

Pelham School Board Meeting
Pelham Elementary School
September 11, 2024
6:30 p.m.

School Board Members: Troy Bressette, Chair; David Wilkerson, Vice-Chair; Garrett Abare; Rebecca Cummings; and Darlene Greenwood

Superintendent: Chip McGee

Assistant Superintendent: Sarah Marandos

Business Administrator: Deb Mahoney

Absent: Mya and Alexia

Also in Attendance: Taryn Capraro, School Nutrition Director; Brian Sands, Facilities Director; Kim Noyes, Director of Student Services; Tara MacDonald, Assistant Director of Student Services; and Keith Lord, Director of Technology.

I. Public Session:

A. Call to Order:

6:30 p.m. - Chair Troy Bressette called the meeting to order, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

The meeting began with Mr. Bressette acknowledging that the agenda for the evening was quite full, focusing primarily on budget presentations. The Chair thanked everyone for attending and noted that no members of the public were present for public input.

II. Opening Remarks:

A. Superintendent:

Superintendent McGee stated he had three updates, and Dr. Marandos had one. He assured the group he would be brief but emphasized that a lot was happening. First, he shared his experience visiting first-grade classrooms earlier in the day. The students were learning the basics of reading, and while it might not seem significant, Dr. McGee was impressed with the first graders' knowledge of the different ways to form the "ck" sound in the word "truck." By their third week of school, the students already knew two of the three ways to spell this sound.

Next, Dr. McGee expressed excitement for PMS' participation in the town's Old Home Day event on Saturday, with the school's band set to march. Finally, he thanked the community, the Board, and the school staff for ensuring a smooth and quiet Primary Day. The Moderators were pleased with the support from the PHS administration, and the students behaved well. He also commended the custodial and maintenance teams for their efficient setup and clean-up efforts.

Dr. Marandos announced the fall series for Parents in the community, which has been organized in collaboration with the SEL Vertical and District Leadership teams. On September 24, Katie Greer will give an online presentation titled "Digital Safety: Keeping Our Families Healthy and Safe in the Digital World."

Additionally, on September 30, Lynn Lyons will be returning with a presentation titled "From Stress to Smartphone: From Freakouts to Friendship—What Parents Need to Know and Do About Worry, Anxiety, and Depression," which will be held at PHS.

In October, there will be two more presentations: one in partnership with the Police Department and the Pelham Community Coalition to host another mock bedroom event at PMS, and another on the topic of suicide prevention, where internal staff will present "Signs of Suicide" training for parents, also at PMS. This information will be

included in Dr. McGee's weekly update for parents, and the community is encouraged to attend these valuable presentations.

Mr. Bressette thanked Dr. McGee and Dr. Marandos for their updates, noting that the information sounded incredibly useful and practical. Mr. Bressette especially acknowledged Lynn Lyons, mentioning her previous presentations as impressive, and thanked Dr. Marandos and the team for arranging her return.

III. Presentations:

A. None

IV. Main Issues:

The meeting then moved to the budget presentations, with the Chair asking Dr. McGee to lead. Dr. McGee noted that the evening's discussions would be lengthy due to the numerous budget items. He asked Business Administrator Deb Mahoney if she wanted to mention anything before starting.

Ms. Mahoney reminded the Board that an Encumbrance Report, promised from the previous week, was included in their packets. This report provides a detailed, line-by-line account of adjusted budget amounts carried through purchase orders from the end of the year. It would serve as a helpful guide for comparing the requested budget to the approved budget from the previous year. She encouraged anyone with questions to reach out.

Mr. Bressette thanked Ms. Mahoney and welcomed Taryn Capraro, the School Nutrition Director.

A. FY 2026 Budget Presentation – School Budgets

a. PSD Nutrition Budget

The presentation began with Ms. Capraro expressing gratitude to the School Board and the families for supporting the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs. She highlighted the importance of these programs in serving the community and mentioned their return from maternity leave. Ms. Capraro emphasized her goal for the current and upcoming fiscal year (FY2026) to closely monitor the budget, increase revenue, and manage expenses while maintaining full student participation in the programs. She also mentioned the hope for improved staffing, which would allow for the reinstatement of revenue-generating initiatives. The focus remains on budgeting for essential items, including equipment, as outlined in the five-year nutrition equipment plan.

In FY2026, the plan includes replacing a PES steamer budgeted at **\$29,000**. The plan was pushed forward because no new equipment was purchased last year. Ms. Capraro discussed tracking revenue to ensure purchases remain within financial limits and invited questions from the Board.

Moving to specific budget lines, Ms. Capraro highlighted an increase of **\$500** in the District-wide Food Service line for cleaning costs, which is necessary to comply with state regulations. USDA commodities showed a decrease, reflecting actual numbers from FY2025. For PES, an increase of **\$7,900** in the food line was attributed to anticipated enrollment growth. Additionally, the replacement of the steamer, for **\$29,000**, was confirmed. For PMS, decreases were noted, particularly in rental and lease equipment, as they decided not to purchase a vending machine. Instead, they relocated an existing machine to a more accessible area.

A discussion followed regarding the vending machine offerings, with assurances that they comply with USDA standards for health and nutrition. For PMS, further decreases were reported, totaling approximately **\$9,900**. At PHS, slight increases were noted for kitchen equipment maintenance, while supply costs were reduced due to declining enrollment. The overall reduction for the high school was **\$1,321**, with a total reduction of approximately **\$5,576** for the entire Food Service Program.

