

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

MINUTES

Pittsfield School Board Meeting
November 19, 2020
Pittsfield Middle High School

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

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 m.

II. AGENDA REVIEW

The following items was added to the agenda:

- Card of thanks (John Graziano)
- Request for Remote Learning (Dr. Graziano)
- Carports (Ms. Harvey)

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 Ms. Asdot and seconded by Mr. Gauthier to approve the minutes of the public meeting on November 5, 2020. Changes include: on page six, section B, change to “2021-2022”; on page 7, correct spacing; and on page 9, section XVI, add space between paragraph one and two. The motion was passed unanimously to approve the minutes as amended.

V. PUBLIC INPUT - None

VI. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Harrison Hill explained to the Board that a proposal is being prepared by the Site Council and will be presented to the Board at a future meeting.

VII. PES PRINCIPAL

A. Attendance

According to Ms. Harvey, there has been a recent rise in student and staff absences. The uptick is due to more students, staff, and their families coming down with symptoms that potentially could be due to COVID-19.

B. COVID Tracking

Ms. Harvey reported that twenty-six students and sixteen staff were out with COVID-19 symptoms or possible exposure, but there were no COVID-19 confirmed cases.

C. New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)

The NEASC visit has been rescheduled to early 2021 due to COVID-19 issues in the chairperson’s school.

D. Budget

Ms. Harvey highlighted several areas of interest relative to the 2021-2022 proposed budget including not including a cost of living adjustment for support staff and administrators and decreases in supplies and books. Additional funds (\$4,000) may be necessary for a summer school program.

E. Heating Plant

Ms. Harvey reviewed the recommendation of Yeaton Associates to install digital controls at PES.

F. Playground Equipment

Ms. Harvey recommended two pieces of playground equipment be replaced this year. One is the pod hopper and the other is the fossil bluff climber. The pod hopper for a cost of \$5,000 is the first choice.

G. Carports

Barnstead MotorSports is not able to install the carports as promised. The money will be returned to the district in full. The money will be reallocated to other COVID-19 requirements.

VIII. PMHS PRINCIPAL

A. 2021-2022 Budget

Mr. Hamilton summarized several budget cuts that were made to the 2021-2022 proposal including books, Student Assistance Program (SAP) staff, summer employment for the guidance coordinator, health service supplies, media books, and building maintenance supplies.

B. District Leadership Team

Mr. Hamilton stated that the DLT designated the Steering Team to make decisions regarding COVID-19 and school reopening. He provided the Board with a memo with additional information relative to COVID-19 and the recommendation of the Steering Team.

According to Mr. Hamilton, the Steering Team is recommending a shift to orange status, which means the majority of students will be learning remotely. Ms. Asdot asked if the recommendation changes anything with athletics. Mr. Hamilton stated he would provide the Board with information relative to athletics later in his report. Ms. Bickford provided the Board with information specific to the students with disabilities. Some students, as designated by individual education programs (IEP), will be attending school during the orange status.

Mr. Gauthier asked how the school moving to orange will affect out-of-district students and Concord Regional Technical Center (CRTC) students. Mr. Hamilton said CRTC will continue to be open and the district will continue to provide transportation to the students who want to attend. The same is true for out-of-district students.

Heather Elliot stated her concern about her child not being in school for several weeks and needing to rely on remote learning. She stated her child goes to daycare when not in school and is not confident that they will be able to provide

the support her child may need during remote learning. Ms Asdot asked Ms. Elliot if she has attempted communicating with the teacher to see if accommodations can be made to help the student. Ms. Elliot said she has no complaints about the teacher but is concerned about the quality of the education her child is receiving during the pandemic.

Karen Perras asked (by Zoom) if staff will be remote and how will students who are in school be serviced. Mr. Hamilton stated that essential workers would be in the building, as needed. The administration continues to work on those details. Ms. Harvey stated that because the status is orange many required services will still be in place.

Tina Nevins (by Zoom) commented on the level of attendance during the last period of time that the students were learning remotely. She is concerned about attendance when students are learning remotely. Angela Eastman (by Zoom) stated that she is concerned that when the educational setting is remote, students of working parents must attend childcare and wonders how this is helping to suppress COVID-19. Tracy Huyck (via Zoom) stated that she thinks it would be easier for parents if the schools went remote.

Discussion ensued regarding the movement to the status of orange. Mr. Gauthier stated his concern about having to move to orange. Mr. Mitchell stated that because of the current conditions, he supports the move to orange status.

Ms. Douglas called attention to the data that was collected in surveys. She is concerned about the number of families who have admitted they are traveling during the holidays and how it will affect the safety of students and staff.

On a motion made by Ms. Asdot and seconded by Mr. Mitchell, the Board voted unanimously to move to orange status.

C. School District Newsletter

Mr. Hamilton provided a copy of the November 9, 2020 newsletter to the Board. Mr. Hamilton stated that free meals for all students, which is being supported by the federal government, will be extended through June.

D. Student Attendance

Mr. Hamilton explained that when there was a shift to remote, there was a significant decrease in attendance for grades 6 through 12. He reported that today was the first day back for hybrid; only fifty percent returned to school.

E. Student & Staff Pandemic Report

Mr. Hamilton distributed information regarding COVID-19 statistics throughout the State of New Hampshire. Between today and November 2nd, there have been two positive cases of COVID-19.

