

APPROVED BY THE PITTSFIELD SCHOOL BOARD

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT #51
PITTSFIELD SCHOOL BOARD**

MINUTES

Pittsfield School Board Meeting
January 07, 2021
Pittsfield Middle High School

I. CALL TO ORDER

Members Present: Bea Douglas, Chairperson
 Heidi Asdot, Vice Chairperson
 Jessica Drouin
 Adam Gauthier
 Ted Mitchell via Zoom

Others Present: John Graziano, Interim Superintendent of Schools
 Jessica Bickford, Director of Student Services
 Melissa Brown, PMHS Assistant Principal
 Derek Hamilton, PMHS Principal
 Danielle Harvey, PES Principal
 Kathy LeMay, PES Assistant Principal
 Members of the Public

Ms. Douglas called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

II. AGENDA REVIEW

The following items were added to the agenda:

- Building Use (Mr. Gauthier)
- Home-School 2020-2021 Count (Ms. Brown)
- 19-20 Cost Survey (Ms. Bickford)
- FY Special Education Aid (Ms. Bickford)

III. ACTION ON AMENDED AGENDA

On a motion made by Ms. Asdot and seconded by Mr. Gauthier, the Board voted unanimously to approve the agenda as amended.

IV. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. Mitchell and seconded by Mr. Gauthier to approve the minutes of the public meeting on December 3, 2021 as written. The motion was passed unanimously to approve the minutes.

V. PUBLIC INPUT

Jesse McGlashling read a statement requesting that winter athletics, given the precautions that are being taken, be allowed to continue.

Becky Burke introduced herself to the Board as she has assumed a role on the High School Tuition Committee.

Justin Clough reiterated support for the continuation of winter sports. He commented on how important sports are for students.

Jesse McGlashling spoke in support of winter sports continuing, given the precautions being taken to keep students safe.

Tammy Beliveau stated her concern for the mental health of children while they are engaged in remote learning during the pandemic.

Jah Gordon pleaded with the Board to continue allowing students to play basketball, commenting on how important it is to him and his friends. He assured the Board that precautions would be in place to keep athletes safe.

Tracy Roode stated that it is important for her son to continue to play basketball and sees the precautions as sufficient to keep students safe.

Ben Marcotte stated his opinion on how important playing basketball is to him and his peers.

Ryan Stephens stated that he felt it was important to continue playing basketball; he spoke of the importance of the sport in his life.

VI. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Site Council faculty advisor Dan Courtney introduced Dalton Swenson. Mr. Swenson explained the community service requirement, which is being considered by the Site Council. The proposal will decrease the community service hour requirement by 30 hours due to the pandemic. The Site Council passed this proposal with 80% majority.

A motion was made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Ms. Drouin to approve the proposal to decrease community service. Mr. Gauthier stated that he is not in favor of decreasing the requirement, but would be willing to make accommodations for students with underlying health conditions. Ms. Douglas stated that there are restrictions on what

activities are approved. Mr. Gauthier suggested tabling the topic until the Board can look at the guidelines and reconsider the vote at the next meeting. The Board agreed to do so.

Mr. Courtney provided accolades to Dalton Swenson for his student leadership of Site Council.

VII. PES PRINCIPAL

A. Attendance

Ms. Harvey reported attendance statistics and assured the Board that the PES administrators are reaching out to families who are not participating in their remote work with offers of support. Ms. Douglas applauded the efforts to reach out to families.

B. COVID Tracking

Ms. Harvey provided statistics on COVID-19 related absences and cases at PES.

C. Homeschool Numbers

According to Ms. Harvey, there are twenty students from PES being homeschooled by their families.

D. First Quarter Academics

Ms. Harvey provided the Board with an academic grading report for each grade level. She reported that there is a greater number of students scoring “one” than usual.

E. Conference Participation

Ms. Harvey provided documentation of conference participation for the fall virtual teacher conferences. Ms. Douglas asked if the attendance at conferences was down because of the access they have to teachers during remote learning. Ms. Harvey answered in the affirmative and said that another reason was parents not returning messages teachers left to make appointments.

F. Red Status

According to Ms. Harvey, there are five PES students in the building during red status. Additionally, some students are allowed in for evaluations with the school psychologist.

