

## PITTSFIELD SCHOOL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

January 8, 2026, 5:30 P.M. PMHS Media Center Pittsfield Middle High School

Members Present- Sandra Adams, Chair; Molly Goggin, Vice Chair; Eric Nilsson, Tim Robinson, Adam Gauthier. Others Present - Dr. Sandie MacDonald via phone Superintendent; Dr. Erik Anderson, PMHS Principal; Melissa Brown, PMHS Assistant Principal; Kristen White PES Principal; Jerrica Smith, Student Services Administrator, Members of the Public

1. CALL TO ORDER - Sandra Adams
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - Sandra Adams
3. REVIEW OF MANIFEST COMPLETED - Yes, Sandra Adams for the Jan. 1 payroll and the Jan. 8 manifest
4. ACTION ON AMENDED AGENDA – Adam, Molly, all yes
5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – public and nonpublic minutes from December 18, 2025 - Eric, Molly, all voted yes, Non - Adam, Eric - all voted yes.  
Sandra motioned to seal minutes, Molly 2nd, all voted yes
6. PUBLIC INPUT- about this agenda - none

6:00 P.M. PUBLIC HEARING on a proposed warrant article regarding Open Enrollment – to receive comment on whether the School Board shall place a warrant article on Open Enrollment on the ballot for the 2026 Annual School District Meeting.

7. SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS- Sandie MacDonald - not in - ill
8. REPORTS FROM THE ADMINISTRATION - no reports -
9. SCHOOL BOARD ACTION AND INFORMATION ITEMS 2026-27 Budget comments and updates Open Enrollment update Fair Funding update - 2nd reading Policies DAF and IJK, acceptance of funds, resignation, annual report and dates info needs to be ready, warrant articles.

Dr. Anderson - Dusty Durant and officer Julian Gidney from the Pittsfield Police Dept. attended the Alice Training program.

Sandra Adams - 2nd reading to replace DAF to replace Current DAF - Eric, Adam 2nd, numbers on bottom of pages, all voted yes.

2nd reading of IJK to replace IKJ - lettering change only - Adam, Molly, all voted yes.

Sandra Adams, resignation of part-time history teacher Cara Torrey at PMHS. Adam, Tim - all voted yes.

Acceptance of Funds - holding off from NH Charitable Foundation - \$13,278 for photog equipment. Need public hearing over 10K, will be February during regular meeting.

Acceptance of Funds - Maryann McNeil basketball uniforms-\$750. Foss Family Foundation - lighting drama, \$3,150.

Adam motioned to approve new donations, Molly 2nd, all voted yes.

Deadline for Annual Report - will have Rheana contact Town Admin. Appears to be Tuesday, March 3, so no later than Feb.23 to be on the safe side.

Warrant Articles - need to be in place for next Wednesday's meeting. They are completed per Dr. MacDonald

## 26-27 Budget Comments

10. COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS • Budget Committee: Sandra/Eric • CIP and Facilities: Eric/Adam • Negotiations: Tim and Molly, complete • Strategic Planning: Adam/Molly/Tim • Policy Committee: Dr. MacDonald and Sandra Adams

11. OLD BUSINESS: Instructional policies, IA policy

12. PLAN AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING – February 5, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. Annual Report, School Calendar for FY 27, deliberative session and regular meeting - public hearing for fund acceptance if required for Charitable foundation for \$13,278.

13. SELECTBOARD LIAISON - Art St. Laurent

14. ADDITIONAL BUSINESS- To address items that may arise during the meeting or other items not on the agenda that Board members would like to discuss - none

15. PUBLIC INPUT – The Board may accept the public's input that is addressed directly to the Chair in a courteous and respectful time frame of three minutes. The Board does not engage in discussion or answer questions during public comment. None -

Per Dr. MacDonald: We will have Non-Public, Student-Related Issue

Policy Committee did not meet, will meet Jan 22nd- Tim R - motioned to raise amount of funds for acceptance requiring a public hearing to 25k, without public hearing - Eric 23nd - Adam discussing, would like it to go through process - Molly agrees with Adam - Per Dr MacDonald no vote needed - this is 1st reading - more discussion at 2nd reading.

Nonpublic Session will be after Public Hearing -  
**Adjourn Public Meeting 6pm**

### **Public Hearing Beginning and Started by Sandra Adams**

Molly explained we need to have Warrant on our ballot - due to the RSA - Molly read proposed warrant article 8 - see online files for details. Purpose for tonight is to share Factual and Fiscal Impact and hear community comments - no vote tonight - Prior to deliberative session where more discussion is had and then vote in March.

