structure, we take the student as far as possible until we can no longer manage it. Mr. McCauley added that he has worked in outplacement schools. The goal is to get the student back to the district, but some students could very easily disrupt a whole building.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney stated ESS was brought in to help with highly anxious students, and the Board voted to absolve it. Some of those students had to be outplaced. Mrs. Olson noted a very impaired student can affect the ability for others to learn.</p> <p>Mr. Scofield asked to see the specifics and stated he cares about the outcome and student success.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked about the status of ESS. Mrs. Olson stated that was an elimination from the budget for this year. Mrs. Faulenbach asked if the Social Worker would fill that gap. Mrs. Olson stated yes that was correct. Mrs. Faulenbach noted it is a cost savings doing it internally vs. paying the licensing, insurance,</p>	
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and more. Mrs. Faulenbach then asked about Extended School Year (ESY) services. Mrs. Olson stated it is a determination made by IDEA on who gets it. We have a robust ESY program. The Litchfield Hills Transition Center helps get them in the community. Thirty percent of students identified have ESY and it's important to ensure there is no regression of skills during summer. There are approximately 180 students enrolled.

Mrs. Sarich asked if the district reevaluates students placed OOD. Mrs. Olson stated they can do that at any time, and try to test to see if the student can return to district. Mrs. Sarich asked if it is all students that need outside evaluations. Mrs. Olson stated no, it's typically for students who need psychological/neuroscience evaluations or are MLL students. The CSDE Annual Performance report shows the state average for students placed OOD is 7.25%, New Milford is 3.37%.

Mrs. Olson continued her presentation by discussing transportation. Mrs. Olson stated transportation is seeing a 6.37% increase due to the lack of vendors, staff, drivers, and increase in cost of fuel. It is not easy to secure transportation, and there are times a van aide is needed for the student. There are currently 17 runs for 32 students, so there is a goal to ride share with other districts.

Mrs. Olson shared the top 10 23/24 Highest Cost of OOD students which included tuition, 1:1 cost, and transportation. The total for the top 10 most expensive OOP students was \$2,184,494.00. There is reimbursement by the state department but some students are quite expensive and need the 1:1 because of behaviors. The transportation is also very expensive. Mr. Giovannone stated the reimbursement is based on the cost per pupil. After the district has spent \$86,711 we are potentially reimbursed 68% for every dollar spent after that.

Mr. O'Brien asked why transportation is \$149,853 for one student. Mrs. Olson stated it could be distance or that the student requires medical on the runs.

Mayor Bass asked where the reimbursement goes in the budget. Mr. Giovannone stated on page 72, it's

