

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

MINUTES

Pittsfield School Board Meeting
May 20, 2021
Pittsfield Middle High School

I. CALL TO ORDER

Members Present: Adam Gauthier, Chairperson
Justin Clough, Vice Chairperson
Jessica Drouin (via Zoom)
Molly Goggin
Diane Rider

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 (via Zoom)
Kathy LeMay, PES Assistant Principal
Members of the Public (some via Zoom)

Chairperson Gauthier opened the meeting at 5:34 p.m.

II. AGENDA REVIEW

The following items were added to the agenda:

- Curriculum (Mr. Clough)
- Drake Field (Mr. Gauthier)
- Committee Assignments (Mr. Gauthier)
- Non-Resident Attendance Request (Dr. Graziano)
- Drake Field Concern (Mr. Hamilton)

III. ACTION ON AMENDED AGENDA

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

IV. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

A motion was made by Ms. Drouin and seconded by Mr. Clough to approve the minutes of the public meeting on May 6, 2021. Changes include: page one, under agenda review, change to "...items were..."; page three, paragraph five, omit the word "by"; on page three, paragraph six, change to "...cases resulting in..." and adjust spacing after section B; on page six, paragraph one, change to "Jacqueline"; on page six, paragraph four, change to "...May 8, 2021 at 9:30."; on page seven under Committee Assignments, omit Ms. Douglas and Mr. Mitchell and insert the word vacant; and on page seven, paragraph four, change to "...grades up would not be recognized..."The minutes were approved unanimously as amended.

A motion was made by Mr. Clough and seconded by Ms. Rider to approve the minutes of the public meeting on May 10, 2012 as written.

V. PUBLIC INPUT - None

VI. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Harrison Hill explained that the last proposal considered by the Site Council made changes to the membership of the Council. The change was made to include at-large members, rather than representatives from committees in order to allow more students who would like to be on Site Council possible.

According to Mr. Hamilton, a new chair of the Site Council will be elected and take over on June 1, 2021. The new chair will become the representative to the School Board. Mr. Gauthier thanked Mr. Hill for his hard work on Site Council

VII. PES PRINCIPAL

A. Attendance

According to Ms. Harvey and Ms. LeMay, daily absences have continued to improve to ten to fifteen absences per day.

B. Summer Camp at PES

Ms. Harvey and Ms. LeMay reported that plans are continuing to develop around a three week summer camp option for PES students. Teachers are hard at work creating plans that will help to re-engage students in learning while giving them skills that they can transfer to many different areas.

C. ESSER II (CRRSA)

Ms. LeMay explained that the ESSER II grant has been sent in with the first round of activities, which include chromebooks, teacher computers, fifty percent of a district social worker, and summer meal program.

Mr. Gauthier asked if specific costs were included in the grant proposal to which Ms. LeMay answered in the affirmative. Mr. Gauthier asked if funds would be needed to continue the work after the grant was no longer available. Ms. LeMay stated that the chromebooks and computers were one-time expenses; fifty percent of the district social worker was cut from the district budget proposal, but will be allowed due to social emotional needs being met; staffing needs are based on needs relative to COVID-19; and disc golf is a one-time purchase, as are the cleaning supplies. Mr. Gauthier asked if the grant could be used for repairs. Ms. LeMay answered in the affirmative. Mr. Gauthier asked if the proposal was for future costs. Ms. Harvey stated that it was for future costs, as good work had been done by Ms. Blanchette and Ms. LeMay to spend the previous grant.

Mr. Clough asked if someone will be hired to help with the grant administration. Ms. LeMay stated that she will be doing the work throughout the summer and will reassess the need for assistance in the fall.

Mr. Gauthier asked if a public hearing is required to spend the funds from the grant. Dr. Graziano said a public hearing is not necessary, but informing the community regarding expenditures is critical.

D. PES Classes for 2021-2022

Projected class sizes were provided to the Board for the school year 2021-2022.

E. Spring Conference Data

Ms. Harvey and Ms. LeMay provided the Board statistics relative to parent participation at spring conferences with teachers. Mr. Gauthier stated how nice it was to see the participation rate go up from last spring.

VIII. PMHS PRINCIPAL

A. Newsletter

Mr. Hamilton apologized for not including a copy of the newsletter in the Board's packet. The topics included in the newsletter were Exhibition Night, the NEASC Community Forum, and Family Information Nights.

B. End of Year Events

Mr. Hamilton provided copies of letters shared with families of eighth graders and seniors. The letters provided details for the end-of-year events.