Mr. Bressette asked about the delta between budgeted spending (about **\$600,000**) and actual spending (just under **\$400,000**) in FY2024. Ms. Capraro attributed this to the lack of equipment purchases and ongoing staffing challenges. She reiterated the Department's effort to maximize existing resources while budgeting prudently for the future.

Mr. Abare inquired about how the program funds itself. Ms. Capraro confirmed that capital expenditures are funded through meal sales, state funding, and non-program revenue sources such as catering. Staffing shortages were a concern, with discussions around how the program could improve with additional staff. Increased staffing would allow for more popular meal offerings and opportunities for non-program revenue growth, such as catering and special events.

The discussion also touched on the impact of the Default Budget on Food Service operations, focusing on equipment replacement schedules and prudent fiscal practices. Staffing concerns continued, with Ms. Capraro mentioning that they have four employees, including the managers, in each building. The Food Service is currently short-staffed by about two employees per school. Efforts are being made to cover gaps with substitute staff by adjusting the menu based on available personnel

The presentation concluded with the Board expressing appreciation for Ms. Capraro's efforts.

b. PSD Facilities Budget

Brian Sands, Director of Facilities for the Pelham School District, began by thanking the School Board and community for their continued support. He highlighted several accomplishments for the year, including the ongoing effort to bring solar into the District, the completion of the PMS, and improvements to school safety. He mentioned that the commissioning for PMS would be finalized this fall, ensuring all mechanical systems are optimized for peak efficiency. An energy audit will also be conducted at PHS as part of a **\$532,000** boiler upgrade project to identify the most efficient path forward.

Mr. Sands discussed several budgetary items, including the retro-commissioning of mechanical systems at PES, which was last updated during the 2019 energy efficiency upgrade. He emphasized the importance of maintaining mechanical systems at peak efficiency, which requires retro-commissioning every five to seven years. The boiler upgrade at PHS is expected to follow a thorough audit, determining the most effective and financially sensible replacement options.

Mr. Sands also introduced a new initiative for the Department: **The Facilities Department's Year-Over-Year Plan for FY2026**. The plan includes regular commissioning and retro-commissioning and using the findings from these processes to drive future equipment improvements or replacements. Mr. Sands explained that this proactive approach will help the District maintain equipment efficiency, with the potential return on investment from these upgrades realized within 24 to 36 months.

The discussion then moved to budget details. Mr. Sands noted that the salaries and benefits presentation included a request for one full-time custodial employee for PMS. This addition reflects the increased square footage of the facility and the need to maintain a high standard of cleanliness. He also proposed aligning the custodial supplies budget for PMS with those of the PES and PHS, based on a rate of **\$0.39 per square foot**.

Mr. Sands touched on specific budget line items, including a request for funding to attend the SchoolDude conference, which supports facilities management and community scheduling. Additionally, there was a discussion regarding the Professional Services budget, which includes the Energy Consultant's quarterly support fees.

As the meeting progressed, the group reviewed several other budget line items related to utilities, including electricity and natural gas. Ms. Mahoney explained that solar energy would offset electricity costs for PES and PMS starting in July next year. PHS, however, will remain fully grid-supplied for another year as infrastructure work is completed. Ms. Mahoney noted that forward market rates for natural gas and electricity have been budgeted, with a potential reduction at the Superintendent's level.

Mr. Bressette asked when they could expect to see solar panels on the roofs of the schools. Ms. Mahoney stated that the panels would be installed before July 2025. The District would start seeing returns from the panels in July 2025.

PES' Trash and Recycling Services, contracted through the town, were reviewed, noting a **5%** cost increase. The team briefly discussed the District's single-stream recycling system. Additionally, Mr. Sands mentioned a standard increase of **\$0.01 per square foot** for repairs and maintenance across all schools, reflecting the District's efforts to stay ahead of repair needs.

The conversation then returned to the commissioning process. Mr. Sands explained the value of regular recommissioning in maintaining system efficiency, particularly for hidden elements that can negatively impact energy usage. The team discussed how the commissioning of PES' mechanical systems and the preventive maintenance of rooftop equipment are critical to identifying potential failures before they become costly repairs.

Mr. Sands addressed a question regarding the gym floor at PMS, noting that while the buckling issue has been resolved, the soft spots have yet to be addressed, though the vendor remains accountable for completing this work.

The conversation continued with discussing managing a minor issue without budgetary impact. It was noted that the concern was operational rather than financial. The Board acknowledged that although a small section of the court needed attention, it did not affect overall performance. The discussion shifted to the custodial budget, highlighting that on page 4, the cost for supplies at PMS was being aligned with the other two buildings at **\$0.39 per square foot**. Additionally, on page 5, the budget for equipment included a request for a high-speed burnisher at PMS, similar to equipment used at the high school.

Mr. Wilkerson asked for clarification on the benefits of a high-speed burnisher, confirming that its primary advantage was extending the life of the wax on floors, which in turn prolongs the floors' life. The burnisher reduces the need for more aggressive and time-consuming floor maintenance. It was emphasized that the custodians needed two burnishers, which are heavy, battery-powered, and impractical machines to move between buildings. It was further noted that **\$11,000** was budgeted for one burnisher in the current fiscal year, and if purchased, it would reduce the need for another request in FY2026.

