

APPROVED BY THE PITTSFIELD SCHOOL BOARD

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

MINUTES

Pittsfield School Board Meeting
July 16, 2020
Pittsfield Middle High School

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

Others Present: John J. Freeman, Superintendent of Schools
 Jessica Bickford, Director of Student Services
 Melissa Brown, Director of Career Readiness
 Derek Hamilton, Dean of Operations
 Danielle Harvey, Dean of Instruction
 Kathy LeMay, Director of Interventions and Title I
 Tobi Chassie, Recording Secretary
 Members of the Public

Ms. Douglas called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

II. AGENDA REVIEW

The following items were added to the agenda:

- Solar Rebate Program (Mr. Gauthier)
- Drake Field Playground (Mr. Gauthier)
- Student Issue in Non-Public Session (Dr. Freeman)
- Acceptance of Gift (Ms. Harvey)
- Drake Field (Mr. Hamilton)

III. ACTION ON AGENDA

On a motion made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Ms. Asdot, 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 Ms. Drouin to approve the minutes of the public meeting on June 18, 2020. The motion was passed unanimously to approve the minutes as written.

A motion was made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Ms. Asdot to approve the minutes of the non-public meeting on June 18, 2020. The motion was passed unanimously to approve the minutes as written.

V. PUBLIC INPUT

Mike Cabral asked if the warrant for investigating whether or not to tuition out high school students would be acted upon. Ms. Douglas said that the Board will be moving forward to honor the requirements of the warrant article.

Gerald LeDuc, on behalf of the Select Board, stated that the Town Hall cannot be used for voting this coming fall due to social distancing requirements. He stated there would be a request coming from Cara Marston, town manager, to use the PMHS gymnasium. Ms. Douglas indicated that this could mean a change in the school calendar.

Mary Perry asked why Kindergarten Camp was being cancelled since there is a summer school. She also asked if arrangements can be made for the sixth graders coming up to PMHS. Dr. Freeman explained that there would be alternative options to the typical district programs for both kindergarten and sixth grade students in response to the pandemic.

Justin Clough asked for information regarding Drake Field. Ms. Douglas asked him to hold his questions until after the discussion, as it is on the agenda, to which he agreed.

Paulette Wolfe stated she has some questions regarding the proposed restructuring but would be willing to hold off until the discussion. Ms. Douglas stated that would be possible.

VI. NON-PUBLIC SESSION

At 5:40 p.m. a motion was made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Ms. Asdot to enter into a non-public session under the authority of RSA 91-A:3 (c) to discuss two student matters and a personnel matter. The Board was polled and voted unanimously (Ms. Asdot, yes; Ms. Douglas, Ms. Drouin, yes; Mr. Gauthier, yes) to enter into non-public session.

While in non-public session, the Board voted to:

- A. Continue an out-of-district placement due to a manifest educational hardship;

- B. Approve a request for non-resident attendance;
- C. Terminate the superintendent's contract by mutual agreement effective July 31.

At 5:55 p.m. a motion was made by Ms. Asdot and seconded by Mr. Gauthier to exit from a non-public session and to re-enter into open session. The Board was polled and voted unanimously to exit the non-public session and to re-enter into open session (Ms. Asdot, yes; Ms. Douglas, yes; Ms. Drouin, yes; Mr. Gauthier, yes).

VII. DEAN OF OPERATIONS

A. Building Facilities Protocol

Mr. Hamilton reviewed the protocol being followed for staff members and other visitors to access the school facilities.

B. Summer Athletic Guidelines

Mr. Hamilton provided the Board with a copy of the summer athletic guidelines and screening protocol for participation in middle high school summer sports programs. The program will run from July 13 to August 14, 2020.

C. School Safety Report

Mr. Hamilton provided the Board with a copy of the annual School Safety Report that he has submitted to the New Hampshire Department of Education.

D. Drake Field

Mr. Hamilton explained that every effort has been made to limit traffic in certain areas of Drake Field, such as the basketball court and play spaces. He said that people have gone so far as to use wire cutters to gain access to the areas that are off limits. Litter is a major concern as people are not respecting the property. Mr. Hamilton stated that the Pittsfield Police Department is trying to monitor the situation, but officers are finding it difficult to hold people accountable. Pittsfield Chief of Police Joe Collins has written a letter to Mr. Hamilton; Mr. Hamilton read the letter aloud. Chief Collins ultimately has asked for the Board to open the facilities.

Ms. Douglas stated she has asked Mr. Hamilton to consider having custodians start their day at Drake Field. She agreed that it was impossible for the police department to monitor all corners of the property. Ms. Douglas stated she was in contact with the Pittsfield Parks and Recreation Department, who have voted to keep the play space at the pool area closed. She was interested in showing support of their decision by following suit.

Mr. Gauthier stated he would be in favor of opening Drake Field. Ms. Drouin stated that she is not in favor of opening Drake Field. Ms. Asdot stated she has conflicted feelings and is concerned about the liability of the District if they open it and someone contracts Covid-19. Ms. Douglas opened the discussion for public input.

Melissa Babcock asked what would be happening when the schools open and thought it should be consistent with Drake Field.

