

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

MINUTES

Pittsfield School Board Meeting
February 4, 2021
Pittsfield Middle High School

I. CALL TO ORDER

Members Present: Bea Douglas, Chairperson (via Zoom)
 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 (some via Zoom)

Vice Chairperson Asdot called the meeting to order at 5:29 p.m.

II. AGENDA REVIEW

The following item was added to the agenda:

- Revolution Basketball Program (Mr. Mitchell)
- Superintendent Search (Ms. Asdot)
- Program of Studies (Ms. Brown)

III. ACTION ON AMENDED AGENDA

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

IV. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Mr. Mitchell to approve the minutes of the public meeting on January 21, 2021. Changes made include on page eight, paragraph eight, change to "...can meet face to face and not socially distance, they should..." and on page ten, paragraph two change to "Ms. Douglas stated that no money is being made from allowing PMHS basketball." The motion was passed unanimously to approve the minutes as amended.

On a motion by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Ms. Drouin, the minutes of the January 26, 2021 non-public meeting were unanimously approved as written.

V. PUBLIC INPUT

Ms. Asdot recognized the number of members of the public and directed people to limit their public input to three minutes each.

Girard LeDuc stated that there was confusion at the Deliberative Session regarding the voting practices. He checked with the Town's attorney and his decision was accurate. He explained that he allowed some people extra time to speak rather than risk upsetting them.

Robert Beliveau asked what the deciding factor for closing the schools to 100 percent remote was. Dr. Graziano stated that the decision was made in the best interest of the safety of the students. Mr. Beliveau then asked what are the factors now to move to hybrid? Dr. Graziano said that again the decision was based on data and maintaining safety of the students. Mr. Beliveau opined that compared to surrounding towns, Pittsfield's numbers look better and it warrants students returning to school. He said that if he had known that Pittsfield would go fully remote, he would have moved his children to other schools. Mr. Beliveau praised his son's teacher, Ms. Brown, for her patience; in spite of her efforts his son is not learning. Mr. Beliveau stated that mental health issues due to students learning remotely are serious; he provided some statistics to make his point. He is concerned that his child is not able to focus on his learning and is worried about his mental health. He added that sports are important to his son.

Tabatha Farmer asked for clarification about staffing during COVID and asked how it has affected decisions made. Ms. Harvey explained that staffing has been determined by the number of available staff and the space available. She explained that when staff have been sick or quarantined, there have not been a sufficient number of substitutes. She further explained that when there are large numbers of students to keep separated, there is not adequate space available. Ms. Farmer made the point that if students were back in school, more parents might step up to substitute teach. Ms. Bickford stated that there are vacant paraprofessional positions, as well as substitute teaching opportunities.

Ms. Douglas asked if it would make sense to have the administration do their presentation before taking further public input. Ms. Asdot paused public input in order for the administration to present information relative to the reopening plan.

VI. SUPERINTENDENT

A. School Status Update

Dr. Graziano introduced the presentation by saying that the administration has taken many factors in consideration as they have navigated decisions relative to school opening during the pandemic.

Ms. Harvey provided background information. She stated that the Pittsfield School Board had extended the school district's red status through Friday, February 5. The red status means that students and staff will be fully remote during this time period. The decision to extend the remote period was primarily based on three reasons. First, the positivity rate of new COVID-19 cases is now higher than 10%, and the total number of cases in Pittsfield had nearly tripled in the six weeks prior to the decision. If they had moved back into orange or yellow status (hybrid), it was likely they would go back and forth between being open and closed. Ms. Harvey said that the administration believed this offered stability, consistency, and safety for students and staff during an unpredictable time. The School Board planned to reassess the school status at its meeting on February 4, 2021.

Ms. Harvey provided the audience with some data regarding the practices of local schools. She explained that a major factor that was considered was the number of shifts that students would need to make between in-person and remote. She showed data relative to the shifting that students have had to make from hybrid and full remote.

Mr. Hamilton provided the following information from the NH Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) dashboard: 1) There has been an average of 393 cases per day over the most recent 7 day period (January 28-February 3); 2) This is a 31% decrease compared to the previous 7 day period; 3) There are 14 new cases in Pittsfield (in the last 14 days); and 4) The antigen and PCR positivity test rate over the last 7 days in Pittsfield is 9.1% (compared to 4.6% state-wide).

Mr. Hamilton explained the DHHS decision matrix. The decision matrix is intended to be a guide for making decisions about how/when to switch school instructional models with metrics schools should consider.