<p>the top line. That is in our budget book for the current year and next year. The year behind is the net cost per pupil for general education students. As revenue is applied, it is reflected in the budget position. The district gets half in February and half in May. There have been times the revenue is not the full 68% and we've had to make up for the shortfall.</p> <p>Mrs. Olson then reviewed the Key Accomplishments of her department. Mrs. Olson stated the Annual Performance Report includes being below state average at 15.7% with the state average at 16.3%. They have met targets for increased graduation rates, inclusion, transition goals, targets for timely and accurate reporting, and substantial compliance for chronic absenteeism.</p> <p>Mrs. Olson stated in-district accomplishments include increasing capacity to meet the needs of students with significant behaviors, providing learning opportunities for para educators, working with general education staff and interventionists to improve math instruction, complete district-wide training on CT SED's, and working on improving the equity of over-identification.</p> <p>Mr. O'Brien asked what is over-identification. Mrs. Olson stated we had over-identification of speech for students of a certain ethnicity. They are working with the state department to help with training and looking at the data more carefully. The hope is to have interventions before they are referred to special education.</p> <p>Mrs. Olson stated current initiatives include collaborating with General Education to improve outcomes for students in ELA and Mathematics, to align all individual learning centers, partner with outside consultants, provide increased paraprofessional professional development opportunities, train staff on district-wide Threat and Risk Assessment Protocol, training staff on Columbia Suicide Assessment, co-teaching throughout all schools, increased unified courses at NMHS, and explore unified theater/music.</p>	
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<p>Mrs. Olson stated the district has begun to embrace Science of Reading at the elementary school level. The district takes an integrated approach to using school based and community-based mental health providers. The Superintendent has brought stability to the district.</p> <p>Mrs. Olson stated opportunities include increase in general education teacher capacity and confidence to better meet the needs of all students, expand the reach of best practice interventions at the elementary level, increase student access to highly skilled content teachers by shifting paraprofessional roles and responsibilities, and review, develop, and standardize the IEP process.</p> <p>Mrs. Olson stated her department has maintained budget for 11+ consecutive years. They have maintained quality of services and special education expenditures. It is important to note the Special Education Expenditures in New Milford are 23.9% of the overall budget. The average Special Education budget for towns in the state of CT are on average 24.9%.</p> <p>Mrs. Herring asked if the Social Worker at SMS will assume the ESS role. Dr. Parlato stated the intent of that Social Worker is to provide support for the tier 3 service.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney stated she is glad to see the exploring of the unified theater and music. The placements are going down, but the population of high needs students is going up. When determining the placement and using five as a placeholder, is there a way to anticipate the kids coming in the pipeline. Mrs. Olson stated the kids in the pipeline are part of the projected number. Mr. McCauley stated the district dropped last year from 7 to 5 and asked Mrs. Olson if she was comfortable with that for this year. Mrs. Olson stated she was. Mrs. Faulenbach noted the number is based on actuals and the process of placing a student may take a year. Mr. Barile asked for the different classification definitions for students with special needs, and asked if there was a potential for over diagnosing one or the</p>	
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other. Mrs. Olson stated she would provide that information.

Mr. Hansell asked about student tuition. Mrs. Olson stated there is a base and then there are add ons. We charge the district who is sending the student.

Mayor Bass asked for details regarding the Social Worker salary for budget vs. actual. Mr. Giovannone stated it is going down by \$168,000 because of the reduction to ESS. The line below it is going up by \$161,401 because of the increase in evaluations.

Facilities:

Mr. Cunningham reviewed the Facilities staff and stated looking at annual contractual obligations, they are seeing an increase in 3-5% in contracts. Fire equipment needs to be done annually, which is going up 3%. There are now a dozen boilers and the building management systems have new Siemens Systems. There is a mandatory inspection of bleachers every year. The CoGen systems have a preventative maintenance contract. There is a 3% increase on cleaning products and camera infrastructure, including having firewalls.

Repair/Building lines for schools increase an average of 3+% a year and this year it is a total of \$14,180.

There are costs to cover for escalating preventative maintenance contracts for building equipment.

Custodial supplies have increased 3% for a total of \$5,000.

Mr. O'Brien asked about an increase in the Professional Services. Mr. Giovannone stated the key drivers are other professional services in maintenance. Looking at the high school, the line is going up by \$26,638, that is the CoGen maintenance agreement. There are also ongoing costs related to NV5 ESG. BFY26243-53220, that is increasing by \$5,464. That is related to the ESC maintenance contract. Mr Cunningham stated that is an additional maintenance contract put in during the energy conservation project that the district now has to take over.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked if there are any other annual costs built into the energy conservation project. Mr.

Giovanzone stated the two pieces they just discussed are those costs.

Mayor Bass thanked Mr. Cunningham for his hard work and asked about the 5 Year Capital Plan Appendix G2, specifically how the 25/26 Capital Plan projects are tasked. Mrs. Faulenbach stated those are not in the operational plan. Though we may identify capital projects, they are not part of the overall cost. They are to be on the radar for the next 5 years. As the Board moves forward, we will ask for a motion to have those funds withdrawn out of Capital Reserve. Mr. Cunningham stated it is very fluid and we may have the opportunity to chip away at it with end of year funds.

Mrs. McInerney asked about the heat in the building being set to day and night. Mr. Cunningham stated they do set it to occupied and unoccupied settings.

