

Pelham School Board Meeting
December 6, 2023
Pelham Elementary School
6:30 pm

In Attendance:

School Board Members: David Wilkerson, Vice-Chair; Thomas Gellar; Darlene Greenwood; and John Russell

Superintendent: Chip McGee

Assistant Superintendent: Sarah Marandos

Business Administrator: Deb Mahoney

Student Representative: Mya Belanger

Absent: Troy Bressette

Also in Attendance: Danielle Pilato, School District Clerk; and Doug Vincent, School District Moderator

I. Swearing-In:

School District Clerk, Danielle Pilato swore in Doug Vincent as School District Moderator.

II. Public Session:

A. Call to Order:

Vice-Chair David Wilkerson called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm and requested that everyone stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Public Input @ 6:32 pm

A. None

Public Input closed at 6:33 pm.

IV. Opening Remarks:

A. Student Representative:

Mya Belanger mentioned that PHS has the drama play this weekend, Thursday through Saturday. The Band concert will be held on Thursday, December 14 at 6 pm. She noted that the winter sports begin this week. Ms. Belanger commented that there is a lot of stuff going on with the Student Government.

B. Superintendent:

Dr. McGee welcomed Mya Belanger as the Student Representative for the School Board. He noted that she was committed serving out the school year as the Student Representative. Dr. McGee commented that they were able to make things work on the Student Government side. Dr. McGee mentioned that he was able to attend the first ever interscholastic basketball game at PMS. He noted that it was fun to see in the new gymnasium.

Dr. McGee stated that at PES the PTA has had Holiday Shoppes all week.

Dr. McGee said that he was delighted to say that the District would have a PMS winter concert. The concert is on December 12 at 6:30 pm. He added that he is excited about the play "Arsenic and Old Lace."

V. Presentations:

A. None

55
56 **VI. Main Issues / Policy Updates:**

57 **A. Progress on Pelham School District Goals for the 2023-2024 School Year**

58 Dr. McGee commented that at the August 30, 2023 meeting, the Board approved these goals for the 2023-24 school
59 year.

- 60 1. Improve Student Performance in Mathematics
61 2. Culture of Belonging
62 3. Making Pelham one of the best places to work (Year 2 of 3; complete in 2024-25)
63

64 Dr. McGee said that the bottom-line is that the District has met its annual benchmarks at PES and PHS levels. The focus
65 is now at PMS while continuing to make progress at the other two levels.
66

67 Dr. Marandos provided the action items for PMS.
68

69 **Goal 1: Improve Student Performance in Mathematics (Year 3 of 3; complete for 2023-24)**

70 **At Pelham Memorial School**

- 71 a. The District has created a supplemental math course for students in need of additional math support in Grade
72 8. This course is an option for student who are not taking a Spanish course.
73 b. The District has reinstated in the schedule a structured support time for additional math and reading
74 instruction for all grades (called Literacy).
75 c. The District is continuing its Mathletes program for select students who would benefit from a boost in math.
76 This is taught by the math coach and is part of the Unified Arts rotation.
77 d. The District has created a low-stakes school-wide competition using the math practice software, called IXL
78 Leaderboard.
79 e. The District has completed the adjustment of Accelerated Math in grade 6 to allow for a high school level
80 Algebra I in Grade 8.
81

82 Mr. Gellar asked how many students are involved in the supplemental math course. Dr. Marandos stated that
83 there are approximately nine or ten students in the supplemental math course. The course meets every day for
84 the full school year.
85

86 Mr. Gellar asked if the parents knew that the District was offering the supplemental math course. He wanted to know
87 if parents have been given the opportunity to ask for their child to be put in the course. Dr. Marandos said that was not
88 an option this year.
89

90 Dr. McGee stressed that the course is not designed for students who want to take additional math courses.
91

92 Ms. Greenwood acknowledge that each grade level is different. She pointed out that 57% of the PES students were
93 proficient or better in mathematics, but only 29% in PMS were proficient or better. Dr. Marandos stated that the
94 District's Math Vertical Curriculum Team was reinstated, and they are having in depth conversations across all grade
95 levels. Dr. Marandos acknowledged that they are working with Nicole Bridge, Karena Carten, and Kim Dexter.
96