Mr. Hamilton explained criteria used to make the decisions about school opening: 1) Level of community transmission; 2) Level of school impact; and 3) Method of instruction. He said that the factors not considered by DHHS are the number of

students and the size of space available.

Ms. Asdot asked if, when considering space, furniture has been removed. Mr. Hamilton said that since August furniture has been moved into storage units outside the building. It was asked if larger spaces such as the cafeteria are being considered to which Mr. Hamilton answered in the affirmative. Ms. Harvey stated that when the weather was better, outside spaces were used as much as possible.

Molly Goggin asked if there are options available to move kids around according to how many students are in each class. Ms. Harvey said that they are considering the use of space according to the overall needs of the school and that all options are being considered.

Tim Goggin suggested that a three-foot distance be used, instead of the recommended six-foot distance. He suggested that if you go to three-feet, it will significantly increase the number of students who can be in school. He also stated that he thinks this issue will move into the fall due to limitations of the vaccination and encouraged the administration to consider all options now. Ms. Goggin spoke in favor of the three-foot distance requirement.

Ms. Harvey explained that they are proposing that the week of February 8 they move to orange status. Students previously in orange are invited back in; teams may consider revisions to the list. The goal would be to see where students are and prepare them for the class returning. During orange status it is proposed that Kindergarten students come in on their A or B day. All staff in the building will work on resetting rooms, resetting technology, plan for the NEASC visit, and be offered team support. For the week of February 15 they propose moving forward with Kindergarten and grade five to yellow status. And, if there are enough students remaining remote, they would move to teal status. Ms. Harvey explained that pre-school and grades one through four would move to teal status for four days per week. This will require a family survey to confirm that there is enough space.

Mr. Hamilton exhibited the color coding scheme that is being used.

STATUS	MODALITY	TARGET CAPACITY	SAFETY PROTOCOLS
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Red	Campus Closed	0%	NA
Orange	Limited Access	10-25%	Strict - limited access to students with special needs and those who require additional support; strict protocols for screening, masks, and travel
Yellow	Campus Open	50%	Required protocols - screening upon arrival, masks required inside the school building, extensive minimization of travel within the building
Green	Campus Open	50%	Recommended protocols - self monitoring of symptoms, masks suggested in the classroom, and limited travel within the building
Teal	Campus Open	90%	Self monitoring of symptoms, masks required in the building, and travel within the building only as needed
Blue	Near Normal Operations	99%	Transition back to near normal operations; those with severe medical concerns will still be allowed to work remotely

Mr. Hamilton explained the proposal for the reopening of PMHS. During the week of February 8 they would shift to orange status to support the most high risk students while they prepare for the transition to yellow status. During the week of February 15 they would shift to yellow status (grades six through twelve). Sixth graders would follow the current schedule in a hybrid model; seventh and eighth graders would follow the previous yellow status schedule with teachers rotating through home bases to deliver instruction. Grades nine through twelve would continue synchronous learning; students will rotate to classrooms for instruction.

Karen Perras asked for clarification regarding staffing at the middle school level. Mr. Hamilton stated that staffing issues will be worked out.

Mr. Hamilton explained that if approved tonight, the administration would survey families for commitment to in-person or remote following the meeting. The work that will also need to be done includes: 1) Regrouping students; 2) Set up physical spaces; 3) Organize bus runs; 4) Re-organize food services (meal delivery will stop on 2/12; and 5) Check that we are clear on supplies for those coming to

school and those staying at home

Ms. Asdot reopened the meeting to public input.

Justin Clough said thank you to all of the community members who have come out to speak. He also thanked the administration for their work in figuring this out. Mr. Clough implored the School Board to make the decisions necessary to have students come back to school. He opined that the administration is being too cautious and that they should listen to the parents and have students come back to school.

Mr. Beliveau stated that it is better for students to go to school even if only a day at a time. Discussion ensued regarding the three-foot versus six-foot suggestion. Ms. Farmer stated that students are suffering and thinks going to school with a three-foot distance is better than not going.

Lewis Driscoll stated that he needs to be in school. He said that he and other students he knows need to have contact with their teachers. Online learning, according to Mr. Driscoll, is difficult.

Nicole Mooney opined that the decisions being made are having a negative effect on many aspects of students' lives, including their mental health.

Gage Bursey summarized his experience as a student fluctuating between online and hybrid learning.

