

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

MINUTES

Pittsfield School Board Meeting
November 5, 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 p.m.

II. AGENDA REVIEW

The following items was added to the agenda:

- Sally Blanchette (Mr. Mitchell)
- Budget Related Meetings (Mr. Hamilton)
- Recording Secretary (Dr. Graziano)

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 Ms. Drouin to approve the minutes of the public meeting on October 15, 2020. Changes include: changing the footer to read October 15, 2020; on page 3, paragraph 3, change spelling to Mr. Gauthier; starting on page 6, modify Roman numerals to be in sequence; on page eight, change sections to A through D; and on page nine, change spelling to Ms. Asdot. The motion was passed unanimously to approve the minutes as amended.

V. PUBLIC INPUT - None

VI. SCHOOL BOARD

A. Presentation

Ms. Douglas thanked Dr. Freeman for his attendance at tonight's meeting. She presented Dr. Freeman with a token of appreciation for his twenty one years of service to the Pittsfield School District. After receiving a standing ovation, Dr. Freeman stated that being the superintendent of schools in Pittsfield was his favorite job in his entire career. He said that he grew to love the Town of Pittsfield. He expressed his appreciation of the School Board and previous School Boards for the confidence they had in him, saying that he enjoyed a trusting relationship throughout his employment, especially as superintendent.

VII. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE - None

VIII. PES PRINCIPAL

A. Attendance

According to Ms. Harvey, there has been a recent rise in student and staff absences. The uptick in absences is due to more students, staff, and their families coming down with symptoms that could be related to COVID-19. Statistics were shared with the Board; there was an average of fourteen students absent per day.

Mr. Gauthier asked if it was possible to shut down a portion of a building, rather than the entire building in a future event. Ms. Harvey stated that the decision was made by the COVID-19 Steering Team and any further details would jeopardize the confidentiality of students so would require a non-public session to discuss further.

Ms. Douglas stated that she was impressed with the decisions made and the process used to make recent decisions of PES closure. Mr. Gauthier and Ms. Asdot agreed that the work done by the administrative team, especially relative to communications, was commendable.

Ms. Harvey stated that the issue was the number of teachers that would have needed to be quarantined and the lack of substitute teachers available for coverage.

B. COVID-19 Tracking

According to Ms. Harvey, twenty-six students and sixteen staff have been out with symptoms or possible exposure.

C. Segment Three

Ms. Harvey explained that the survey has been distributed to parents for information relative to changes in hybrid or remote designation for segment three.

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

Ms. Harvey shared a memo with the Board that was sent to NEASC outlining updates that have been made since the collaborative conference.

E. Fall Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA)

Ms. Harvey reported that all NWEA assessments are complete with hybrid students in grades 1 through 5. She indicated that Kindergarten students will be assessed in January and that remote students are finishing up with testing.

F. Fall New Hampshire Student Assessment System (NHSAS)

Ms. Harvey reported that hybrid 4th and 5th grade students have completed the interim New Hampshire assessment and that there are two more remote students yet to finish.

IX. PMHS PRINCIPAL

A. District Leadership Team (DLT) Report

The DLT reviewed data regarding the plans for teachers over the holidays. A survey to parents was distributed today. Mr. Hamilton stated that the next step is for the COVID-19 Steering Team to meet to review data from surveys. There will be a recommendation for the Board's consideration presented at the next meeting.

B. Family Survey Results

Mr. Hamilton provided a summary of the feedback gathered through a survey sent to families. Families were asked to share comments on what was working and what needed improvement.

C. School District Newsletter

Mr. Hamilton provided the Board with a copy of the newsletters from October 19 and October 26, 2020.

D. Student Attendance

According to Mr. Hamilton, there were an average of 9.2 total absences on hybrid learning days, which is a marked improvement from the average of fourteen at the beginning of the month. Remote Wednesdays, between October 12 and 29, 2020, averaged sixty-eight absences.

E. Student and Staff Pandemic Report

Mr. Hamilton reported that there were eighteen students and four staff members at PMHS who self-reported or were sent home with symptoms, quarantined, and/or referred for COVID-19 testing in the past three weeks. No positive cases were reported.

F. Winter Athletics

Mr. Hamilton informed the Board that the start dates for winter athletics have been delayed. The practice sessions will begin on December 14, 2020 and the regional games will begin on January 11, 2021. The Board agreed that they need more information about the implementation of winter athletics before making final decisions. Mr. Hamilton will share additional information at the next meeting.

G. Budget Meeting

Mr. Hamilton inquired of the Board how they wanted to handle upcoming budget meetings. He stated that there is a January 14, 2021 public hearing scheduled. There is nothing in the reopening plan that addresses these types of meetings, although the practice has been not to open the school to public meetings.

