

APPROVED BY THE PITTSFIELD SCHOOL BOARD

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

MINUTES

Pittsfield School Board Meeting
October 7, 2021
Pittsfield Middle High School

I. CALL TO ORDER

Members Present: Adam Gauthier, Chairperson
Justin Clough, Vice Chairperson
Molly Goggin
Diane Rider

Others Present: Bryan Lane, Interim Superintendent
Derek Hamilton, PMHS Principal
Kathy LeMay, PES Assistant Principal
Michael Wylie, PES Principal
Members of the Public

Chairperson Gauthier opened the meeting at 5:31 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. AGENDA REVIEW

The following items were added to the agenda:

- Resolutions from NH School Board Association (Ms. Rider)
- Board Code of Conduct (Mr. Clough)
- Tuition Study (Mr. Clough)
- Mission / Vision Statement (Mr. Clough)

IV. ACTION ON AMENDED AGENDA

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

V. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

The September 2, 2021 minutes were considered by the Board. Changes include: on page two, paragraph seven, change to “School-wide assemblies...”; starting on page three, change Roman Numerals to be sequential; on page seven, paragraph five, change to “At 8:15 p.m. a motion was made by Mr. Clough and seconded by Ms. Goggin to...”; on page seven, paragraph six, change to “...adjourned at 8:17 p.m.” On a motion made by Mr. Clough and seconded by Ms. Goggin the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the September 2, 2021 as amended.

The September 16, 2021 minutes were considered by the Board. Changes include: starting on page three, change Roman Numerals to be sequential; on page seven, paragraph one, change to “Ms. Goggin”. On a motion made by Ms. Rider and seconded by Mr. Clough, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of September 16, 2021 as amended.

Mr. Lane explained that the non-public minutes from September 16, 2021 will be available for the Board’s review at the next meeting. He stated that when there is no action in a non-public session, separate minutes are not required; the Board agreed.

VI. PUBLIC INPUT

Ryan Rafferty asked for information relative to questions previously asked; Mr. Lane said he would be reporting results during his section of the meeting.

VII. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Matthew Swenson reported that the election was held with seventy-six percent of the student body voting. The process enhanced the understanding of Site Council among students, according to Mr. Swenson.

VIII. PES PRINCIPAL

A. Attendance

Mr. Wiley reported that the average number of absences for the last week of September was 40 out of 253 students.

B. Grants

Mr. Wiley reviewed Title I, Title II, and ESSER grant work. The ARP ESSER grant has started; these funds will be available for two years. Ms. Goggin asked if the ARP ESSER funds can be used to address learning loss in the area of reading. Mr. Wiley stated that Ms. LeMay, Ms. Bickford and he have been in conversation about the use of the money to address learning loss.

C. Calendar of Upcoming Events

Mr. Wiley provided dates for upcoming events at PES.

IX. PMHS PRINCIPAL

A. COVID-19 Update

Mr. Hamilton provided statistics relative to the COVID-19 impact at PMHS. He stated that the statistics do not illustrate the overall negative effect of COVID-19 and that the last month was the most challenging due to staff absences, student absences, and the process for making up work now that a remote platform is not available. Mr. Hamilton explained the difficulty that is being experienced regarding the maintaining of social distancing.

B. Family Communication

Mr. Hamilton provided the Board with a copy of the letter shared with families summarizing the challenges due to staff shortages, an introduction to new teachers, and the impact of transitioning to the yellow status. There are four position vacancies anticipated including the guidance coordinator, media specialist/online learning coordinator and two long-term substitutes.

C. Learning Studios

Learning

Mr. Hamilton explained that after an 18-month hiatus due to COVID-19, Studios are resuming on Wednesdays.

D. Professional Learning

According to Mr. Hamilton, focus groups as part of the professional development plan for Wednesdays have been organized.

E. School Newsletter

Mr. Hamilton provided the Board with a copy of the October district newsletter.

Mr. Clough provided further information about the impact of COVID-19 according to the news. He thanked the administration for their hard work. He offered advice for the administration to “keep moving forward.”

Mr. Clough asked if metrics were in place to assess the Universal Design for Learning (UDL); Mr. Hamilton stated that there is a protocol used that could be used to provide further information.

Ms. Rider stated that she has provided suggestions on formats to be used on the website to inform the public of curriculum materials. Mr. Hamilton stated that the

work is in progress. Ms. LeMay stated that the format used currently has been published to ensure transparency, but the format was not intended for family consumption.

X. INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

A. COVID-19 Update

Mr. Lane explained that the statistics he reviews on a daily basis come from the NH Department of Public Health.

Mr. Lane stated that there was a question about the number of students being kept home due to the mask requirement. He stated that the number of these students is less than five.