G. December Outreach

Ms. Harvey reviewed the ways in which teachers reached out to their students in December, including drive through events, door-to-door delivery of materials, and gifting students with books. She highlighted the efforts of teachers. The Board thanked Ms. Harvey for the extra work involved in the outreach to families during December.

VIII. PMHS PRINCIPAL

A. Building Inspections

According to Mr. Hamilton, the Pittsfield Fire Department will not be conducting the annual building inspections at this time, due to COVID-19.

B. Fall Conference Data

Mr. Hamilton provided the Board with statistics relative to attendance of parents at conferences. The middle school staff offered parent-teacher conferences, while the high school staff offered student-led conferences.

C. Stipend Positions

Mr. Hamilton provided the Board with a list of the clubs and teams. He made note of some activities that have been remote and some that have been postponed due to COVID-19. On a motion made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Ms. Asdot, the Board approved the payment of stipends for all activities.

D. Pandemic Report

Mr. Hamilton provided an update on state and local data regarding COVID-19, including numbers of affected students and staff.

E. Red Status Details

Mr. Hamilton explained the movement from orange to red status beginning on January 4, 2021, with anticipation of pivoting back to orange on January 18, 2021. He explained the implications relative to staffing. According to Mr. Hamilton, the District Leadership Team (DLT) is recommending that the red status be maintained for an additional five weeks. Ms. Douglas expressed her concern about the extension of the red status given the circumstances. Ms. Drouin stated her concern regarding the wellness of students. Ms. Douglas asked Dr. Graziano to weigh in, which he did. Dr. Graziano acknowledged the difficult position the Board is in, but felt that for the safety of staff and students, red status is warranted. He suggested shortening the recommended time if that would make the Board feel more confident in making a decision. Ms. Douglas opened the floor for public comment.

Tracy Roode spoke in favor of moving back to orange status and provided an example of another community who has remained open for hybrid learning.

Ms. Harvey stated that staffing is the most challenging issue. When teachers and students have to move back and forth due to quarantines, it creates a tumultuous situation for students and families. For reasons of consistency and gaining momentum with the curriculum, she feels that the red status is, in the long run, better for students. Ms. Harvey opined that an anticipated spike after the holidays would occur around January 18, 2021, therefore extending the red status would be warranted.

Justin Clough stated that although the primary concern is academics, that peer interactions is also being disadvantaged. He made suggestions for how students may be provided opportunities for peer interactions, such as community service.

Tammy Beliveau expressed her concern for her son's education when the school is in red status.

Kathy LeMay stated that the District Leadership Team (DLT) decided on the February date to make planning by families easier.

Ms. Douglas stated that she thought extending the red status until the end of February is too long. Ms. Asdot and Mr. Gauthier agreed. Ms. Asdot suggested extending the red status until February 8, 2021. The DLT will meet on February 3, 2021 and there will be a Board meeting on February 4, 2021. Ms. Douglas suggested the administration look at similar communities in the area to see how they are faring and sharing that information with DLT.

On a motion made by Ms Asdot and seconded by Mr. Gauthier, the Board approved staying in red status until February 8, 2021 and to revisit the decision at the February 4, 2021 Board meeting.

F. Athletics

Jay Darrah, athletic director, provided data based on responses from other schools on a survey relative to athletics. Approximately 90% of schools are allowing athletics to continue, providing protocols are used and precautions are taken. He stated that high school athletics are in stage two and middle school athletics are in stage one. They will not play any teams not wearing masks. Coaching staff are flexible so can make accommodations if a coach is quarantined. Ms. Asdot stated that she is concerned about the inconsistency between school and athletics, but understands the social-emotional impact of losing athletics. Ms. Douglas also is concerned about the social-emotional impact on students and feels that athletics, when executed with appropriate precautions, can bring some positivity to their lives. Ms. Drouin was undecided and Mr. Mitchell stated he was inclined to

allow the athletic program to try playing. Mr. Gauthier stated that he thinks the older students are having some peer contact with friends and in their jobs.

A motion was made by Mr. Gauthier to pause winter athletics. There was no second.

Mr. Mitchell stated that there are many schools allowing their students to participate in sports, which is why he is leaning toward being in favor of allowing it. Mr. Darrah said that the situation will be constantly monitored and changes will be made, when necessary. Mr. Darrah, when asked by Ms. Drouin, reviewed the procedures that are being used to keep students safe. These procedures are all consistent with Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletics Association (NHIAA) recommendations.