Ms. Douglas asked Bob Schiferley if the Budget Committee had made any decisions. He stated that no decisions have been made but is wondering about the size of the room used and number of people in attendance. Mr. Hamilton stated that the guideline the State of New Hampshire has put out is for there to be no more than one hundred people in a given space. Ms. Douglas opined that other communities must be dealing with this issue and wonders what they might be doing to address this issue. Ms. Douglas suggested using the PMHS gym, where

there would be optimum space. Ms. Asdot asked Mr. Hamilton to refer back to the reopening plan to make sure there is consistent interpretation, as there have been groups denied the use of meeting space. Mr. Hamilton stated that there is no policy, but it has been the practice to not have meetings, other than the School Board, in the schools. The budget meetings are mandated by law so will need to be held.

X. PMHS ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL REPORT

A. College Board

Ms. Brown informed the Board that the College Board Testing Day took place on October 14, 2020. She shared the letter that was sent to parents informing them of the testing process.

B. Registrations and Withdrawals

According to Ms. Brown there have been eighteen enrollments and fifteen withdrawals from the district.

C. Concord Regional Technical Center (CRTC)

Ms. Brown provided a description of the CRTC program. She reported that there are eleven first year and five second year students in the program.

D. New Hampshire Education Assistance Foundation (NHHEAF)

Presentations via Zoom are scheduled for students and their families by NHHEAF. December 2, 2020 will be financial aid night and in March there will be a college overview scheduled.

E. College Visits

Virtual visits to colleges have been facilitated by senior advisors, giving them the opportunity to meet with college admission counselor, according to Ms. Brown.

F. Social Worker Report

Ms. Brown commended Lisa Gauthier for her work as the district's social worker. Ms. Gauthier provided the Board with a report summarizing her work. She made a point of thanking the benefactors for the donations that have funded this position. She has had contact with forty-six families, made 193 contacts in the past six months, and has participated in seventy-one home visits.

XI. DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES

A. Governor's Order #48

According to Ms. Bickford, all mandated compensatory education meetings have been held for students with special needs. There were no claims for compensatory education made by parents, which is a testament to the integrity of the special education team.

B. Proposed New Position for 3021-2022

Ms. Bickford has rescinded her request for an additional full time district coordinator, foster and court liaison, due to budget constraints.

XII. INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

A. Recording Secretary

Ms. Chassie informed the Board that she may be moving to taking the minutes of the Board meetings remotely, due to COVID-19. She will come to the next meeting and, depending on current circumstances, will be in a separate room to be sure the technology will support the remote taking of minutes. She thanked the Board for their understanding of the situation.

B. High School Tuition Study Committee Update

According to Dr. Graziano, the Tuition Study Committee met on October 20, 2020. Four sub-committees were formed including 1) Budget & Facilities, 2) Pittsfield Course Offerings, 3) District Contracts, and 4) Offerings of Receiving Districts. Mr. Gauthier stated that he provided the definition of "viable" for the committee to help clarify the scope of the work of the committee. The team will meet again on November 12, 2020 at 4:30.

C. Good to Great Team Update

The Good to Great Team, according to Dr. Graziano, met in October. The team decided they would audit extended learning opportunities. They would like to investigate what opportunities exist, especially after the elimination of the extended learning opportunities coordinator due to budget constraints.

D. Entry Plan

Dr. Graziano stated that when he started, he promised to spend the first weeks monitoring the district so that subsequent recommendations could be made to the Board and the new superintendent. He surveyed eighteen community

members/parents, eight faculty, and four students. Dr. Graziano shared the results of the data gleaned from the people with whom he communicated.

E. 2021-2022 School District Budget

Dr. Graziano reminded the Board that the process began with the proposal of a timeline and a request of the Board to “hold the line”. The administrators worked diligently to provide a proposal that was responsible, both to the students’ education and the taxpayer. Dr. Graziano has met with people who could help him navigate the budget process, including administrators, Board members, and Dr. Freeman.

No new position nor no new programs are being recommended. The only raises being proposed are for teachers, which is part of the negotiated contract. Retirement and insurance costs have risen. The proposed budget represents a 1.2% increase. There are still unknowns relative to revenue. The tax rate was set today and will result in the school tax rate being \$4.14 per thousand. Dr. Graziano stated that current information from the State of New Hampshire is expected by November 14, 2020, which will give the Board a better idea of revenue and the overall impact of the proposed budget.

Mr. Mitchell asked how much of the proposed increase is due to the increase in retirement and insurance costs. Dr. Graziano agreed to provide him with that information.

Mr. Mitchell stated that he has taken a first look at the proposed budget and is stunned to see how little is flexible. Ms. Douglas stated the Board needs more time to review the proposal; by that time, maybe the numbers from the State of New Hampshire will be available. Ms. Douglas suggested the Board may need to work closely with the administrative team to fully understand the budget proposal.