97 Mr. Wilkerson pointed out that only 29% of PMS students are proficient in math. He wanted to know how many of the
98 71%, who are not considered proficient, are eligible for the supplemental math course. Dr. Marandos said that the
99 supplemental math course is only eligible to Grade 8 students. Students in Grades 6 and 7 are eligible for Mathletes.
100 The Board acknowledged that the number of students in Mathletes and the supplemental math course is significantly
101 less than the 71%, who are not considered proficient in math.
102

103 Mr. Wilkerson mentioned that the Math Coach is heavily engaged with the Mathletes and the supplemental math
104 course. Dr. Marandos stated that the Math Coach meets with the five Math Teachers at PMS. When the Math Coach is
105 not intervening with students, is working with the Math Teachers independently and as part of the Professional
106 Development.
107

Goal 2: Culture of Belonging (Year 1 of 3, complete in 2025-26)

Dr. McGee stated that the Culture of Belonging Task Force has all but completed their report. They should present the report on January 17, 2024.

The School Board created the task force, which is Chaired by the Director of Human Resources Toni Barkdoll, and charged with three tasks:

- a. Identify key factors that are holding the District back from a better culture of belonging.
- b. Recommend an improved process for collecting, analyzing, acting on information, and
- c. Recommend an improved method for reporting on progress.

The task force is made up of a cross section of the District including Director of Human Resources, a Custodian/Maintenance Worker, an Educator from PES, PMS, and PHS, an Educator selected by the PEA, an Instructional Assistant, a Non-affiliated Professional Staff Member, a SAU Support Staff Member, a School Level Support Staff Member, two School or District Administrators, and a Technology Support Staff Member.

Ms. Greenwood asked what a Non-Affiliated Staff Member is. Dr. McGee said it is a related service provider or an Occupational Therapist (Not in PEA).

Goal 3: Making Pelham one of the best places to work (Year 2 of 3; complete in 2024-25)

Dr. McGee mentioned that this goal is to make Pelham one of the best places to work. The measurements for success are through successful contracts and retention.

Measurement through Successful Contracts: The Board successfully presented a contract for the Pelham Education Support Personnel Association in March of 2023. The Board and the Pelham Education Association are currently in negotiations to develop a contract to present to voters in March 2024.

Measurement through Retention: The Board is also tracking progress on this goal through retention data. The District uses PEA data as an indicator of its ability to retain professional staff including teachers, professional services providers, and administrators. The District use PESPA data as an indicator of its ability to retain hourly staff including instructional assistants, support staff, custodians and food service personnel. For 2023, the District saw retention of hourly employees, as measured by PESPA, improve to above our target of 70%. Retention of professional staff remained stubbornly at 82%.

Group (Indicator)	Target	2022	2023
Professional Staff (PEA)	90%	82%	82%
Hourly Staff (PESPA)	70%	64%	75%

*2022 Hourly Staff was initially reported incorrectly as 62%.

In order to continue to work to improve retention, we are currently taking the following steps.

- a. The Board is working to wrap up a successful negotiation with the PEA and gain a warrant that voters approve.
- b. The Culture of Belonging Task Force is working on identifying and sharing the defining characteristics that attract people to come work in and continue to work for Pelham.
- c. The Director of Human Resources is redesigning its onboarding experience to improve the experience for new employees.
- d. The Business Administrator and Director of Human Resources are developing a plan to become and remain competitive with salary and benefits for all employees. They will present that plan to the School Board for approval upon completion.

Mr. Russell asked what the average rate of retention in Southern New Hampshire compared to other schools. Dr. McGee said that 90% is the target, and higher performing Districts tend to be at 90%.

Ms. Greenwood acknowledged the great work that the Director of HR, Toni Barkdoll is doing.

Conclusion

These goals are the core of the District's work to improve the Pelham School District. While not all indicators show the progress they want, but they are confident that their continued efforts at improvement on multiple levels will yield the results they want as a School District and community.