Mr. Barile asked if the CoGen system had gas and electric. Mr. Cunningham stated it has an engine and converts natural gas and as a generator creates electricity. A byproduct of that process is heat and so we run water through it to absorb that heat, which then goes directly to our boilers. In time, the CoGen contract will be covered by the savings we generate. Mr. Barile asked if it was gas powered. Mr. Cunningham stated yes, it is natural gas. The theory behind it is we pay less for natural gas than a kilowatt of electricity. The additional benefit is it creates heat that we can now put directly into our boiler.

Human Resources:

Mrs. Kavanaugh introduced the Human Resource (HR) team and stated HR manages the staff. They are service oriented and available to people if they have questions. There is 75% participation in medical/dental/vision. The teamsters have separate benefits plans. Upcoming contracts are teachers, administrators, custodians, and food service, all in 2026. HR attends career fairs at UCONN, SHU, and Fairfield University. They are well attended and they are done in conjunction with ESS. Some current projects are the MUNIS Position Control, that is a 1:1. There is the Center for Public Research and

<p>Leadership (CPRL) that is utilized so we can attract a pool of educators, which is a struggle with less people going into the field. HR is reexamining how we look at reciprocity for certification in certain states. Something new is the CT paid leave. We are now entering the second year of paraeducator of the year. They continue to do exit interviews and review the data from those interviews.</p> <p>Mrs. Kavanaugh stated, in the budget, many numbers will stay flat. The substitute line will go up because CT minimum wage will go up. There will also be a need for more substitutes based on the new CT paid leave. The salary line went up 4.2% and includes the amount of overtime for secretaries in the district. There is a decrease in professional services. The district was scanning hard copies of files but stopped doing that since we are required to keep paper copies. There is an increase in dues and fees: CASPA, SHRM, and others. Budget drivers are position control in MUNIS, adherence to changing laws (including CT Sick leave law), and stability in the HR team.</p> <p>Mrs. Herring asked Dr. Parlato about the Professional Services line not being more specific. Mrs. Herring stated Professionals Services is a lot of money, and was wondering why they are all lumped into that specific bucket. Mr. Giovannone stated they are broken out in one of the appendices and it has professional services vs. other services.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach agreed it's a lot of money, and it is good to clarify what is legal fees, naviance fees, and others. Mr. Giovannone stated the request for Professional Services next year is 5.8% of the total budget. Other services also mentioned are 16.1% of the total budget.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked if the 13.5 MBUs in Appendix C6, under the Department of General Administrative District, are all captured and, if not, how many total are there. Mr. Giovannone stated there are 21 overall and broken out in Appendix C9. Mrs. Faulenbach asked, out of the 21, how many are grant based. Mr. Giovannone stated 1.85, the remaining 19.5 are in the budget request. Mrs.</p>	
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Faulenbach asked, of those, is there any grant shift movement. Dr. Parlato stated that was for certified staff, not for any administrators. We did move a teacher from the grant to the general fund, that would not be reflected in the non-bargaining unit list. Mr. Giovannone stated for next year's budget, there is no change to non-bargaining. It is already captured in the current budget for 24/25. Dr. Parlato clarified, stating what Mr. Giovannone is stating is that one person went from non-bargaining to bargaining. Mr. Giovannone added that it is part of the 19.5, but we are reflecting that change in the current year and it has already been captured.

Mr. Barile asked how class size is affected with the reductions of the teachers being proposed. Mr. Giovannone stated it is listed out in Appendix B. For HPS, 1st grade with 7 teachers, currently has a class size of 16.6. Even with the reduction of 1.0 FTE, the class size goes down to 15.3 because of lower enrollment. It is similar for NES. 1st grade currently has a class size of 16.4, and with the reduction of 1.0 FTE it will still go down to 15.1. Mr. Barile raised concern over eliminating positions, stating we already are losing good teachers, and when they leave we all look at each other as if to ask, "what can we do?" Mr. Barile stated, he understood it is based on need but there are expectations set for these students. We have more teachers allocated for ELL because of need, but it's not specified. We have teachers that teach an English class and there are expectations to hit certain benchmarks, but we do not have guidelines on how many teachers it will take to get the students there. On average, per the number of students, we are adding more services such as ELL, to an ever changing and diverse community. Mr. Barile stated he wondered how we are going to measure performance and need and the reallocation gives him pause.

