

APPROVED MINUTES OF THE PITTSFIELD SCHOOL BOARD

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

**PITTSFIELD SCHOOL BOARD
MINUTES**

Pittsfield School Board Meeting
October 19th, 2023
Pittsfield Middle High School

I. CALL TO ORDER

Members Present: Adam Gauthier, Chairperson
Sandra Adams, Vice Chairperson
Molly Goggin
Adam Cote
Helen Schiff

Others Present: Bryan Lane, Superintendent
Charlene Vary, Director of Student Services
Derek Hamilton, PMHS Principal
Melissa Brown, PMHS Assistant Principal
Kristen White, PES Principal
Members of the Public

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

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of allegiance was led by Mr. Gauthier.

III. AGENDA REVIEW

The following items were added to the agenda:

PragerU (Mr. Cote)
Remove September 21, 2023 Meeting Minutes, already reviewed. (Mrs. Adams)
Non-Public RSA 193:a for Superintendent's Evaluation (Mrs. Adams)
Policies KFA, KCD, KDA (Mrs. Adams)

IV. ACTION ON AMENDED AGENDA

On a motion made by Mrs. Goggin and seconded by Mrs. Adams, Mr. Gauthier, yes, Mrs. Schiff, yes, Mr. Cote, yes; 5-0, the Board unanimously approved the amended agenda.

V. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

The minutes from the previous meeting from September 7, 2023 were considered, changes include: page 4, paragraph 1, “Mr. Hamilton apologized”, paragraph 9m “Mrs. Schiff paid her compliments”, IX, B, last sentence change regards to regard, E., “There was a recent Adequacy Fund Budget Seminar”, page 7, F, paragraph 2, correct chartered to chartered, remove apostrophe in Schools’, page 6, XV, recess time to be corrected to 6:50 p.m., page 7,

The minutes from the previous meeting from October 5th, 2023 were considered and changes include:

Document wide correction of QuakerU to PragerU, Page 2, VI, capitalize Republican and Democratic, VII, A, “Mrs. White provided”, C, correct “push-in services”, F, paragraph 2 correct Tiers to Tears, paragraph 7, correct changed to changes, page 5, X, A, correct “Quarterly Financial”, page 6, remove apostrophe from Pecorinos’, E, paragraph 7, correct invest to investigate, page 7,

On a motion made by Mrs. Schiff and seconded by Mrs. Goggin, the changes were approved, 4-0-1, with Mr. Gauthier abstaining.

VI. PUBLIC INPUT

Sabrina Smith addressed the Board to have her statement from the previous meeting on October 5th, 2023 corrected. Mrs. Smith stated she had inquired as to the possibility of having a paraeducator present for afterschool activities, if the budget would allow, because it is needed for the support of the students, regardless if they have an IEP or not.

Chris Smith spoke in regard to the appropriateness of the PragerU Curriculum being brought into the public schools. Mr. Smith stated that this has nothing to do with politics, but the ideological bias that has been identified as a repeated issue within their organization. Mr. Smith continues that more importantly they are not accredited, and the consideration of their programs should stop there. Mr. Smith stated that even though the entire state board has voted in support of this, he does not support it. Mr. Smith hopes that the Board will make the decision that is in the best interest of the children based off this information, and their dedication to their roles in education.

Daniel Schroth provided the Board with a copy of an article on climate change that was recently printed in the Concord Monitor. Mr. Schroth asked the Board as to if there are any policy shifts that could be made within the District to help with the climate change.

VII. DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES

- A. SPECIAL EDUCATION – Mrs. Vary spoke to the Board regarding the status of the special education team at PES, our new Out of District Coordinator and the open positions that are still open.
- B. TRANSITION PROJECT – Our 9th and 10th graders will be working with Mr. Belanger through the Southern Connecticut State University, for a Random Controlled Trial research project, for students with learning disabilities. Mrs. Vary explained how the program will run and the benefits to the students.

Mr. Gauthier thanked Mrs. Vary for stepping into the additional roles within the special

education department to support her team and the students.

VIII. SUPERINTENDENT

- A. ENROLLMENT REPORT – Mr. Lane provided the Board with an update as to the enrollment numbers.
- B. STATE ASSESSMENT SCORES – The Department of Education has released the results of the State Assessments that were conducted in the Spring. Mr. Lane supplied the Board and public with a list of results by grade, level and efficiency.

Mrs. Goggin spoke to the outcome of the scores and the continued identified need for specialist interventions. Mrs. Goggin further inquired if there were additional sub-group breakdowns of the data, with the special education numbers available.

Mr. Cote asked Mr. Lane how these numbers compare to the last two years historically.

Mr. Lane stated that he would get this information for the Board.

