2021 ANNUAL SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING DELIBERATIVE SESSION MINUTES

TOWN OF PITTSFIELD
SCHOOL DISTRICT DELIBERATIVE SESSION
February 3, 2021

The Pittsfield School District Deliberative Session was held at the Pittsfield Middle High School gymnasium Wednesday, February 3, 2021. School District Moderator Gerard LeDuc called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. Moderator LeDuc explained the rules of procedure and then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Due to the expectation of extended conversation regarding Article 03, Moderator LeDuc asked the Body if they would permit discussion of Articles 04 and 05 prior to Article 03. The Body agreed.

School Board Vice Chairperson Heidi Asdot read the following statement from School Board Chairperson Bea Douglas: “I am sorry that I am unable to attend tonight’s meeting. Due to circumstances out of my control I am quarantined through Friday and will be released on Saturday. This is due to having been exposed to Covid 19. I must put my health and the health of all those around me as my first priority. Please be kind and thoughtful listeners as my board and our superintendent present and answer questions pertaining to the school budget. The board and all administrators have worked very hard on this budget. We understand your frustration as it is ours. We will answer your questions and hope that you will listen to what struggles have been while trying to develop a budget under the most extenuating of circumstances with the loss of a million dollars in state aid and rising costs in retirement and insurance. Thank you all for being here tonight, Sincerely, Bea Douglas, Pittsfield School Board Chair.” She also read a statement from School Board Member Ted Mitchell: “Though I am not physically present at this deliberative session I want everyone to know that I completely support the School Board, School District, Administrations, Teachers and Students. I hope you will also, when considering the Warrant Articles presented to you.”

**ARTICLE 01 School Lunch Program**
To see if the Pittsfield School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $330,000 for the support of the School Lunch Program. This appropriation will be funded by a like amount of revenue from the sales of food and State and Federal sources. (Estimated tax impact of this article: $0) **Recommended** by the Pittsfield School Board. **Recommended** by the Pittsfield Budget Committee (12 yes, 0 no) (Majority vote required)

Article 01 was read by Moderator LeDuc.

Motion made by School Board Member Adam Gauthier to approve Article 01 as read, seconded by School Board Vice Chairperson Heidi Asdot.

Moderator LeDuc opened the floor for discussion.
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There being no further discussion, Article 01 shall appear on the ballot as written.

ARTICLE 02 Receive and expend grant funds
To see if the Pittsfield School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $850,000 for the support of Federal and private foundation grant-funded educational programs of the Pittsfield School District. This appropriation is contingent upon receiving revenue from Federal grants and private foundations and will be expended in accordance with Federal and State requirements upon approval by the NH Department of Education or private foundation requirements. (Estimated tax impact of this article: $0) Recommended by the Pittsfield School Board. Recommended by the Pittsfield Budget Committee (12 yes, 0 no) (Majority vote required)

Article 02 was read by Moderator LeDuc.

Motion made by School Board Member Adam Gauthier to approve Article 02 as read, seconded by School Board Member Jessica Drouin.

Moderator LeDuc opened the floor for discussion.

There being no further discussion, Article 02 shall appear on the ballot as written.

ARTICLE 03 Operating Budget (discussed after Articles 04 & 05)
Shall the Pittsfield School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling $10,529,306? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be $10,918,600, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Pittsfield School District or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. (Estimated tax impact of this article: $3.30/thousand; estimated tax impact of the default budget $4.43.) Not Recommended by the Pittsfield School Board. Recommended by the Pittsfield Budget Committee (8 yes, 4 no) (Majority vote required)

Article 03 was read by Moderator LeDuc.

Motion made by School Board Vice Chairperson Heidi Asdot to approve Article 03 as read, seconded by School Board Member Jessica Drouin.