Mr. Clough stated that he was upset to read the information relative to the Eighth Grade Promotion Ceremony. Mr. Hamilton stated that the Board, at their last meeting, expressed their desire regarding eighth grade promotion activities. Accordingly, changes were made to include calling it a promotion ceremony, rather than an awards ceremony. He explained that some students, due to the circumstances of the past year, would need additional time to demonstrate mastery of course competencies. Therefore all students will be eligible to participate in the ceremony.

Mr. Clough stated that he understands that the year has been tough for everyone. For that reason, he thinks the students who did everything they were supposed to do, should be duly acknowledged. He is supportive of students needing help but wonders what benefit there is in promoting all students, not just the students who met the requirements.

Ms. Goggin asked about the certificates students will be receiving. Mr. Hamilton stated that to find the balance, he is suggesting that the students who met requirements receive a promotion certificate and the students who did not, receive a different certificate. Mr. Clough stated his concern about how it will be perceived by the students and their families if students who did not yet meet requirements receive acknowledgement. Ms. Rider asked if the promotion ceremony could be delayed until August, when the students needing more time would have completed their requirements. Mr. Hamilton said that this option was considered, but eventually abandoned.

Mr. Clough stated further concern that the students who met the requirements. He wanted confirmation that the students who met requirements will be “put on a pedestal” in front of their families and rewarded for their hard work. Mr. Hamilton stated that those students will be properly acknowledged.

Mr. Hamilton stated that students need to meet the requirements in their core courses (math, science, language arts, and social studies) in order to begin grade nine in the fall. He stated that there are eighteen out of fifty-two students who are failing two or more of their classes. These students will need to complete the work to meet competencies before they can begin grade nine.

Mr. Clough reiterated his view of the perception of students and their families. He wanted to be sure the students who met requirements will be properly acknowledged.

Ms. Brown explained that the letters that were sent to families have already worked to help students and their families understand the predicament they are in

relative to promotion. Many students are working to meet competencies in order to be acknowledged.

Mr. Gauthier asked for details regarding the sequence of events during the promotion ceremony. Mr. Hamilton explained what the event would look like. He stated that there would be a balance of acknowledging students who have met requirements with the students who, due to the conditions presented by COVID-19, need more time and support to complete the requirements. Mr. Hamilton reviewed the purposeful and intentional process followed to come to conclusions about how to handle these end of year activities.

C. NHIAA Tournament Guidelines

Mr. Hamilton provided a summary of the NHIAA Executive Council meeting on May 19, 2021. He read additional information relative to the wearing of masks. According to Mr. Hamilton, the main takeaway is that the Executive Council is recommending, rather than requiring, masks be worn during active play but still require masks to be worn in dugout areas. School nurses have opined their position on masks, asserting the use of masks until the COVID-19 vaccinations have been completed for student athletes. Mr. Hamilton said that, ultimately, it is the decision of the Board as to whether students wear masks on the field of play.

Ms. Rider asked about the percentage required to get to herd immunity; Mr. Hamilton stated the NHIAA did not provide that number.

Mr. Clough suggested that the Board follow the NHIAA recommendations as they have the data needed to make these decisions. Mr. Gauthier stated that he talked to the Athletic Director; the Athletic Director stated that he would be comfortable having the students not wear masks on the field, unless a team is unwilling to play against the team if they do not wear masks on the field.

Mr. Hamilton clarified that for the rest of the regular season, masks will be required. These recommended changes are only pertinent to tournament play. Further discussion ensued regarding the factors being taken into consideration as mask requirements are determined.

A motion was made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Ms. Rider, to approve the option of masks to be worn while actively participating in spring tournaments and to require masks be worn when not actively participating, in the dugout, during transportation, against teams who require their teams to wear masks, and when appropriate distancing cannot be maintained. The motion passed with Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Rider, and Ms. Drouin voting in the affirmative and Mr. Clough and Ms. Goggin opposing the motion.

Ms. Goggin stated that she believes athletes should be required to wear masks during play since students have yet to be fully vaccinated. Ms. Drouin stated that when allowing options, it could cause confusion and/or create the possibility of

students feeling badly if they choose to wear a mask. Discussion ensued regarding the consequences of the mask ruling.

Ms. Drouin asked if the item could be tabled until the next meeting in order to allow more time to see what other schools might be doing. Mr. Gauthier opined that timing is critical due to the dates of tournament play.

D. Site Council

Mr. Hamilton thanked Harrison Hill for his service to the Site Council as chair. The new person will be elected and begin on June 1, 2021; this person will then be the new School Board representative.

Mr. Hamilton stated that the Site Council is one of three in the state to serve in the capacity of leadership, which is a great opportunity for students.

