

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

MINUTES

Pittsfield School Board Meeting
August 19, 2021
Pittsfield Middle High School

I. CALL TO ORDER

Members Present: Adam Gauthier, Chairperson
Justin Clough, Vice Chairperson
Jessica Drouin
Molly Goggin
Diane Rider (arrived at 5:35)

Others Present: Jessica Bickford, Director of Student Services
Melissa Brown, PMHS Assistant Principal
Derek Hamilton, PMHS Principal
Kathy LeMay, PES Assistant Principal
Michael Wylie, PES Principal
Members of the Public

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

Mr. Gauthier explained that there were two public hearings scheduled for tonight's meeting. The first is for the Suncook Rotary and the second regarding adequacy funds. Due to a notification error, there will not be a hearing for the adequacy aid. Instead, there will be a discussion regarding the process.

The Public Hearing for the Rotary was opened. (See minutes)

Mr. Lane apologized for a misinterpretation of the NH Department of Education rules about the reallocation of the adequacy funds. He explained that he has discussed the matter with representatives of the NH Department of Education, the School District clerk, Jamie Dow at the Division of Revenue Administration, and Attorney Barbara Loughman in order to better understand the process.

Mr. Lane explained the draft warrant article to expend additional funds. He stated there is a proposal to spend \$233,713 of the available \$352,505 on the hiring of one library media specialist for PES, one special education teacher for PMHS, one administrative assistant for PMHS, and salary increases for four district administrators.

Mr. Lane further explained that a public hearing needs a seven-day notice and the special meeting must be held fourteen days, or more, after the public hearing. If the Board is amenable to moving forward, Mr. Lane suggested the following schedule:

- August 23, 2021 – Warrant and notice of a public hearing is posted
- September 9, 2021 – Public Hearing is held for the Town to give input
- September 23, 2021 – Special Meeting is held
- September 27, 2021 – Business office send revised budget to State, if warrant passes

Mr. Lane provided the following information:

- The Division of Revenue Administration will begin setting tax rates in the first week of October. If we inform them of the meeting, they will hold off working on our files.
- If the Public Hearing is held on September 9, 2021, the School District Clerk is not available. The Board would need to find someone to take the minutes.
- If the Board chooses to not go ahead with the Special Meeting, the NH Department of Education will apply the \$352,505 to lowering the tax rate that will be set in October of 2021.

Mr. Clough asked what amount was already returned to the Town of Pittsfield. Mr. Gauthier answered \$587,000. He reviewed the impact on the taxpayers in several scenarios.

Ms. Goggin stated that she thinks it is important to move the proposed warrant forward in order to hear the voices of the townspeople. She stated that the proposed use of the funds is sustainable and important to the district.

Mr. Gauthier stated that he agreed that the public should be heard. He stated that he would like to see measures taken to ensure that there is not a repeat of the situation that occurred during the budget process last spring.

Ms. Rider stated her agreement that the warrant article should be moved forward.

Mr. Lane stated that the Budget Committee needs to be consulted; they do not need to vote to support or not to support the warrant article. Only people at the special meeting will be voting on the warrant and there would be no modifications made to the warrant at the time of the special meeting. The public hearing is the only time that opinions regarding changes can be heard.

Katie Bachelder asked for clarification regarding monies returned to offset taxes. Louis Houle, with confirmation from Mr. Lane, explained that the money will be used to reduce taxes during the current year. Mr. Houle explained that the effect of sending this one-time windfall to the taxpayers would be detrimental as it would create a spike in taxes in the next year. He recommended using the funds to purchase what the district needs so as to reduce a “spike” effect for taxpayers. Discussion ensued regarding the options available.

Ms. Rider voiced concern about thinking about the adequacy recalculation as “a gift” and explained that the money is from the taxpayers.

A motion was made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Ms. Rider to move forward with the warrant article and scheduling the public hearing. Discussion ensued. The Board unanimously approved the motion.

