

**New Milford Board of Education  
 Budget Hearings & Adoption of Motions and Minutes  
 January 13, 14, 20 & 21 2026  
 Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

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 NEW MILFORD, CT

**Budget Hearing Motions and Minutes  
January 13, 2026  
 Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

<b>Present:</b>	Mrs. Leslie Sarich, Chairperson <i>via video conference</i> Mr. Eric Hansell Mrs. Sarah Herring Mrs. Tammy McInerney Mr. Dean Barile Mrs. Wendy Faulenbach Mr. Brian McCauley Mr. Tom O'Brien Mr. Joseph Failla Mayor Pete Bass, <i>ex-officio</i>
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<b>Also Present:</b>	Dr. Janet Parlato, Superintendent of Schools Ms. Holly Hollander, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Mr. Anthony Giovannone, Director of Fiscal Services and Operations Mr. Jeffrey Turner, Technology Director Mr. Matthew Cunningham, Facilities Director Dr. Kimberly Culkin, 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.		<b>Call to Order</b> <b>Pledge of Allegiance</b> The budget hearing meeting of the New Milford Board of Education was called to order at 6:30pm. by Mr. Eric Hansell, Vice Chairperson. The Pledge of Allegiance immediately followed the call to order.	<b>Call to Order</b> <b>Pledge of Allegiance</b>
2.		<b>Presentation of the Superintendent's Proposed 2026-2027 Budget</b>  Dr. Parlato stated it is the Superintendent's responsibility to prepare, advocate, and implement an annual budget that addresses district goals, meets needs of students, and to have regular status updates throughout the year. The Board of Education (BOE) has a responsibility to oversee the budget, advocate and adopt while meeting the needs of students.	<b>Presentation of the Superintendent's Proposed 2026-2027 School Budget</b>

The last 3 years were focused on district guiding documents and concept documents. The current BOE goals are increasing student achievement, family and community engagement, budget development and fiscal management, creating a safe school environment and an exceptional workforce. This budget addresses those ongoing needs, while maintaining momentum and staying fiscally responsible.

Dr. Parlato stated the mission of the New Milford Public Schools (NMPS) is a collaborative partnership of students, educators, family and community. The goal is to prepare each student so they may excel in an ever-changing world, and embrace challenges, while respecting others.

The Portrait of a Life Long Learner allows us to assess skills students need, inspire growth, become an agile communicator, critical thinker, thoughtful problem solver, and trustworthy community member.

Dr. Parlato stated the District Accountability Indicators are trending in the right direction, with a slight increase in the Overall Performance Index.

Dr. Parlato stated, for the budget, the following fixed costs are required items that carry forward from one year to the next. 77.3% of the entire budget is fixed costs that cannot be changed.

Required Item for 2026-27	\$ Increase	% Increase
Contractual Salary Increases for All Bargaining Units	\$1,871,548	2.45%
Contractual Health Benefits Increases for All Bargaining Units	\$1,361,548	1.78%
Transportation - Bus Contract Increase	\$194,723	0.26%

Utility & Refuse/Recycling Increases	\$75,089	0.10%
Other Insurance (Life, Disability, Workers Comp, Cyber, Liability for Auto/Property, Student Accident)	\$68,616	0.09%
Total Increase of Fixed Costs	\$3,571,524	4.68%

Dr. Parlato stated it would be a 4.68% increase, but with reductions, the proposed increase is 3.2%.

Proposed additions and reductions are:

- -5.0 certified staff in grades Prek -5
- -3.0 certified staff, grades 6-12
- -0.4 nurse
- +1.5 certified staff, prek-5

It is a net reduction of 6.9 Full Time Employee (FTE) with a cost reduction of \$516,886.

Dr. Parlato stated the district has seen a decline in enrollment. The current 11th grade cohort is 301 and the current 1st grade cohort is 200 students. With the reductions, the class sizes will remain the same or even be slightly lower. Adding in a 5th grade teacher will bring the average class size down to 21.9 students from 23.9 students.

Other proposed reductions are to the Out of District (OOD) Tuition, Out of District Transportation, General Busing, Legal Fees, and Pension.

Proposed increases include Substitutes, Disability Insurance, Director of Human Resources salary increase, School Security Officer hourly rate, and Literacy Workbooks.

Dr. Parlato stated, with declining enrollment there has been an increase in High Needs students. These are students on Free/Reduced lunch, Multi

Language (ML) students and students with IEPs. Dr. Parlato reviewed the increase of High Needs students:			
	2014-15	2019-20	2025-26
Free/ Reduced Lunch	875 20.2%	1342 34.1%	1257 36.4%
Multilingual	120 2.7%	199 5%	321 9.3%
IEPs	591 13.6%	602 15.3%	648 18.8%
Enrollment	4335	3925	3446
<p>Dr. Parlato stated the requests that were not included in the budget were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 6.0 Kindergarten general education paraprofessionals - Hill and Plain School (HPS) and Northville Elementary School (NES)</li> <li>● Trapezoid Classroom Tables and Associated Chairs - NES</li> <li>● Classroom Carpets - Sarah Noble Intermediate School (SNIS)</li> <li>● 1.0 Dean of Students - Schaghticoke Middle School (SMS)</li> <li>● 1.0 Music teacher - SMS</li> <li>● 3.0 Hallway Monitors - SMS</li> <li>● Renovation of Chorus Room to be a Chorus Room (former Home Economics room)</li> <li>● 1.0 In-School Suspension Monitor - New Milford High School (NMHS)</li> <li>● 2.0 Multilingual tutors - NMHS</li> <li>● Slab Roller for Ceramics - NMHS</li> <li>● Ductless Fume Hood for Art - NMHS</li> <li>● 1.0 Director of Curriculum/Instructional Supervisor - Central Office</li> </ul>			

	<p>Dr. Parlato stated this is an honest and balanced budget. The needs of the students are increasing, and guiding documents show there is momentum in the right direction.</p> <p>Mr. McCauley stated he was concerned with the OOD Tuition and OOD Transportation reductions, noting that it is a variable cost. Dr. Parlato stated there are already additional placeholders in the budget for unexpected placements. Mrs. McNerney asked if any OOD placed students were returning to the district. Dr. Parlato stated students are leaving or aging out, and no students are being brought back to the district.</p> <p>Mr. Barile asked if there were any non-certified staff reductions. Dr. Parlato stated the nurse position is a non-certified staff, but no paraprofessionals, custodians or secretaries are being reduced. Mr. Barile asked how a student is identified as requiring special education services. Dr. Parlato stated a student is first referred, and then receives testing to see about eligibility. Mr. Barile asked to get more information specific to the special education teachers and paraprofessionals.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked what other bargaining units are upcoming and would affect the legal line item. Mr. Giovannone stated custodians and maintainers are in the spring with nurses and secretaries next year.</p>	
<p><b>3.</b></p>	<p><b>Discussion of the Superintendent's Proposed 2026-2027 Budget including but not limited to, PK - Grade 5, Transportation, Benefits, Revenue, District-Wide Departments</b></p> <p>Mrs. Bilko began her presentation by thanking staff and colleagues, along with the BOE for all their hard work. Mrs. Calabrese stated the focus is for students to have academic achievements and grow with confidence. Mrs. Gallagher stated the ideas we live by guide us and our daily decision making.</p>	<p><b>Discussion of the Superintendent's Proposed 2026-2027 Budget including but not limited to, PK - Grade 5, Transportation, Benefits, Revenue, District-Wide Departments</b></p>