Ms. Goggin commended the Site Council and said it was an extraordinary opportunity for students. She said it provides students with a way in which meaningful participation could occur.

E. Summer Academies

Mr. Hamilton reviewed the Summer Academy options being made available to students this summer. He noted that the program is coordinated by Jenn Massey. The programs will culminate in a presentation on July 16 at 5:00, to which School Board members are invited.

F. Drake Field Concern

Mr. Hamilton stated that a communication was received this week from a community member living on Bridge Street. He lives in the house behind the grandstand at Drake Field. Foul balls land in his yard and he is concerned about the danger of the balls relative to his children and wife, who is pregnant. Mr. Hamilton reviewed several options that have been previously considered including a batting cage, netting, and consultation from Primex. However, no action was previously taken.

Mr. Gauthier stated that another community member also has stated his concern about the foul balls. Mr. Gauthier has visited Drake Field and the homes of the concerned families and suggests that netting be installed and trees trimmed accordingly. Mr. Gauthier feels that if someone was hurt, it would result in a lawsuit, which ultimately would cost more than purchasing netting. Mr. Clough stated that he also felt a batting cage should be considered and that more than one option should be investigated. Mr. Clough stated that some electrical wires are of concern, as well, and should be addressed.

Mr. Gauthier stated that some neighbors of Drake Field are disposing of their fire pit ashes over the fence into Drake Field. Dr. Graziano stated that he would follow up. Dr. Graziano also said the issue of the foul balls will also be further investigated.

IX. PMHS ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL - No report

X. DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES

A. Medicaid

Ms. Bickford provided information relative to the Medicaid to Schools Program. She stated that the program now mandates that orders must include a medical diagnosis for students and a verification of medically necessary services in the school setting. An emergency meeting is scheduled with key stakeholders to begin deliberations on how schools and special education departments will respond to move forward with this. Ms. Bickford stated that she feels she should not bill for the services in question to avoid having to pay back funds paid out by Medicaid if found to be inappropriate.

Mr. Gauthier asked what percentage of students would be affected by this mandate. Ms. Bickford said it would be difficult to determine until a full file review is done.

Mr. Clough asked if it would be possible to write a letter to the parents of the students involved to inform them of the change and ask them to help get the medical diagnosis. Ms. Bickford stated that special education services are not determined by eligibility for Medicaid. The services required by the students' Individual Education Program (IEP) be provided, regardless of Medicaid eligibility.

Ms. Bickford stated that steps are already being taken to ensure that Medicaid rules are followed. She is interested in getting more information before moving forward. Ms. Bickford explained that \$30,000 is what was anticipated as revenue for the school year and it has actually been \$66,000. Now with the new mandate, it is likely to go down again.

Ms. Rider asked what the time requirements were for staff in order to receive these funds. Ms. Bickford said it is a significant amount of time; possibly ten percent of her week is spent on dealing with Medicaid requirements.

B. Takeaways from COVID for Special Education

While there have been some challenges for students and staff during the pandemic, there have been some practices that teachers and staff have learned and will continue in the future. Ms. Bickford shared some of the takeaways that have been realized.

XI. INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

A. Tuition Study Committee

According to Dr. Graziano, the Tuition Study Committee met to review the questions that were raised at the community forum. He said that the next step is to bring the Board an executive summary of the work done by the committee at the next meeting. Dr. Graziano thanked the members of the committee for their hard work on this issue.

Mr. Gauthier agreed that a lot of work was done by the committee. He stated that it was unfortunate that the packet was not distributed at the beginning of the meeting. Dr. Graziano stated that it was an intentional decision to hold the materials until the end to avoid people being distracted from the presentation.

B. Good to Great Team

Dr. Graziano stated that the Good to Great Team met recently. He stated that the ESSER grants may be beneficial in breathing life into Extended Learning Opportunities.

Mr. Clough noted that there were no students on the Good to Great Team and wondered why. Dr. Graziano thanked Mr. Clough for his suggestion and agreed to pursue it further with the committee.

C. End of Year Celebration

Dr. Graziano stated that the administration, the Education Association of Pittsfield, and the School Board will sponsor a celebration that will honor retirees and people moving on to other jobs.

D. School Board Training

Dr. Graziano stated that Barrett Christina from the NH School Board Association will be present to provide training for the members of the Board at an upcoming meeting.

E. School Board policy Review

Dr. Graziano stated that for \$1,700, an attorney will review the School Board's policies. Background work will be done by Dr. Graziano to be in a position to have the work begin.

F. Conval School Funding Lawsuit

According to Dr. Graziano, Pittsfield is in support of the Conval school funding lawsuit. At this point, the support of the Board is moral support, not financial support. Dr. Graziano continues to follow the issue and to testify, when appropriate.