Amy Ramsey asked if the School Board could provide a summary of the proposed expenditures and how it would effect the budget over the next few years. Mr. Lane stated that he would be providing information to the Board’s chair, who will be communicating with the chair of the Budget Committee. Information will be disseminated to the public at that time.

II. AGENDA REVIEW

The following items were added to the agenda:

- Agenda Packets (Mr. Gauthier)

III. ACTION ON AMENDED AGENDA

On a motion made by Mr. Clough and seconded by Ms. Goggin, the agenda was approved as amended.

IV. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

A motion was made by Ms. Goggin and seconded by Mr. Gauthier to approve the minutes of the August 5, 2021 meeting. Changes made include: on page two, paragraph nine, change to Tracy Huyck; on page three paragraph one, change Matthew Wenson to Swenson; starting on page four, change Roman numerals to be in sequence; on page eight, paragraph eight, change from unanimously to “Mr. Clough, Ms. Drouin, Ms. Goggin and Ms. Rider voting in the affirmative and Mr. Gathier opposing...”; and on page ten, paragraph five, change to Tracy Huyck. The Board unanimously approved the minutes as amended.

V. PUBLIC INPUT - None.

VI. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Matthew Swenson provided a summary of the Site Council's activities.

VII. PES PRINCIPAL

A. Student Family Handbook

Mr. Wiley presented the PES Student Family Handbook. On a motion made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Ms. Rider, the Board voted unanimously to approve the PES Student Family Handbook.

B. Calendar of Upcoming Events

Mr. Wiley provided an update of events including new staff orientation on August 18 and 19, 2021, teacher workshop days on August 25 and 26, 2021, Open House and BBQ on August 26, 2021, and the first day of school on August 30, 2021.

VIII. PMHS PRINCIPAL

C. New Teacher Orientation

Mr. Hamilton provided a list of topics that were covered with new staff during New Teacher Orientation on August 18 and 19, 2021.

D. Teacher Workshop Days

Mr. Hamilton provided a list of topics being covered with all staff during teacher workshop days on August 25 and 26, 2021.

E. Opening Days

Mr. Hamilton reported that a district-wide Open House will be held on August 26, 2021 and outlined the activities at PMHS.

F. PATCH Program

Mr. Hamilton informed the Board of changes with the PATCH program. Although there will no longer be a clinic at PMHS, a doctor from Epsom Family Care is interested in becoming the district doctor.

IX. PMHS ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

A. PMHS Student Family Handbook

Ms. Brown requested approval of the PMH Student and Family Handbook. She reviewed the minor changes that have been made to the document. On a motion made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Mr. Clough, the Board voted unanimously to approve the PMHS Student and Family Handbook.

On a motion made by Ms. Goggin and seconded by Mr. Clough, the Board voted unanimously to approve the Staff Handbook

X. DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES

A. Special Education Procedures Manual

On a motion made by Ms. Goggin and seconded by Ms Drouin, the Board voted unanimously to approve the Special Education Procedures Manual.

XI. ACTING INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

A. Hiring Process

Mr. Lane thanked Sheila Dupere for her help after she moved to another position. The newly hired administrative assistant, Sarah Zinn, will begin on September 9, 2021.

The following people have been hired as para-educators: Amber Johnson, Brenna Driscoll, Allison LaRochelle, Shelli Vardaro, Katie Desainde, and Claire Drew (part-time).

Wayne Fraser, according to Mr. Lane, has been hired to accept the position of Alternative Learning Program coordinator.

Louisa Meehan has been hired as the PMHS art teacher.

Heidi Hoffman has been hired for the position of special education teacher at PES for grade 2.

Wendy Holbrook has been hired for the position of special education teacher at PMHS.

Amanda Cleveland has been hired for the position of student support specialist for PES.

B. Tuitioning High School Students

Mr. Lane stated that he is in the process of gathering data relative to tuitioning high school students. He stated that one major obstacle is transportation. Although the

contract with Marston's Transportation Company is more than reasonable, they may not have the capacity to do all transportation and other companies are much more expensive. Mr. Lane is continuing his research and calculations relative to the proposal to tuition high school students to another district.