	<p>Mrs. Calabrese stated HPS would have a 0.45% increase, which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increase of a 0.5 FTE Teacher in Pre-K</li> <li>● Reduction of 1.0 FTE Teacher in Grade 1</li> <li>● Reduction of 1.0 FTE Teacher in Grade 2</li> <li>● Reduction of 0.5 FTE Teacher in Special Education</li> <li>● Transfer in of a 0.1 FTE Nurse from Litchfield Hills Transition Center (LHTC)</li> </ul> <p>General Education would go from 18 to 16 teachers, Excel would go up 0.5, Special Education would go to 4.0 and Unified Arts would stay at 4.0. The student population is declining. In 2025 HPS served 363 students and next year the projection is 333.</p> <p>Mrs. Gallagher stated NES would have a 0.09% decrease, which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reduction of 1.0 FTE Teacher in Grade 1</li> <li>● Reduction of 1.0 FTE Teacher in Grade 2</li> <li>● Reduction of 0.5 FTE Teacher in Special Education</li> <li>● Transfer in of a 0.1 FTE Nurse from LHTC</li> </ul> <p>General Education would go from 21 to 19 teachers. Excel would have 3.0 teachers, Special Education would have 5.0 teachers, and Unified Arts would have 4.0 teachers. In 2025 NES served 399 students and next year the projection is 362.</p> <p>Mrs. Bilko stated SNIS would have a 6.15% increase, which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increase of 1.0 FTE Teacher in Grade 5</li> <li>● Transfer in of a 0.1 FTE Nurse from LHTC</li> </ul> <p>General Education would increase to 36 teachers. Special Education would have 12.0 teachers and Unified Arts would have 9.0 teachers. Mrs. Bilko stated it's important to build a school community that engages with the larger community. All three schools engage in service projects so students can feel a sense of pride.</p> <p>Mrs. Calabrese stated there is a new program called Character Strong that includes a "kindness</p>	
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	<p>kickoff” and assemblies to encourage students to have strong character.</p> <p>Mrs. Gallagher stated K-5 professional learning helps with social and emotional needs of students. Science of Reading and iReady has also helped identify areas for growth.</p> <p>Mrs. Bilko stated, building climate and culture is important. They want families to feel confident in the school system. There is communication through social media and Parent Square. Seeing the service projects being done is important for families to know what is happening outside of school. Additionally, there have been staff shout-outs and recognizing those that make a positive difference. Students are encouraged to grow with leadership roles such as doing the morning announcements and having classroom jobs. The schools offer recognition such as “Top Dogs” or OSCARS. This gives confidence to the students. Mrs. Calabrese stated partnership with the PTO is imperative and they could not do it without their help. Through collaboration, they are able to enhance programs and while addressing district priorities.</p> <p>All three of the schools combined are 21% of the overall budget. The focus is to maintain the programs currently being offered and strengthen students. It is done as a whole to include social and emotional support and guidance lessons. A dynamic curriculum that is designed towards positive outcomes.</p> <p>Mayor Bass thanked Mrs. Calabrese, Mrs. Gallagher and Mrs. Bilko for their presentations and asked a question about a video shown with students learning while sitting on the carpet in the classroom. Mrs. Bilko replied that there has been a lot of research done regarding movement and students' ability to learn. It helps encourage collaboration. As the students get older, they may go back and forth from the carpet to their desks.</p> <p>Mayor Bass asked what changes the principals have noticed from 5 years ago to today. Mrs. Bilko</p>	
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	<p>stated there has been a significant increase in high needs students. Skillsets are changing with a faster paced world surrounded by technology. It is a trend being seen not just in New Milford, but around the country. These needs require more attention. Mrs. Calabrese stated it is about self regulation. Students come to school with what she calls, “invisible backpacks,” and it is hard for them to connect the students with the teacher.</p> <p>Mr. Failla asked the principals to give their opinions on the class sizes. Mrs. Calabrese stated smaller class sizes can meet the needs of students better. Small groups in the classroom are more manageable. Mrs. Gallagher added it is easier to launch the new program, Bookworms, because the class sizes are smaller. Mr. Failla asked when Bookworms will be assessed. Mrs. Gallagher stated testing is currently being done. The data will help see how students are progressing and allow teachers to give individual instruction.</p> <p>Mr. Barile asked to see the percentage of Special Education students by school. With the reduction of certified staff, will that mean relying too much on non-certified staff. Dr. Parlato stated student need is what helps dictate staffing needs.</p> <p>Mr. McCauley noted the past two years there has been a request for 6.0 paraprofessionals and asked to know more. Mrs. Gallagher stated, paras are helpful when it comes to having another adult to answer questions and manage a classroom of 17-18 students.</p> <p><u>Department of General Administration:</u> Mr. Giovannone stated the proposed budget represents a decrease of 24.97%. The staffing allocated to this department are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 0.5 BOE Clerk</li></ul> <p>The non-salary lines that had changes include legal fees, dropping by \$85,000 for next year. The current retainer should have enough to cover the rest of the year. Professional Services includes Shipman &amp; Goodman expenses, BOE recordings and other programs. They will be collapsing those</p>	
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	<p>line items and rolling them up into Professional Services. Advertising is for bids and legal notices, which is being utilized more in conjunction with the 5 year Capital Plan. The supply line is increased by \$5,800. That is a reallocation. Dues and Fees has a slight increase.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked about Professional Services, is it district-wide or just part of the department. Mr. Giovannone stated it is just within the BOE, not across the Department of General Administration.</p> <p>Mr. Giovannone continued, stating the Office of the Superintendent has an increase of 0.80%. There are proposed reductions that will not affect the office. Staffing includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 1.0 FTE Superintendent</li><li>● 1.0 FTE Admin Assistant to the Superintendent</li></ul> <p>The proposed budget has a benefit increase of 9.17%. Health insurance is the biggest factor. Functions of payroll also have corresponding increases. The pension amount is provided by the Finance Department, and a reduction was recommended. Disability was locked in for the last 3 years and now has an increase. The district saved money by not paying for the year over year compounding increases. Life insurance is changing by a small amount and Workers Comp is provided by CIRMA.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked if health insurance was being offset by reductions. Mr. Giovannone stated yes. Mrs. Faulenbach asked if there is a new locked-in rate for disability. Mr. Giovannone stated they still have to go out to bid. Mrs. Faulenbach suggested coordinating with the town.</p> <p>Mr. Giovannone stated health insurance, State Partnership Plan (SPP), anticipates an increase of up to 13.5%. Dental insurance is partially insured through CIGNA, and partially SPP. Teamsters manage their plan. The new employee assistance program started in 2025.</p>	
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	<p>Mr. Failla asked for more information about the new employee assistance program. Dr. Parlato stated it is part of the benefits for employees, which includes 2 free counseling sessions, advice on stress management and more. Mr. Failla asked if employees contribute to the plan. Mr. Giovannone stated the district pays it 100%.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked what the dollar amount is for the increase to health insurance. Mr. Giovannone stated it is about \$1,300,000 and a 1.78% increase to the budget. Mrs. Faulenbach noted that a 13% increase is shocking, but the numbers across the state are closer to 20%. Mayor Bass stated, when the district moved over to SPP, it was a cost avoidance of millions. Mrs. Faulenbach agreed and asked the Mayor to have a conversation with Brown and Brown to see if that percentage could be reduced.</p> <p>Mr. Giovannone stated the Department of Fiscal Services would have a 3.59% increase. This includes fees for Quickbooks, MUNIS user fee, audit fee, reduction of \$1,000 in tech supplies, increase fees for memberships, budget of \$500 for Amazon Prime District, and LAP (Liability, Auto and Property). CIRMA is recommending the district use a projected 5% increase.</p> <p><u>Transportation:</u> Mr. Giovannone stated Transportation would have an increase of 0.58% in the proposed budget. This includes the reduction of one bus route and pushing for All Star to service other runs. Mrs. McInerney asked why the district privatized those runs in the past. Mr. Giovannone stated it was due to driver shortages and rural roads that are impassable for buses.</p> <p>Mr. Failla asked what the longest bus route is for a student in minutes. Mr. Giovannone stated it's somewhere around 52 minutes. The policy is no longer than 1 hour in either direction. Mrs. Faulenbach asked if there are runs for other services such as athletics. Mr. Giovannone stated this number is just for pupil transportation and late bus runs, not athletics.</p>	
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	<p>Mayor Bass stated New Milford is one of the environmental justice districts, and by 2030 all school buses will have zero emissions. The Mayor asked if there were any discussions regarding that. Mr. Giovannone stated all the buses are propane and was not aware of the zero emissions. The Mayor suggested calling WestConn for more information. Mrs. McInerney asked if All Star had been able to resume athletic runs. Mr. Giovannone stated some, and it's getting better.</p> <p><u>Revenue:</u></p> <p>Mr. Giovannone stated the revenue lines have 2 changes, one is excess cost that has to do with the current placements, plus any additional new placements within Special Education. This would include tuition and transportation, both of which are being reduced. The district is reimbursed roughly 68%, so it is not dollar for dollar. Using the same reimbursement rate, and less students being outplaced, means less revenue to get back from the state. Medicaid is changing by 24.55%. Building use fees, Excel tuition and gate/parking permit fees are flat. DCF tuition will not count as a revenue driver.</p> <p>Mr. Failla stated he did not agree with charging students a parking fee and it should be covered by the district. Mrs. McInerney stated she agreed with Mr. Failla.</p> <p>Mr. Hansell asked if the building use fees included fields. Mr. Giovannone stated yes, to cover costs such as custodial, lighting fees, etc.</p>	
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Opportunity for the Public to be heard</b>        Mrs. Nicole Orletski, 1st grade teacher at HPS, asked the BOE members to picture a 5 year old child walking into school for the first time. What happens will shape how they see themselves for years to come. The reality is kids need to be seen and heard. Studies from the Tennessee Star Project found smaller classrooms perform better in reading and math. Effective reading depends on small groups and immediate feedback. Smaller class sizes allow for intervention and help students</p>	<p><b>Opportunity for the Public to be heard</b></p>

