



Pittsfield School District Voter's Guide

2018 School District Meeting Session 2 - Ballot Voting
7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, March 13
Town Hall, Main St., Pittsfield

The Pittsfield School District is providing this Voter's Guide to District residents to support your understanding of this year's ballot voting decision. This document includes the warrant articles which will be decided during the ballot voting portion of the annual school district meeting on Tuesday, March 13. Each article is followed by a brief explanation of the article (*in italics*). Please contact school board members or the superintendent of schools with any questions:

- Mike Wolfe, School Board Chairperson
 - mwolfe@metrocast.net
- Bea Douglas, School Board Vice-Chairperson
 - bdouglas@metrocast.net
- Linda Freese, School Board Member
 - lfreese@metrocast.net
- Ted Mitchell, School Board Member
 - tedmitchell@metrocast.net
- Ralph Odell, School Board Member
 - rodell@metrocast.net
- John Freeman, Superintendent of Schools
 - sau51super@metrocast.net

To vote, completely fill in the OVAL to the RIGHT of your choice, YES or NO on the ballot that you will receive at Town Hall on Tuesday, March 13.

Election of School Board Members and School District Moderator

School Board Members: Vote for not more than two:

- Ralph Odell
- Heidi Ann Asdot
- Adam Gauthier
- (space provided for write-in candidates)

School District Moderator: Vote for not more than one:

- Gerard Leduc
- (space provided for write-in candidates)

Articles

ARTICLE 02 – 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 sale 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 (13 yes, 0 no). (Majority vote required.)

A YES vote for Article 02 – School Lunch Program authorizes the school district to expend funds raised through sale of food and entitlement grants from state and federal sources. The funds raised will support the lunch program entirely with no school district funds being required. A NO vote would prevent the expenditure of funds to operate the food services program, which means that the school lunch program would be eliminated or be supported by school district funds.

ARTICLE 03 – Receive and Expend Grant Funds

To see if the Pittsfield School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,100,000 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 New Hampshire 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 (13 yes, 0 no). (Majority vote required.)

A YES vote for Article 03 – Receive and Expend Grant Funds authorizes the school district to receive and expend both entitlement and competitive grant funds. (Entitlement grants are assured by our government as long as grant guidelines are met.) Grant funds provide funding for several educational programs including support for special needs students and students requiring academic help, among other purposes. The article also commits the district to expend funds in compliance with government rules or requirements of private fund sources. It is anticipated that the district will receive no more than \$1,100,000 in grant funds in 2018-2019. A NO vote would prevent the receipt and expenditure of grant funds. Funds from the state or federal government would be refused, and the district would not accept any competitive grant funds.

ARTICLE 04 – Operating Budget

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 \$10,530,724? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$10,202,520, 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: \$1.15/thousand.) **Recommended** by the Pittsfield School Board. **Recommended** by the Pittsfield Budget Committee (9 yes, 4 no). (Majority vote required.)

A YES vote for Article 04 – Operating Budget authorizes the school district to raise and expend \$10,530,724 for operating the district’s schools for the 2018-2019 school year. The tax impact over the current year operating budget is an added \$1.15 per thousand. This budget represents no new programs or new positions and maintains the current level of services and options for students within the schools. A NO vote would adopt the default budget for the district, which is \$328,204 less than the proposed budget. The default budget would result in significant program and staff reductions, resulting in a reduced level of services and options for students within the schools.

ARTICLE 05 – 1 Year Collective Bargaining Agreement

To see if the school district will vote to approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Pittsfield School District and the Educational Association of Pittsfield teachers which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing level:

Fiscal Year: 2018-2019
Estimated Increase: \$99,885

and further to raise and appropriate \$99,885 for the current fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels. (Estimated tax impact of this article: \$.38/thousand.) **Recommended** by the Pittsfield School Board. **Recommended** by the Pittsfield Budget Committee (8 yes, 5 no). (Majority vote required.)

A YES vote for Article 05 – 1 Year Collective Bargaining Agreement provides for a 1.5% increase in the salary guide, a lesser insurance plan than is currently provided, and an increased employee share of health insurance costs for teachers and other professional positions included in the collective bargaining unit. The previous agreement expired last June, and teachers are working without a successor agreement and under the conditions of the previous contract this year. A NO vote would maintain the terms of the previous contract, keeping covered employees at the same salary level (take home pay is actually less due to increased insurance costs) and with the same health insurance coverage (a superior plan with lower employee contribution), among other no-cost provisions.

March 2018

To our friends and neighbors, the citizens of Pittsfield,

This year's budget season has been particularly difficult for us. We are challenged by our legal and moral responsibility to provide for the education of our children and youth while, at the same time, remaining sensitive to the ability of the taxpayers of Pittsfield to fund our schools within an unfair statewide school funding system that disadvantages property-poor towns like ours.

We have taken a number of prudent steps to minimize expenses in recent years, such as the retrofitting of light fixtures with energy-saving LED products, increasing insulation when renovating our PMHS gym and PES roof and siding, and seeking alternative sources of electricity and heating oil. These cost-saving measures are helping us to save tax dollars without negatively impacting our services to students.

Unfortunately, we have also had to cut staff positions that do impact our students, eliminating more than thirty positions over the past ten years, including the elimination of more than eleven teaching positions and two administrative positions (our student enrollment has decreased by about forty students in this same period). The effect of these reductions has been to eliminate course and other options for students and the level of support that we can provide to our struggling students; unfortunately, in this era of school safety concerns, we have also had to eliminate our School Resource Officer position.

On the revenue side of the ledger, the state is reducing the sustainability portion of our adequacy grant by \$86,000 per year, every year for twenty-five years. This means that by the year 2040, the state will be contributing about \$2,000,000 less per year, every year to our Pittsfield schools than it currently supports, or almost 50% of what the state now contributes.

A significant driver of increased costs is special education. While both the federal and state governments mandate – and rightly so – that all students be provided with a free and appropriate educational program, they come nowhere close to funding their own demands.

Significantly, a small number of our students present very complex special learning needs which require placement in learning environments outside our own schools as their specialized needs would be prohibitively expensive to serve in-district (often, these needs are due to serious emotional and/or behavior challenges). A number of these placements are court-ordered and allow for few, if any, options (in fact, we are currently even responsible for a placement that has been ordered by a Massachusetts court).

We are extremely pleased with the quality of education provided by our educators in Pittsfield and the options provided to our students is the best that we can do under very challenging circumstances. We sincerely and humbly ask for your support in meeting our responsibilities to our children and youth of Pittsfield by voting YES for all warrant articles in this year's ballot voting.

Sincerely,

The Pittsfield School Board