Mr. Lane explained that Governor Sununu has not provided leeway to go remote; Pittsfield will continue to offer classes in school. The Commissioner of Education did clarify that we could offer a remote program if all the parents in the class agreed to that.

Mr. Lane asserted that a person could be hired to provide remote education. However, the shortage of staff will affect the district's ability to hire someone for this purpose. Mr. Lane explained the complexities involved in hiring qualified or provisionally qualified long-term substitutes.

B. Adequacy Funds / Special Meeting

Mr. Lane explained that following the vote at the Special Meeting on September 23, 2021, he provided the business office with the breakdown of the proposed expenditures by account. The administration will be bringing forth expenditure proposals for the Board's consideration; if the Board does not approve the expenditures, the funds will not be spent.

C. Budget Development 2021-2022

Mr. Lane stated that a budget proposal is in draft form. He will be creating a document to include the total budget as well as broken down by departments. Exact numbers for the increases in health insurance and retirement are not yet available so he is using a three percent increase as a working number.

Mr. Lane explained that the district is not currently providing a Family and Consumer Science option for middle and high school as that position was cut from the budget. Thus, regulations are not being met and the position will be added to the next budget proposal.

D. Staff Credentials

Mr. Lane reported that the certified staff whose credentials require renewal by June 30, 2022 have been notified that they should meet with him prior to April 1, 2022.

E. COVID-19 Protocols

Mr. Lane provided the Board with an updated copy of the *Pittsfield School District COVID-19 Protocols*. He explained the changes are in line with the *State of New Hampshire Coronavirus COVID-19 School and Child Care Toolkit 2021-2022 School Year* produced by the NH Department of Public Health. Although Mr. Lane is not required to follow the Toolkit guidance, he stated that due to protecting the immunocompromised students within the district, he feels that this is the most responsible handling of the situation.

Ms. Rider read a letter from parent Jamie Koladish, requesting a policy of optional masks. Ms. Rider opined that the goal is to mitigate death and serious illness and that the research does not align with the use of masks. She further opined that accommodations should not be made based on the needs of a minority of students. She provided the example of using braille for all students just because one student needs braille.

Mr. Lane stated that if the Board was interested in understanding the community's sentiment regarding the use of masks, Google surveys can be used. He forewarned that not all people will participate in the survey but a thirty percent response is the goal.

Ms. Goggin stated that all stakeholders should be surveyed including teachers, students, and parents.

Mr. Clough stated that the decision of the Board has to take into account all students. Discussion ensued regarding the efficacy of masks and the element of risk for serious illness and/or death.

Ms. Rider stated that the response protocol should be status quo until a survey can be conducted and a decision made by the Board using the information gathered in the survey. Mr. Lane explained how he would use the district's alert system to notify parents of the survey. He suggested students from grades six through twelve could be surveyed using their school email. The Board agreed to having Mr. Lane proceed with the survey as discussed.

F. HVAC Service Agreement

Mr. Lane stated that he learned that the HVAC service agreement is in need of renewal. He provided information relative to the continuation of a contract with Control Technologies, which is consistent with the previous contract and was put out to bid. Mr. Lane stated that the company has agreed to continue with the contract, rather than the per diem rate that has been in place since the contract ended.

Mr. Clough questioned the inconsistencies between two schools. Mr. Hamilton explained the differences in the technologies between PES and PMHS.

On a motion made by Ms. Goggin and seconded by Ms. Rider, the Board approved a contract with Control Technologies for three years for the cost of \$55,545.

G. Proposed Expenditures

Mr. Lane presented salary adjustments for non-union staff based on the decisions made at the Special Meeting. On a motion made by Mr. Clough and seconded by Ms. Goggin, the Board unanimously agreed to approve salary adjustments for support staff and administration as recommended by Mr. Lane.

H. Superintendent Search

Mr. Lane explained that he has been informed by Barrett Christina, Executive Director of the NH School Board's Association, that the deposit of \$5,000 to conduct a search for the superintendent of schools is still in their possession. On a motion made by Mr. Clough and seconded by Ms. Rider, the Board voted unanimously to leave the \$5,000 deposit in the hands of the NH School Board Association for the future search for superintendent.

XI. SCHOOL BOARD

A. Board Code of Conduct

Mr. Clough stated that he could not find any policies currently on Board ethics. He provided the Board with an example from another district, which he thought would be a good starting point for a discussion of the Board.

Mr. Lane stated that there is a policy that relates to "conflict of interest" for Board members. He also clarified that the NH Department of Education policies relative to ethics only apply to certified personnel.

Mr. Lane stated that a draft policy should be provided in advance of a meeting, at which time it could be further discussed by the Board. Mr. Clough asked that the topic be added to the next agenda for further discussion.