		<p>falling behind. Smaller classes can help the teacher identify students that are withdrawn emotionally. It also means safer classrooms and stronger student relationships. When students do not get strong early instruction, it is more costly in the long run with intervention and remediation. Keeping student numbers low in primary grades will help teachers and student success.</p> <p>Mrs. Doranne Koval, HPS teacher, stated students have changed. They have significantly increased in emotional behavioral and academic needs. At the elementary level, teachers deliver curriculum in multiple subjects as well as with social emotional learning (SEL). Developmental play based learning is also essential and required. All require time and capacity. Small class sizes help address these needs. It allows teachers to listen and build relationships with students to be proactive and not reactive. Each transition takes instructional minutes. Larger classes take away from meaningful relationships. Play builds critical functioning skills that align with NMPS goals. From a Special Education perspective, it helps reduce the need for more interventions later. Smaller class sizes support stronger academic outcomes. Mrs. Koval encouraged the board to keep elementary class sizes small, and to remember enrollment can increase throughout the year.</p>	
5.		<p><b>Recessed to Wednesday January 14, 2026</b>                  The budget hearing meeting of the New Milford Board of Education was called to recess at 8:28p.m. by Mr. Eric Hansell, Vice Chairperson.</p>	<p><b>Recessed to January 14, 2026</b>                  The meeting recessed at 8:28 p.m.</p>

**Budget Hearing Motions and Minutes  
January 14, 2026  
 Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

<b>Present:</b>	Mrs. Leslie Sarich, Chairperson <i>via video conference</i> Mr. Eric Hansell, Vice Chairperson Mrs. Sarah Herring Mrs. Tammy McInerney
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**New Milford Board of Education**  
**Budget Hearings & Adoption of Motions and Minutes**  
**January 13, 14, 20 & 21 2026**  
**Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

	Mr. Dean Barile Mrs. Wendy Faulenbach Mr. Brian McCauley Mr. Joseph Failla
<b>Absent:</b>	Mr. Tom O'Brien

<b>Also Present:</b>	Dr. Janet Parlato, Superintendent of Schools Ms. Holly Hollander, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Mr. Anthony Giovannone, Director of Fiscal Services and Operations Mr. Jeffrey Turner, Technology Director Mr. Matthew Cunningham, Facilities Director Dr. Kimberly Culkin, 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 Demeyer, Schaghticoke Middle School Principal
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<b>1.</b>	<b>Call to Order</b> <b>Pledge of Allegiance</b> The budget hearing meeting of the New Milford Board of Education 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.	<b>Call to Order</b> <b>Pledge of Allegiance</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Opportunity for the Public to be heard</b> There was none.	<b>Opportunity for the Public to be heard</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Discussion of the Superintendent's Proposed 2026-2027 Budget including, but not limited to, Grades 6-12 and District-Wide Departments</b>  Mrs. Demeyer stated it's about innovation and sustainability while preparing students to excel in a competing world. It is about ensuring students have the opportunity to stretch themselves in a variety of ways and step out of their comfort zone. SMS has 796 students with 160 Special Education students, and 72 MLs. There are 936 members of the SMS community and 140 staff.  Mrs. Demeyer stated they have been working on community building, and balancing academics with creativity. A healthy culture is a prerequisite for academic growth and it is about the whole child. Student visibility and community building provides stability and empowerment that students need.	<b>Discussion of the Superintendent's Proposed 2026-2027 Budget including, but not limited to, Grades 6-12 and District-Wide Departments</b>