The conversation then touched on the safety and convenience of using battery-powered equipment over corded options, especially in covering larger areas without tripping hazards. Ms. Mahoney provided an update on utilities, mentioning that a small budget was allocated for propane for a portable building behind PHS.

On page 7, the District explained that it sought to equip its Kubota all-terrain vehicle with a plow or snow blower for better snow removal. A drop spreader was also discussed to ensure the precise application of ice melt. Additionally, encumbered funds for landscaping and irrigation at PMS were mentioned.

Moving to page 10, it was reported that the CO2 detectors in all PMS unit ventilators needed repairs. These detectors provide live readouts and send alarms to the building management system when CO2 levels exceed preset thresholds, enhancing the school's air quality management.

On page 11, the discussion turned to upgrading the LED lighting in the PHS gym, which was necessary to meet the required lighting standards for athletic events. The Board also discussed replacing emergency response posters throughout the District. These posters, used in every classroom, will be updated for improved clarity and durability.

Mr. Sands provided an update on the PHS building improvements, specifically the upgrade to the boiler system. A clarification was made regarding the PMS bond, Ms. Mahoney noted that it was year 4 of the payment schedule, and a reduction of **\$112,560** in interest was expected in the next fiscal year due to historically low interest rates.

The Board discussed non-instructional equipment, including the need for pest management, fire and burglar alarms, and wet/dry sprinkler systems. The distinction between non-instructional equipment and building improvements was clarified, with the latter typically involving larger, infrastructure-related projects such as roof replacements and boiler upgrades.

Mr. Wilkerson asked a question regarding the difference between wet and dry sprinkler systems. Mr. Sands explained that a wet sprinkler system is used in conditioned spaces, whereas a dry system is implemented in unconditioned spaces, such as the attic of the building. In the dry system, nitrogen is used to reduce corrosion and maintain pressure. If a fire breaks out and a sprinkler head is activated, the system floods with water for fire suppression. It was clarified that nitrogen is not a fire suppressant but only serves to purge moisture from the system.

It was suggested that further technical questions should be addressed in a workshop session with the Building Administrator or Facility Director.

The conversation shifted to emergency response posters. One specific poster throughout all buildings, an example of which is on the bottom half of a door in the library, has a cost of **\$7,000**. There are hundreds of these posters that need to be replaced throughout the District.

The presentation concluded with the Board expressing appreciation for Mr. Sand's efforts.

c. **PSD Special Services Budget**

Kim Noyes, Director of Student Services, and Tara MacDonald, Assistant Director of Student Services, began the meeting by expressing their enthusiasm for the upcoming year, marking their second year in the District. They shared that their first year was spent getting to know the District, students, and staff, and now they are ready to move forward with new initiatives.

Ms. Noyes provided an overview of the budget, acknowledging that student services can be complex due to the variety of programming and support required. She emphasized that while budget increases exist, some are due to factors beyond their control, and others are intentional investments to enhance programming. The goal is to bring students back to their community schools, allowing them to learn alongside their peers. Ms. Noyes also highlighted the successful retention of Special Educators and Service Providers, which has reduced the need for contracted staff, including a School Psychologist and Speech-Language Pathologist.

Ms. Noyes addressed staffing challenges, noting that while they aim to employ all service providers within the District, some positions, such as School Psychologists and Speech Pathologists, remain difficult to fill. However, the contract providers from last year have returned and are excited to continue their work in the District, which provides continuity for students and families.

The conversation shifted to Out-of-District (OOD) placements, where Ms. Noyes mentioned a slight increase in these placements. However, there was a decrease in residential placements, which helped to balance costs. She discussed the Specialized Programming, Consultation Services, and Transportation costs, which rise with Out-of-District (OOD) placements. Ms. Noyes highlighted a partnership with the New England Center for Children (NECC), which has implemented a costly but beneficial program at Pelham Elementary School. This program provides a Master's Level Special Educator, a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) Supervisor, and Consultative Services, with the District supplying Instructional Assistants. Ms. Noyes explained that while the program is expensive, it offsets costs in other areas by replacing a historically difficult-to-staff program.

A question was raised about the grade levels covered by this program. Ms. Noyes clarified that it covers grades one through five and that they have received program approval from the Department of Education. However, the program does not include kindergarten, though support for kindergartners is available through a Registered Behavior Technician who is a District employee.

The discussion then moved to the benefits of the NECC program. Ms. Noyes explained that without this program, students might be less included in their general classroom settings due to the lack of specific programming. This could eventually lead to Out-of-District (OOD) placements, which are costly and reduce students' connection to their community. With the NECC program, students remain in their community schools, and as they gain skills, they are increasingly integrated into general classrooms. The goal is always to support students in becoming independent learners in their classroom settings.

In response to another question, Ms. Noyes confirmed that the NECC staff provides ongoing Professional Development for District staff, including instructional assistants and regular education teachers. This ensures that all staff can support students in their learning environments. Additionally, the NECC provides extensive training for Instructional Assistants, including a two-week summer program focused on applied behavioral analysis.

Ms. Noyes then reviewed the budget, starting with the workshop line item, which has increased due to the need for CPI (Crisis Prevention Intervention) training. CPI is a de-escalation program required for some staff to support safe restraint and seclusion practices. Tara MacDonald and Katie Carmody are the District's Trainers, and they are adding a trauma component to better support students with trauma backgrounds. Ms. Noyes emphasized the importance of training as many staff as possible in verbal de-escalation techniques, which can prevent the need for physical interventions.

