

**Pelham School Board Meeting  
Special School Board Meeting  
December 28, 2020  
Pelham Elementary School  
6:00 pm**

**In Attendance:**

**School Board Members:** Megan Larson, Chair, Debbie Ryan, Vice-Chair, Troy Bressette, Darlene Greenwood, and David Wilkerson (Virtual due to Covid-19)

**Superintendent:** Chip McGee

**Director of Curriculum,**

**Instruction & Assessments:** Sarah Marandos

**Student Representative:** Joe Wholey

**Absent:** Deb Mahoney, Business Administrator

**1. Call to Order:**

Chair Megan Larson called the Special School Board Meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Ms. Larson then requested that Mr. Wilkerson say whether he was alone or if someone else was in the room. Mr. Wilkerson stated that he was alone.

**a. Public Input:**

None

**2. Presentations:**

No Presentation

**3. Main Issues / Policy Updates:**

**a. Pandemic Response Update**

Superintendent Chip McGee mentioned that the School Board had received quite a few emails, and he read sections from five emails that were received.

The first email read, "The responsibility of tending to remote learning, for my child, has almost certainly fallen on my husband's shoulders. If remote learning continues, there are literally three days that I will have to request off from work so that I can be home with the boys. The unwanted effects of a lockdown are heartbreaking. Many decisions that we will make in life we must weigh the risk versus the benefit, and I believe the academic, social, emotional, and psychological benefits from in-person learning outweigh the risks that the virus poses to our children."

The second email read, "I think that the measures that have been implemented are good, and there is only so much that you can do. I appreciate the time that you have taken to provide updates. I understand the social aspects of school, not being in-person, can be tough and a challenge. But if it saves lives, it is needed until we can get the control."

The third email read, "While genuine return from remote learning would be most ideal across the board, for those who want it. A partial return for kindergarten students, similar to what Pre-K is doing, would be more of a burden because it disrupts the routine that parents with multiple children have developed to make remote learning work."

The fourth email read, "As a parent of two elementary school children, I selected in-school learning. I am disappointed in our commitment to being in-school and very confused over why we are not. I will conclude that remote learning is not working, and parents are breaking."

52 The fifth email read, "I am hoping that remote learning will continue for two weeks, beginning on January 4. As  
53 much as I would like to have my kids out of the house and with their friends, I feel the risk is too high, especially  
54 following the holidays. I hope you take this into consideration."  
55

56 Dr. McGee, after communicating with his leadership team, PESPA, and the Teacher's Association, stated that his  
57 recommendation was for the following:  
58

59 January 4 – 8 Most students remain in remote learning. Preschool and current students receiving in-school  
60 special education instruction remains in-school. The staff assigned to teach remote from the start  
61 of the year, on leave, with accommodation, or with exceptions in place from Human  
62 Resources can work remotely. Others work at school. This will allow the District to update  
63 its guidance, particularly at room configurations, lunch, and break protocols.  
64

65 January 6 Kindergarten returns to in-school instruction for those families that have chosen in-school.  
66

67 January 11 Grades 1 – 12 return to in-school instruction for those families that have chosen in-school.  
68

69 Dr. McGee mentioned that the District is looking into the protocol for mask breaks. He said that the District wants  
70 to make sure that there are at least six feet of distance between students. Dr. McGee noted that if six-feet of space  
71 is not an option, then the District would look at Plexiglas' installation. The District is requesting the teachers review  
72 the seating arrangement within the classrooms. Dr. McGee added that the guidelines would be revised and  
73 republished by January 6, 2021.  
74

75 Dr. McGee then commented on the staffing for the School District. He mentioned that staffing has been the  
76 biggest challenge this year and added that when a teacher has a positive case of Covid-19, the District does not  
77 only lose that teacher but also the staff members that came in close contact with the teacher. Dr. McGee  
78 mentioned that he created a new floating substitute position within PES, PMS, and PHS for lunch and recess time  
79 coverage.  
80

81 Dr. McGee stated that the District has been working very hard to recruit teachers. The District has used recruiting  
82 websites, used social media, and has made efforts to recruit at universities and colleges. He noted that the District  
83 is still looking to fill positions, and now is the time to apply. Dr. McGee mentioned that the District is readjusting  
84 sub pay for IA's covering for a teacher to match the new sub pay rate.  
85

86 The District is suspending all non-essential professional development leave for the remainder of the year. Dr.  
87 McGee stated the reason for the decision was that this is the one area that the Administration is in charge of, and  
88 because the District cannot afford to have people out of work.  
89

90 Dr. McGee requested that the School Board consider adding two teacher positions for the remainder of the year.  
91 The addition of two teachers would be used to create an additional second grade and third-grade classroom. The  
92 additional classrooms would decrease the number of students within a classroom. Dr. McGee mentioned that the  
93 District has leads to the two teaching positions. He added that the estimated cost for both positions would be  
94 \$79,761.  
95

96 Dr. McGee mentioned that the other cost item was to allow unused Personal Leave for PEA, PESPA, and hourly  
97 employees to be paid out at the end of the fiscal year. The estimated cost is \$170,161. At the end of the fiscal year,  
98 the payout would be used as an incentive not to use their Personal Leave during the school year. He commented  
99 that he felt comfortable recommending to the School Board because of the budget freeze from August until  
100 December. The open positions were budgeted because of the Covid-19 response, the underspent accounts in  
101 Professional Development, the responsibility pool, and co-curricular activities.  
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103