B. Pelham Memorial School Project Update

Dr. McGee commented that they are on Phase 8 of 9. He noted that Phase 8 ends in December 2023. The contractors are working on the punch list for the second floor as he was speaking. The paint, floor tiling, finishes for electrical and plumbing are being put in place. The elevator is close to completion.

Dr. McGee mentioned that they are going to be using the HVAC system of the new building, when they move into the second floor.

Dr. McGee stated that they would be using the second floor science tower for the first time as well.

Dr. McGee said they had a Building Committee meeting last Wednesday, and they have four students on the Committee. They are also working on the memorials around the building and the grand reopening.

Mr. Gellar asked why there was a bunch of balances that were negative, and what it meant. Ms. Mahoney said that she would look into it. Ms. Mahoney mentioned that this is a project ledger, and it shows as a negative balance on the reports, even though it is not a negative total.

Ms. Greenwood asked where the installation of radiant heat was going. Dr. McGee said that he would get back to her with an answer.

Ms. Belanger asked about the grand re-opening, she wanted to know if that is when the project is complete or when the new students are coming into the building. Dr. McGee said it is to celebrate the completion of the project, it will likely occur after the new students have entered the building.

C. Proposed Changes to the 2023 -2024 Calendar

Superintendent McGee said that this is a rare occurrence to change a calendar that they are in. Dr. McGee noted that he is proposing two changes to the calendar. One proposed change is the result of the decision of the NH Secretary of State to place the NH Presidential Primary on January 23 instead of February 13.

The second proposed change is to have no school for PMS only on January 2. This would support the PMS staff and students' move from the first floor to the soon-to-be-completed second floor. This could be a hardship for families and so the school is committed to providing supervised space for students who require it.

Mr. Wilkerson stressed that the District needs to get the information out to the parents as soon as possible. This will let the parents know that PES and PHS students would still have school on January 2.

Mr. Gellar made a motion to adjust the 2023 – 2024 school year schedule as proposed. Ms. Greenwood seconded the motion. The motion passed (4-0-0).

D. Budget Committee Decision

Dr. McGee thanked Dr. Marandos and Ms. Mahoney for attending the Budget Committee meeting that he was unable to attend. Dr. McGee acknowledged that the District is in some unusual territory and they want to make sure they think through the \$802,760 reduction that the Budget Committee made to the School District's budget. The District is putting together the materials for the standard reconsideration. This will occur at the next School Board meeting.

Dr. McGee acknowledged that it was a difficult circumstance, given the amount of work that the School District put

210 into the FY2025 budget.

211
212 Mr. Wilkerson suggested that the residents watch the Budget Committee meeting because it explains best what has
213 transpired.

214
215 Ms. Greenwood stated that she was disappointed in the process. She noted that the Board spent a lot of time on the
216 budget. Her feeling was the School Board was being disregarded. Ms. Greenwood added that the Budget Committee is
217 not permitting the taxpayers of the Town to choose if they want to support the proposed School District budget.

218
219 Mr. Russell seconded what Ms. Greenwood said.

220
221 Mr. Gellar acknowledged that he watched the Budget Committee meeting and heard about the changes. He stated,
222 "When we sit here on the Board, we have an obligation to maintain the level of services that voters have voted for in
223 the past. That is part of what the default budget is. This is what we have already committed to, these the contracts we
224 have, and the information we have. When we go below that, and in this particular case, it seems like it is not directed
225 in a particular area that we cannot afford certain services.

226
227 But, the effect of reducing the amount is to say we basically want to reduce the level of services that we are providing
228 right now because when we come up with our operational budget, we are maintaining a level of services that we
229 believe have been approved by the voters and we are seeking to continue in the direction of the voters have in the last
230 ten years. So this is a change which does not give the voters a choice in that sense, because it says either you say you
231 maintain the status quo, which is the default budget, or you reduce the level of services to some degree. Because the
232 reduction, you have a budget that is matching the previous year when we know that inflation and other costs go up
233 automatically means that you are reducing the level of services you provide.