Dr. Parlato stated those are favorable class sizes even with reduction in staff. With the smaller numbers at NMHS and a smaller incoming 9th grade, we know we can absorb that with existing staff. It was looked at very carefully and the proposal for the reductions would not have been proposed otherwise.

<p>Mrs. Herring noted there are monthly enrollment numbers and asked if the numbers have changed at all. Dr. Parlato stated that they compare it to the projection and they are right on the money. The data is stale but still accurate.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked Dr. Parlato to clarify how attrition works in the budget. Dr. Parlato stated early in the year it is hard to know who will retire. The person with the least amount of seniority can go into the position of the person retiring, so people don't lose their jobs. For example, at NMHS, there is a Science teacher that left. We can absorb that position into other sections with existing personnel.</p> <p>Mr. Scofield asked about the 1.0 FTE being added to Central Office, if that person would work on making sure students are residents. Having someone do that full time would more than pay for their salary given the cost to educate a student is \$20,000 a year.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked Mayor Bass if there was any conversation regarding an adjustment for the insurance number. Mayor Bass stated that can be discussed tomorrow. Dr. Parlato stated that usually happens in March. Mrs. Faulenbach agreed but stated at this time last year they reached out to the insurance company and it ended up helping the budget.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach stated there is roughly \$248,000 in the insurance line item sitting there, and there has not been a discussion on what to do with it. Mrs. Faulenbach stated she is grateful for the appropriation, and asked if there is any way to earmark it, and put it against a line item for the future without causing issues with the auditors. Mr. Giovannone stated the amount in the current year is technically over by \$292,000. The Board has approved a transfer out of that for \$36,275, which leaves the remaining \$242,000. There is no current mechanism to carry over that money. If not expended, it would fall to the bottom line to Capital Reserve. Mayor Bass stated it would be good to wait until we have a more firm insurance percentage number from the actuarial. Mrs. Faulenbach stated that they have seen these numbers fall all over the place. What we do know is there may</p>	
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**New Milford Board of Education
 Budget Hearings & Adoption Minutes
 January 14, 15, 21 & 22 2025
 Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

	be future expenditures and she is asking what protocol would be for that line item, and the existing 2% cut out. Dr. Parlato stated, of the items that did not make it into the proposed budget, she may look to the Board to potentially use the 2% carveout or part of the insurance money.	
4.	Opportunity for the Public to be heard There was none.	Opportunity for the Public to be heard
5.	Recessed to Wednesday January 22, 2025 The budget hearing meeting of the New Milford Board of Education was called to recess at 8:40p.m. by Mrs. Leslie Sarich, Chairperson.	Recessed to Wednesday January 22, 2025 The meeting recessed at 8:40pm.

