

NEW MILFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION  
New Milford Public Schools  
50 East Street  
New Milford, Connecticut 06776

BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL MEETING NOTICE

DATE: September 24, 2013  
TIME: 7:00 P.M.  
PLACE: Sarah Noble Intermediate School – Library Media Center

AGENDA

New Milford Public Schools Mission Statement

The mission of the New Milford Public Schools, a collaborative partnership of students, educators, family, and community, is to prepare each and every student to compete and excel in an ever-changing world, embrace challenges with vigor, respect and appreciate the worth of every human being, and contribute to society by providing effective instruction and dynamic curriculum, offering a wide range of valuable experiences, and inspiring students to pursue their dreams and aspirations.

1. CALL TO ORDER

A. Pledge of Allegiance

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Members of the School Facility and Utilization Study Committee will present information regarding the possible closing of a school due to declining enrollment.

3. PUBLIC HEARING

The Board will hold a Public Hearing at which Public Participation regarding the Summary of Findings is welcomed. The Board will not permit any expression of personal complaints or defamatory comments about Board of Education personnel and students, nor against any person connected with the New Milford Public School System.

4. ADJOURN

GEORGE D. BUSKBEK  
TOWNS CLERK

2013 SEP 19 P 2:07

NEW MILFORD, CT

**New Milford Board of Education  
 Special Meeting Minutes  
 September 24, 2013  
 Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

GEORGE P. DUNN  
 JOHN OLENIK  
 2013 SEP 26 P 1:15  
 NEW MILFORD, CT

Present:	Mrs. Wendy Faulenbach, Chairperson Mrs. Angela C. Chastain Mr. David A. Lawson Mr. Thomas McSherry Mrs. Lynette Celli Rigdon Mr. David R. Shaffer Mrs. Daniele Shook Mr. John W. Spatola Mr. William Wellman
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Also Present:	Dr. JeanAnn C. Paddyfote, Superintendent of Schools Mr. Joshua Smith, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Ms. Ellamae Baldelli, Director of Human Resources Mr. Gregg Miller, Director of Fiscal Services Mr. John Calhoun, Facilities Manager Mr. Joseph Olenik, Assistant Facilities Manager Mrs. Roberta Pratt, Director of Technology Mrs. Laura Olson, Director of Pupil Personnel and Special Services
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<b>1.</b>	<b>Call to Order</b> <b>A. Pledge of Allegiance</b> The special meeting of the New Milford Board of Education was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mrs. Faulenbach. The Pledge of Allegiance immediately followed the call to order.	<b>Call to Order</b> <b>A. Pledge of Allegiance</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Summary of Findings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mrs. Faulenbach said that members of the School Facility and Utilization Study Committee would present information this evening regarding the possible closing of a school due to declining enrollment. This would be followed by public feedback.</li> <li>• Dr. Paddyfote said the Committee was made up of 28 members, representing a cross section of the school and town community. The Committee met over an eight month period to review enrollment and utilization projections and presented their recommendations to the Board of Education in June. Four members will speak this evening as well as Mr. Rich Dufour</li> </ul>	<b>Summary of Findings</b>

of All-Star Transportation.

- Dr. Tomasello said the School Facility and Utilization Study Committee had three charges: to plan for facility utilization in support of the schools' mission; to determine efficiency of use and allocation of resources; and to identify alternatives to current facility use. He said that over the course of their extensive study one finding was clear: enrollment is declining with a loss of 12% from peak and an expected further decline for the next ten years.
- Mrs. Romaniello said she is the town-wide PTO president, a parent with children in schools from Sarah Noble to the High School, and a Committee member. She detailed the projected decline in enrollment. An 11.4% decline is expected over the next five years with a more pronounced loss in enrollment at Northville and Pettibone. By 2017-2018, a 9.8% decline is projected at 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grades, a 5.5% decline at 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, and a 9.5% decline at 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades.
- Mrs. Falder, a Committee member and mother of three children in New Milford schools, described the five alternatives explored by the Committee and detailed the pros and cons of each one. She said that after reviewing all the alternatives, the Committee recommended Scenario B which recommends closing John Pettibone School, establishing two PK-2<sup>nd</sup> grade schools at Hill and Plain and Northville, moving 3<sup>rd</sup> grade up to Sarah Noble, moving 6<sup>th</sup> grade up to Schaghticoke, and redistricting to balance the enrollment at the two remaining elementary schools.
- Mr. Mack, a Committee member, fourth grade teacher at Sarah Noble and New Milford resident detailed the enrollment projections under Scenario B. They are highest in the next few years then continue to decline steadily. Enrollment eventually levels off and is served using two elementaries. Under Scenario B in 2015-2016, all schools still have excess in classroom usage with other necessary rooms for art, music, computer, guidance, psychology,