Another budget increase was noted in the Medicaid consulting and training line item. Ms. Noyes explained that while the District has not yet seen the financial benefits of Medicaid billing, staff are on track to improve this area significantly. The need for specialized services such as Visual Impairment Support, Feeding and Swallowing Services, Vocational Training, and Translation Services drives the increase in Professional Services. Translation Services have become more necessary as the District has seen more families requiring this support during IEP meetings and other processes.

Ms. Noyes also discussed the anticipated **5%** rate increase for the NECC program, which is typical for Massachusetts-based schools. Additionally, there has been an increase in BCBA Consultation Services across the District, particularly for students who require behavioral support but are not part of the NECC program.

Mr. Wilkerson asked a question regarding the need for Translation Services in Special Education. Ms. Noyes clarified that translation services are required for families needing language support during IEP meetings and other documentation purposes. This service is essential for ensuring that all families are fully informed and can participate in their children's education, even though English as a Second Language (ESL) typically falls outside Special Education. ESL falls under Dr. Marandos' budget.

The discussion then shifted to the importance of protecting the rights of students and families, with Mr. Wilkerson recognizing that Translation Services often benefit both students and parents. There was further conversation about English as a Second Language (ESL) and how translation services are not always aligned with qualifying for other services.

The focus then moved to Tutoring Services, where it was mentioned that there has been an increase in contracted tutoring for students, particularly for those in a hospitalized setting. Mr. Bressette asked a question regarding reconciling budget discrepancies, specifically regarding the number of students attending charter schools. The initial projection indicated 17 students, while the memo referred to 19. The explanation was that these projections are a snapshot in time and can fluctuate throughout the year due to various factors, such as student acceptance into charter schools.

Ms. Noyes elaborated on the budgeting process, noting that the number of students in charter schools can change constantly, so estimates often allow for a margin of ± 3 to 4 students. She also highlighted that students attending charter schools are still entitled to Special Education Services, which adds to the complexity of the budgeting process.

Ms. Greenwood asked how the District judges the costs of Tutoring Services for homebound students in hospice or hospitalization. Ms. Noyes explained that they rely on historical data and maintain close relationships with agencies that provide these services. They also try to stay informed about rate changes and the potential return of students to the District. For instance, five students informed the District by March that they were planning to return, while another five were accepted into charter schools.

It was noted that charter schools charge different rates. Some include services like Reading and Counseling in their fees, and others do not. The District often has to search for external vendors to fill the gap.

There was clarification that the Tutoring Services discussed primarily involved Special Education students, many of whom are in mental health facilities. Ms. Mahoney commented that for regular education students, tutoring can be part of a 504 Plan and is charged to the 2120 line of the budget.

Mr. Abare questioned the percentage of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). It was estimated to be around **16.9%**, slightly higher than the state average of **15%**. This discrepancy was explained as being typical for certain regions in the state.

The next part of the meeting covered general budget items, such as postage and repairs, along with legal obligations to publish notices regarding child find and record destruction. Some of the biggest budget drivers were Out-of-District (OOD) placements, which have increased. The tuition for these placements and other public schools and private institutions has seen a projected **33% increase**.

Ms. Noyes provided a detailed breakdown of the current Out-of-District (OOD) placements, noting that **15 students** are placed outside the District. This number includes one new placement over the summer and a shift in placement for a student who moved from residential to day placement, resulting in a **\$10,000 decrease** in costs for that student. There are also two anticipated placements for the upcoming year.

Ms. Noyes emphasized the importance of budgeting for potential placements, as failing to do so would result in scrambling to find funding later. She also explained that Out-of-District (OOD) placements are often necessary when the District cannot meet the complex needs of certain students. However, many students are on track to return to the District after receiving specialized services.

The meeting then moved to the District's efforts to build programs like the NECC program, which serves **six students** and aims to reduce the need for Out-of-District (OOD) placements. A reduction in residential tuition was noted, as the District currently has no students in residential care, but there is a placeholder for anticipated needs. Based on historical data, there was also a **\$900 increase** in supplies, often related to technology and specific programming needed to support students.

There was a question about whether a significant drop in Line 610 supplies for the FY2025 budget was attributed to the Default Budget. Ms. Mahoney said that a Superintendent's Reduction was done for the current year's budget.

Regarding the **Ace ABA curriculum**, this program is used for students requiring Applied Behavioral Analysis programming, while **Q-Interactive** is a licensure for another program. It was noted that the number of students using this program increased from 10 to 13, with a **\$100 increase** in software costs due to the specialized nature of the program.

For **equipment replacement**, the District continues to budget **\$1,000** to cover potential failures of communication devices or FM systems, which are critical to supporting students with disabilities.

A **\$15,000** request for **Medicaid Reimbursement Services** reflected a **\$9,950** increase. It was explained that this increase aligns with efforts to revamp the Medicaid to Schools program, which had been affected by legal changes and the pandemic. Staff training and engagement were prioritized over revenue generation for this year, with expectations for future revenue increases. The District is also considering switching to a new vendor for Medicaid services, with an upfront payment of **\$15,000** as opposed to the previous vendor's model of taking a percentage of the reimbursement. This change is expected to result in a higher reimbursement rate for the District.