Open Enrollment - students from outside can come to our school IF we have room. Unlimited incoming - 0 outgoing- we won't fund it - they can still go if they want to. This approach preserves local control and fiscal stability - if we don't know we cannot plan financially.

Key Fiscal Reality - Open Enrollment does not help Pittsfield's costs - we can't reduce any of our costs - fixed, teachers, etc. Then you add on paying the tuition

- for the child to leave - we are still responsible for the Special Ed cost for all students who leave or who are here. Does not matter.

Cost per pupil - as enrollment declines - cost per pupil goes up.

We don't have agreements with other schools for tuition; they charge what they want. Moving Target -

The district revenue decreases by State funds because our population drops.

The reason why the board is recommending this is due to the costs - \$95,748 to Prospect Mtn for 4 students 23/24, 5 this year, higher cost. We will owe more this year for these same students 2026 - if the rate is set at 80% it will be \$19k per student -

Questions about next year, 2027 - Per Dr. MacDonald students can apply anytime they want. If mid-year and town votes no pay - then parents would have to pay. For each student, if they leave to another district the state adequacy goes to the new school they attend. \$4k approx.

For Pittsfield, Special Ed is a big part of our costs - Open Enrollment increases special ed costs. We have to increase coordination and compliance, we are still the managers.

Why limiting O to outgoing matters - does not mean students cannot go out of district - means Pittsfield won't pay - protecting districts fiscally.

Local Control. Open enrollment law was supposed to be local control as it was created, but that did not happen.

This does not prevent students who need placement due to IEP - this does not fall into Open Enrollment -

Costs don't generally go down because student movement comes from all grades. As our per pupil rate goes up the tuition rate that we have to pay goes up. This protects Taxpayers and School Programming. Adequacy Money from State is being challenged now in court - whether it goes with the student or not -

Tim Robinson - explained that he sees the vision what open enrollment can be - funding mechanism does not allow it to run right - can't will or wish it to happen - you have to provide the money - I notice that our Reps are not here and that they

walked out of a meeting the other night - taking tax dollars away and not filling it in to support the school - nobody is addressing having a plan.

Molly - ditto - we are responsible for providing quality education and control costs to the taxpayers.

Feb 5 Deliberative Session - Molly urged people to attend

### **Public Questions/Comments**

**Ray Benoit - embarrassing that we have to do this - the state caused this - did not give the towns a way to work with this plan - this is not a new problem - the state has not fixed the funding. We are being forced to pay. Does not make sense. The more money you take away from this school the more we cannot provide for our students. Shame on the state - Shame on the Reps - Shame on them for walking out -**

**William Rupp - I understand that students going somewhere else will be a cost. If students come here, we will have an increase in costs.**  
Board, Yes, could be but we control and we would get more adequacy.  
We have the room.

**Katie Nikas - when we say any students - who?**

Molly, we have the power to reject - yes - if special ed is involved the receiving school does not pay, the sending school does.

**Katie Batchelder - if we say 0 percent can go out - that means WE won't pay. That needs to be clarified in the Warrant. How do you choose who you take or who gets taken - each school gets to decide, decides who to accept.**

**Receiving Schools now are Prospect Mountain and Franklin**

**Sarah Osbourne read a personal statement regarding the RSA article.**

**Art St Laurent - Warrant Article - Thank you to the School Board and Dr. MacDonald - I have no trust in this state and our Reps. What is going to be**

**our fallback plan, when the state realizes the loophole - 0 exit - they want open enrollment - what will be our fallback?**

Molly explained it was not the law to begin with -

**We may want to try and plan for the future.**

**Tim explained will need to vote different reps in.**

**Art St. Laurent - handout so people understand? - are we thinking of entering a consolidation agreement with other towns -**

**Per Sandra Adams - Per Dr. MacDonald 3 districts are interested in discussion per their Superintendents, not the specific school boards. Pembroke, Concord, Belmont.**

**Molly explained that there will also be another Warrant on the 2026 ballot, to create a town ad hoc committee to look at the bigger picture, consolidation - education - with other towns etc.**

**Just to research and present information, to board and administrator - non-binding.**

**Art - commend the board for forward thinking - thank you.**

**Katie Nicas - people are not knocking our doors to come here to school. If we choose this and no students come, will it not hurt us? How many students are using open enrollment with us? None -**

**Kristen Everson - with the vast amount of funding for EFA's, does anyone know if crossover is being discussed - of utilizing that funding to allow for filling in the gaps of costs for students to leave the district? Dr. MacDonald - state has been clear - if a student uses EFA's - they pay, no crossover - Concord CTE program might be a loophole.**