Budget Hearing Minutes

January 22, 2025

Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center

Present:	Mrs. Sarich, Chairperson Mr. Eric Hansell Mrs. Tammy McInerney Mrs. Sarah Herring Mr. Brian McCauley Mrs. Wendy Faulenbach Mr. Tom O'Brien Mr. Dean Barile Mr. Randall Scofield <i>arrived at 6:44pm</i> Mayor Pete Bass, <i>ex-officio</i>
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Also Present:	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 Mrs. Teresa Kavanaugh, Human Resources Director Mr. Matthew Cunningham, Facilities Director Mr. Jeffrey Turner, Technology Director
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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 6:30 p.m. by Mrs. Leslie Sarich, Chairperson. The Pledge of Allegiance immediately followed the call to order to resume the meeting.	Call to Order Pledge of Allegiance
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<p>2.</p>	<p>Public Comment Erin Haynes, 19 Greenview Road, stated she is in support of the Special Education budget and its initiatives. Mrs. Haynes stated she has an autistic son that faces many challenges. He has difficulty communicating and anxiety with change and transition. He is an example of a student who needs a high level of support. Mrs. Haynes stated she appreciated Dr. Parlato and Mrs. Olson highlighting the high needs rising in the district. Something mentioned last night was the education classifications. Mrs. Haynes noted her son has multiple diagnoses. The staff does a whole lot with just a little and all New Milford students can succeed. Some of the initiatives include the ILC, so staff and students are more supported, paraprofessional development will have more tools in their box, and unified music would be wonderful for her son. Mrs. Haynes stated in the upper grades there are less opportunities for arts for students with high needs. She urged the board to support Special Education by adopting the proposed budget as it is.</p> <p>Mrs. Virginia Landgrebe, 35 Meeting House Terrace, stated she is also the Vice President of the New Milford CEA. There are a number of teachers present, as well as a number from various schools watching online. Mrs. Landgrebe stated they were there to support the students, student facing staff, as well as those who are behind them. Mrs. Landgrebe wanted the Board to know they are there because they care and are offering support.</p>	<p>Public Comment</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Discussion of the Superintendent’s Proposed 2025-2026 Budget including, but not limited to, wrap-up issues and questions</p>	<p>Discussion of the Superintendent’s Proposed 2025-2026 Budget including, but not limited to, wrap-up issues and questions</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Vote on Adoption of the 2025-2026 Board of Education Budget</p> <p><i>Mrs. McInerney moved to approve the Adoption of the Superintendent’s 2025-2026 proposed budget, seconded by Mr. O’Brien.</i></p> <p>Mrs. Sarich asked for an amendment to the motion for the purpose of properly recognizing 0.5 FTE, of the 1.0 FTE add for the school Psychologist to be at Hill</p>	<p>Vote on Adoption of the 2025-2026 Board of Education Budget</p>

& Plain School and not at Schaghticoke Middle School - as presented in the Superintendent's proposed budget. Reduce line BPD21400-51115 on budget book page 33 in the amount of \$37,313 and increase line BPA21400-51115 on budget book page PAGE #12 in the amount of \$37,313.

Mrs McInerney asked for clarification, since others do not have the budget book. Dr. Parlato clarified that they are taking the 0.5 FTE School Psychologist and switching the placement of that position.

Mr. Giovannone stated it would have a net zero effect on the budget.

Mrs. Faulenbach made a motion to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 budget for the purpose of decreasing line BPD21400-51115 in the amount of \$37,313, and increasing line BPA21400-51115 in the amount of \$37,313, properly recognizing 0.5 FTE, of the 1.0 FTE add for the school Psychologist to be at Hill & Plain School and not Schaghticoke Middle School, as presented in the Superintendent's proposed budget. Seconded by Mr. McCauley. Amendment passed 8-0-0. Mr. Scofield was not present.

Mrs. Sarich asked for an amendment to the motion for the purpose of reflecting the revised actuarial guidance provided on January 22, 2025 for health insurance with a trend of 9.5% instead of 8% as it is now in the Superintendent's proposed budget. It is an increase in line BAZ25043-52810 on budget book page #66 in the amount of \$139,742.

Mrs. McInerney asked why this line was increasing. Mr. Giovannone stated they had the 8% in the budget based on the projection that they received back in September. They consulted with Brown & Brown, and they are recommending a new range for health projections for next year. It is recommended they use 9.5% going forward and not the 8% originally proposed in the Superintendent's budget. It would

Motion made and passed 8-0-0 to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 budget for the purpose of decreasing line BPD21400-51115 in the amount of \$37,313, and increasing line BPA21400-51115 in the amount of \$37,313, properly recognizing 0.5 FTE, of the 1.0 FTE add for the school Psychologist to be at Hill & Plain School and not Schaghticoke Middle School, as presented in the Superintendent's proposed budget.