<p>Increasing student visibility at SMS includes photographs and mirrors in the hallway. Last year they had one 8th grade ceremony instead of 3 different ones and it made a difference. Commitment to the whole child includes new courses, curriculum revisions, and new core materials. They have been working hard on implementing those materials. Robotics and coding has launched. There has also been teacher evaluations, professional development, non-evaluative visits and improved data use. The goal is to ensure everyone can grow at their own pace.</p> <p>The budget priorities are centered around the students. The hope is to maintain current programming so that athletics and academics are integrated. There has been high inflation for basic supplies so the thought is to move the funds where needed. Buying programs such as Quill help student engagement. There has been a surge in participation in band, and they are hoping to build the outdoor community. There is a push to expand student leadership with guest speakers and field trips. Student leadership is how students see themselves and their potential. Guest speakers help students see what their academics may look like in the outside world. Field trips have experiential learning. Prioritizing these experiences helps students pursue their aspirations.</p> <p>Mrs. Herring asked how many students are currently taking a language given there is a lack of language teachers. Mrs. Demeyer stated 26 students are taking French. There are 5 sessions of Spanish with 120 students total. It's all 8th graders. Mrs. Herring asked if there was a chance it could be offered to 7th graders in the future. Ms. Hollander stated language is a shortage area and it's a balance of hoping to bring someone onboard, but then it doesn't work out. Students are still able to take a language, it is just not until 8th grade. Mrs. Demeyer stated, because of the gap that this created, the need was filled with instruction of reading/writing and speaking. This Communication Arts course has proven to be very helpful to students. Mrs. Herring asked if there was a curriculum for the class and Mrs. Demeyer stated there was. Mrs. Herring asked about having STEM and if finding a teacher was still a difficulty. Dr. Parlato stated they have hired someone to build a bridge to the first year academy at the high school. Ms. Hollander stated the thought was</p>	
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to have a complementary course in 8th grade for the Pathways. All these efforts are to keep students engaged vs. sitting in a study hall. Dr. Parlato stated, in the absence of a STEM teacher, there are many offerings at SMS with computer and computer science and there are still STEM offerings. Mrs. Herring asked which 8th graders get to take a language. Mrs. Demeyer stated they look at data points, and base it on ELA performance.

Mr. Failla stated he has heard great things about SMS, it's been turned around from a problematic school. The emphasis placed on academics as well as the non-academic part of the student is critical. Mr. Failla thanked Mrs. Demeyer.

Mrs. Faulenbach noted the transportation line for athletics didn't change much, and asked if it was because of the contract, or number of opportunities offered. Mrs. Demeyer stated she looked at previous usage history, and was able to give a number with more certainty. Mrs. Faulenbach asked if the same opportunities were being offered. Mrs. Demeyer stated yes, it is a dollar amount increase based on rising costs.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked about the 140 staff members at SMS. Mr. Giovannone stated they may work at SMS but their salaries are within other departments such as Special Education or Facilities.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked to confirm there were no staffing changes at SMS. Mrs. Demeyer stated that was correct.

Mr. Manka began his presentation by thanking everyone, including staff, the BOE, cabinet members and parents. Mr. Manka stated the focus has been centered around a sense of belonging. The aim is to have students build on their strengths in the classroom, on the fields and other areas of education. Over the last 5 years students have been returning to band, chorus and athletics. There has also been an increase in special education needs. MLs are 7% of NMHS student population. There is quarterly planning done to assist students and ensure they have what they need to be successful. Programs such as Wingman help students transition from 8th grade to high school. The Pathways

	<p>program is instrumental, the Peer to Peer program and FLEX continue to be assets. Within the proposed budget, NMHS is looking at a 1.56% increase.</p> <p>Mr. Manka stated NMHS has the following staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 102 Teachers, which includes department chairs</li><li>● 1.0 Special Education Department Chair</li><li>● 1.0 Pathways Coordinator</li><li>● 2.0 Social Workers</li><li>● 1.5 School Psychologist (0.5 vacant)</li><li>● 1.0 Substance Abuse Counselor</li><li>● 6.0 Counselors</li><li>● 15.0 Paraeducators</li><li>● 1.0 SCW (1.0 vacant)</li><li>● 1.5 S&amp;L</li><li>● 2.0 OT/PT which is shared</li></ul> <p>Mr. Manka stated, the hope is to have consistency and to understand the portrait of the Lifelong Learner. It is important to have communication, instructional rounds, Tier 1 strategies, Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) accountability measures and grants. It's critical to take the work, disseminate through the departments and regularly communicate weekly to parents and staff. The instructional keystones are using high impact, Tier 1 strategies.</p> <p>Mr. Manka stated NMHS needed to work on getting attendance back up and there were behaviors that needed to be addressed. With the introduction of student leaders and having regular meetings with teachers they are making progress. There has been a steady rise over the last 3 years in student success. This is from intentional programming.</p> <p>Social Emotional Programming, such as the Wingman Program, has 148 students help mentor and be leaders. These programs help students focus on social awareness, responsibility and day to day work that are essential skills. Another program, Peer-to-Peer, has added students that speak Spanish and Portuguese. These programs create an instant friend, and opportunities for students to feel part of the community. It also helps students transition into NMHS with a feeling of security.</p>	
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<p>NMHS was recently recognized for the AP 2025 SILVER award for staff and students. It's a big achievement. NMHS is looking to provide ECE (Early College Experience) courses. For the 26/27 school year there are 13 potential courses for students to receive college credit. These are transferable credits at a fraction of the cost. Students are dual enrolled in a safe environment.</p> <p>The continuation of the Pathways program will build partnerships and internships with places such as Nuvance Health and Ives Bank. There are conversations happening with Columbia University for an educator Pathways. It would be great to provide students with these exposures so they can have it on their transcripts.</p> <p>The Summit is an alternative education program for students. Students have to apply and there has been success with students who were previously school avoidant. They are provided with what they need academically and emotionally.</p> <p>Mr. Manka concluded by stating the budget provides adequate FTE staff, including support staff, clerical and administrative. The budget covers the resources to support the arts, and the cost of instructional materials.</p> <p><u>NMHS Athletics:</u></p> <p>Mr. Lipinsky stated the athletic department mirrors the mission of the district. NMHS received the Michaels Cup Award, which is a very prestigious award. The Michaels Cup is awarded to districts that promote sportsmanship, citizenship, and positive school spirit. New Milford has received it 4 years in a row. Athletics teaches life skills. There are 28 sports offerings at various levels. There are 524 student athletes, which is over 45% of the student population. NMHS has unified sports events and awards nights. In regards to the proposed budget, purchase services went up, which are the fees for referees and officials. Also, dues and league fees went up for invitationals and tournaments. The budget will ensure we have the equipment we need, staffing of security, officials/game workers, dues and fees for state membership, fees for golf, swimming, ice hockey and gymnastics.</p>	
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	<p>Mr. Barile noted there are 3 certified staff members being reduced. Mr. Manka stated the average class size in English was an area where there was a reason for a reduction. A math teacher left at the beginning of the year and that had a negligible effect on class size.</p> <p>Mr. Failla noted projected enrollment is a decrease of 50 students. Mr. Manka stated that was correct. Mr. Failla asked about the accountability index for graduation rate. Mr. Manka stated last year it was 88.9%. Mr. Failla asked why 11% of the students are not graduating. Mr. Manka stated that it is usually because of truancy, school avoidance, or an inability to be successful in class. 88.9% has room for improvement but it's a trend in the right direction. Mr. Failla asked what was being done to increase the graduation rate. Mr. Manka stated the Summit Program is helpful for that. It is bringing back students who were school avoidant. There is also a credit recovery program that is offered after school to students. The SEL program is helping students who are quiet and passive be more active in class.</p> <p>Mr. Barile asked if NMHS follows students after high school, and works with them through a program online to finish courses and graduate. Mr. Manka stated they do. They work with BYU for credit courses, which allows older students to be able to catch up with lost credits.</p> <p>Mr. Failla stated it's good the district is helping students who do not think college is the right path for them. Mr. Manka stated they have a teacher that is certified to bring back computer graphing and has a wonderful vision. Woodshop had a massive update, and they now have a teacher in that role.</p> <p>Mr. Failla asked about ECE Courses. Mr. Manka stated they have spent the last few years getting interest from staff and are now launching those courses.</p> <p>Mr. Failla asked if students are reading entire books cover to cover. Mr. Manka stated yes, and are working on students increasing the number of minutes they are reading. They are trying to move away from screens.</p>	
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Mr. Failla asked if Mr. Manka was aware of a study done by USC San Diego on student prepping. The study found students were falling below middle school standards. Ms. Hollander agreed this was an area of concern. Students are lacking in ability to write and read. They are working to remedy this with the core curriculum and it is now moving up the grades. They are seeing the same in Adult Education. Mr. Failla stated the students should get back to the basics so they are prepared for college if they choose that route.