234
235 Whether we can manage that and still maintain the level of services that I would like to see on December 20. To see
236 what options do we have to at least maintain what we have accomplished so far and what we are trying to accomplish
237 right now. However, if we as a community do not wish to continue to improve and strive to improve the level of
238 education that we provide to the community. Then that should be a choice of the voters, as opposed to an arbitrary
239 amount that says 'Okay, I want to match the number that we had last year without any particular reason that goes
240 behind it'.

241
242 It is a concern to me, and I am hesitating to say what I recommend or not recommend based on the information I
243 receive on December 20. However, this is the concern I have. Your budget is your policy, your budget or your
244 priorities. If you reduce the budget with no reason, other than saving money. Sure, I am a taxpayer and I would love to
245 have the money saved, but only if we can provide the level of services that we are really trying to provide. So I am a
246 little concerned, but I will wait to see what happens on December 20 to see how I how I stand on that."

247
248 Mr. Wilkerson stated, "I was the School Board Rep on the Budget Committee, and I feel like I should give some
249 indication of what the experience was like. For anybody who doesn't know, the Board assigns the responsibility of
250 attending the Budget Committee meetings to an individual on the Board and the individual becomes a voting member
251 of that Committee and in doing so we have the responsibility to participate in all the meetings that lead up to the
252 conclusion that took place a couple of weeks ago.

253
254 During that process, we participate as a Committee in a review of the Town budget and the School District budget. So
255 both of those entities are represented and the budget is reviewed very carefully. And from the Town perspective,
256 Department Heads come and they advocate for their budgets. In the School District case, the Superintendent, Assistant
257 Superintendent, and Business Administrator were present again advocating for the items in our budget.

258
259 The amount of time that is spent not simply on the Board's part or my part, but I think most conspicuously on the part
260 of the Administrators in our buildings as well as our District Administrators is very significant. This is a major effort to
261 put together a responsible budget. And it has been my sense for a long time that the responsibility of the Board, and

for that matter the Selectman, is to be stewards of the resources entrusted to us by the town each year when the town votes on the budget.

And so I guess the question is very similar to Tom's question. As stewards of those funds, we have received the approval of the town for each of the budgets of the last 10 years. And as such, I think we have demonstrated good stewardship with those funds. Therefore, it was our intent to again demonstrate that stewardship and give the town an opportunity to make its decision to continue in the direction that we are going or if not, then in the direction of the default budget. However, neither of those is the case that will be presented to us in the warrant as it currently stands at the Spring Meeting. Both at the Deliberative Session and at the Voting Meeting that follows. Frankly, I am grateful that we have had some time since that meeting ended and tonight because I was quite frustrated, to put it mildly. In addition, I felt that my effort was in large part a waste of time. That to spend that amount of time, and those hours was an enormous waste of my time. I am grateful for what you said tonight, Dr. McGee, with regard to what your efforts are now in view of the current circumstances. Moreover, I am grateful to know that the leadership in our District has not abdicated its responsibility to do what we can with what we have. However, to do so in a way that achieves a success to which we are all committed.

I have great concern for the well-being of our community and for our town. That is a mild statement of the nature of my concern. Because I think that in this instance, the Budget Committee has taken a role upon itself, which is not representative of town at large. In addition, I guess it remains to be seen if that is true or not.

I think when the RSA was conceived that guides us in the manner, which we govern ourselves, I do not think it was imagined that we would find ourselves in circumstances we find ourselves in the moment. That we would arbitrarily make decisions to cut budgets and in one case, in the Town case, there is no choice. Either you get the default budget or you get the default budget. And with the District, either you get the default budget or you get less than the default budget. And those are not real choices. And in my mind, it suggests a lack of trust in the voters of the town of Pelham who have historically approved these budgets."

