

NEW MILFORD, CT

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**New Milford Board of Education
 Special Meeting Minutes
 August 6, 2020
 New Milford High School Library Media Center**

Present:	Mrs. Angela C. Chastain Mr. Joseph Failla Mrs. Wendy Faulenbach Mr. Pete Helmus Mr. Brian McCauley (arrived at 6:45 p.m.) Mrs. Tammy McInerney Mrs. Eileen P. Monaghan (arrived at 6:32 p.m.) Mrs. Cynthia Nabozny Mrs. Olga I. Rella
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Also Present:	Dr. Paul Smotas, Interim Superintendent Ms. Ellamae Baldelli, Director of Human Resources Mrs. Laura Olson, Director of Pupil Personnel and Special Services Mr. Brandon Rush, Director of Technology
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1.	Call to Order The special meeting of the New Milford Board of Education was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Mrs. Chastain.	Call to Order
2.	Public Comment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Megan Byrd said she hoped the district calendar would be adjusted to have students start after Labor Day to give more time to prepare for the fall reopening. She said she hopes the district will start on a hybrid schedule to allow for a slower reopening. She is concerned that parents have not heard details of what the remote learning option will look like. 	Public Comment
3.	Discussion and Possible Action <p>A. New Milford Public Schools 2020-21 School Calendar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs. Chastain welcomed Dr. Smotas to his first meeting since beginning as Interim Superintendent. 	Discussion and Possible Action
		A. New Milford Public Schools 2020-21 School Calendar

- Dr. Smotas said he started on Monday and has been reviewing the plan for reopening. While he thinks it is a well written plan, there is still much to be fleshed out. He would also like time to address the concerns that have been emailed to him. He is suggesting that the calendar be revised and the student start date pushed back to September 8, 2020. That will give the district about four weeks to work on revising the plan to “get all our ducks in order”. Starting Monday morning, he will be meeting with the administrative team and program directors to go over the plan page by page, with the idea of taking in feedback received from the Board, parents and staff.
- Regarding staff, the convocation date of August 28 will stay the same. The following full week (5 days) will be devoted to training and opening of schools. Dr. Smotas said these days will be critical to addressing safety and health concerns raised by staff and parents.
- Dr. Smotas said that today he met with Jeff Woods of All-Star Transportation, Jason O’Connor from the Youth Agency, and the Mayor. He and the Mayor will be meeting with the Police Chief next week regarding traffic concerns with reopening. He also spoke with the NM CEA union president today and met with the Director of Food Services regarding delivery of food. He is meeting with Mike Crespan, the Town of New Milford Health Director, tomorrow.
- Dr. Smotas said the administrative team will meet every day over the next two weeks to review, revise and refine the plan. He hopes to begin area specific zoom meetings by August 24 to answer questions and inform parents and staff. Areas will include Student Services and Instruction, Food Services and Facilities, Human Resources and Staffing, and Extracurricular Activities.
- Mrs. McInerney said she liked the idea of the area specific meetings but is concerned they are late for parent decision making. Dr. Smotas

said they will schedule them earlier if they are able, but that they are at a critical juncture with the plan and he doesn't want to rush. He said he would like to see what other districts are doing too. He called this the most important decision he has ever made as a superintendent.

- Mrs. McNerney requested two times a week parent communications regarding progress. Dr. Smotas said that as concrete adjustments are made, he will share them.
- Mrs. Faulenbach said she supports the request to revise the calendar as it will provide needed time for planning and training. She said the community needs to be aware that plans remain fluid; there will likely be changes.
- Mrs. Rella said she also supports the change. She said she is concerned for working parents that need to arrange day care. Dr. Smotas said the plan model is the next agenda topic.
- Mrs. Chastain asked what the plan is for the four days resulting from the change. Dr. Smotas said they will be added to the end of the calendar year.

Mrs. Rella made a motion that the Board approve the proposed New Milford Public Schools 2020-21 School Calendar as presented, with a student start date of September 8, 2020.

Seconded by Mrs. Faulenbach.

The motion passed unanimously.

B. Model for Reopening 2020-21

- Dr. Smotas said the Reopening Plan provides for three options. He struggles with the full opening idea. He said it is difficult without knowing the real impact of the virus, since there are so many different societal views about it. He said in talking to peers in surrounding districts and around the state, over 90% are planning to use the hybrid model. He feels

Motion made and passed unanimously that the Board approve the proposed New Milford Public Schools 2020-21 School Calendar as presented, with a student start date of September 8, 2020.

B. Model for Reopening 2020-21

remote learning has resulted in too much lost instruction.

- Dr. Smotas said he believes the best alternative is the hybrid model for the entire district. He said that specific plan will be reviewed over the next two weeks and some tweaking may occur. By State mandate the Board of Education does not vote on this; it is solely the Superintendent's decision. He wanted to present his final recommendation to all for transparency purposes.
- Mr. Helmus said he is not a big fan of the hybrid model. He asked what scientific data points support it. He hears a lot that people are fearful, but does not see data presented to support their concerns.
- Mr. McCauley said he is not thrilled with the hybrid model, and thinks it will be a hardship for families but with the state limiting gatherings to 25, he doesn't think there is a choice.
- Mr. Failla said the data available changes daily and there are opinions on all sides. He appreciates the work Dr. Smotas has already done in just four days. He supports Dr. Smotas's recommendations regarding the calendar and reopening.
- Mrs. McInerney agreed, saying the hybrid model makes class sizes smaller and helps with protocols for busing too. She is glad the district is starting slowly.
- Mr. McCauley said the district does have students with IEP goals who need five days and he hopes there is programming there for them.
- Mrs. Olson said there are no waivers regarding IDEA. She said special education students are viewed as general education students first and many are successful in a hybrid model. For those who aren't, they will be discussing "priority access".
- Mrs. Rella said she thinks this is a good plan, especially with things changing every day.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mrs. Monaghan said she appreciates the work so far and said she would like to see the Wednesday of the hybrid model fleshed out.• Dr. Smotas said this is a journey, and everything is on the table. The ultimate goal is to do whatever is best for students as safely as possible.	
4.	Adjourn Mrs. Rella moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:06 p.m., seconded by Mrs. Monaghan and passed unanimously.	Adjourn Motion made and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:



Wendy Faulenbach
Secretary
New Milford Board of Education