<p>require a budget add of \$139,742. Mayor Bass stated the 9% is settled upon based on a range, and the amount could be as high as 12%. Mrs. Faulenbach stated while not pleased this motion is increasing the budget, it is incumbent upon the Board, prior to adoption, to set the budget accordingly. Mayor Bass stated there has actually been cost avoidance since we did self insured SPP. Mrs. Faulenbach stated making the adjustment is appropriate. We have to also remember the bargaining units coming up and we have to come up with a number where we can work together.</p> <p>Mrs. Sarich asked Mr. Giovannone how this increase will affect the budget. Mr. Giovannone stated the above motion increases the Superintendent's proposed budget by \$139,742, bringing the total increase up from 3.93% to 4.12%.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach made a motion to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 budget by increasing line item BAZ25043-52810 by \$139,742 for the purpose of reflecting the revised actuarial guidance provided on 1/22/25 for health insurance with a trend of 9.5% instead of the 8% as it is now in the Superintendent's proposed budget. Seconded by Mr. Hansell. Amendment passed 8-0-1 with Mr. Scofield abstaining.</p> <p>Mrs. Sarich asked for an amendment to the motion for the purpose of properly recognizing additional replacement staff savings not already presented in the Superintendent's proposed budget. Reducing line BLA10009-51115 on budget book page #10 in the amount of \$17,817. Reducing line BLA10025-51115 on budget book page #10 in the amount of \$42,809. Reducing line BLB24143-51210 on budget book page #17 in the amount of \$5,861. Reducing line BLD10010-51115 on budget book page #29 in the amount of \$33,809.</p> <p>Mrs. Sarich asked Mr. Giovannone what the effect is on the overall budget with this motion. Mr. Giovannone stated the total of the four lines is a</p>	<p>Motion made and passed 8-0-1 to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 budget by increasing line item BAZ25043-52810 by \$139,742 for the purpose of reflecting the revised actuarial guidance provided on 1/22/25 for health insurance with a trend of 9.5% instead of the 8% as it is now in the Superintendent's proposed budget.</p>
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reduction of \$100,296. All lines are associated with salaries. These are salary savings and corrections to the dollar amounts that should have been there before getting our books. It brings the total increase down from 4.12% to 3.99%. There are 9 or 10 lines brought up through the hearings, based on actuals for previous years. Four had merit for further adjustment. Mrs. Faulenbach stated there was a lot of work going into finding this. Dr. Parlato stated they went back as far as 2017.

Mrs. Faulenbach made a motion to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 budget by decreasing lines BLA10009-51115 in the amount of \$17,817, line BLA10025-51115 in the amount of \$42,809, line BLB24143-51210 in the amount of \$5,861, line BLD10010-51115 in the amount of \$33,809, for the purpose of properly recognizing additional replacement staff savings not already presented in the Superintendent's Proposed Budget. Seconded by Mrs. Sarich. Amendment passed unanimously.

Mrs. Sarich asked for an amendment to the motion for the purpose of removing Panorama. Reducing line BDZ20643-53200 on budget book page #45 in the amount of \$20,000.

Mr. O'Brien asked what Panorama is and why we are reducing it. Mrs. Sarich stated we are using it for survey questions. We have the current surveys and plan to switch to Google, which is free. Mrs. McInerney asked if we were using Survey Monkey. Mrs. Sarich stated no. Mrs. McInerney asked if this will suffice for surveys and the data needed. Panorama can deliver in different languages, does Google have that capability. Dr. Parlato confirmed that it does.

Mrs. Sarich asked Mr. Giovannone what the effect is on the overall budget with this motion. Mr. Giovannone stated the above motion reduces the Superintendent's proposed budget by \$20,000 and will bring the total increase down from 3.99% to 3.96%.

Motion made and passed unanimously to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 budget by decreasing line BLA10009-51115 in the amount of \$17,817, line BLA10025-51115 in the amount of \$42,809, line BLB24143-51210 in the amount of \$5,861, line BLD10010-51115 in the amount of \$33,809, for the purpose of properly recognizing additional replacement staff savings not already presented in the superintendent's proposed budget.