**Should not be happening, the State has been unable to track it.**

**Heather Elliott - I support this article - money is getting taken away from our students, spending more and getting less. Agree for 0 percent out.**

**Ray Benoit - our responsibility to educate ourselves - educate our neighbors in civil conversation -**

**Sarah Osbourne** – Dr. MacDonald had mentioned that when we were discussing adequacy money that to determine based on this current legislation if we were going to have to pay back adequacy money to the state. What happened was because adequacy money typically follows a student and we had a lawsuit ongoing with student from Pittsfield who were going to Prospect Mountain and were assigned to prospect Mountain enrollment there but not to Pittsfield. So it was like where they enrolled and who had them in terms of adequacy. So when the lawsuit was pending, that money could in essence have to come from us because they weren't attending here. They went to Prospect Mt. because they decided to do that. Prospect took it upon themselves to submit to DOE that they were Prospect Mt. students.

**Dr. MacDonald** - will have firm info on whether state adequacy money stays with school or student at Deliberative Session

**Donna Keeley** - **Warrant language** - can we add more details as to what 0 out really means and who will pay the tuition. School District or Parent? No. Warrant must be worded a certain way. Can get the word out other ways, before and during voting.

**Cleon Riel** - if you say 0 students can leave - they will go anyways - will this encourage them to charter or go sooner - has Dr. MacDonald spoken to any other districts - how is it working - did they get a surge - did it have a derogatory impact yet? There are only 2 schools -

**Kyle Chambers** - downside to losing students is a budget issue. Could you do 3 in 3 out scenario - What happens if Warrant fails -

Dr. MacDonald, then Pittsfield has not opted in to Open Enrollment - defaulted into letting them go - and we pay for it. Many other towns are doing this same Warrant article.

**Brianna Hawes - isn't it illegal to recruit kids from other schools - how do we fix this?** Molly, without guardrail or guidance, privatizes a public entity and allows for this. There are rules in NHIAA.

**Louis Houle - tell our friends - we need to get signs - school should promote outcomes -**

**Katie Nikas - what happens when an article does not pass - our school closes?**

**Molly - if we think about all the influx of legislation and drain on all public schools - these laws are meant to close us. Our education commissioner said he wants no public schools in NH.**

**Dr. MacDonald - collaboration goes on with schools - we work with Community Colleges - if we have kids that have interests we can work with other schools - this does happen -**

**Sarah Osbourne - what are limits at other schools - Dr. MacDonald, Franklin does not have a limit - Supreme Court has ruled that you must do 0, and you won't have to pay. Read a letter of personal opinion about keeping Pittsfield Schools Open-related opinion to Coe Brown and how good this school is.**

**Molly - explained Warrant for Education Study Committee, 9 members if voted in. We recognize the need for diverse perspectives.**

**Coe Brown - is considered semiprivate - not sure how it would work. Yes it is a consideration per Dr. MacDonald.**

**Louis Houle - so it sounds like we can just close the school and send our kids over here and over there - not that simple - and costs don't go away.**

**Dr. MacDonald - I want to reiterate what Louis said - sending kids out will cost more - these are not cost saving measures - higher budgets fund more and better programs - If you decide to give a menu of options like Deerfield - it involves more cost. That is why it is so important for the community to**

**be involved and choose. This RSA is something that was DONE to the communities without any discussion, it is not fair.**

**Diane Melim Heffernan- whatever we do, before deliberative session - we need to make it clear about the costs - we have a responsibility to kids in this town - we have a responsibility to the taxpayers as well - my feeling, we need to look at all angles and be very clear, if we do allow open enrollment and we have to finance kids to other school, tax rate will increase.**

**Jim Allard - I am your former Rep. and spent 4 years and learned a hard lesson - don't speak against what your 'party' wants - I was on the Education Committee and did not agree with this plan of action and was promptly removed and put on the Fish and Game Committee. We, Pittsfield and other towns, will get no help until the balance of power is changed under the state house dome. We have no friends in the majority in Concord.**

**Katie Bocash - will there be another public hearing for this Warrant 9.**  
No, just deliberative session on Feb 5

**Art St. Laurent - we are in a unique situation because we lost a supreme court case.**

**To confirm we won't have to pay tuition if someone chooses to go.**  
Yes, right now yes but the law could be changed.

**Frank Babcock - does not having to pay tuition, supersede what the current RSA says - Dr. MacDonald will review and get back and get info online.**

**Meeting Adjourned 7:50 p.m. and entered non-public.**

**Submitted by Donna Keeley**  
**January 11, 2026**