Mr. Driscoll stated that the lack of structure is detrimental to him and other students.

Faith Griffin summarized her experience as a student trying to learn remotely. She stated that she is more motivated when in school and would like to go back to school.

Frank Miller stated that students need to go back to school.

Jenn Codispoti thanked the administration, School Board, and teachers for their work during this challenging time. She suggested looking at all spaces available in order to have students return. She suggested using the unified arts rooms as classrooms. Ms. Codispoti urged the Board to take into consideration recommendations, data, and what other neighboring schools are doing, as well as what the Pittsfield parents are saying.

Heather Elliott stated concern regarding Kindergarten. She stated that Kindergarten students are having the most difficulty with remote learning but may be disadvantaged because of class size. She would rather have her Kindergarten child go four days, rather than two-day remote.

Kelly Page stated that she is grateful to everyone making decisions regarding the reopening. She said that she wants her children back in school full time, especially her son, who is in Kindergarten. She feels that social emotional learning is crucial for Kindergarteners.

Scott Jackson stated that his granddaughter is struggling with remote learning in spite of being a capable student in a good home. He stated that school is important for the students who are not as well off. When he sees how difficult it is for his granddaughter, he is worried about other students. He strongly feels that students need to return to school.

Jodi Cunningham stated that although she enjoys having her children home, she is concerned about their education. She stated she would not send her children back to school unless they are going to return to a normal routine in school. Ms. Cunningham stated strongly that students should return to school.

Dan Green asked if the Board would make a decision tonight, to which Ms. Asdot confirmed that as the plan.

Dylan Mills stated that online learning is not working and never will. He said there is no passion involved in education when online. He spoke to the importance of friends in the learning process. He explained that he no longer is motivated to learn because he is not receiving the reward of seeing his friends. Mr. Mills stated he is a hands-on learner and cannot learn from a computer screen. He said that teachers are doing an amazing job trying to teach students but not seeing students is likely affecting them, as well. He stated that students are not learning so if they do not go back to school, failure is to be expected.

Samantha Taylor stated that she has the luxury of having assistance from family members to supervise remote learning. In spite of that, one of her children is failing miserably and needs to be in school. Ms. Taylor stated that students want to go back to school and suggested that the Board may not be listening to the parents and the students when making decisions.

Mr. Mitchell stated that he came to the meeting knowing that getting students back to school needed to be accelerated. He suggested a three-foot distance and to move to yellow status immediately. Based on the mental health of our students, he thinks students need to return to school. Mr. Mitchell said that the previous decisions were made because of the conditions at the time and now things are different.

Ms. Douglas stated that she is speaking from the perspective of an educator, a Board member, and a citizen of Pittsfield. She said that she believes we are losing students. She stated that the decisions made previously were for good reasons, especially around the holidays. Ms. Douglas thanked the administration for their work on the plan but suggested that they become more aggressive in getting the students back. She suggested that they move to teal status immediately.

Ms. Asdot stated that her daughter has been struggling with remote learning. She stated her agreement with Mr. Mitchell and Ms. Douglas; she stated being in favor of changing to a three-foot distance and moving to yellow status on February 8, and teal status on February 15, 2021.

Ms. Drouin stated that she stands behind the decision to have been in remote learning during and after the holidays. She now thinks it's time to move into a more aggressive phase.

Mr. Gauthier stated that his children are not doing well with remote learning. Students are losing out on the social emotional aspect of their education. He stated his agreement with the three-foot distancing, moving to yellow status, but give the administration two weeks to figure that out and go to teal status after February vacation, to which Mr. Mitchell and Ms. Douglas agreed.

On a motion made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Ms. Asdot, the Board unanimously approved reducing six-foot distancing to three-feet distancing, effective immediately

On a motion made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Ms Asdot, the Board voted unanimously to move to yellow status for the week of February 8, orange status the week of February 15, and teal status the week of March 1, 2021.

Mr. Mitchell stated that the participation of the community was outstanding tonight and he was sorry that it has taken a crisis to see this level of participation.

Ms. Douglas thanked the members of the community, especially the students who made their voices heard. She, too, wished there was more involvement from the community. Ms. Douglas said that the Board is often accused of not listening. She said that although they don't always make decisions with which everyone agrees, they are listening.

Ms. Harvey asked if PES could go to teal status earlier than March 1 if they are ready and the Board agreed.