Mrs. Adams asked if Mr. Lane used the disaggregated data for this.

Mr. Lane stated that this was the data that was used. The report was approximately 140,000 lines of assessment score data.

Mrs. Goggin asked that Mr. Lane expand on the additional data to be provided by cohort as well to monitor it by percentage. Mrs. Goggin spoke on the graduation rate and how that one piece of data presented to the public can be perceived negatively.

Mr. Lane stated that the reading proficiency is about 55%, which is not sufficient for any District.

- C. BI-MONTHLY DISTRICT TREASURER MEETINGS – Mr. Lane informed the Board that moving forward, he is set to meet with the School District Treasurer twice per month to discuss the District's finances. The District is working on the online banking procedures and the option to outsource payroll to make the function of the finance manager more efficient.
- D. STRONGER CONNECTIONS GRANT – Mr. Lane was pleased to inform the Board that the Pittsfield School District has received a grant in the amount of \$92,000 that is targeted to improve our school security and safety.
- E. BUDGET – Mr. Lane spoke to the Board on the most recent Budget that was presented.

Mr. Lane provided the Board and the public with an update in the budget as to the addition and removal of positions within the District.

Mr. Lane spoke to the Board and public regarding which positions and line items would be placed into grants.

Mr. Lane thanked the administrative team for their collaboration in working on the budget.

Mr. Cote inquired to Mr. Lane as to if this new budget included the Reading Specialist position.

Mr. Lane stated that this does not include that position.

Mr. Cote asked the total financial impact on the District for this position.

Mr. Lane stated this would be approximately \$100,000 with salary and benefits.

Mr. Cote asked Mr. Lane if he has received the revenue numbers for the budget yet.

Mr. Lane stated that he has not gotten the final revenue numbers. He has received the draft estimates, but not the final numbers to use for the budget. Mr. Lane stated that he was not confident in those numbers and he should have final numbers by the November meeting.

Mrs. Adams asked Mr. Lane to the increase in the stipend for the Band position.

Mr. Lane stated that this has been a historically underpaid position and needed to be increased in order to fairly compensate the teacher for the programs offered to the students.

Mrs. Adams inquired as to line 328, for professional development.

Mr. Lane stated that these line items are part of the collecting bargaining agreement and must be included.

Mrs. Adams asked if the increase was accurate.

Mr. Lane stated that this was the accurate number, per the collecting bargaining agreement.

Mr. Gauthier asked about the increase in the budget for professional dues and fees on line 540.

Mr. Lane stated that this is a line item for additional memberships to the Principal's Association. Mr. Lane spoke as to the benefits associated with this membership for our administrative team.

Mr. Cote inquired as to if this would be the appropriate time to add the Reading Specialist into the budget.

Mr. Lane stated that he would like to receive the final numbers and grants before doing this.

Mr. Hamilton asked the Board to look at lines 49 and 54 of the budget. Mr. Hamilton showed that line 53 previously showed classroom supplies, which is no longer shown in the budget as that. Mr. Hamilton showed that this reflects a decrease in the supplies budget, not an increase.

IX. SCHOOL BOARD

A. Policies – Review for Legislative Change

- i. KFA,
- ii. KCD,
- iii. DKA,

- iv. DJE, Bidding Requirements
 - v. GBCD, Background Investigation and Criminal Records Check
 - vi. JCA, Change of School or Assignment
 - vii. JKAA, Use of Restraints of Seclusion
 - viii. BEDG, Minutes
 - ix. IHBAA, Evaluation Requirements for Children with Specific Learning Disabilities
 - x.
- B. PragerU – Mrs. Goggin read three articles regarding PragerU and different areas of concern that have been identified such as their content such as controversial Social Studies videos that are conservative leaning. Mrs. Goggin spoke on several other topics that should not be included in educational content.

Mrs. Goggin felt it was important to note that the NHPR article did specifically state that the NH-approved programs are not linked to the other PragerU courses offered.

Mrs. Goggin spoke on the concern for the rigor of the course. The program offered is 5-15 minute videos on finance.

Mrs. Schiff stated that she was able to review the course materials and saw nothing of concern within them.

Mrs. Goggin stated her concern as an educator and a parent that this course would be insufficient in providing our students with a viable option to meet the requirement. Mrs. Goggin spoke on the VLACS programs and the credits earned and course material that has proven to be effective for students.

Mr. Cote inquired as to whether or not there were other online courses available for our students for their Financial Literacy credit.

Mrs. Goggin confirmed that VLACS offers this course as well.

Mr. Hamilton spoke to the Board regarding the recent law changes that impacted these graduation requirements. Mr. Hamilton stated that he was unable to find Personal Finance in the graduation requirements from the state.