104 **b. Level of Community Transmission:**

105 Dr. McGee reviewed the metrics for the level of community transmission. He provided the School Board with the  
106 statistics from December 15 and December 28. The Covid-19 PCR test positivity as a 7-day average was 9.8%  
107 (Moderate) on December 15 and was 8.3% (Moderate) on December 28. The number of new infections per  
108 100,000 population prior to 14 days was 786.6 (Substantial) on December 15 and is 613.4 (Substantial) on  
109 December 28. And the number of new hospitalizations per 100,000 people over the prior 14 days was 0.9  
110 (Minimal) on December 15 and is 0.9 (Minimal) on December 28.

111  
112 The next metric that Dr. McGee reviewed was the Staffing Capacity Data. He mentioned that since the pivot 11  
113 students, from the entire District had reported positive cases of Covid-19. During the same period, 14 staff  
114 members reported having a positive case of Covid-19. He pointed out that the reported positive Covid-19 cases,  
115 since November 25, have not exposed other students. Dr. McGee acknowledges that, since the report was printed,  
116 the staff has informed him of additional positive Covid-19 cases.

117  
118 The final metric reviewed was Level of School Impact. Dr. McGee stated that the Staff Capacity remains 'Strained  
119 Medium.' He noted that the increase in pay for substitute teachers and the additional 11 substitutes hired in  
120 December has helped. He mentioned that he hopes to have four more substitutes by January 11. Dr. McGee added  
121 that since the last School Board meeting, the District has been able to clarify who can teach in school and who has  
122 requested an exception or requested a Leave of Absence.

123  
124 Ms. Greenwood asked if the two additional teachers would be in place and would the students know who their  
125 teacher is by January 11. Dr. McGee mentioned that it was doubtful that the new teachers would be set up by  
126 January 11. The students will remain in their original classrooms until the new classrooms are fully staffed.

127  
128 Mr. Bressette acknowledged that he is becoming more concerned with the social-emotional impact that remote  
129 learning is having on students. He wanted to know why the District could not return to in-school learning by  
130 January 4. Dr. McGee mentioned that currently, the transmission of Covid-19 within the community remains  
131 substantial. And he added that the District might have to work through an increase of positive Covid-19 cases  
132 because of the recent holiday.

133  
134 Mr. Bressette asked, regarding the Personal Leave payout, if there was a possibility of requesting a commitment  
135 from the staff and providing the buy-out now. Dr. McGee commented that he had not considered that option, as a  
136 matter of practice. He mentioned that paying someone in advance for something that may not be available would  
137 get the District into some questionable fiscal practices.

138  
139 Dr. McGee commented that he is confident that the District's guidance of three to six feet of separation was  
140 correct, based on the available information. He noted that the District is not going to have a Family Choice model  
141 and still be able to keep people six feet apart. But he added that the District might be able to keep people from  
142 gathering for 10 minutes or more and remain at least six feet apart from each other. Dr. McGee noted that he has  
143 heard people say that children are not 100 percent immune, but they have a low level of significant impact. He  
144 pointed out that children can still carry the virus and pass the virus to adults.

145  
146 Ms. Larson asked if the District was going to tighten up staff interactions. Dr. McGee stated that the District has  
147 reviewed guidelines with the staff and will review the staff's guidelines again on January 4. Ms. Ryan asked if Dr.  
148 McGee had been in contact with the Health Officer. Dr. McGee commented that he met with Karen McGlynn and  
149 had discussed the downward trend, and if she knew of any vaccines for teachers. Dr. McGee mentioned that he did  
150 not know if the State will mandate the vaccine. He noted that the NH-DHHS and DOE had not provided information  
151 regarding mandating vaccines.

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153 Ms. Ryan asked why the District needed to know which teachers would teach in-school and which teachers needed  
154 to request a Leave of Absence. Dr. McGee provided an example of a hypothetical Pelham teacher who has a child  
155 in the Hudson School District. Currently, both Districts are remotely learning, but if the Hudson School District  
156 remains remote while the Pelham School District returns to in-school learning, the Pelham teacher would be

157 required to return to in-school instruction. Ms. Ryan then asked if there was a possibility that if a classroom of  
158 students were impacted by Covid-19, that only the classroom of students would pivot to remote learning. Dr.  
159 McGee mentioned that the students in the classroom would need to quarantine based on the guidelines. He said  
160 that if students' classrooms were from PES, then pivoting the classroom to remote learning would be easy.

161

162 Ms. Ryan made a motion to support the memo as outlined. Mr. Wilkerson seconded the motion. The motion  
163 passed (5-0-0)

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165 **4. Future Meetings:**

166 a. 01/06/2021 – 6:30 pm School Board Meeting @ PES Library

167 b. 01/20/2021 – 6:30 pm School Board Meeting @ PES Library

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169 **5. Adjourn Meeting:**

170 Mr. Bressette made a motion to adjourn the public session at 6:50 pm. Mr. Wilkerson seconded the motion. The  
171 motion passed (5-0-0)

172

173 Submitted by Matthew Sullivan