Mrs. Herring asked if the Substance Abuse Counselor goes into the classroom or if they see the students one on one. Mr. Manka stated it varies. It can be part of a PPT, small group work, or meeting individually. It is based on the level of need.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked to confirm there are 6 counselors. Mr. Manka stated they are part of guidance. Mrs. Faulenbach stated counselors can help with early identification for students that need help catching up on credits and asked if truancy rates have improved. Mr. Manka stated NMPS falls below the nationwide average. The counselors have weekly meetings, and the attendance team meets regularly.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked Mr. Lipinsky about the ice hockey rental fee. Mr. Lipinsky stated it was about \$15,000-\$16,000. Mrs. Faulenbach asked if the line item for transportation is covered under the bus contract. Mr. Giovannone stated not all of them. This winter All Star did about 90% of the bus runs for athletic events. Mrs. Faulenbach asked about the slight increase in the phones. Mr. Giovannone stated that it falls under utilities, and is service related and part of the Office of the Principal.

Department of Instruction:

Ms. Hollander stated it is a collaborative partnership to prepare students for the future and to prepare them for challenges. The alignment of work is through the Board of Education, the district and The Department of Instruction (DOI).

The mission of the DOI is to provide coherency, empowerment, partnership and collaboration, which aligns with the 5 pillars of the district. This effort is not

siloes but done as partnerships, while keeping the instructional core at the forefront. The roles and responsibilities include curriculum development, data collection, regular and special education curriculum, report cards, classroom models, and MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support). Also under the Office of the Superintendent is residency, Title IX, Title I, Title II, Title IV, Professional Learning, Educator Evaluation, Adult Education, test coordination, Multilingual Learners (ML), policy implementation and community partnerships.

This year the DOI addressed 36 instances of residency checks and performed an audit of all the 6th grade families.

Multilingual Learners or English Learners (MLs/ELs) have grown. ML teachers provide a targeted instruction, grounded in Tier 1 instruction. The English learners receive English language development, and phonics, even those identified with a disability.

It is the district's responsibility to assess and identify any ELs, communicate all policies to ELs and stakeholders, submit annual assessments, and review all EL data annually. Parent Square helps with this.

ELs have increased by 213% over the last 10 years. At this time the DOI is not seeking additional support, but plans to move faculty to the areas with the most need. Currently there are the following EL numbers:

School	Number EL students (as of 1/10/26)	Number of Teachers
HPS	63	2.0
NES	38	1.0
SNIS	87	2.5
SMS	75	2.0
NMHS	74	1.5

<p>There is an intake process, classroom placement procedures, and a curriculum for K-12. There is also progress monitoring for dual identified students, based on data collection. The continued work includes a language development plan that spans K-12, building based programming, translation tools and state mandates.</p> <p><u>Adult Education:</u></p> <p>Ms. Hollander stated the district is required to provide instruction for basic adult education, which is for adults functioning below the secondary level and need basic skills. It also provides instruction for English as a Second Language (ESL), secondary school completion, citizenship preparation and career readiness.</p> <p>The goal is to prepare these adult students for the workforce, which the state sets targets. The number of students has grown from 88 in 2023/2024 to 112 in 2025/2026. The staff for the Adult Education program include a program director, program facilitator, guidance counselor (1.5 FTE with 0.5 grant funded), a secretary, an adult education evaluator, and 12 teachers.</p> <p>The program offers in person or remote credit diploma programs, computer instruction for GED in English and Spanish, ESL instruction, digital literacy, OSHA 10 workplace safety and other opportunities such as cosmetology. The program connects students with community resources, builds confidence and work ethic.</p> <p>There have been grants awarded, which include \$30,000 for instructional innovation and \$50,000 for transition, career navigation and support. Funding sources need to be closely monitored. The Adult Education program has been funded through the LEA budget and grants. The budget overview would lead to a 8.98% increase with a 10.75% increase in salary.</p> <p><u>Tuition:</u></p> <p>The Shepaug Agriscience program has 34 seats, the total tuition cost is \$134,538. Western Connecticut Academy of International Studies (K-5) in Danbury has 18 seats, with a tuition cost of \$1,247 per seat, and a total cost of \$22,446. The Henry Abbott Tech High</p>	
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School has 17 seats on average from SMS and 70-100 district wide. The number of available seats is based upon a formula the district must adhere to.

Impact on the Budget:

Ms. Hollander stated the purpose is to build consistency, think creatively and stay true to the intervention model. There are signs of improved instructional consistency, greater efficiency and clarity and a stronger alignment between district priorities and classroom practice.

The major driver has been aligning and streamlining the K-8 curriculum process. There is a unified math pathway with the iReady math for K-5, Savvas math for 6-8 and the 9th grade Math Lab. For ELA & Literacy, K-3 launched Bookworms, commonized screening for K-5 and there is a new offering for 9th grade, Academic Reading.

Focusing on improvement and support systems means stronger coaching by utilizing lab classrooms, increasing teacher access to realtime data, having ongoing professional development and providing clearer communication about student progress. The collaboration between general education, special education and ML will ensure a coherent support for diverse learners. Actions that continue are reviewing core materials, streamlining processes, and improved communication channels through shared data dashboards.