Mr. Hamilton further informed the Board that he was waiting for the NHDOE to provide guidance as to where this would fall as a graduation requirement.

Mr. Gauthier asked Mr. Hamilton if the District offers any other courses that are this “relaxed”.

Mr. Hamilton stated that we do not.

Mr. Cote read a letter that he prepared with his thoughts and concerns on the PragerU offerings within the Pittsfield School District.

Mr. Gauthier asked Mr. Lane what our requirement is to offer the course.

Mr. Lane stated that we are not required to offer or advertise the course, but we must accept the course if completed by a student.

Mrs. Goggin expressed her concern with bringing the PragerU courses into the District. Mrs. Goggin additionally expressed that there is still not an assigned area for this course. Mrs. Goggin thanked Mr. Cote for his input and agreed that she does not believe that their courses should be offered.

Mrs. Adams inquired as to what the Economics credit graduation requirement was.

Mr. Hamilton stated that this is a half credit course. Mr. Hamilton stated that this has not been assigned as a requirement to graduate from PMHS or by the State. There has not been a change in state standards as of now.

Mr. Lane stated that this has not been revised since the mid-2000's. Mr. Lane continues to confirm that this means that this is not a required class to graduate. Mr. Lane advised the Board write a statement to be submitted to the Board of Education regarding their concerns around the PragerU courses. Mr. Lane informed that Board that submitting a letter of concern allows the District to inquire to the State Board later to see if there were other Districts that had similar concerns regarding this material as well. Mr. Lane voiced that there is power in numbers and if there are other Districts who are also voicing these concerns, this should make a difference to the Board and Commissioner of Education in implementing their courses in our schools.

Mrs. Goggin moved to submit a letter of concern from the Pittsfield School District regarding the quality, rigor and lack of accreditation of PragerU as a Financial Literacy Credit to the State Board of Education and Commissioner, seconded by Mr. Gauthier, the Board voted, 3-1-1, to have Superintendent write a draft letter of concern.

X. COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

- A. Budget Committee Representative – Mrs. Adams stated that the Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary have been appointed.
- B. Drake Field and Facilities – Mr. Gauthier nothing
- C. Negotiating Team – nothing
- D. Foss Family Scholarship – Mrs. Adams nothing
- E. Public Relations – Mrs. Goggin spoke on the many happenings that are coming up with Halloween this month. Mrs. Goggin spoke on the scheduled Trunk-or-Treat Event for October 28, 2023. Mrs. Goggin stated that there is a Boys and Girls Club-sponsored dance on Friday, October 19, 2023. Mrs. Goggin spoke on several other upcoming Halloween events and field trips that are scheduled at the two different buildings.

Mrs. Goggin stated her appreciation to the principals for their detailed newsletters that are being sent home to the families.

XI. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for November 3, 2023, at 5:30 p.m. in the Pittsfield Middle High School Media Center.

Policies to be reviewed for first reading: KFA, KCD, KDA, hold action policies until second meeting of the month of November (Mr. Gauthier)

XII. BOARD COMMENT

Mr. Gauthier spoke with the electrician that's working at PES regarding the lighting project that is underway. Mr. Gauthier was grateful to hear that the District will be receiving a \$2,000 rebate from the electrician's supplier, as a discount in the bill for the services, passed on from Mr. Azotea himself.

XIII. PUBLIC INPUT

Chris Smith inquired to Mr. Hamilton as to the time length of the period of classes that would be offered for the online personal finance class.

Mr. Hamilton confirmed that these would be held during the standard class period.

Mr. Smith expressed his concern for the rigor of the material and the empty time that would be created for the students.

Mr. Smith spoke to the Board regarding the Professional Development increases in the Budget and how that will go over with the Budget Committee. Mr. Smith speaks on the importance of not having siloed thinking in these matters, and that yes, you may spend some money here to save some in other areas.

Mr. Smith spoke on his experience with data mining and made a recommendation to the Board on a program to use to better help with analyzing the digital data provided.

Sabrina Smith spoke in agreeance with her spouse and the importance of professional development as a former para-educator for the District.

XIV. NON-PUBLIC RSA 193:A

On a request made by Mr. Gauthier to enter into a non-public session under RSA 193:A, for Superintendent's Evaluation, Mr. Gauthier moved to enter a non-public, seconded by Mrs. Adams, 5-0, at 7:26 p.m..

On a request motion by Mr. Gauthier to exit from non-public session under RSA 193:A, seconded by Mrs. Goggin, 5-0, at 8:12 p.m..

XV. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mr. Cote and seconded by Mrs. Goggin to adjourn the meeting. The Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Zinn

Recording Secretary