Jodi Cunningham asked if removing garbage from Drake Field could be done by students requiring community service. Dr. Freeman answered affirmatively.

Mary Perry asked why Pittsfield Parks and Recreation voted to close their pool facilities. Ms. Douglas suggested it was because of the limited space and inability to social distance.

Mike Cabral stated that he believes the sun will sanitize the equipment and the decision should be revisited when it becomes colder.

Justin Clough stated that ultraviolet rays have been proven to eradicate the virus. He said that many families would use the facilities and would mean more people would be informally monitoring the grounds. He opined that this is a community issue that can be managed better with the informal supervision of the community members who use Drake Field.

Jean Cram stated she witnessed a large gathering of cars and people in the area of the boat ramp. This incident occurred on a Friday night at 5:45 p.m.

Cara Peterson stated her opinion that Drake Field should be kept closed due to the guidelines that the district should be following.

Heidi Asdot stated she is conflicted; she is nervous that if Drake Field is opened that it will add to a surge in Covid-19 cases.

Chris Smith stated that because it is summer and open air, it would be better to open the park. He suggested youth will use the facilities one way or another.

Matt Wolfe said that no one is deterred by the tape that is surrounding the play space and basketball court. He feels that closing Drake Field is not successful.

A motion was made by Mr. Gauthier to open Drake Field.

Jean Cram suggested that if the facilities are not going to open, then taking down the basketball hoops would be warranted.

Lisa English stated that families have already made decisions as to whether they feel comfortable at Drake Field. She suggested opening Drake Field and then letting parents make decisions about whether their children should access the facilities.

Chris Smith stated there are two distinct groups, small children using the play space and older children using the basketball courts.

Mr. Gauthier withdrew his motion. The Board postponed making a decision until later in the meeting.

VIII. DEAN OF INSTRUCTION

A. Gift Acceptance

Ms. Harvey explained that Donna Keeley is on the Board of Camp Graylag which provides grants in the memory of Carl Wallman, former owner of Camp Graylag. A grant of \$7000.00 is offered to the district to provide a slide for the natural playground being developed at PES.

On a motion made by Ms. Asdot and seconded by Mr. Gauthier, the Board voted unanimously to accept a gift of \$7000.00 from Camp Graylag to purchase a slide for the natural playground.

IX. DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES - No report.

X. DIRECTOR OF CAREER READINESS - No report.

XI. DIRECTOR OF INTERVENTIONS AND TITLE I MANAGER - No report.

XII. SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOL

A. Administrative Restructuring

Dr. Freeman made a recommendation to change to a traditional administrative structure to include:

- PES Principal
- PES Assistant Principal
- PMHS Principal
- PMHS Assistance Principal
- PMHS Guidance
- District Director of Student Services

Dr. Freeman provided the Board with details such as the origin of the current structure, advantages, and disadvantages.

Mr. Gauthier asked what the difference is between a dean and a principal. Dr. Freeman explained that the splitting of the responsibilities between curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and operations was accomplished by utilizing dean positions.

Dr. Freeman stated job descriptions have not been completed but would be available as early as August 6, 2020.

Mr. Gauthier asked about the funding of the new position. He acknowledged that there have been suggested line items for funding the new position provided. He is concerned that one line-item is that of technology. He stated that the Board fought “tooth and nail” for the technology funds and to use them for the new position is of concern.

Mr. Gauthier asked Dr. Freeman to explain further why all administrators were not in favor of this proposal. Dr. Freeman stated that there is concern by some that the expertise that has been developed in the dean structure will not be put to full use. Ms. Brown explained her perspective regarding the proposal. She was originally concerned about the decision, but after thinking it through has changed her mind.

Mr. Gauthier stated he is concerned about creating a new position that voters did not know about in March.

Justin Clough stated that one item of consideration is communication, or lack thereof. He is concerned that there is not a good system of communication with staff in the district. He is concerned that the proposed structure will not be any better relative to communication than the current structure.

Ms. Douglas acknowledged that communication is an ongoing concern that will continue to be addressed by the Board. She stated there has been concern about there not being a school-based approach to administration echoed in the community.

Mike Cabral asked if the addition of the position would affect the budget. He asked if the Budget Committee has been notified.

Mr. Gauthier asked if there would be any other positions that would be needed to sustain the proposed structure; Dr. Freeman stated he did not think that would be necessary.

Dr. Freeman explained that the proposed structure will cut down the number of people being supervised by some administrators. For example, the dean of instruction is supervising forty-three people currently, while other administrators do not supervise nearly that many.

Ms. Douglas invited input from Paulette Wolfe. Ms. Wolfe asked for clarification regarding Ms. LeMay's ability to add assistant principal tasks to her caseload. Ms. Wolfe asked for clarification regarding the position of Guidance Coordinator. Dr. Freeman asked Lisa English to explain the scope of her position as administrative assistant to the position of director of career readiness; she reviewed her job responsibilities. Ms. Wolfe stated she is concerned about the addition of the position.

Lisa English asked if the new position of guidance coordinator has been described. The full job description has not been fleshed out, according to Ms. Douglas, but she trusts that the administration will do that before hiring someone into the position. Ms. English stated she is very concerned that if the administration was to be restructured without adding the new position, students will not get the attention they require.