The discussion shifted to the **Grade 8 DC trip**, with the District reserving funds to support students needing instructional assistance. The **Parent Focus Group** is working towards more regular monthly meetings to support families through training and learning opportunities.

In terms of **Extended School Year (ESY) Services**, it was noted that **Professional Services (Line 330)** and **Other Services (Line 332)** for students attending school, in the District, were in line with District needs. **Easter Seals**, a transition service for young adults not enrolled in a full Extended School Year program, received **\$9,280** in support.

There was a question about the increase in **Out-of-District (OOD) tuition** for the regular school year, which rose by approximately **33%**, while **Extended School Year (ESY) costs** were reduced by **50%**. The differences were explained by the limited services provided by Easter Seals during the extended school year compared to the regular school year.

Regarding **Psychological Services**, the budget was increased from **\$250** to **\$300** for Professional Development, aligning with other Departments. There was also a discussion on **Contracted Services**, which showed an increase. This increase was attributed to the decision to include actual rates in the budget, rather than just the difference between contracted and staff salary rates, to understand staff and funding needs better.

The discussion also covered **Counseling Services** for charter school students, which the District must contract. Additionally, funding for **Independent Educational Evaluations** was reviewed, which are sometimes required to be funded by the District through the IEP process.

Speech Services, which often rely on contracted personnel, were adjusted similarly to the psychological services. The **Professional Development** budget was raised from **\$250** to **\$300** to match other Departments. The District continues to contract for an audiologist at a rate of **\$10,000**, which aligns with historical costs. Speech Services are also provided to District-wide and charter students, with efforts made to reduce contracted services by utilizing in-house staff.

The budget for this year included both Contracted Services and staff salaries, rather than just the difference between the two, as was done in previous years. Specifically, **\$58,000** was mentioned as an example of a Contracted Service. The purpose of this budgeting approach was to provide a clearer understanding of the staff and funds available. Contracted Services will be reduced as permanent positions are filled, with a focus on calculating salaries and benefits.

One specific case was discussed, involving a provider offering eight hours of remote Psychology Services for PES, ensuring that in-District Psychologists don't have to leave their duties for meetings. It was clarified that the 48 hours reflects one full-time position at 40 hours, and eight hours per week for another position.

Speech Services were then addressed. Similar to Psychological Services, Speech Services are often provided through contracts. The budget for Professional Development was also increased from **\$250** to **\$300** to align with peers. The District contracts an Audiologist for **\$10,000**, covering all students.

The conversation then shifted to Speech Services provided by contracted staff and district employees. Currently, one Speech Pathologist and one Assistant Speech Pathologist are contracted, but ideally, the District would like to hire them as full-time employees. At present, the District employs three Speech Pathologists.

Repairs for audiological and communication devices were noted, as some equipment is aging. Travel expenses increased due to the Speech Pathologist traveling to charter schools. Physical Therapy (PT) Services remained steady, while Occupational Therapy (OT) Services saw a decrease in travel costs due to better coordination of charter school assignments. However, an increase in OT services was noted for charter schools.

The Special Services Administration budget, covering conferences, certifications, and associations, was then discussed. It was noted that **\$550** seemed to be an increase, but it was clarified that contracted fees and travel costs had been reduced through the default budget process. Funds were applied to the Special Education Department and other Departments, including those of the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent.

In terms of transportation, it was mentioned that costs fluctuate with Out-of-District placements, as the District is responsible for providing transportation to these students. There are also in-District transportation needs for students

requiring specialized transport, including buses or vans, and at times, a monitor may be needed to ensure safety. Transportation for field trips was also included in this budget.

Lastly, there was a discussion regarding transition-based field trips for students aged 22, following a change in federal law extending Special Education Support from age 21 to 22.

The presentation concluded with a thank you to Ms. Noyes and Ms. MacDonald for their efforts in preparing the budget.

d. **PSD Technology Budget**

The meeting moved on to a presentation of the Technology budget. Mr. Lord, the Director of Technology, was welcomed and thanked the Board for the opportunity to discuss the budget. He expressed gratitude for the Board's and community's continued support, which has allowed significant progress in technology updates, including replacing all District-wide network switches and deploying Chromebooks.

Mr. Lord highlighted that brand-new Chromebooks positively impact classrooms and noted the successful overhaul of the high school's Digital Art Lab. Mr. Lord emphasized that the budget focuses on maintaining a tech-rich environment for students, with a heightened emphasis on cybersecurity due to increasing threats. He also mentioned the recent completion of a technology audit, which informed part of the budget plan.

Mr. Lord then shifted to discussing Chromebook deployment, noting that grades 1, 5, and 9 are the primary focus for replacements in the coming year based on enrollment projections. He explained that Chromebooks have a **four-year** life expectancy, meaning fifth graders will use the same device through eighth grade before receiving a new one in ninth grade. Additional Chromebooks will be purchased to accommodate new students and devices' natural wear and tear.

Ms. Cummings recalled initial concerns about providing Chromebooks to first graders but assured everyone that the deployment had been successful. Mr. Lord also explained that Chromebooks remain in the classroom from kindergarten to fourth grade while fifth graders begin taking them home, preparing them for more responsibility.

Mr. Lord outlined the life expectancies of various technological devices in the District. Chromebooks, laptops, and desktop computers typically last four years, network switches have an eight-year lifespan, and access points last about six years. He acknowledged the challenge of aligning these replacement cycles to avoid significant financial impacts in any given year. However, he noted that this year's upcoming replacements are less costly than last year's network switch replacements.