On a motion made by Ms. Douglas with a second by Mr. Mitchell, the Board approved keeping sports open with Ms. Douglas, Ms. Asdot, Ms. Drouin, and Mr. Mitchell voting in the affirmative and Mr. Gauthier voting in opposition of the motion.

IX. DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES

A. 2019-2020 Cost Survey

Ms. Bickford distributed a cost survey giving the Board comparative data on the cost of educating students with disabilities.

B. 2020 Special Education Aid Report

Ms. Bickford distributed the 2020 Special Education Aid report and provided an explanation of the formula for receiving assistance.

C. Special Education Plans During Orange Status

Ms. Bickford provided an explanation of the programs that have been created for students with disabilities when the schools are in orange status.

D. Paraprofessionals

Ms. Bickford provided an update on her quest to fill vacant paraprofessional positions.

E. Medicaid

Ms. Bickford explained the efforts being made to optimize Medicaid reimbursement by the special education team. A mock audit will be conducted to ensure that best practices have successfully been put in place.

X. INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

A. High School Tuition Study Committee

Dr. Graziano explained that the Socio-Economic Sub-Committee has been added to the process. He listed the schools that are willing to accept Pittsfield students. The next meeting is scheduled for January 19, 2021.

B. Good to Great Team

The Good to Great Team has decided to put their process on hiatus during this very stressful time for students and teachers. The next meeting is May 11, 2021.

C. 2021-2022 School District Budget

Dr. Graziano reviewed rules for holding public meetings such as the School District Deliberative Session. Ms. Douglas asked the Board for their opinion on how the meeting should be executed. Discussion ensued regarding the advantages and disadvantages of having the meetings face-to-face. On a motion made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Ms. Asdot, the Board voted unanimously to have the Deliberative Session face-to-face and the public hearing in a hybrid format, allowing both face-to-face and Zoom options, following CDC guidelines and in the gymnasium.

Dr. Graziano distributed proposed warrant articles for the Board's consideration. Mr. Gauthier asked how much is in the capital improvement fund, to which Dr. Graziano responded approximately \$200,000.

The Board reviewed the articles and provided Dr. Graziano feedback. He will revise the proposal and bring it back to the Board at the next meeting.

D. 2021-2022 School District Calendar

Dr. Graziano distributed a draft of the 2021-2022 for the Board's consideration. Mr. Gauthier suggested that the two voting days be made remote learning days to allow the Town to use the school for voting, without disrupting student learning. Ms. Harvey and Mr. Hamilton reminded the Board that this would be dependent on students having one-to-one devices and that the remote learning platforms are funded. Dr. Graziano will continue to work on the calendar and will meet with the Education Association of Pittsfield (EAP).

XI. SCHOOL BOARD

A. Facilities Use

Mr. Gauthier suggested allowing the Town to use the buildings for upcoming Deliberative Sessions and Public Hearings, to which the remaining Board members agreed.

B. Superintendent Search

Ms. Douglas stated that the superintendent search should be initiated, to which the remaining Board members were in agreement.

XII. COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

- A. Budget Committee - Mr. Mitchell
- C. Drake Field & Facilities - Mr. Gauthier
- D. Negotiations – Ms. Asdot and Ms. Douglas
- E. Foss Family Scholarship Foundation – Ms. Drouin

XIII. PUBLIC INPUT

Bob Schiferle provided a summary of the most recent Budget Committee meeting. He reviewed the Budget Committee's expectations of the superintendent. Mr. Schiferle stated that he would like a Board member to be available to speak to the point of the funding shortfall. Mr. Schiferle stated that the Committee is trying to distribute information to ensure the community is well informed. Mr. Mitchell suggested information about the school funding decrease be provided to the community.

Justin Clough congratulated the athletes who spoke to the Board about their opinions relative to the athletic programs.

Danielle Johns-Densky, via the Zoom chatbox, stated that she feels more effective as a teacher when fully remote.

XIV. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for Thursday, January 21, 2021 at 5:30 in the Pittsfield Middle High School Lecture Hall.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by Mr. Mitchell and seconded by Ms. Asdot, the meeting was adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tobi Gray Chassie
Recording Secretary