

APPROVED BY THE PITTSFIELD SCHOOL BOARD

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

MINUTES

Pittsfield School Board Meeting
September 16, 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
Jessica Bickford, Director of Student Services
Michael Wylie, PES Principal
Members of the Public

Chairperson Gauthier opened the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

Mr. Clough led the group in the pledge of allegiance.

II. AGENDA REVIEW - No additions or deletions.

III. ACTION ON AMENDED AGENDA - No additions or deletions were made to the agenda.

IV. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES - No minutes were presented.

V. PUBLIC INPUT

Mr. Wood stated his appreciation to the Board for taking on the topic of Critical Race Theory.

Mr. Wood stated that the Board is responsible for curriculum and should not be distracted by the sentiment of the NH School Board Association, who he believes leads Boards to think they are micromanaging when dealing with curriculum. He encouraged the Board to deal with curriculum by initiating a committee that would include community members. Mr. Wood stated that he is hoping the quality of education will be enhanced by a review of curriculum.

Mr. Clough stated that although there have been more immediate issues that have had to be addressed, the topic of curriculum has been an interest to the Board for months. He opined that now that things have settled down a bit, it is time to address the topic of curriculum.

Ms. Rider stated that she has spoken to Leslie Vogt about using the Good to Great Team to review curriculum. She stated that there is a form available on the website to initiate the process that the Good to Great Team can use to review curriculum and other programs.

Ms. Goggin stated that there needs to be a metric by which the curriculum is being measured. She stated that the people in the field must have a tool to look at curriculum and that it should be the tool that the Board also uses.

Ms. Goggin warned that using standardized assessment results as a measure of success of the curriculum needs to be done with caution. Mr. Lane concurred that the NH State Assessment Program has changed over the past six years and is therefore difficult to use as a tool to measure success of curriculum.

Ryan Rafferty stated that he is in opposition of students being required to wear masks. He stated that he questions the criteria that was used to make the decision to have students wear masks. He asked what the metric is being used to make the decisions. Mr. Lane stated that fifteen percent of the school population was absent today as a result of a Covid related issue. Mr. Lane stated that the data that is available to the public is not current. For example, the DOE website states Pittsfield has one case, but in fact has fifteen percent of the population.

Mr. Rafferty stated that he challenges the authority of the Board to make the decision of whether or not students should wear masks. He opined that it is the parents' decision as to whether their children should wear masks.

Mr. Rafferty asked for clarification regarding the criteria outlined in the District Reopening Plan. Mr. Lane agreed to talk further with Mr. Rafferty.

Ms. Goggin stated that consideration of the "school community" be used to better define the percentages used in the District Reopening Plan.

Lisa English asked why the District Reopening Plan does not include a remote learning option. She stated her concern for students who may be required to be out of school for a COVID related reason.

Mr. Lane stated that the Commissioner of Education has stated that the school must be in session for five days per week. He provided information to help explain why the remote option is not being offered at this time. Mr. Lane explained the reasons for students being required to stay home from school for up to twenty days.

Ms. Rider stated that Virtual Learning Academy Charter School is an option if parents are uncomfortable with having their students' experience be negatively affected by COVID-19.

Mr. Wood stated that the number of absentee students may include students other than those affected by COVID-19. Mr. Rafferty stated that it is not safe to assume that the students who are absent have COVID-19.

VI. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE - No report.

VII. DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES

A. Flex Program Overview

Ms. Bickford provided the Board with information about the Flex program. She noted that the Good to Great Team will be evaluating the Flex Program during this school year. Mr. Gauthier questioned the numbers of students included; Ms. Bickford stated there are currently seven students in the PES Flex Program and seven students in the PHS Flex Program.

Ms. Rider asked Ms. Bickford for behavior management statistics such as the number of times classrooms are evacuated due to a student's behavior. Ms. Bickford agreed to gather data for the Board's review at a future meeting.