Jillian Gauthier asked for clarification about Title I funding, which was provided.

Melissa Babcock stated her concern that if the money is found in the budget to create the new position would it mean the budget increasing in the next year. Ms. Douglas stated there are many factors that will influence whether the new position would mean increasing the budget. She stated that the students are aware of the role of the two deans and, in this environment of COVID-19, another change would be difficult. She suggested considering keeping things the way they are for right now and use the following year to consider the restructuring.

Ms. Harvey stated that the administration is overburdened in the current structure. She stated there is a need for another person to assist in the responsibilities that are required, especially in the wake of COVID-19.

Ms. Asdot stated that having two people in each school to cover administrative responsibilities would be a positive change. Decreasing the number of people that each administrator has to supervise is an added benefit.

Mary Perry stated that the idea of moving sixth grade students to PMHS was led by Ms. Harvey. If Ms. Harvey is not at PMHS then students may not feel comfortable. Ms. Harvey stated that the team of administrators will remain intact and support one another as best they can.

Mr. Gauthier asked if the overload that is being discussed is due to COVID-19. Ms. Harvey stated that it is not due to COVID-19; she has experienced the overload in the past years. Although COVID-19 made the work different, it didn't necessarily increase the burden.

Jodi Cunningham stated her concern about the potential increase in budgets in the future.

Ms. LeMay stated that at first she was concerned about the proposed changes, but after time to reflect has come to realize that it will be a move that will be in the best interest of students.

Ms. Drouin stated that she is concerned about the timeline, but after hearing the perspective of the administration, is in favor of the proposal.

A motion was made by Ms. Asdot and seconded by Ms. Drouin to accept the proposal of Dr. Freeman to restructure the administration. The motion was passed with Ms. Asdot, Ms. Douglas, and Ms. Drouin voting in the affirmative, and Mr. Gauthier voting against the motion.

B. Leader Award

Dr. Freeman reported that Jessica Bickford has been recognized by the Lakes Region group of the New Hampshire Association of Special Education Administrators as this year's Emerging Leader.

C. Resignation

Dr. Freeman notified the Board of the resignation of Julie Britton from her position as special education teacher at PES.

D. New Professional Employees

Employees hired since the last School Board meeting include Nora Jones as PMHS Special Educator, Amy Philbrick as School Psychologist, and Erik Rogers as PES Behavior Support Specialist.

E. School Reopening Planning for August

Dr. Freeman explained that a meeting occurred with the teacher leaders in the district. Sub-committees have been created to study the recommendations provided by the Governor. The groups will report back by July 31, 2020, in order for the administration to coordinate the plan. The District Leadership Team will reconvene on August 4, 2020, for a final review of the plan. Recommendations will be put forward to the School Board on Thursday, August 6, 2020. Dr. Freeman suggested that the meeting on August 6 be devoted to this one agenda item.

Ms. Asdot asked if the teacher's union is represented in the group working on the plan. Dr. Freeman said that the union president is involved and the New Hampshire NEA has provided relevant information.

Mr. Gauthier asked if any teachers have indicated that they will not return if learning is not remote. Dr. Freeman responded by saying that one teacher has

asked for accommodations but that no teachers had indicated that they will not return to school.

F. School Warrant Tuition Request Article

Dr. Freeman provided the Board with steps to respond to the warrant article. Mr. Gauthier suggested a committee be formed so that there is input from the community.

G. Opioid Litigation

Dr. Freeman explained that he participated in an informational meeting regarding potential district involvement in opioid litigation. He reported that he had consulted the district's attorney relative to district involvement, and that she recommends participation in this no-cost litigation. Dr. Freeman recommended the Board sign up for participation under the conditions presented by attorneys from Drummond and Woodsum. On a motion made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Ms. Asdot, the Board voted unanimously to join the national Opioid Litigation through Drummond and Woodsum.

H. Drake Field (Continued)

Ms. Douglas asked the Board to consider the decision on opening up Drake Field to the public. Dr. Freeman recommended that Drake Field reopen based on the community's input. Mr. Gauthier made a motion to open Drake Field's play space and basketball courts. Discussion ensued. The motion was seconded by Ms. Douglas and the Board voted unanimously to open Drake Field's play space and basketball courts.

XIII. COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

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

XIV. SCHOOL BOARD

A. Solar Rebates

Mr. Gauthier presented information about solar rebates. More information will be gathered for future discussion by the Board.

B. Live Streaming Meetings

Mr. Gauthier stated that since the Board has met via Zoom during the early portion of the pandemic, the public has asked about streaming the Board's meetings. More information will be provided and a decision made.

XV. PUBLIC INPUT (Second Session)

Paulette Wolfe stated that she is very happy that the School Board packet is now online. She thanked the SAU staff for posting the entire packet, not just the agenda.

XVI. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for August 6, 2020, at 5:30 p.m. in the Pittsfield Middle High School lecture hall.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Ms. Asdot, the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m..

Respectfully submitted,

Tobi Chassie
Recording Secretary