Dan Green made the motion to amend Article 03 to read “Shall the Pittsfield School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amount of $10,029,306”. Carole Dodge
seconded the motion. Dan Green presented Moderator LeDuc the petition to amend the article on behalf of the signers Daniel Greene, Carole Dodge, Katie Bachelder, Daniel Ward, Helen Schiff, Scott Jackson, Teresa Jackson, Melissa Chagnon, Teresa Emerson, Justin Greene, Scot Palmer, Teresa Palmer, and Tracy Huyck. Budget Committee Chairperson Bob Schiferle stated it was an exceptionally challenging year. He stated the original budget proposed by the School Board would have resulted in a $4.71 per thousand increase. This was primarily the result of the expected reduction of state revenue and some minor increases in expenses. The Budget Committee carefully reviewed and analyzed the budget and there was lot of discussion. They could not find anything to cut, but because of the potential tax impact on the taxpayers, it was voted to reduce the overall budget by $487,000. The Committee was torn. Dan Green requested a secret ballot to vote on the proposed amendment. Mike Cabral claimed the school got over $200,000 from the State for COVID relief and additional federal COVID relief money. He claimed the school is not using the funds they have appropriately. Tracy Huyck voiced concern that all the proposed cuts based on the Budget Committee proposed budget will negatively impact the students. She claimed the School Board made cuts starting from the bottom up, and we have more administrators than we need. Rick Anthony asked the people who signed the petition to come forward and share their plan for where the additional $500,000 in cuts will come. Dan Schroth reminded the voters of the $400,000 that was cut from the budget when we lost the Barnstead students. It made sense to him at the time. Now he believes it is important to listen to the Budget Committee. We can’t just decimate the school. He feels very differently now than he did back then. Budget Committee member Katie Bachelder stated she has no ill will toward the school or administration. She knows they are trying, but she is not sure she can afford it, and she knows others cannot. It is not up to her to find where to cut. She went through the budget line by line and doesn’t know where the cuts can come from. She believes we should be comparing to the 2019 budget, not the 2020 budget. She knows there are costs out of our control such as health care and retirement costs, but they need to come from somewhere. Budget Committee member Mary Paradise stated it was a very difficult season for the Budget Committee. She agrees it is not our job to say where the cuts are made, but it is irresponsible to blindly cut the budget without a plan for those cuts and to base our education budget solely on what taxes we can afford, because the State does not fund education as it should. Without the funds the Budget Committee has already proposed cut, there will be substantial losses. Responding to a previous statement that “we have less and less for our kids, why should we give the school more”, Ms. Paradise stated we have less for our kids because we have not been able to spend what we should on education because we are a property poor district. She stated her husband is retired, and she hopes to retire soon. We had tough years when her children were in school here as well, and many retirees and the elderly still supported the education budget. We have worked very hard to build our school district, but because of continued cuts to the education budget each year, we have decimated a school district that was recognized nationally and internationally for the amazing work we were doing with little amount of money. To cut even more from the budget is irresponsible, because it is not there to take. Just like the town budget, if we do not set money aside for big projects for maintenance and equipment, it will cost more because we did not plan for it. She encouraged everyone to vote down the amendment. Linda Small asked
where $1,000,000 came from and why we lost it. Interim School Superintendent Dr. John Graziano responded that it was loss of a one-time adequacy grant from the State. He understands the frustration, but the loss of the State revenue is devastating. Carol Dodge claimed the money was used to hire teachers, and not put into maintenance of the building. She claimed the money was not used as it should have been. Dr. Graziano responded the money went back to the town to reduce taxes, not to hire teachers. Budget Committee member Mary Paradise confirmed the money went back to the town. She said she believes the money was given to the schools because the State was sued for not fulfilling its obligation to adequately fund education, and they threw us a bone because they know they have not given the schools what they need. It was meant to be used to help our students, but we used it to lower taxes. Budget Committee member Mary Paradise responded statutorily, in order to use the funds we had to account for it in the budget.

Moderator LeDuc called for the secret ballot. Polls closed at 7:50pm. Moderator LeDuc asked the supervisors of the checklist to count the ballots.

44 yes 25 no. Amendment passes.

Moderator LeDuc read the article as amended.

There being no further discussion, Article 03 shall appear on the ballot as amended.

ARTICLE 04 Special Education Capital Reserve Fund
To see if the school district will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $50,000 to be added to the Special Education Capital Reserve Fund previously established in March 1996 to fund special education programs for identified students of the district under the provisions of RSA 35:1. This sum to come from June 30 fund balance available for transfer on July 1. No amount to be raised from taxation. (Current account balance, approximately $277,540) Recommended by the Pittsfield School Board. Recommended by the Pittsfield Budget Committee (11 yes, 1 no) (Majority vote required)

Article 04 was read by Moderator LeDuc.

Motion made by School Board Member Jessica Drouin to approve Article 04 as read, seconded by School Board member Adam Gauthier.

Moderator LeDuc opened the floor for discussion.

There being no further discussion, Article 04 shall appear on the ballot as written.
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ARTICLE 05 Dumpster Capital Reserve Fund
To see if the Pittsfield School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of $3,000 to be added to the Dumpster Replacement Capital Reserve Fund previously established to fund replacement of dumpsters at the schools of the district. (Estimated tax impact of this article: $0.01/thousand. (Current account balance $6,005). Recommended by the Pittsfield School Board. Recommended by the Pittsfield Budget Committee (11 yes, 1 no) (Majority vote required)

Article 05 was read by Moderator LeDuc.

Motion made by School Board Member Jessica Drouin to approve Article 05 as read, seconded by School Board Member Adam Gauthier.

Moderator LeDuc opened the floor for discussion.

There being no further discussion, Article 05 shall appear on the ballot as written.

Moderator Leduc adjourned the meeting at 8:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

[Signature]

Erica Anthony
School District Clerk