Mr. Lord moved on to key budget items, starting with the elementary school's technology replacement under budget line 2225. PES is the first to receive a refresher on the interactive Promethean Boards, which have a **six-year** life expectancy. The plan is to replace 28 boards, representing half the school. This phased approach allows the District to refresh each building's technology every two years, maintaining consistency across classrooms within a school. The cost of each Promethean Board is approximately **\$3,400**.

Ms. Cummings inquired about the benefits of Promethean Boards compared to more affordable options, such as TVs. Mr. Lord explained that the Promethean Boards offer enhanced interactivity and a built-in computer, allowing teachers to run presentations without relying on personal devices. This setup also provides additional computing power in the classroom, enabling teachers to manage multiple tasks simultaneously.

Mr. Lord explained that the Promethean Board functions independently as a computer, eliminating the need for teachers to use their laptops for classroom presentations. This ensures a smoother workflow and allows teachers to continue using their computers for other tasks while engaging students with the Promethean Board's interactive features.

The discussion began with an overview of the Board's tools, emphasizing the added flexibility of portable Promethean Boards on carts in large spaces like libraries and gyms. It was noted that while some boards are mounted, others are mobile to accommodate different settings. Safety concerns, such as potential tripping hazards, were also considered when making these decisions.

A few Board members recalled seeing similar technology, such as smart boards but it was noted that Promethean Boards run on an Android-based operating system, making them more advanced. While not tied to Promethean, the Board is actively considering alternative options with input from Instructional Technology Coaches.

It was clarified that while not mandatory, Promethean Boards are the primary technology used in elementary and middle school classrooms. Deployment in the high school had been delayed due to technical issues and budget constraints. The Promethean Board has replaced traditional whiteboards and projectors, offering additional features such as recording, camera functionality, and multi-student interactivity.

Mr. Lord then addressed the replacement of teacher laptops at PMS. This year, **\$44,000** is allocated to replace four-year-old laptops, a slight decrease from previous years due to fewer staff members at Memorial. This aligns with the District's ongoing technology replacement plan.

Regarding technology infrastructure, several key items were highlighted: the replacement of firewalls, network backup solutions, and internet content filters. These replacements occur every 3-5 years and are crucial for maintaining cybersecurity and a tech-safe environment. The firewall protects the network from external threats; the backup solution ensures data recovery and the content filter blocks inappropriate material, meeting the District's E-rate requirements.

Auditorium Coordinator

The discussion then moved to the Auditorium Coordinator position. The Board currently maintains a stipend position for this role at PHS. However, with the addition of a new auditorium at PMS, the proposal is to increase the stipend by **\$1,000** to cover both spaces. Due to the similar equipment and skillset required, the recommendation is to have one individual manage both auditoriums. Additionally, the Coordinator's responsibilities include equipment maintenance, planning, and training others to operate the equipment.

Finally, there was a proposal to add an hourly pool to compensate individuals brought in to work during rental times. While the hope is for these costs to be offset by community rental revenue, current rental numbers have decreased since COVID. It was noted that much of the auditorium use is internal, such as by the Drama Club, where no rental fees are charged. Last year, the Auditorium Coordinator tracked approximately 40 hours of additional time spent managing the equipment during such events.

Ms. Greenwood asked a question regarding the individual receiving the stipend, and it was confirmed that the person acting as the Auditorium Coordinator is not an IT person. However, it was clarified that a teacher holds the current Coordinator position.

It was explained that this administrative role was added to ensure oversight of the sensitive and costly equipment in the auditorium. The position, currently filled by a teacher, involves additional responsibilities, though the remuneration may not be sufficient to attract others. The teacher currently in the role is considered capable, which alleviates immediate concerns about coverage.

The presentation then shifted to a budget review. Key budget areas were addressed, starting with:

Line 442: Rental Lease Equipment, which includes Chromebook procurement.

Line 330: Professional Services was reviewed, particularly the budget for auditorium expenses, such as repairs and equipment training. Notably, **\$4,000** is allocated for the PORT lighting training.

Line 532: Data Communications, covering the District's internet services and backup solutions, was also discussed. A new line was added for an emergency cellular router. This new system replaces a previous model with a larger router that can connect up to 50 people, offering cost-saving and operational improvement.

The **Pickup Patrol Service** for PES was also mentioned. This service now requires an additional cellular iPad budget to run the dismissal software. This decision followed an assessment that showed Wi-Fi installation was not cost-effective.

Line 650: Software showed inflationary adjustments, with an increase due to moving the School Messenger software to District-wide accounting, but it was noted that this was not an actual budget increase.

Line 734: Equipment Additional highlighted new purchases for the auditorium. Two lines, prioritized by the Auditorium Coordinator, focused on portable equipment that could be used at PHS and PMS. One such item is a **\$4,000** portable wireless microphone kit. Portable spotlights were also requested due to the age and cost of repairing the existing equipment.

Line 738: Equipment Replacement covered network-related items, including laptop and UPS replacements (battery backups for data closets). Three Uninterruptible Power Supply units (UPS) were mentioned, critical for powering network switches during an outage.

A question was raised regarding the UPS replacements. Mr. Lord clarified that these backups provide power for up to 30 minutes until generators take over, thus preventing major network interruptions.

The presentation concluded with a brief review of the technology procurement schedule.