Mr. Clough asked what the cost of joining the lawsuit would be. Dr. Graziano stated that we do not currently have the opportunity to join the lawsuit, but there may be another opportunity later on. Mr. Clough stated that the suit addresses the issue of not receiving proper support from the State of New Hampshire, which results in an overburden to taxpayers of Pittsfield.

Mr. Gauthier asked about the timing for joining the lawsuit. Dr. Graziano repeated that we are now beyond the point of joining, but is confident another opportunity will arise. Mr. Gauthier asked if money can be encumbered to financially support the lawsuit. Ms. Goggin stated that if something does not change, the burden to the taxpayer will get worse.

Mr. Clough stated that \$3,200 is covered by the state, leaving the town to fund the rest of approximately \$20,000 per student.

G. Purchase Request

Dr. Graziano provided the Board with a list of items that he requests the Board authorize. These were items originally in the 2021-2022 budget, but were cut. The total for PES is \$24,820 and for PMHS \$17,689.

Mr. Clough asked about the purchase of used Chromebooks from another district. Mr. Hamilton stated that those items were received and were used to get by until new Chromebooks were purchased and received this spring. He asked if it was better to repair old devices or to purchase new ones. Mr. Hamilton stated that it depends on the device and that sometimes it is appropriate to repair; it is more likely that it is iPads that need to be repaired. Devices are evaluated before being sent out for repair; sometimes it is appropriate. Chromebooks are most often purchased in lots of 50 and iPads in lots of 10. According to Mr. Hamilton, a typical repair is approximately \$100.

According to Mr. Hamilton, the district is now one-to-one, which means that there are approximately 700 devices for students. Ms. Ryder asked how frequently the

devices are used. Ms. LeMay explained that the one-to-one was due to going remote during the pandemic. Now that students are back in school, devices are not used for long durations of time, but the district remains one-to-one.

Ms. Rider stated her concern about the screen time issues that have arisen due to COVID-19. Mr. Clough stated his opinion that society has made a shift to technology and would anticipate the need to continue with the purchase of technology. Ms. Ryder stated that she has observed negative utilization of technology and does not see the need for a one-to-one technology environment for grades K through 3.

Mr. Clough asked how many of the devices will need to be replaced. Mr. Hamilton said that once all devices are retrieved when school ends, an assessment will be made of how many need to be replaced. Ms. LeMay stated that in the Technology Plan, it was anticipated that fifty devices will need to be replaced. Mr. Hamilton stated that the \$4,000 being requested for technology repair would provide an opportunity for some minor repairs to be made, rather than spend more money on the purchase of new equipment.

Mr. Hamilton explained that prior to the pandemic, the district had moved to using devices on a cart. Due to COVID-19, however, the district moved to a one-to-one environment. Ms. Ryder reiterated her concern with the amount of time students spend on devices. Ms. Goggin stated that the one-to-one environment is critical to differentiating instruction, but agrees that the amount of screen time does need to be monitored.

On a motion made by Mr. Clough and seconded by Ms. Drouin, the Board voted unanimously to approve the expenditure of \$42,000 for the items Dr. Graziano listed.

Ms. Rider asked for further discussion regarding the extent of technology used in the classroom. Dr. Graziano suggested the item be added to a future agenda. Mr. Clough suggested the Board consider how to create a way to sustain technology for the future. He further suggested using the surplus to begin developing a plan to sustain technology. Discussion ensued regarding the community's expectation on spending surplus funds.

H. Resignations

Dr. Graziano recommended the Board consider the resignation of Emily Lion. On a motion made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Ms. Drouin, the Board voted unanimously to approve the resignation of Ms. Lion. Mr. Clough stated that Ms. Lion was an asset to the district and her resignation was a loss.

Dr. Graziano recommended the Board accept the resignation of Elaine Ramsey. On a motion made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Mr. Clough, the Board voted unanimously to approve the resignation of Ms. Ramsey.

Dr. Graziano recommended the Board accept the resignation of Jessica Strohl. On a motion made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Mr. Clough, the Board voted unanimously to approve the resignation of Ms. Strohl.

Dr. Graziano recommended the Board accept the resignation of Danielle Harvey. On a motion made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Ms. Goggin, the Board voted unanimously to approve the resignation of Ms. Harvey with deep regret. Ms. Goggin stated that Ms. Harvey has been an asset to the district and will be missed very much.

I. Pittsfield Post

According to Dr. Graziano, graduates will be honored in several publications, including the Pittsfield Post.