Mr. Clough thanked Mr. Lane for his work during his first week of employment.

C. Other

Mr. Lane stated that he has been visiting teacher meetings and is impressed with the high level of enthusiasm and spirit of the faculty.

Mr. Gauthier thanked Mr. Lane for his immediate attention to details during his first week.

XII. SCHOOL BOARD

A. Board Packets

Mr. Gauthier asked if board packets can be provided in hard copy to the members. Mr. Lane stated that this would be done.

B. Hiring / Resignations

Procedures relative to hiring and resignations were reviewed by Mr. Lane.

C. Investigation

Mr. Clough assumed responsibility for the meeting. He asked Mr. Gauthier if he had anything to say about the allegations that were made by another Board member at the previous meeting.

Mr. Lane stated that he has conferred with Ms. Barbara Loughman. She stated that Mr. Lane would not be advised to conduct an investigation. If the Board directs an investigation, an independent investigator shall be hired.

Mr. Clough clarified that he had asked the Interim Superintendent to determine the appropriateness of conducting an investigation; he did not "direct" an investigation to take place.

Ms. Goggin stated that she thinks it is not in the purview of the Board to investigate the matter further.

XIII. COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

- A. Budget Committee Representative - Mr. Clough
- B. Drake Field and Facilities - Mr. Gauthier
- C. Negotiating Team - Ms. Goggin and Mr. Gauthier

Mr. Lane asked if a letter had been initiated by the Board to the Education Association of Pittsfield. When the Board responded that it had not, Mr. Lane agreed to send the letter.

- D. Foss Family Scholarship - Ms. Drouin

XIV. PUBLIC INPUT

Clayton Wood asked the Board to conduct a public hearing regarding the wearing of masks. Currently, the wearing of masks is optional. Mr. Wood asked for the topic of Critical Race Theory to be added to an upcoming agenda. Ms. Goggin thanked Mr. Wood for the suggestion and agreed that it would be important to use this opportunity to educate the public around this topic. Mr. Lane agreed to put the requested item on an upcoming agenda. Mr. Lane also stated that Covid-19 data will be constantly monitored in order to make decisions relative to the health and safety of students and staff.

Heather Elliott asked for clarification relative to wearing masks. Mr. Clough provided clarifying information and Mr. Lane stated that the information will be sent to parents before the opening of school.

Heather asked if a previous suggestion to investigate curriculum being used in other schools, especially those who are seeing higher test scores, would be taken. Mr. Clough stated that although testing scores is only one factor to consider, a review of curriculum is a priority for the Board. Ms. Rider stated that she is concerned about the accessibility of curriculum on the website. She thinks there is too much information relative to the PES curriculum and she is having difficulty finding information relative to PMHS. She has requested a listing of materials being used. Ms. Goggin stated that it is not the responsibility of the Board to oversee curriculum. She said it is the responsibility of the Board to support the superintendent and the superintendent to support the administration in developing curriculum.

Amy Ramsey asked if the Board is considering an informational meeting about the issue of tuitioning high school students to another district. Mr. Gauthier stated that there will be another opportunity for the public to hear information relative to tuitioning students.

Ms. Rider suggested that parents should be encouraged to reach out with questions and comments about the curriculum. Mr. Clough stated that he appreciates the public who is in attendance at tonight's meeting and hopes that there will be continued interest in attending. Attending a meeting is a way in which the public's voice can be heard, as is

meeting with the superintendent. Mr. Clough encouraged people to follow a “chain of command” but said that if things are not addressed appropriately, the superintendent and Board would act accordingly.

XV. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for Thursday, September 2, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. in the Pittsfield Middle High School Media Center.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by Mr. Clough and seconded by Ms. Goggin, the meeting was adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tobi Gray Chassie
Recording Secretary