The Board thanked Mr. Lord for his transparency and effort in preparing the budget and for the discussion.

e. **SAU**

The presentation began with a discussion about the budget and upcoming changes. Dr. McGee expressed gratitude to the Board and acknowledged the inclusion of Human Resources and Finance in the SAU and School Board budgets. It was noted that HR costs related to recruitment and retention would increase, as would the restoration of some Professional Development funding that had been previously cut.

Dr. McGee emphasized efforts to minimize budget increases and referred to Page 1 of the budget document. **Line 330**, it was highlighted that there was an expansion of media and communication support to enhance social media outreach. Additionally, on the same page, there was a reduction in postage costs due to decreased usage. Dr. McGee also mentioned removing membership from the ASCD development group, as the materials were no longer necessary. However, there was an increase in **Miscellaneous 890** for staff appreciation and acknowledgments, driven in part by rising food costs, which aligned to make the Pelham School District the best place to work.

Dr. McGee then passed the presentation on to Ms. Mahoney. She mentioned that, as discussed by Mr. Lord, the budget for the School Messenger had been moved to a more appropriate section of the budget, reflecting a reduction on Page 1, **Line 446**. She noted that this was merely a transfer.

Ms. Mahoney commented that Page 3 had a significant **\$7,000** increase in rental/lease software costs, mainly due to rising expenses associated with E-Finance Plus. The increase exceeded the typical 3-5% and was now around 8-9%, reflecting the rising software costs. Implementing integrated software, such as student activity management tools, was highlighted as essential for supporting the Business Office's operations. The reinstatement of the contracted national conference and the importance of Sungard Power School for the Business Office were also discussed.

Human Resources

Director of HR, Toni Barkdoll provided an overview of increased costs, especially in criminal record checks, which rose from **\$6,000** to **\$10,000**, reflecting the actual expenditure on fingerprinting and background checks. He

mentioned the addition of an HR Coordinator, which led to Professional Development and upskilling efforts, as well as an increase in the cost of supplies and software programs like PowerSchool E-Finance Plus. Ms. Barkdoll emphasized the importance of campus recruiting efforts, which resulted in three successful hires this year, particularly from Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU).

The meeting concluded with a brief discussion on school Board-related expenses. It was noted that Committee and District meeting costs were lower than budgeted, allowing for a reduction in those areas. The grand reopening fund, budgeted for the current year, would be reduced accordingly.

f. **School Board**

Ms. Mahoney began with a discussion regarding Election Services, specifically on page two of the School Board's budget. A noted increase of **\$400.00** for supplies was attributed to the need for additional ballots. It was mentioned that last year's expenses amounted to **\$2,036.00**, largely due to the purchase of these ballots. The increase in ballot supplies was attributed to the trend of absentee voting, with more people opting to vote remotely rather than attending the event.

The conversation then shifted to Auditing and Legal Services. There has been a general increase in Auditing Services, as the budget for these services had not been adjusted in several years. It was necessary to increase the allocation slightly to cover the 2026 budget audit.

Ms. Mahoney also clarified that non-specialized legal funds, budgeted on page three, cover legal expenses, including advice lawyers provide. Dr. McGee and Ms. Mahoney had discussed the appropriate budget number, considering expenses over the previous two years. It was agreed that the request for fiscal year 2026 would be level-funded based on prior expenses.

g. **Curriculum**

Dr. Marandos began her presentation with a discussion on **Line 446** rental/lease software. Two new items were introduced:

- i. The Book Creator, piloted last year in PES and PMS as part of the Library and Computer Technology programs. This literacy tool was well-received by students, so its use will continue.
- ii. IXL Math, previously budgeted individually by schools for grades 1 through 9, has now been consolidated into the budget.

The conversation then moved to the Bilingual programs. There were two notable changes:

- i. Before COVID-19, the primary teacher traveled frequently to Concord, but with everything now being virtual, the travel line has been eliminated. However, there is a shift in the supply line due to the District no longer being eligible for Title III funding, which primarily supports ESL students. Only large districts with a certain percentage of ESL students are now eligible.
- ii. Despite the loss of funding, the District will continue to provide backpacks with supplies for approximately 16 to 17 students who receive these services, ensuring their continued support.

Turning to page two, the request was made to increase the software budget to explore an updated version of the Danielson Rubric. The District has been using the 2013 version for a decade, but there are plans to move to the 2022 version next year. This rubric is a critical tool administrators use to evaluate teacher effectiveness consistently.

The language in the rubric has changed, and training is underway to understand the updates. These changes will be brought to the Professional Development Committee as the District rewrites its master plan, due in 2025.

Under **Line 890**, a staff recognition line that was previously only under the PMS budget will now include all three schools. This change rectifies an issue that had existed for years.

A comment was made on the success of the Summer Institute for Teachers. Various departments came together to write the curriculum, and it was a highly successful event, with strong participation from teachers. The Board was thanked for supporting the budget that funds this initiative.

On page three, there was nothing substantial to report. However, an updated instructional materials plan showed significant curriculum purchase costs over several years for the elementary, middle, and high schools. High school costs are more variable, depending on each year's courses. The plan also included software costs associated with information access fees, reflecting the shift from traditional textbooks to software programs. This centralized source of information covers subscription-based items, with several instances crossing multiple years (five or six).

The presentation concluded with no further questions or comments from the Board.