J. Non-Resident Request

Dr. Graziano explained a request of a non-resident to have their child attend PES. After discussion, it was decided that the Board would enter into a non-public session to discuss the issue in more detail.

XII. SCHOOL BOARD

A. Curriculum

After looking at the policies relative to curriculum, Mr. Clough asked about the Curriculum Team. Mr. Hamilton stated that the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Team is currently fulfilling the responsibilities of the Curriculum Team. The work is culminating after monthly meetings. A summary will be provided to the Board in an upcoming meeting.

B. Policy Review

Mr. Gauthier asked what the policy review process would look like. Dr. Graziano stated that he would do some preliminary review of policies and submit it to the attorney for review. This work will lead to the Board reviewing policies for approval. According to Dr. Graziano, an attorney from the NH School Board Association, for \$1,700, would review the policies of the School Board. There is

not a requirement to have an outside look at the policies, but ensures that there is adequate coverage, according to Dr. Graziano.

XIII. COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Mr. Gauthier stated that committee assignments should be filled.

Mr. Clough nominated Ms. Goggin as a second member to the Budget Committee. After discussion, Mr. Clough withdrew his nomination of Ms. Goggin to the Budget Committee.

Ms. Goggin nominated Mr. Clough to the Negotiations Committee. Mr. Clough nominated Ms. Goggin. With Ms. Rider, Ms. Drouin, and Mr. Clough voting in the affirmative, and Ms. Goggin abstaining from the vote, Mr. Clough and Ms. Goggin were voted as members of the Negotiation Committee.

Mr. Gauthier was nominated for the Drake Field Committee. Ms. Rider, Ms. Drouin, Mr. Clough, and Ms. Goggin voted in favor of the nomination and Mr. Gauthier abstained from the vote.

Mr. Gauthier confirmed that Ms. Drouin would be on the Foss Scholarship Committee.

Mr. Gauthier stated that Mr. Mitchell was previously the secretary before he resigned. He nominated Ms. Goggin as secretary. The nomination was approved with Ms. Rider, Ms. Drouin, Mr. Gauthier and Mr. Clough voting in the affirmative and Ms. Goggin abstaining from the vote.

XIV. PUBLIC INPUT

Gerard LeDuc stated that the packet of information being disseminated late in the presentation of the Tuition Study Committee was unacceptable. He opined that people are upset about the lack of transparency from the School Board. He thought the situation was much like the presentation to the Budget Committee last year.

Mr. LeDuc stated he was confused about the NEASC report. Mr. Hamilton stated that a meeting was held with the Board before the June 5, 2021 community forum. The NEASC report will be formally released on May 28, 2021, prior to the forum. The report will be available online and in hard copy. Mr. Gauthier asked Mr. Hamilton to bring hard copies of the NEASC report to the Post Office.

Tracy Hyuck stated that she signed up to receive a hard copy of the Tuition Study report but has not received it, yet. Dr. Graziano agreed to follow up on this.

Ms. Hyuck stated that she was contacted by several people asking if the Pittsfield School Board will be joining the lawsuit. She asked why we missed the opportunity. Mr. Gauthier stated that it happened during the transition from Dr. Freeman to Dr. Graziano.

She asked if the surplus money can be used to join the lawsuit. Dr. Graziano stated that when the window of opportunity to join opens again, the Board will discuss the option. There is a fee associated with joining the lawsuit, according to Dr. Graziano. Mr. Gauthier asked if there is an option of encumbering funds from the fund balance for joining the lawsuit when it is an opportunity. Dr. Graziano stated that he will investigate details related to the lawsuit. Ms. Hyuck stated that money needs to be set aside so that the Board will be ready when the opportunity to join the lawsuit arises.

XV. NON-PUBLIC SESSION

At 8:26 p.m. a motion was made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Mr. Clough to enter into a non-public session under the authority of RSA 91-A:3 (c) to discuss student matters. The Board was polled and voted unanimously to enter into a non-public session (Mr. Clough, yes; Ms. Drouin, yes; Mr. Gauthier, yes; Ms. Goggin, yes; Ms. Rider, yes).

At 8:50 p.m. a motion was made by Adam Gauthier and seconded by Justin Clough to exit from a non-public session. The Board was polled and voted unanimously to exit the non-public session (Mr. Clough, yes; Ms. Drouin, yes; Mr. Gauthier, yes; Ms. Goggin, yes; Ms. Rider, yes).

On a motion made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Mr. Clough, the Board voted unanimously to approve the non-resident student request.

XVI. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for Thursday, June 3, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. in the Pittsfield Middle High School Lecture Hall.

XVII. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by Mr. Gauthier and seconded by Mr. Clough, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tobi Gray Chassie
Recording Secretary