VII. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE - No report

VIII. PES PRINCIPAL

A. Attendance

Ms. Harvey provided attendance data, reporting that there had been a slight improvement in the last two weeks, averaging thirty one absences per day.

B. COVID Tracking

Ms. Harvey reported on the impact of COVID for PES, especially regarding custodial coverage.

C. School Status

Team leaders prepared to return to on-site during the past week. They determined what was needed based on experiences so far this year of what needed to happen to improve on areas that did not work.

IX. PMHS PRINCIPAL

A. Pandemic Report

Mr. Hamilton provided data from the DHHS dashboard to put Pittsfield in context with the state relative to the pandemic.

B. School Calendar

Mr. Hamilton asked for a change to the calendar to accommodate voting day. On a motion made by Mr. Gautheir and seconded by Mr. Mitchell, the Board

unanimously approved changing the calendar to swap the remote day scheduled for March 10 to March 9, 2021.

C. School Status

In preparation for a return to on-site learning, Mr. Hamilton met with the common planning time teams to get a sense of what worked well and what needed to be improved upon based on previous experiences.

X. PMHS ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

A. Program of Studies

Ms. Brown distributed a revised Program of Studies and asked the Board for their approval. She reviewed the changes that have been made to the document. Ms. Brown clarified the community service requirements relative to the recent decision of the Board. Mr. Gauthier made a motion which was seconded by Mr. Mitchell to approve the Program of Studies. Discussion ensued regarding guided study issues, including a clarification offered by Ms. Bickford. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

XI. DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES - No report

XII. INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (Continued)

A. 2021-2022 Budget Update

Dr. Graziano suggested the Board meet to consider the ramifications of the budget decisions made at the Deliberative Session. February 16, 2021 at 5:00 was determined to be the date of the meeting for the Board to consider the budget.

XIII. SCHOOL BOARD

A. Revolution Basketball

Mr. Mitchell asked the Board to reconsider the previous decision relative to Revolution Basketball. On a motion made by Mr. Gauthier and second by Mr. Mitchell, the Board voted unanimously to approve Revolution Basketball using the school facilities.

B. Superintendent Search

Ms. Douglas stated that she has discussed the contract with the NH School Board Association and they are willing to put it on hold. Dr. Graziano has agreed to stay through the fall.

XIV. 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

XV. PUBLIC INPUT

Tim Goggin stated that if the schools return to in-school sessions, then the community needs to cooperate by following guidelines such as wearing masks and maintaining distance. He suggested working with the students to help them understand the importance of following the guidelines. Otherwise, the schools will quickly close again.

Elisha Griffin stated that guidelines are reviewed with students. She said there has not been a huge issue with the exception of having to occasionally remind students.

Molly Goggin thanked the School Board for listening to the community's concerns. She is appreciative of the teachers' hard work in doing their best to provide the best education that they can. She stated that the good that is happening in spite of COVID, needs to be celebrated.

Tracy Hyuck stated that Medicaid reimbursement practices need to be investigated further. She opined that the health insurance policy that is being supported by the taxpayers for teachers is inappropriate. Ms. Douglas stated that the Board will do what is best for the students in the district when making adjustments subsequent to the decisions made at the Deliberative Session.

Jill Gauthier asked if the PTO will be able to meet in the school when they go to the teal status. Ms. Douglas stated that organizations should be able to return to using the school facilities once the district is in the teal phase.

Ashley Perron stated that there have been positive things happening and should be celebrated. She offered to help in any way she can to assist in her children returning to school. She thanked the administration and the School Board for their work during this difficult time.

Korilyn Martin thanked the School Board and teachers for their work. She stated that there are victories to be celebrated. She expressed her appreciation for the teachers who are making a difference in her children's lives. She acknowledged how hard teachers are working.

Mr. Gauthier stated that not only do decisions need to be made in the best interest of students but also in the best interest of taxpayers.

Scott Jackson asked for clarification regarding the term “district” and thought it meant several towns. Ms. Asdot clarified that it can also mean a single town district. He asked about the role of the superintendent, to which Ms. Douglas suggested he make an appointment to visit the superintendent for clarification.

Mr. Mitchell suggested that once COVID has passed a celebration should be planned to acknowledge the work that was done to survive the pandemic.

XVI. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for Thursday, February 18, 2021 at 5:30 in the Pittsfield Middle High School Lecture Hall.

XVII. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Ms. Asdot, the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tobi Gray Chassie
Recording Secretary (via Zoom)