Mr. Lane explained that the steps that would be taken include a first reading of a draft, opportunity for public input, and then a vote at a second reading.

B. Mission / Vision Statement

Mr. Clough read the current mission statement. He stated that he would like a revised mission and vision statement. Mr. Lane suggested designating a future meeting as a workshop for developing a new mission and vision statement. He suggested inviting the public's input at the work session.

Ms. Goggin asked for clarification relative to the NEASC requirement for the vision of the graduate. Mr. Hamilton stated that the current vision/mission was written in 2019 and that the vision of the graduate is currently being developed and will be complete by the end of the school year. Mr. Clough opined that the vision and mission should be developed by the Board with community input considered; he encouraged the scheduling of a work session to give the topic some attention. November 18, 2021 was recommended as a date for the work session.

C. Tuition Study

Mr. Clough asked Mr. Lane for an update relative to the Tuition Study issue. Mr. Lane stated that the spreadsheet is complete other than the cost of transportation. He is not succeeding in receiving projected costs for transportation from companies. Mr. Lane warned that given the current situation with bus driver shortages, decisions could be severely hampered by availability of transportation. The cost projection spreadsheet will be available to the Board at the next meeting, although transportation costs will be a best-guess estimate.

Mr. Clough commented on the inaccuracies represented on social media. He asked if there was a way to provide information to the public to clarify the areas of confusion. Mr. Lane stated that the spreadsheet will provide specific information that will provide clarity.

Ms. Goggin stated that she would like to discuss the quality of the programs as well as the financial considerations when addressing tuitioning students out to other districts. She asked what the steps would be for making a final decision. Mr. Lane stated that the final decision is in the hands of the Board and will not require a vote of the community. He stated that he will clarify the steps at the next meeting after consulting with the district's attorney.

XII. COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

A. Budget Committee Representative

Mr. Clough explained that there are specific expectations being required by the Budget Committee. For example, they are interested in “COVID-19 spending” being separated. Mr. Clough stated the Budget Committee is interested in seeing notes that will clarify parts of the budget proposal. According to Mr. Clough, there has been discussion regarding a potential Capital Improvement Plan.

B. Drake Field and Facilities - Mr. Gauthier - No report.

C. Negotiating Team

Ms. Goggin and Mr. Gauthier had an initial meeting with the Negotiating Team at which ground rules were developed. Mr. Lane clarified that the content of the Negotiation Team meetings is not public and will not be included on the agenda of future meetings; the Board will discuss negotiation issues in non-public sessions.

D. Foss Family Scholarship

Ms. Rider recapped the Foss Family Scholarship meeting.

XIII. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for Thursday, October 21, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. in the Pittsfield Middle High School Media Center.

XIV. PUBLIC INPUT

Sarah Marston asked Mr. Lane if she understood correctly his statement that the taxpayers of Pittsfield would not vote on the decision regarding tuitioning students to another district, but that it would be a decision made by the Board. Mr. Lane stated that he will further investigate the answer to that question and report back at the next meeting.

Ryan Rafferty asked Mr. Lane to clarify the absentee rate. Mr. Lane said it was thirteen percent two days ago.

Mr. Rafferty asked Mr. Lane to clarify the statistics he is finding at the NH Department of Public Health. Mr. Lane stated that the capital area, of which Pittsfield is a part, is in the red zone. Mr. Rafferty stated that Pittsfield does not meet the criteria to be in the yellow status according to the data he is seeing. He opined that the COVID-19 Protocol is not being followed and if it was, masks would be optional based on the current statistics. Mr. Lane explained that he is using multiple data points to make decisions regarding the COVID-19 Protocol. Mr. Rafferty suggested that the criteria stipulated in the COVID-19 Protocols be followed; that would mean masks would be optional.

Mr. Rafferty students should be able to exercise their right to make the decision relative to the wearing of masks.

Ms. Marston stated that she questions the validity of asking young children their opinion about wearing masks.

Mr. Rafferty made a point that an assumption is being made by some that the reason the district is having difficulty filling positions is the fear of COVID-19.

Ms. Gauthier suggested looking into starting PES later in order to use buses for transporting students out of the district.

XV. SCHOOL BOARD (Continued)

A. NH School Board Association

Ms. Rider requested information from the Board regarding suggested resolutions to the NH School Board Association. The Board asked for additional information before making a final decision. Ms. Rider will provide the information to the members.

Ms. Rider informed the Board of information relative to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) intervening in matters of unruly community members at Board meetings.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by Mr. Clough and seconded by Ms. Goggin, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:54

Respectfully submitted,

Tobi Gray Chassie
Recording Secretary