<p>Mrs. McInerney made a motion to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 budget by decreasing line BDZ20643-53200 in the amount of \$20,000, for the purpose of removing Panorama. Seconded by Mr. Barile. Amendment passed unanimously.</p> <p>Mrs. Sarich asked for an amendment to the motion for the purpose of removing CABE participation. Reducing line BAZ23143-58100 on budget book page #63 in the amount of \$19,446.</p> <p>Mr. O'Brien noted that CABE helped the district find Dr. Parlato as their Superintendent. Mrs. McInerney asked if there would be professional development loss if they don't have CABE participation. Dr. Parlato stated not for the teachers. The professional development CABE offers is for the Board and includes conference participation. Mrs. McInerney asked if the Board uses CABE at all for policy. Dr. Parlato stated they do not.</p> <p>Mrs. Sarich asked Mr. Giovannone what the effect is on the overall budget with this motion. Mr. Giovannone stated the above motion reduces the Superintendent's proposed budget by \$19,446, bringing the total increase down from 3.96% to 3.93%.</p> <p>Mr. Barile made a motion to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 budget by decreasing line BAZ23143-58100 in the amount of \$19,446, for the purpose of removing CABE participation. Seconded by Mr. Scofield. Amendment passed unanimously.</p> <p>Mrs. Sarich asked for an amendment to the motion for the purpose of reducing the number of outside SPED evaluations by 2. Reduce line BPZ21343-53230 on budget book page #49 in the amount of \$9,000.</p>	<p>Motion made and passed unanimously to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 budget by decreasing line BDZ20643-53200 in the amount of \$20,000, for the purpose of removing Panorama.</p> <p>Motion made and passed unanimously to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 budget by decreasing line BAZ23143-58100 in the amount of \$19,446, for the purpose of removing CABE participation.</p>
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<p>Mr. McCauley asked how the reduction will affect the district in being able to do outside evaluations. Dr. Parlato stated that was a projection in the budget but we are now projecting we'll have two fewer outside evaluations. With the personnel additions, it will help keep testing in house. Mrs. McInerney noted if additional evaluations end up being needed, the Board will have to find a way to cover it. We may be reducing it from the bottom line, but we still have to provide services if necessary.</p> <p>Mrs. Sarich asked Mr. Giovannone what the effect is on the overall budget with this motion. Mr. Giovannone stated the above motion reduces the Superintendent's proposed budget by \$9,000 bringing the total increase down from 3.93% to 3.92%.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach made a motion to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 budget by decreasing line BPZ21343-53230 in the amount of \$9,000, for the purpose of removing the number of outside Special Education evaluations by 2. Seconded by Mr. Hansell. Amendment passed unanimously.</p> <p>Mrs. Sarich asked for an amendment to the motion for the purpose of reducing the fees for parking at New Milford High School from \$100 per permit down to \$75 per permit. This is an increase in line BLE26643-44861 on budget book page #72 in the amount of \$6,950.</p> <p>Mrs. Sarich asked Mr. Giovannone what the effect is on the overall budget with this motion. Mr. Giovannone stated the above motion increases the Superintendent's proposed budget by \$6,950, bringing the total increase up from 3.92% to 3.93%.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney made a motion to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 budget by increasing line BLE26643-44861 in the amount of \$6,950 for the purpose of reducing the fees for parking at New Milford High School from \$100 per</p>	<p>Motion made and passed unanimously to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 budget by decreasing line BPZ21343-53230 in the amount of \$9,000, for the purpose of removing the number of outside Special Education evaluations by 2.</p> <p>Motion made and passed unanimously to amend the Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 budget by increasing line BLE26643-44861 in the amount of</p>