MTSS:

Ms. Hollander stated MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support) is a framework for enhancing the implementation and adoption of evidence-based interventions to achieve important academic and social-emotional outcomes.

Current support is:

School	Numbers (as of 12/23/25)	Percentage (as of 12/23/25)	Interventionists
HPS	32	13%	2

NES	28	11%	2
SNIS	137	18%	4
SMS	107	14%	3

The work continues by ensuring long term sustainability and continued support for Tier 1 instructional practices. There are adjustments happening to meet the needs of students at the secondary level. The goal is to provide stronger core instruction, refine MTSS, SEL and attendance, and examine the supports from Tier 1 to Special Education.

Dr. Parlato stated, MTSS can help catch a student struggling with foundational skills early on and offer remediation.

Ms. Hollander stated, the next steps include building grades 5-8 literacy programing, supporting mathematics, phonics skills, fluency and vocabulary. There is also alignment for students in grades 6-12 to transition from middle school to high school.

The Department of Instruction overview will have an increase of salaries through contractual obligations and will be an increase of 1.2%.

Mr. Failla stated the Agriscience program is a great program to help students who may not be on a college track. Mr. Failla asked how many students apply for the Shepaug Agriscience program. Dr. Parlato stated she would find out that information. Mr. McCauley stated he is amazed how the Agriscience program has grown. Mrs. Faulenbach agreed it is a great program.

Mrs. Herring asked how many salaries are under DOI. Ms. Hollander stated she believes it is 7.

Mr. Hansell asked how many ML learners, after taking assessments, transition out of the program. Ms. Hollander stated the district uses the state assessment.

Dr. Parlato asked Ms. Hollander to explain what revenue might be generated through the Adult Education program. Ms. Hollander stated enrichment

	<p>programs were put on hold because they are courses already being offered through the town, such as knitting. They were not getting the interest or participants that they had in the past.</p> <p><u>Department of Technology:</u>          Mr. Turner stated the department works hard to provide students what they need with safety in mind. The department has 9 people, which includes the IT Director, 1.0 secretary, techs and a network analyst.</p> <p>Grades K-2 are using chromebooks only in school. Grades 3-12 bring them home. The department continues to seek out grants. The district has already been awarded \$1,600,000 in grants. Currently they are working on updating desktops and laptops because of the Windows 11 upgrade. It's about being cost conscious. With the E-Rate grant, all servers have been updated. The phones will be updated. There will be bids on items such as access points and audio visual projects will include cafeteria/stage and gym updates.</p> <p>After using Powerschool for the last 4 years, there is a large amount of data for all the departments.</p> <p>Mr. Turner stated the implementation of AI tools will need to be done for teachers safely. Currently there is Gemini and School AI. No student will have AI accessible to them unless they are in a google classroom where a teacher is proactively looking at it.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney asked if students have access to Gemini. Mr. Turner stated it is locked down. Anything the district could not control safely was eliminated.</p>	
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Opportunity for the Public to be heard</b>          There was none.</p>	<p><b>Opportunity for the Public to be heard</b></p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Recessed to Tuesday, January 20, 2026</b>          The budget hearing meeting of the New Milford Board of Education was called to recess at 8:54p.m. by Mr. Eric Hansell, Vice Chairperson.</p>	<p><b>Recessed to Tuesday, January 20, 2026</b>  <b>The meeting recessed at 8:54 p.m.</b></p>

**Budget Hearing Motions and Minutes  
January 20, 2026  
 Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

<b>Present:</b>	Mrs. Leslie Sarich, Chairperson Mrs. Sarah Herring Mrs. Tammy McInerney Mr. Dean Barile Mrs. Wendy Faulenbach Mr. Brian McCauley Mr. Tom O'Brien
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<b>Absent:</b>	Mr. Joseph Failla Mr. Eric Hansell
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<b>Also Present:</b>	Dr. Janet Parlato, Superintendent of Schools Ms. Holly Hollander, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Mr. Anthony Giovannone, Director of Fiscal Services and Operations Dr. Kimberly Culkin, Director of Pupil Personnel and Special Services Mr. Matthew Cunningham, Facilities Director Mr. Jeffrey Turner, Technology Director Mrs. Lauren Bergner, Grades 6-12 Supervisor Special Education Mrs. Kristen Phillips, Grades PK-5 Supervisor Special Education
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<b>1.</b>	<b>Call to Order</b> <b>Pledge of Allegiance</b> The budget hearing meeting of the New Milford Board of Education 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.	<b>Call to Order</b> <b>Pledge of Allegiance</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Opportunity for the Public to be heard</b> There was none.	<b>Opportunity for the Public to be heard</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Discussion Superintendent's Proposed 2026-2027 Budget including, but not limited to, District-wide Departments</b> <u>Department of Student Services:</u> Dr. Culkin stated she has the privilege of working with Mrs. Lauren Bergner, Mrs. Kristen Phillips and the rest	<b>Discussion Superintendent's Proposed 2026-2027 Budget including, but not limited to, District-wide Departments</b>