speech etc. still in place.

- Mrs. Falder talked about the budgetary impact of Scenario B. She said as a current member of the Town Council and a former member of the Board of Finance, she knows money is tight for many people in town and the theme is always do more with less. She said the increase in mil rates is not favorable at this time. Under Scenario B there will be an annual savings of \$635,000 from non-instructional staff savings. There will be additional savings in utilities not used and upgrades not needing to be done if John Pettibone is closed. She said the school will need a new roof and has safety issues with most of its doors opening to the exterior. Mrs. Falder showed that teacher/student ratios remained small with this Scenario with projections based on a maximum class size of 18:1 at the elementary level and 22:1 at Sarah Noble and Schaghticoke. She said if an unexpected population boom comes it can be accommodated with this scenario.
- Mrs. Romaniello said the redistricting would divide the Pettibone district between Hill and Plain and Northville at Bennitt/Elm Streets and Malletts Lane. In general redistricting follows the river, trying to avoid crossing over the river and bridge where it can.
- Mr. Rich Dufour said he has been at All-Star Transportation since 1993. He said in the last ten years, they have cut six buses due to declining enrollment. Under Scenario B he believes four additional buses and possibly a special education van will be needed for the redistricting. Some bus routes that are combined now will need to be split. This also keeps ride time down to a 50 minute average.
- Dr. Tomasello summarized the annual cost savings of going to five schools. He said 335 students will be redistricted based on present numbers. The change will allow for equitable and even class sizes. The ultimate goal will improve the utilization of Hill and Plain, Northville and Sarah Noble.

<p>3.</p>	<p><b>Public Hearing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mrs. Faulenbach thanked the Committee members for their presentation and hard work. She said the public session would begin. She asked speakers to identify themselves by name and address and to try to limit their comments to five minutes so that all speakers would have an opportunity to be heard. The format for the evening was for speakers to comment on the findings so that the Board could solicit feedback. Questions would be noted so that answers could be gathered and addressed on the district website. An additional hearing will be planned for October.</li><li>• Carol Allison, a New Milford resident and 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Sarah Noble, advocated for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade to remain at Sarah Noble. She said research shows that 6<sup>th</sup> graders in an elementary environment do better academically and behaviorally versus 6<sup>th</sup> graders in a middle school environment.</li><li>• Jill Olejniczak said she attended Schaghticoke as a child and is the mother of a 2<sup>nd</sup> grader. She advocated keeping the 6<sup>th</sup> grade out of the middle school. She also had questions: How many people will lose jobs if John Pettibone closes? How much will the town pay in unemployment? What if the enrollment projections are wrong?</li><li>• Dayna Gartland, mother of two children in New Milford schools, agreed with the 6<sup>th</sup> grade assessment and is also concerned about 3<sup>rd</sup> graders at Sarah Noble since it is such a large school. She was also concerned about what happens if the enrollment projections are incorrect.</li><li>• Joseph Knight is concerned with losing the school property, possibly seeing it sold for other use, then needing to build a new school in the future.</li><li>• Amy Davis, parent of children age one year through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, agreed with the sentiment opposing 6<sup>th</sup> grade at Schaghticoke. She said that the redistricting map appears to split</li></ul>	<p><b>Public Hearing</b></p>
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Malletts Lane and asked if that meant that children on that street might attend different elementary schools.