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<p>permit to \$75 per permit. Seconded by Mr. Hansell. Amendment passed unanimously.</p> <p>Mrs. Sarich opened the floor for more motions.</p> <p>Mr. McCauley stated that on the top of the list of potential wants was six paraprofessionals in Kindergarten. Mr. McCauley stated he would like to try and get that to happen later in the year. Mrs. McInerney stated, even if it isn't six, some help would be great. Kindergarten is a difficult grade. There are students coming in with all different abilities.</p> <p>Mr. Scofield stated he understands we have to be mindful of the budget, but we have the money and we can figure out a way to fund the teachers and paraprofessionals being reduced. New Milford has growth, and next year we'll have to hire someone to cover that growth. Mr. Scofield stated he is worried someone will not want to work for New Milford when they see we just got rid of someone the previous year. Mr. McCauley stated they are getting rid of positions, but not necessarily people. There are a number of positions that will be hired over the year. If it gets down to it, they can find the money if necessary.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach stated it is difficult to understand that there's only so much money to go around, and that she firmly believes each board member does the best they can. Just in the last 24 hours, there has been tremendous work and the goal is to get the budget passed the first time out of the gate.</p> <p>Mr. Giovannone stated the 3.93% and \$76,350,587 is the same % as the originally proposed budget. Mrs. Faulenbach added that it also takes into account the increase of \$139,000 for the insurance adjustment. It may look flat but we had to make adjustments for that increase.</p> <p>Mrs. Herring thanked all the school administrators and department heads for submitting such detailed and thoughtful budgets for the 25/26 school year. New Milford is an ever changing town and our school population mirrors those changes. After listening to the presentations, Mrs. Herring stated she was</p>	<p>\$6,950 for the purpose of reducing the fees for parking at New Milford High School from \$100 per permit to \$75 per permit.</p>
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	<p>reminded that more and more children are beginning their school careers with limited skills and preparation. For many, the preschool years are not enriching years filled with conversations with adults, trips to the town library, and free play. The joy of learning is not instilled in some preschoolers and the line between daycare and schools is becoming blurred. The public schools have become responsible for teaching more and more of the social/emotional skills found outside of basic academics. All of this takes time out of the school day. After 30 years of teaching, Mrs. Herring stated she can say with certainty the “successful students” she has encountered have influencing adults impressing upon them the importance of getting an education, while showing respect and appreciation for teachers and other adults involved in the process. Research has shown us that for a student to be successful they need one such adult in their life. Successful students come from all different backgrounds, races, family units and ethnicities. For a teacher to be able to build a successful relationship, classroom size needs to be kept manageable. In the proposed budget we see the addition of personnel in our school, to help address the increasing student needs. Keep in mind the support personnel are not there full time. The teacher is front and center and dealing with all the needs of each student continually throughout the day. We should be doing everything in our power to keep class sizes small in the primary grades to enhance the teacher/pupil relationship. Mrs. Herring noted that Dr. Parlato has projected class sizes that are favorable at this point, but she hopes we can remain open to the option of adding classes should the numbers unexpectedly increase.</p> <p><i>Mrs. Sarich moved for the Board of Education to adopt the 2025-2026 budget in the amount of \$76,350,587, reflecting a 3.93% increase, as amended by the Board. Seconded by Mr. Barile. 8-1-0 with Mr. Scofield opposed.</i></p>	<p>Motion made and passed 8-1-0 for the Board of Education to adopt the 2025-2026 budget in the amount of \$76,350,587, reflecting a 3.93% increase, as amended by the Board.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Discussion and Possible Action: A. Monthly Reports</p> <p>No discussion.</p>	<p>Discussion and possible action A. Monthly Reports</p> <p>Motion made and passed unanimously to approve the monthly</p>

	<i>Mr. O'Brien moved to approve the monthly reports: Budget Position, Budget Transfer Request and Purchase Resolution D790, seconded by Mr. Hansell. Motion passed unanimously.</i>	reports: Budget Position, Budget Transfer Request and Purchase Resolution D790.
6.	Adjourn <i>Mr. O'Brien moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:11 pm, seconded by Mr. McCauley and passed unanimously.</i>	6. Adjourn Motion made and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:



Mrs. Tammy McInerney
Secretary
New Milford Board of Education