Mr. Clough asked for further information relative to the number of students who have been served by the Flex Program and the metric being used to measure the success of the program.

VII. INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

A. Information and Discussion

Mr. Lane reviewed the status of the district relative to COVID-19. Currently there are nine confirmed COVID cases in the district.

Mr. Lane explained that the administration is in the process of creating the 2022-2023 budget proposal. He is having the business manager generate a document with actuals for expenditures for the past three years.

Responding to a question asked by Ms. Goggin, Mr. Lane explained that he is looking at alternatives to NWEA for data gathering as well as a prescribed curriculum for reading and writing district-wide. Ms. Goggin asked that the programs selected be considered for integration into the middle high school. Consultants at PES are working with staff on the selection of a reading program.

B. Critical Race Theory

Mr. Lane provided information for the Board relative to Critical Race Theory. He stated that he will be providing staff with professional development relative to Critical Race Theory. He will be using a document that has been produced by the NH Department of Education. During this training opportunity, he will also be reviewing the educator's code of ethics.

Ms. Rider stated that she appreciated Mr. Lane's transparency regarding Critical Race Theory.

Ms. Rider opined that teacher candidates need to be asked about their philosophy. She believes that Critical Race Theory can creep into the curriculum if people are not screened when potentially being hired.

Ms. Rider suggested that there are federal requirements for some grants to include Critical Race Theory. Mr. Lane stated that he is not aware of that requirement and that all activities within a grant must be approved by the NH Department of Education.

C. Public Hearing Recap

Mr. Lane explained that he met with the Budget Committee on September 8, 2021. The warrant article being brought forward on the next night was discussed.

Mr. Lane stated that he thought the hearing went well. Ms. Rider stated that she received feedback from a community member regarding the clarity and helpfulness of Mr. Lane's presentation.

It was decided that the Board will call upon Mr. Lane to explain the warrant article at the meeting scheduled for next week.

D. Tuition Study

Mr. Lane explained the work that he is doing relative to tuitioning high school students and stated that transportation and special education costs are the complex issues being investigated. Discussion ensued regarding the details of transportation.

IX. SCHOOL BOARD

A. Nomination of Board Member

Mr. Lane stated that Jessica Drouin has resigned from the Board. He confirmed that the process would include putting an advertisement in the Concord Monitor asking for interested people to state their interest in a letter sent to the SAU office, candidate letters would be reviewed by the Board, interviews conducted, and a final decision made by the Board. Ms. Rider asked for the advertisement to be added to the Pittsfield Post's publication.

B. COVID-19 Protocol

Mr. Lane stated there is currently not a memorandum of agreement with the Education Association of Pittsfield relative to the use of sick time for COVID related issues. He made suggestions as to how this issue might be addressed by the Board. Ms. Goggin suggested Mr. Lane contact the leadership of the Education Association of Pittsfield to ask their opinion. Mr. Gauthier asked Mr. Lane to add this to the agenda for the next meeting. Mr. Clough stated that an agreement that will help staff contend with COVID-19 absences will be a way to improve work conditions.

Mr. Lane stated that attorneys in the State of NH are providing advice about the possibility of requiring employees to be vaccinated.

Mr. Lane offered to provide information and guidance regarding COVID-19 protocols in order for the Board to continue making decisions regarding the District Reopening Plan.

Discussion ensued regarding the intricate details of the COVID-19 District Reopening Plan. Mr. Lane agreed to continue his work to stay abreast of state-wide issues and solutions.

C. Adequacy Funds

Mr. Lane reminded the Board that they need to decide whether to add money to the warrant article for increases in pay for non-full year employees.

On a motion made by Mr. Clough and seconded by Ms. Goggin, the Board voted unanimously to approve a two percent raise for the returning non-full year staff for the amount of \$10,846.50.

X. COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

A. Budget Committee Representative - Mr. Clough

Mr. Clough reported that the Budget Committee was encouraged by Mr. Lane's presentation.