Ms. Asdot asked if hybrid or remote learning were necessary next year, would that change the budget significantly. Ms. Harvey stated that they tried to take that possibility into consideration. She said that this proposal is the fourth version of the proposal and many changes were made along the way. Mr. Hamilton stated that health and maintenance supplies were of consideration given COVID-19. Ms. Bickford stated that the cost of transportation may increase if we remain in a remote and hybrid environment, due to the individual plans that are in place to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

XIII. SCHOOL BOARD (Continued)

A. Superintendent Search

Ms. Douglas stated that there is a committee of twelve people working on the search for superintendent. She is pleased with the selection of people on the committee.

B. Sally Blanchette

Mr. Mitchell suggested that the recommendation of the Good to Great Team to create process maps for the position of financial manager should be stepped up in order to be prepared for her departure.

Mr. Gauthier asked about the timeline for advertising the position. Ms. Douglas stated the Board would need to receive an official letter of resignation from Ms. Blanchette before embarking on a search. She stated that the Board may want to revisit the recommendations of the Good to Great Team.

Mr. Mitchell asked Dr. Graziano to ascertain how much time is spent by Ms. Blanchette on payroll functions, as it might be a good idea to investigate contracting that work out to a provider.

C. Pittsfield Beautification Project

The Pittsfield Beautification Committee sent a letter asking the Board for the approval of placing dog waste bags and buckets. On a motion made by Mr. Mitchell and seconded by Mr. Gauthier, the Board voted unanimously to approve having dog waste supplies provided at Drake Field by the Beautification Committee, who will also take responsibility for their upkeep.

D. Snow Plow Bids

According to Ms. Douglas, there were two bids for snow plowing. One is from Scott Aubertin Excavation for \$18,000 and the other is from K & B Excavation for \$15,000. On a motion made by Ms. Asdot and seconded by Ms. Drouin, the Board voted unanimously to accept the bid of K & B Excavation.

XIV. COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

A. Budget Committee - Mr. Mitchell

Mr. Mitchell reported to the Board the activities of the Budget Committee. The process is going well considering the hybrid nature of the meetings.

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

XV. HIGH SCHOOL TUITION STUDY PUBLIC INPUT

Ms. Elliott asked if the Tuition Study Committee was the first step in a plan to move students to another district. Ms. Douglas stated there are a number of steps that need to be taken and that this study committee is just the first step in determining the visibility of tuitioning students to another high school. Ms. Asdot stated that this study is the result of a warrant article last year, which the Town approved. She invited Ms. Elliott to participate in the Zoom meetings being held by the Committee.

Mr. Clough is very concerned about the impact of closing the high school on the town. Ms. Douglas stated that she has done some research on the socio-economic impact on towns that have closed their high school and has asked Dr. Graziano to be sure and make that a part of the work done by the Tuition Study Committee. Mr. Clough opined that the district should be looking at ways in which more people can be attracted to the town, which will have a positive impact on the cost of education. There is a strong community of caring individuals in this town and that needs to be made apparent in order to attract new families to the town, which in turn will reduce taxes. Ms. Asdot, who is a member of the Tuition Study Committee, said that she is also very concerned about the relationships that exist and add to the positive feeling of the community and will continue to express that at the meetings.

Mr. Clough stated that there are many advantages of a small school. Mr. Mitchell stated that he was the chair of the Economic Development Committee for approximately six years. He explained that in that role, he worked with many companies potentially interested in doing business in Pittsfield; the major interest of businesses was the school in the community.

XVI. PUBLIC INPUT

Bob Schiferle asked when the Board would be meeting with Sally Blanchette to have a discussion of the budget, line by line.

Heather Elliot asked about the plan for pivoting to remote for two weeks after Thanksgiving and two weeks after Christmas. Ms. Asdot stated that people are being surveyed and a subsequent recommendation will be made to the Board at the next meeting.

Justin Clough commended the administration for the work they did with the recent outbreak of COVID-19 at PES. There was criticism expressed on Facebook, which he felt was unwarranted. Mr. Clough thanked the Board for inviting him to be on the Tuition Study Committee and regretted his inability to serve.

Jill Gauthier (via Zoom)asked if there is a consideration of PES going remote to eliminate the need to go back and forth between hybrid and remote until after the holidays. Ms. Douglas stated the COVID-19 Steering Committee will be working on the analysis of survey data and will be making a recommendation at the next meeting.

Mr. Clough asked if there was a possibility of teachers using technology to incorporate remote students in classrooms. Mr. Hamilton said that some teachers are already including remote students in Zoom classrooms.

XVII. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for November 19, 2020 at 5:30 in the Pittsfield Middle High School Lecture Hall.

XVIII. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by Mr. Mitchell and seconded by Ms. Asdot, the meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tobi Gray Chassie
Recording Secretary