

APPROVED BY THE BOARD
SAU #44 Northwood
Northwood School Board
Special Public Session
June 18, 2026
6:30 p.m.

School Board Members

Brian Winslow, Chair

Kendra Berry, Vice Chair

Chrissy Vander Hook

Scott Bryer

Kellen Sawyer

Others:

Nate Byrne, Superintendent

Visitors: None

Call to Order:

Mr. Winslow called the June 18, 2026 meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Roll call: Brian Winslow, Chrissy Vander Hook, Kendra Berry, Kellen Sawyer, Scott Bryer

Pledge of Allegiance: Mr. Robert led the Pledge of Allegiance.

As last night's meeting was adjourned early to attend Graduation, this is a special public session to continue discussion of HB 1610 and HB 1300, as well as SY26 Surplus Spending consideration.

Mr. Byrne began discussion with an explanation of HB 1610, referencing Fund Balance Retention. Northwood passed a warrant article in 2013 allowing the School Board to establish this fund until vote to rescind. If the bill currently sitting on the Governor's desk is signed, this fund balance will be eliminated with the balance returned to offset taxes. The town would have to vote to re-establish the fund next March.

Also discussed, HB 1300, which, also waiting for signature, would mandate a question on the November ballot for every city and town to establish a local tax cap for School budgets. This would require a 3/5 majority for passage.

There are several problems with HB 1300 such as:

There is no “Carve-out” for Special Education instruction, services and administration.

Many sending school districts have little to no control over tuition rates set by receiving high schools.

There is no accounting for long-term contractual costs, such as Teacher and Support Staff

contracts. These are all examples of costs over which the School District has no control, as these examples, if not Federally or State mandated, are necessary to provide an education.

If this bill is signed by the Governor, and passes in November, regular education funds would need to cover additional Special Education, tuition and related costs, thus affecting regular ed students.

Additionally, questions arise pertaining to SB2. As an SB2 town, the Board develops both a proposed budget, as well as a Default budget (same as previous year with adjustments due to removal of one-time expenses or additions due to contractual obligations). If, while cutting expenses to remain under the tax cap, what happens if the default budget is higher? What is the School Board allowed to do? There is no mention of this in the proposed HB 1300.

Mr. Byrne asked Board permission to read his response (“opinion based on facts”) to the bill. The Board agreed. Note: His full letter can be heard on the Northwood School Livestream for 6/18/26 meeting! Discussion continued.

Mr. Winslow spoke to now realizing the cap would be based on current tax rate. As the District has averaged a \$400,000 return for several years to reduce taxes, our rate is lower than many other districts. The Board budgets for known expenses, some of which are also out of their control, such as High School tuition and Special Ed costs. (Students move into and out of district and/or Special Education needs change, resulting in potential savings which have been returned to reduce the tax rate). This past practice could hurt us if the bill is signed.

Mr. Bryer disagreed with one of Mr. Byrne’s comments regarding local control. He feels local control is at the ballot box here in Northwood, and the voters have the final say. He has supported each budget and contract presented to voters during his time on the Board, but will vote against using any surplus funds to be discussed later in the meeting. Mr. Byrne clarified his comments in that the Tax Cap formula was developed by the State, not developed locally, his issue is with how it has been defined.

Ms. Vander Hook asked to clarify HB1610. Mr. Byrne stated that if signed, funds currently in the retention fund along with the amount previously considered to be added this year would be returned to the town to reduce taxes. It doesn’t matter that Northwood approved this fund in 2013, it would be gone. The Town can reaffirm the fund each year, but funds would not be available again until 2028.

At the Board’s direction, Mr. Byrne presented a list of items and estimated cost for surplus spending consideration. Discussion continued.

Motion: Mr. Winslow made the motion to approve \$346,243 from surplus to cover the elevator project and pre-payment of the second energy lease payment. Ms. Berry seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Mr. Winslow – Yes; Ms. Vander Hook – Yes; Ms. Berry – Yes; Mr. Sawyer – Yes; Mr. Bryer – No. Vote 4-1 – Yes. Motion approved.

Discussion continued regarding other items under consideration. Items totaling \$156,698.78 were discussed. Mr. Winslow suggested coming to a consensus of amount to return to the town. Discussion continued.

Milk Cooler	2,715.00	
Air Quality Testing	2,788.00	
Handicap Bathroom Stall	3,500.00	
Gymnasium Audio Upgrade/Repair	2,761.97	
Grade 3&4 Chairs replacement	2,525.81	
ELA Materials	5,000.00	Align State 2027-28 Science of Reading mandate
Interactive Displays replacement	7,800.00	3 aging whiteboard removed from budget
Outdoor Lighting	5,870.00	Replace outdated halogen lighting with more efficient LED & Install lights near lower BB courts
Total	<u>\$32,960.78</u>	

Motion: Mr. Winslow made the motion to spend \$32,960.78 from surplus to cover the cost of the items listed above. Ms. Vander Hook seconded the motion. Roll Call: Mr. Winslow – Yes; Ms. Berry – Yes; Ms. Vander Hook – Yes; Mr. Bryer – Yes; Mr. Sawyer – Yes. Vote 5-0 – Yes. Motion approved.

Closing Public Comment:

Ms. Dole spoke to the Board congratulating most of the Board for the decisions made tonight. I want to remind people that the voters don't get upset because you haven't returned a bunch of money, they get upset when you do return a bunch of money and you didn't do some of the things you could have done, so next year you're behind the eight-ball. We all know the reason for the surplus is the Board plans for what you need, but numbers fluctuate; students move in, move out, things change. It is irresponsible in my mind to not utilize some of those funds that voters have already approved for student needs and return it to reduce the tax rate to make people happy. They'll only be happy for a short time, but they won't stay happy once they realize you didn't plan ahead, use the funds you had, and the budget goes up the next year. As for all of these bills, I really wish the people in Concord who are voting on these bills, that they would consider all the pros and cons before they vote and it goes to the Governor.

Mr. Winslow stated he did not like having to hold this meeting tonight. He found himself between the two positions and trying to strike a balance. Difficult to read the tea leaves between the Governor and town residents, as well as a November election. He thanked Mr. Byrne and fellow Board members for the information provided and the respectful conversation tonight.

Ms. Vander Hook added her thanks to all for the conversation this evening.

Mr. Bryer added that he has the greatest respect for everyone present, and these were tough decisions. He also thanked everyone for tonight.

116 Mr. Byrne apologized for putting the Board in this difficult position tonight, but his role is to
117 inform the Board of the impact of any potential outcomes that could take place. He believes
118 it's his responsibility to inform those not following potential legislation to understand the
119 impact if the legislation is passed.

120 ***Motion: Mr. Winslow made the motion to adjourn: Ms. Vander Hook seconded the motion.***
121 ***Roll Call: Mr. Winslow – Yes; Ms. Vander Hook – Yes; Ms. Berry – Yes; Mr. Sawyer – Yes; Mr.***
122 ***Bryer – Yes. Vote 5-0 – Yes. Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.***

123 Respectfully Submitted,

124 Ginger Dole

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