B. Drake Field and Facilities - Mr. Gauthier

Mr. Gauthier stated that he has been on the Drake Field and Facilities Committee for several years but has not been included in any meetings. Mr. Lane stated that he will look into that.

C. Negotiating Team - Ms. Goggin and Mr. Gauthier

Meetings with the Education Association of Pittsfield will be scheduled.

D. Foss Family Scholarship

Mr. Gauthier stated that due to the resignation of Jessica Drouin, a new Board member will need to be appointed.

On a motion made by Ms. Goggin and seconded by Mr. Clough, the Board unanimously approved having Ms. Rider be appointed as the Board's representative to the Foss Family Scholarship Committee.

XI. NEXT MEETING

The Deliberative Session is scheduled for Wednesday, September 15, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. in the PMHS cafeteria.

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for Thursday, October 7, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. in the Pittsfield Middle High School Media Center.

XII. PUBLIC INPUT

Mr. Wood stated that there are currently four lawsuits holding the School Board accountable for the decision of wearing masks and one for holding them responsible for not wearing masks.

Mr. Wood asked if there is an equity rating for our district. Mr. Lane said he is unaware of the term. Mr. Wood asked that he research the equity rating for the district. Mr. Wood recommended that the Board create a policy on Critical Race Theory. Mr. Wood provided several examples of potential issues that could arise within the district warranting a policy. Discussion ensued regarding the issues surrounding the issues of Critical Race Theory. Ms. Rider agreed that the Board should consider a policy regarding Critical Race Theory. Mr. Clough stated that he thinks the Board should follow the usual procedure for developing a policy. Ms. Goggin stated that law takes precedence over Board policy; the training that Mr. Lane will be doing with staff is based on this law. Ms. Goggin stated that there are already policies in place that directly respond to objectionable materials potentially used by teachers. Mr. Lane stated that he is confident that attorneys will soon be coming out with guidance for schools relative to these issues.

Mr. Rafferty asked Mr. Lane if the other districts who are reporting rising numbers in COVID-19 are requiring the use of masks. Mr. Lane stated he would look into that.

Mr. Rafferty commented on the inaccuracies on the district's website relative to the dates and times of meetings. Mr. Lane stated that due to staff shortages these mistakes have been made and will soon be corrected. Mr. Rafferty stated that there is a general lack of clear communication with the community.

Mr. Rafferty asked the Board to introduce themselves, which they did.

Mr. Rafferty asked for clarification regarding the issue of tuitioning high school students out to other districts.

Mr. Rafferty stated his appreciation for the fact that the Board has instituted the practice of reciting the pledge of allegiance.

Ms. English asked for clarification regarding the presentation that Mr. Lane made at the public hearing last week. Mr. Lane explained the adequacy fund issue to Ms. English and summarized the presentation that he will make at the meeting next week. He provided further information about the proposal that is being made by the administration relative to the expenditure of the adequacy funds. Ms. English asked if bringing back a math teacher was considered; Mr. Lane answered that it was not.

XIII. NON-PUBLIC SESSION

At 7:46 p.m. a motion was made by Mr. Clough seconded by Mr. Gauthier to enter into a non-public session under the authority of RSA 91-A:3 (c) to discuss a staff issue. The

Board was polled and voted unanimously to enter into a non-public session (Mr. Clough, yes; Mr. Gauthier, yes; Ms. Goggin, yes; Ms. Rider, yes).

At __8:24__ p.m. a motion was made by Mr. Clough and seconded by Mrs. Rider to exit from a non-public session. The Board was polled and voted unanimously to exit the non-public session (Mr. Clough, yes; Mr. Gauthier, yes; Ms. Goggin, yes; Ms. Rider, yes).

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

The Board was polled and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:25_ (Mr. Clough, yes; Mr. Gauthier, yes; Ms. Goggin, yes; Ms. Rider, yes).

Respectfully submitted,

Tobi Gray Chassie
Recording Secretary