	<p>of the staff and with the families of the district. The Department of Student Services aligns their work with the district mission. They have drafted a revised Statement of Belief that sees the whole child, and with intention and instructional practices all students can be successful. This mindset builds the foundations. The department has been focusing on collaboration administration and team union, para union, and DOL. They continue to have professional learning, as well as district wide team professionals participating in planning and placement.</p> <p>Dr. Culkin stated they have identified areas of improvement and are developing district standards and a corresponding tool kit to be used across the schools. The focus is to improve student and staff experiences by providing tools to promote self-regulation in students and adults.</p> <p>Within the department there are 3 administrative positions, 3 secretaries at central office, nurses, secretaries, BCBA's, special education teachers, OT's and PT's. There are also 9.4 nurses, 7.0 school psychologists, 99.5 para educators, 9.0 social workers, and 9.4 speech language pathologists. IDEA grant funds are used to pay for some of these staff salaries.</p> <p>The percentage of students with disabilities has incrementally increased. There is an increase in students with autism, emotional disability, ADHD, and intellectual disability. There has also been a slight decrease in students having a learning disability, and other disabilities.</p> <p>The year over year comparison of students with special education programming and the number of students within the school shifts over the course of the school year. The anticipated enrollment at LHTC is projected at 20. Currently there are 17, with room for 3, which could come from outside of the school district.</p> <p>The EXCEL preschool program has 63 students enrolled that are identified as learning disabled, with an additional 19 students in evaluation. The additional 0.5 preschool teacher will help with this.</p>	
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<p>The LHTC provides special education post secondary transition programming, as needed to students with disabilities upon completion of 12th grade, through the school year. The LHTC coordinator serves as the transition coordinator. The benefit includes cost avoidance for OOD placements. The cost for LHTC supplies has increased. This includes funds for purchasing food and other supplies to help students learn. It is approximately a \$25 weekly cost per student.</p> <p>The OOD placement budget is for 37 students at \$4,559,937. The proposed reduction would bring it down to \$4,364,654. This also includes a reduction in transportation, which was budgeted at \$1,709,580 and proposed is \$1,388,630. The reason for the reduction is because less students are expected to be placed OOD.</p> <p>The proposed department budget will continue honoring and celebrating students to teach the whole child. The hope is to expand the partnership with parents and families, and enhance procedures and expectations of NMPS.</p> <p>Mrs. Sarich asked about the instructional supplies. Dr. Culkin stated the LHTC students shop and buy food needed for their classroom so they can learn food preparation and preparing lunches. In the past, parents were paying out of pocket for these items. The increase in \$17,195 to the budget will alleviate that burden on the parents. Mrs. McNerney asked if it was a hardship for some families. Dr. Culkin stated some parents expressed that it was. The \$17,195 is approximately \$5/day per student.</p> <p>Mrs. Sarich about the increase of \$22,176. Mr. Giovannone stated that was a partial realignment for AEDs that do not need replacement, with funds partially allocated for the CPI program and deescalation training. Mrs. Sarich asked what the cost for that training would be for next year. Dr. Culkin stated she would provide that.</p> <p>Mr. McCauley asked about the caseload for teachers. Dr. Culkin stated HPS would go from 6.5- 7.8 students and NES would go from 8.6-7.4 respectively. The case</p>	
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	<p>load at SMS ranges between 7-18 and NMHS ranges from 14-17 students.</p> <p>Mrs. Herring asked how many students are in residential settings this year. Dr. Parlato stated there are approximately 2 students. Mrs. Herring asked about SWD attending OOD schools, noting there are 20 students going to a public school in other districts. Dr. Culkin explained that programs such as ACES, and Ed Advance are considered public schools.</p> <p>Mr. McCauley asked how many placeholders have been used this year for OOD placements. Dr. Culkin stated they have not used any of the placeholders. Mrs. Faulenbach stated the district used to use 7 placeholders, now they are going from 5-4, but why only reduce it by 1. We have not exceeded our placeholders for the last 5 years. Dr. Parlato stated it can be a volatile number. Placeholders are necessary, if we run short we will need special appropriation and have to ask the town for money.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked how many students are budgeted for OOD placement. Dr. Culkin stated the current budget has 37 students with 5 placeholders. Mrs. Faulenbach noted the proposed budget has 30 placements with 4 placeholders. That should bring down the transportation cost. Mrs. Faulenbach asked who provides that transportation. Mr. Giovannone stated it is various providers, about 8-9 vendors. It is a separate number than our general education transportation line. The vendors are sourced by putting out a bid. Mrs. Faulenbach asked if the number was down because of consolidation efforts or because of student change. Mr. Giovannone stated it was a combination of both.</p> <p>Mr. O'Brien asked if the shortage of transportation providers has gotten better. Mr. Giovannone stated it has but only slightly.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney noted some OOD placed students are transitioning out of the district at the end of the year. That is a large class size that is cycling out. Dr. Culkin confirmed they are transitioning out students who no longer require services because of their age.</p>	
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Facilities Department:

Mr. Cunningham stated he keeps the board updated on projects throughout the year. The department has almost 50 employees. They work hard and embrace the ideals we live by. Last April, over spring break, the facilities department did work on dialectic units and through focus, they were able to change out 70 units in 3 days. With heart, the department built a gaga ball pit and placed engraving bricks, going outside typical custodial maintenance. Through collaboration the department revamped the SNIS planetarium. With creativity, the department replaced 24 thermostats at SMS.

It has been over 30 years since major work has been done at the schools:

- New Milford High School opened in 2000
- Schaghticoke Middle School in 1973, with an addition in 1993
- Sarah Noble Intermediate School opened in 1963 and was renovated in 2001
- Hill & Plain Elementary School opened in 1967 and had an addition in 1993
- Northville Elementary School opened in 1981 and had an addition in 1992

Annual contractual obligations include: fire equipment inspections/repairs, sprinklers, pumps, extinguishers, hydrants, devices and panels. The 6 elevators and 3 lifts. 12 boilers, generators, CoGen system and cameras. Other items include bleachers, HVAC automated building management systems, alarm monitoring and an integrated pest management plan. All contractual agreements are about \$250,000 a year and they are mandated. A typical increase is 3-5% annually.

Mr. Cunningham stated, within the budget they will be asking for the addition of a solar preventative maintenance contract to ensure long-term efficiency. Some inhouse projects include being able to control the HVAC and air handling units so it is based on need and not running 100% at all times. Facilities services over 50 air handler units, over 3000 unit ventilators, three dozen pumps, nearly 50 variable frequency drives, dozens of hot water heaters and over 1000 doors. Each door has to be fire and ADA compliant

<p>and has to be able to lock. When compared to a traditional 2,000 square foot home, the district is about 375 houses. The drivers for the budget include increases in utilities, salaries and preventative maintenance contracts.</p> <p>Mr. O'Brien asked about the solar preventative maintenance of \$9,000 per year. Mr. Cunningham stated it will be approximately that with 3-5% escalators built in for each year after.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked about the annual utility increase and asked what was being budgeted. Mr. Giovannone stated it is different amounts for different services. The electricity combined is 6.5% but the escalators depend on the type of service. The bond payment for ESG is due annually, based on prior year fund balance. When the auditors are complete in January, then the payment for ESG will be carved out. There are 18 years left. Mrs. Faulenbach stated she agrees they should plan for the 3rd party maintenance, but it was something that was not discussed or brought up by ESG, and it is a cost that adds up. Mr. Giovannone stated they have received their first summary report from ESG and NV5. It will be reviewed in the next Facilities committee meeting.</p> <p>Mr. Barile asked if the solar panels are maxed out on the roofs. Mr. Cunningham stated it depends on the amount of sun that is on the roof. Mr. Barile asked if there are plans to add solar to the other schools. Mr. Cunningham stated that is a decision on the town side since they are town buildings. Mr. Barile asked if a Tesla wall was looked into so they could store the energy. Mr. Cunningham stated they have not but there is a meeting next week about possibly storing energy in a bank of batteries.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach asked about the overall budget increase. Mr. Giovannone stated custodial is 1.5%, maintenance is 2.82% and there are no staffing changes. It is a \$136,000 increase. \$60,000 is tied to utilities, which are fixed costs, and \$9,000 is for solar.</p> <p><u>Human Resources:</u></p>	
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	<p>Mr. Giovannone stated the Superintendent’s proposed budget for this area represents an increase of 17.35% and includes 1.0 FTE Human Resources Director, 1.0 FTE Admin Secretary for Human Resources, 0.5 FTE Admin Secretary for Human Resources and 0.5 FTE Human Resources Benefits Specialist.</p> <p>The line for substitutes requires a 5.2% increase and is the main driver for the increase. The salary line increase reflects the change in projected salary for the current vacant Human Resources Director position. This increase is aligned to the administrator bargaining unit schedule. Professional Services increases are for ongoing Frontline and AESOP programs.</p> <p>Mr. McCauley asked if the teachers are offered incentives to take less days. Dr. Parlato stated there are no incentives in the contract.</p> <p>Mrs. Herring asked, on an average day, how many positions are not filled with a substitute, where other staff have to cover. Dr. Parlato stated she would get that number for Mrs. Herring.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney noted, many of the instances where a substitute is needed is because of meetings. Dr. Parlato added that with the paid sick leave, people can take time in 1 hour increments in the first 40 hours. Mrs. McInerney asked if the district raised the sub rate last year. Dr. Parlato stated yes. Mr. Giovannone stated the bill rate for the full day is \$184. The pay rate is \$141. ESS is the processor. Mrs. McInerney asked how it works out if you call for a ½ day sub, and you only need them for an hour. Dr. Parlato stated they still utilize the sub for the full time.</p>	
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Opportunity for the Public to be heard</b>          There was none.</p>	<p><b>Opportunity for the Public to be heard</b></p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Recessed to Wednesday January 21, 2026</b>          The budget hearing meeting of the New Milford Board of Education was called to recess at 7:40p.m. by Mrs. Leslie Sarich, Chairperson.</p>	<p><b>Recessed to Wednesday January 21, 2026</b>  <b>The meeting recessed at 7:40pm.</b></p>