E. Policy Review:

The Board reviewed the policies listed below.

a. First Reading:

- i. None

b. Second Reading:

- i. JLCA – Physical Examinations of Students
- ii. KCD – Public Gifts/Donations
- iii. EHAB – Data Governance and Security
- iv. FAA – Annual Facility Plan and Unused District Property

Mr. Gellar asked if Policy JLCA had language that came from the NH SBA. Dr. McGee said he was correct, he added that the policy is easy to put into practice because there are no non-emergency physical examinations or screenings.

Mr. Gellar made a motion to approve policies JLCA, KCD, EHAB, and FAA, as presented. Mr. Russell seconded the motion. The motion passed (4-0-0).

VII. Board Member Reports:

- A. Ms. Greenwood commented that she has a Master Plan Committee meeting tomorrow night. They Committee is getting ready to present the plan.

VIII. Housekeeping:

A. Adoption of Minutes

- a. November 1, 2023 – Draft Public Minutes
- b. November 1, 2023 – Draft Non-Public Minutes

Mr. Gellar made a motion to approve the November 1, 2023, Public School Board Minutes. Ms. Greenwood seconded the motion. The motion passed (4-0-0).

Mr. Gellar made a motion to approve the November 1, 2023, Non-Public School Board Minutes. Ms. Greenwood seconded the motion. The motion passed (4-0-0).

B. Vendor and Payroll Manifests

a.	460	\$635,195.45 (signed)
b.	461	\$591,545.29
c.	462	\$627,304.33
d.	AP111523	\$544,189.62 (signed)
e.	AP120623	\$878,456.39
f.	BFPMS53	\$ 2,519.88 (signed)
g.	PAY	\$591,545.29
h.	PAY460P	\$ 20,187.69 (signed)
i.	PAY461P	\$304,547.76
j.	PAY462P	\$166,859.67

Mr. Gellar made a motion to approve the Vendor and Payroll Manifest as presented. Ms. Greenwood seconded the motion. The motion passed (4-0-0).

C. Correspondence & Information

- a. None

D. Enrollment Report

- a. Dr. McGee said that the Pelham School District has a plus four students, primarily at the PES level. He noted that one student moved onto HiSet, which offers nationally recognized high school equivalency tests (GED).
- b. Dr. McGee commented that they had a student, that they hoped would return to school, but they were unable to convince the student to return. The student did not begin the school year attending school.

E. Staffing Updates

a. Leaves

- i. None

b. Resignations:

- | | | | |
|----|------------------|-----|----------------------|
| i. | Elizabeth Graves | PES | Kindergarten Teacher |
|----|------------------|-----|----------------------|

c. Retirements:

- i. None

d. Nominations:

- | | | | |
|------|----------------|-----|--------------------------------|
| i. | Cynthia Milne | PES | Kindergarten Teacher |
| ii. | Audrey Lonsway | PMS | LTS – Music Teacher |
| iii. | Colin Garrett | PHS | LTS – English Teacher |
| iv. | Andrea Kleiner | PES | LTS – Kindergarten & Preschool |

Mr. Gellar made a motion to accept the resignation, as presented. Ms. Greenwood seconded the motion. The motion passed (4-0-0).

Mr. Gellar made a motion accept the nominations, as presented. Mr. Russell seconded the motion. The motion passed (4-0-0).

Dr. Marandos commented that the Band Instructor, Ms. Saunders has returned from her leave. She is prepping for the Winter Concert.

IX. Future Agenda Planning:

A. No Future Agenda Planning

X. Future Meetings:

A. 12/20/2023 – 6:30 pm School Board Meeting @ PES Library

B. 01/03/2024 – 6:30 pm School Board Meeting @ PES Library

XI. Non-Public

Mr. Gellar made a motion to enter a non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 (II) (i) – Emergency Planning at 7:39 pm. Mr. Russell seconded the motion. The motion passed (4-0-0).

XII. Reconvene:

The Board returned to Public Session at 8:16 pm.

XIII. Adjournment:

Mr. Gellar made a motion to adjourn the School Board Meeting at 8:17 pm. Mr. Russell seconded the motion. The motion passed (4-0-0).

Respectfully Submitted,

Matthew Sullivan

School Board Recording Secretary