The Board thanked Dr. Marandos for her presentation. The Board thanked Ms. Barkdoll for her presentation and contributions to the meeting.

h. **Transportation**

Ms. Mahoney noted that the budget included **15 bus runs** at the contracted rate. She reminded the Board of the decision to extend the contract into the optional fourth year, which included a **2.5% increase** per year within the five-year contract. Ms. Mahoney expressed satisfaction with the service and the rate, describing the increase as phenomenal. The budget for year four was planned for 2027, contingent upon future assessments.

Ms. Mahoney confirmed that the District was very happy with the bus service and the rate.

i. **Revised Budget Report - Encumbrances**

Attention was then shifted to the encumbrance report, which had been provided in response to feedback from the previous meeting.

Mr. Wilkerson briefly mentioned an interview with Eleanor Burton, who shared stories of walking to school.

j. **Capital Improvement Plan (2025 – 2031)**

It was clarified that the CIP was included for informational purposes, with the Facilities Department referencing it and providing the necessary dollar amounts for the Board's proposal.

V. Policy Review:

a. First Reading:

- i. BGAA - Policy Development, Adoption, and Review
- ii. FAA - Annual Facility Plan and Unused District Property
- iii. JICD - Student Discipline and Due Process

It was determined that the three policies for the first read were not time-sensitive

Ms. Cummings moved to table the first read policies. Ms. Greenwood seconded the motion. The motion passed (5-0-0).

The Board reviewed the policies listed below.

b. Second Reading:

- i. AC - Nondiscrimination, Equal Opportunity Employment, and Anti-Discrimination Plan.
- ii. ACA - Discrimination and Harassment Grievance Procedure (New Policy).
- iii. ACAC - Title IX Prohibition of Sex Discrimination and Sex-Based Harassment: Policy and Grievance Procedure.
- a. ACAC (current policy for reference).
- iv. ACE - Procedural Safeguards: Nondiscrimination based on Disability.
- v. ACN - Accommodation of Lactation Needs.

- 684 vi. GBAM - Accommodation of Pregnancy and Related Medical Conditions: Personnel (New Policy).
685 vii. IHBCA - Accommodation of Pregnancy and Related Medical Conditions: Students.
686 b. JIE - Pregnant Students (To be Rescinded).
687 viii. JLDDB - Suicide Prevention and Response Plan.
688 ix. KED - Facilities or Services - Grievance Procedure (Section 504) (To be Rescinded).
689

690 Mr. Wilkerson moved to approve the recommended changes to the related Title IX Policies, as presented. Ms. Greenwood
691 seconded the motion. The motion passed (4-1-0). (Mr. Abare voted 'No')
692

693 **VI. Other:**

- 694 A. None
695

696 **VII. Board Member Reports:**

- 697 A. None
698

699 **VIII. Consent Agenda:**

700 **A. Adoption of Minutes**

- 701 a. August 14, 2024 – Draft Public Minutes
702 b. August 14, 2024 – Draft Non-Public Minutes
703 c. August 21, 2024 – Draft Public Minutes
704

705 **B. Vendor and Payroll Manifests**

- a. PAY556 \$632,810.23
b. PAY556P \$10,563.22
c. AP091124 \$218,850.85
d. BFPMS72 \$12,256.36
e. DU091124 \$240.00

706
707 **C. Correspondence & Information**

- 708 a. None
709

710 **D. Enrollment Report**

- 711 a. None
712

713 **E. Staffing Updates**

714 a. **Leaves:**

- i. None

715
716 b. **Resignations:**

- i. None

717
718 c. **Retirements:**

- i. None

719
720 d. **Nominations:**

- i. Kelly Lemerise PHS Special Education Teacher

721
722 Dr. McGee shared that a former employee, Kelly Lemerise, had expressed a desire to return to the District after briefly
723 leaving for another District. Dr. McGee emphasized that the District welcomed her back and appreciated the
724 opportunity to rehire Kelly Lemerise.
725

726 Mr. Wilkerson moved to approve the Consent Agenda, as presented. Ms. Greenwood seconded the motion, which passed
727 (5-0-0).

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XI. Future Agenda Planning:

- A. During Future Agenda Planning, Mr. Bressette requested an update on the Yondr Pouch implementation at PMS. Dr. McGee was asked to prepare a brief report for the September 25 meeting. The Board acknowledged that the implementation process needed more progress before formal data collection and reporting.

XII. Future Meetings:

- A. 09/25/2024 – 6:30 p.m. School Board Meeting @ PES Library
- B. 10/02/2024 – 6:30 p.m. School Board Meeting @ PES Library

XI. Non-Public:

Mr. Bressette moved to enter a non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 (II) (c) – Reputation; and RSA 91-A:3 (II) (i) – Emergency Planning at 9:21 p.m. Mr. Wilkerson seconded the motion. The motion passed (5-0-0).

Roll Call

- a. Troy Bressette – Aye
- b. David Wilkerson – Aye
- c. Garrett Abare – Aye
- d. Rebecca Cummings – Aye
- e. Darlene Greenwood – Aye

XII. Reconvened:

The Board returned to Public Session at 9:50 p.m.

XIII. Adjournment:

Mr. Wilkerson moved to adjourn the School Board Meeting at 9:51 p.m. Ms. Greenwood seconded the motion, which passed (5-0-0).

Respectfully Submitted,
Matthew Sullivan
School Board Recording Secretary