**New Milford Board of Education  
 Budget Hearings & Adoption of Motions and Minutes  
 January 13, 14, 20 & 21 2026  
 Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

<b>Present:</b>	Mrs. Sarich, Chairperson Mr. Eric Hansell Mrs. Sarah Herring Mrs. Tammy McInerney Mr. Brian McCauley Mrs. Wendy Faulenbach Mr. Tom O'Brien Mr. Dean Barile Mr. Joseph Failla
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<b>Also Present:</b>	Dr. Janet Parlato, Superintendent of Schools Ms. Holly Hollander, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Mr. Anthony Giovannone, Director of Fiscal Services and Operations Dr. Kimberly Culkin, Director of Pupil Personnel and Special Services Mr. Matthew Cunningham, Facilities Director Mr. Jeffrey Turner, Technology Director
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<b>1.</b>	<b>Call to Order</b> <b>Pledge of Allegiance</b> The budget hearing meeting of the New Milford Board of Education was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Mrs. Leslie Sarich, Chairperson. The Pledge of Allegiance immediately followed the call to order to resume the meeting.	<b>Call to Order</b> <b>Pledge of Allegiance</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Public Comment</b>	<b>Public Comment</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Discussion of the Superintendent's Proposed 2026-2027 Budget including, but not limited to, wrap-up issues and questions</b>	<b>Discussion of the Superintendent's Proposed 2026-2027 Budget including, but not limited to, wrap-up issues and questions</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Vote on Adoption of the 2026-2027 Board of Education Budget</b>  Mr. McCauley stated this is a very reasonable budget put forward and will support it. Mrs. Sarich agreed.  Mrs. Faulenbach stated she anticipated a higher increase. Everything has been well done. It is also the largest insurance increase since being on the board. With salary fluctuations and looking at current positions, there are two factors: rising costs and enrollment. The reduction of 6.5 positions will have a reduction amount of \$480,000 and \$130,000 for benefits. All of this thought was done prior to sending	<b>Vote on Adoption of the 2026-2027 Board of Education Budget</b>

	<p>it to the BOE. Mrs. Faulenbach stated she will support the budget.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney stated she will support the budget but is concerned with the cut of a 1.0 special education teacher and not hiring 6.0 paraprofessionals in the kindergarten classes. Mrs. McInerney stated she hopes the Superintendent will monitor it and if something creatively can be done to support the teachers, Mrs. McInerney stated she is confident the Superintendent will do it.</p> <p>Mr. Barile thanked Dr. Parlato for all the time and effort put into the budget. He will support the budget and believes Dr. Parlato is capable of turning this ship around. Mr. Barile stated he did want to dive deeper, but trusts Dr. Parlato that they are moving in the right direction.</p> <p>Mr. Failla stated he is supporting the budget, but does not believe students should pay the parking fees. That can be addressed later in the year.</p> <p>Mrs. Herring stated she will support the budget. She does not like to see teachers cut but the numbers are reasonable. Hopefully with staff that are retiring, it will make it possible that no one loses their job. Mrs. Herring stated she trusts Dr. Parlato to keep an eye on things.</p> <p><i>Mrs. Sarich moved for the Board of Education to adopt the 2026-2027 budget in the amount of \$78,773,658, reflecting a 3.20% increase. Seconded by Mr. McCauley. Motion passed unanimously.</i></p>	<p>Motion made and passed unanimously for the Board of Education to adopt the 2026-2027 budget in the amount of \$78,773,658, reflecting a 3.20% increase.</p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Discussion and Possible Action:</b></p> <p><b>A. Monthly Reports</b></p> <p><i>Mrs. McInerney moved to approve the monthly reports: Budget Position, Budget Transfer Request and Purchase Resolution D-802, seconded by Mr. Barile. Motion passed unanimously.</i></p> <p><b>B. Bid Award for Central Office A&amp;E</b></p>	<p><b>Discussion and possible action</b></p> <p><b>A. Monthly Reports</b></p> <p>Motion made and passed unanimously to approve the monthly reports: Budget Position, Budget Transfer Request and Purchase Resolution D-802.</p> <p><b>B. Bid Award for Central Office A&amp;E</b></p>

	<p><i>Mr. Hansell moved to approve the Bid Award for Central Office A&amp;E, seconded by Mrs. Sarich. Motion passed unanimously.</i></p> <p><b>C. Approval of Educational Specifications for the Northville Roof Project</b></p> <p>Mr. Failla asked who would oversee the project. Mr. Cunningham stated it is MBC’s project. When they go to bid on A&amp;E, they decide the direction. Mr. Failla stated, prior projects that had a Clerk of the Works ran more smoothly. Mr. Failla stated he would recommend MBC hiring a Clerk of the Works.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato stated the administration stated they believe a Clerk of the Works is the way to go.</p> <p>Mr. O’Brien stated he has attended every MBC meeting and wanted to express his appreciation to Mr. Cunningham for drafting 3 different options for the project. He provided plenty of information on how to supervise the project.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato provided details for how the specifications need to be documented, approved by the BOE and uploaded to the grant portal.</p> <p><i>Mr. Hansell moved to approve the Educational Specifications for the Northville Roof Project, seconded by Mr. O’Brien. Motion passed unanimously.</i></p>	<p>Motion made and passed unanimously to approve the Bid Award for Central Office A&amp;E.</p> <p><b>C. Approval of Educational Specifications for the Northville Roof Project</b></p> <p>Motion made and passed unanimously to approve the Educational Specifications for the Northville Roof Project.</p>
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Adjourn</b></p> <p><i>Mr. O’Brien moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:42 pm, seconded by Mr. McCauley and passed unanimously.</i></p>	<p><b>6. Adjourn</b></p> <p>Motion made and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 6:42 p.m.</p>

Respectfully submitted:



Mrs. Sarah Herring  
 Secretary  
 New Milford Board of Education