F. Winter Athletics

Mr. Hamilton admitted that the recommendations relative to winter athletics may not be consistent with the orange status recommendation. He said that the social-emotional well-being of the students is a primary motivator for continuing with athletics. Mr. Hamilton explained the practices that will be in place such as athletes using the same chair, wearing masks while engaged in play, and cleaning/disinfecting. A significant change is relative to spectators; only parents of PMHS seniors will be permitted at home games in Pittsfield. Social distancing during practices will be followed.

Mr. Hamilton stated that his request is to move into Stage I, which allows skill and drill sessions. Mr. Mitchell said he was willing to approve Stage 1, but expects when there is a case, the entire athletic program will be closed down. Ms. Douglas stated that although it seems like a double standard, she is concerned about the social-emotional well-being of the students. She approves of the wearing of masks. Jay Darrah provided additional details for the Board's consideration. Discussion ensued regarding the pros and cons of allowing athletics to continue.

Ms. Asdot asked how many students are involved. Mr. Darrah stated approximately 15 to 50 students can be involved at any one time.

Jill Gauthier stated she is concerned that education is going remote but athletics is continuing. Heather Elliot stated although she doesn't have a student involved in athletics but is not in favor of continuing athletics if children cannot go to school to learn.

A motion was made by Mr. Mitchell and seconded by Ms. Drouin to have the athletic program move to State 1. The motion passed with Ms. Douglas, Ms. Drouin, and Mr. Mitchell voting in the affirmative and Ms. Asdot and Mr. Gauthier opposing.

IX. PMHS ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL REPORT - No Report

X. DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES

A. Alternative Plans

Ms. Bickford explained that forty-four students (twenty-five at PES and 19 at PMHS) are coming in to school for services on a part-time basis.

B. Senior Class 2021

According to Ms. Bickford, the senior class has been working on the plans for their senior trip in the spring. Harrison Hill reviewed a preliminary plan for the class to go to a South Carolina beach in the spring. He acknowledged that COVID-19 will affect plans, of course. Ms. Douglas stated that it is fine to dream and plan, but the final plan will be dependent on the COVID-19 status at the time of the trip. She suggested that they might want to plan alternatives depending on the circumstances at the time of the trip.

XI. INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

A. Card of Thanks

Dr. Graziano read a thank you note from Erica Anthony, Town Clerk, for allowing the use of the PMHS gymnasium for voting. The note especially noted the work done by custodial staff.

B. Request for Non-Resident Attendance

According to Dr. Graziano, a family is moving to another town, but would like to have their children continue learning remotely for the remainder of the year. Ms. Douglas asked for the topic to be tabled until the next meeting.

C. High School Tuition Study Committee

The High School Tuition Study Committee met on November 15, 2020 and will meet again on December 15, 2020. A timeline is being devised and the work will be completed by June 30, 2021. Dr. Graziano stated that the role of the committee is to make a recommendation to the Board. He thanked Ms. Chassie for volunteering to take notes at the meetings. Dr. Graziano stated that additional community members have expressed interest in joining the committee's work.

D. Good to Great Team

Dr. Graziano stated that the Good to Great Team met on November 10, 2020. They want to audit the extended learning opportunities program, but are cognizant of the time constraints on staff. The next meeting is on December 8, 2020.

E. 2021-2022 Budget

Dr. Graziano stated his appreciation to the Board for taking the time to review the budget, line-by-line. Dr. Graziano stated that the insurance cost of \$148,000 is a huge increase but the overall budget is increasing by \$132,000. According to Dr. Graziano, the Adequacy Grant has been decreased by \$200,000. He said that 95% of the budget is related to salaries, benefits, contracted services, and facilities.

Ms. Douglas thanked Dr. Graziano for highlighting the cuts that were made in the budget proposal. She stated that the decreases are worrisome, but appreciated the work of the administration. Ms. Douglas asked for clarification relative to project based learning decreases. Ms. LeMay stated that donations will be sought from families and organizations.

Mr. Hamilton underscored the shifts that are evident due to the sixth grade being moved to the middle school budget lines. He also stated that administrative costs are now building specific, rather than district-wide. Mr. Hamilton stated that the administration did not request a cost of living increase in the proposal. He reassured the Board that cuts were made to control increases. Mr. Hamilton stated that any additions that were initially proposed were taken off the table.

Ms. Bickford explained that the out-of-district tuition costs are based on current enrollment of seven students. This situation could change.

Ms. Douglas thanked Dr. Graziano and the administration for their hard work to create a reasonable budget proposal. On a motion made by Ms. Asdot and seconded by Mr. Mitchell the Board unanimously approved the proposed budget for 2021-2022.

XII. SCHOOL BOARD

A. Superintend Search

Ms Douglas stated that the Board has decided to suspend the search for a superintendent due to COVID-19. She said she called someone in Concord to see why they had made that same decision and it was COVID-19 related.

XIII. COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

A. Budget Committee - Mr. Mitchell

Mr. Mitchell stated the Budget Committee met and is on schedule to make necessary decision.

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

XIV. PUBLIC INPUT

Robert Schiferle stated that he is discouraged that the issue of school funding at the state level fails to support communities. He is disappointed that cost of living increases are not included in the budget.

Elisha Griffin

Jessica Kennedy asked if there was an update on sending students to other schools. Ms. Douglas replied that the recommendation would come from the High School Tuition Committee by the end of June.

XV. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for December 3, 2020 at 5:30 in the Pittsfield Middle High School Lecture Hall.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by Mr. Mitchell and seconded by Mr. Gauthier, the meeting was adjourned at 6:53. p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tobi Gray Chassie
Recording Secretary