- Adrienne Aurichio said she is a ten year resident of New Milford. She asked what happens in 2020 when the population levels off or increases. She says that Danbury is growing and New Milford will see spillover from that. Will the money saved from closing a school now pay for a new school if it is needed then?
- Erika Carlson, New Milford parent and 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in Sherman, asked what the plans are for the money that will be saved by closing the school. She said New Milford test scores are low and asked how scores can be increased with larger class sizes. She said technology is not where it should be and perhaps staff could be added there. She said 6<sup>th</sup> grade is a huge transition year and has concerns about the move. She also had concerns about the enrollment projections.
- Angela Herdter, 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, advocated keeping the 6<sup>th</sup> grade out of Schaghticoke. She said she taught at Schaghticoke during the last transition and the push then was to return the 6<sup>th</sup> grade to Sarah Noble to keep them with younger students. She says the students have one to one contact at Sarah Noble and she is afraid that will get lost at Schaghticoke.
- Dorothy Rigdon said she has grandchildren in New Milford schools and agrees with keeping the 6<sup>th</sup> grade out of Schaghticoke. She is also very concerned about losing the John Pettibone property.
- Roseann Petrusca said she wants to hear from the Board of Education where they stand on this issue.
- Diane Knight, resident since 1998, says she questions placing the 6<sup>th</sup> grade with older children. She wanted to know if the enrollment projections take into account national policies regarding immigration.
- Jerry English said the question of the timing of the close has not been answered yet and there is a significant difference between 2014-2015 and

2015-2016.

- Mrs. Faulenbach said there was no decision on the timing yet as the Board was still gathering input.
- Mr. McSherry said the decision to close a school has not been made yet, never mind what year.
- David Littlefield said that \$635,000 is not really a significant savings in the overall budget. He asked when expenses were added back in if the savings would ultimately be just a few hundred thousand dollars and if that was worth making such a big decision about a school's future.
- Mrs. Faulenbach said that should the Board decide to close the school the property goes back to the town to determine future use.
- Jenna Mancini said she is a senior at New Milford High School. She advocated against sending the 6<sup>th</sup> grade to Schaghticoke.
- Eunice Crowley spoke against closing a school. She said schools are investments in the future.
- Jason Reynolds, father of three children including one 1<sup>st</sup> grader, said he moved to New Milford due to the growth in the community and the lower ratio of students to teachers and he doesn't want to lose that. He doesn't think building inefficiencies warrant closing the school. He questions the validity of the enrollment statistics.
- Joanna Desmaris says she taught in Ridgefield where they closed a school and had to reopen it. She says the district should think long and hard before making this decision.
- Marianne Ruedemann, mother of a John Pettibone student, said she agreed with keeping 6<sup>th</sup> grade out of the middle school. She said she wanted to keep smaller classes and the country feel of New Milford.
- Sarah Donahue thanked the Committee for its work. She thinks the 6<sup>th</sup> grade at the middle school would be a difficult mix. She also has concerns about losing a school facility and then needing the site down the road.
- Sharon Kaufman said the town should be planning for success rather than failure and

	<p>should be promoting the education offered in New Milford through the economic development office.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allison Sidel wants more information about the statistical analysis used for enrollment projections. She said there can be a wide age span within a grade and the Board should keep that in mind when making decisions about grade configurations within schools.</li> <li>• Mrs. Faulenbach asked if there was anyone else who wished to speak during the public hearing and seeing none closed that portion of the meeting at 8:14 p.m.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Adjourn</b></p> <p><b>Mr. McSherry moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m., seconded by Mrs. Celli Rigdon and passed unanimously.</b></p>	<p><b>Adjourn</b></p> <p><b>Motion made and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m.</b></p>

Respectfully submitted:



Daniele Shook  
 Secretary  
 New Milford Board of Education