

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

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

Superintendent: Chip McGee

Assistant Superintendent: Sarah Marandos

Business Administrator: Deb Mahoney

Student Representatives: Alexia Nou

Absent: Rebecca Cummings and Mya Belanger

Also in Attendance: None

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.

B. Public Input at 6:31 p.m.:

No one came forward.

Public Input closed at 6:31 p.m.

C. Opening Remarks:

a. Superintendent:

Superintendent McGee shared updates on upcoming events, including the high school football playoffs, scheduled for **6:30 p.m. on Friday at Harris Field**, and the cheer team's participation in the state competition on **Sunday at 10:00 a.m.** at Pinkerton. He then invited Assistant Superintendent Marandos to report on a Professional Development Day held at the PMS, which allowed for a large voter turnout at PHS. Dr. Marandos noted that teachers engaged in sessions on math and literacy connections, with focused activities on classroom math at the elementary level. The day was deemed productive.

b. Student Representative:

Alexia shared upcoming school events, including the 8th Grade Showcase on **November 14**, the National Honor Society Craft Fair on **November 16**, and the National Honor Society induction on **November 21, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.** Mr. Bressette thanked Alexia for her update.

II. Presentations:

A. None

III. Main Issues:

A. Pelham High School Program of Studies:

The meeting then moved to a review of proposed changes to the high school Program of Studies, which will be returned for Board approval in December before the January course selection process. Dr. Marandos said she would review the course changes and answer any Board questions.

Highlights included an update to the Algebra I—Full Year course. The course description clarified that students transitioning from middle school will receive Pre-Algebra credit in the first half and Algebra 1 credit in the second half of the academic year.

Mr. Bressette asked if this was the first year the District offered Algebra I for a full year. Dr. Marandos stated that the District has offered the course for a full year for three years but at a slower pace. The students would have received only one credit instead of two toward their high school graduation.

A discussion followed on the approach to AP course requirements. Dr. Marandos noted that AP students are now encouraged to take the end-of-year AP exam to earn college credit. This change is intended to prepare students for college better and increase accountability.

Ms. Greenwood asked if students who did not take the exam would receive credit but not college credit. Dr. Marandos clarified that students who did not take the AP exam would still receive high school credit but not the weighted GPA benefit associated with AP courses. It is up to colleges and universities to determine if students receive college credit.

The Board discussed some reasons why students choose not to take the AP exam. Mr. Bressette asked why the District did not decide to make it mandatory. Dr. Marandos mentioned that the District is trying to move to a mandatory requirement, but they want to move slowly.

Further discussion covered changes in Science course structures, particularly in Biology and Chemistry. AP Biology now pairs with College Prep Biology Honors, which led to increased enrollment. A similar approach is planned for AP Chemistry, allowing students to concurrently enroll in regular Chemistry and AP Chemistry for dual credit. Dr. Marandos noted that seniors have priority regarding taking these courses.

AP Psychology was updated to align with the College Board description.

Additional changes included opening "Cooking Around the World," a Family and Consumer Science course, to underclassmen with relevant middle school experience and updating the Chemistry and Biology course descriptions to reflect prerequisites based on Physical Science grades.

The presentation continued with a discussion on curriculum adjustments, particularly in the Science Department. The Exercise Physiology course, previously offered under the Science Department, has been reassigned to a Health Instructor with a background in Exercise Science. Consequently, the course prerequisite has shifted from Biology to Health, aiming to attract more students interested in Exercise Physiology.

Program of Studies (2025-2026 Proposed Changes)

Course Changes	# of Credits	Level	Grades	Prerequisite
Algebra 1 Full Year	2	UL	9-12	None
All AP Courses	1-2	AP		
AP Biology	2	AP	10-12	B+ in previous science class
AP Chemistry	2	AP	11-12	Chem CC or B+ in Honors/AP Biology
AP Psychology	1	AP	10-12	None
Chemistry	1	UL	11-12	Physical Science
Chemistry L1	1	L1	11-12	Physical Science, B+ in Biology.
Chemistry CC	1	CC	11-12	Physical Science, B+ in Biology
Cooking around the World	.5	UL	9-12	None
CP Biology Honors	1	Hon	10-12	Physical Science, B+ in Science
CP Biology L1	1	L1	10-12	Physical Science, B+ in Science
Exercise Physiology	1	Hon/L1	10-12	Health, (B- or better)

Courses not offered in 2025-2026 (Sunsetting)

Science	-	Marine Biology, Zoology, and AP Environmental
Business	-	Entrepreneurship
Art	-	Digital Illustration
Social Studies	-	Civil War and World Religions

The Board discussed enrollment factors affecting course availability, such as staffing and the distribution of elective offerings, which can sometimes lower class sizes across various subjects. By temporarily limiting options, they hope to consolidate enrollment for more effective course delivery.

The consensus of the Board was to approve moving forward with the PHS Program of Studies.

B. Fiscal Year 2026 Budget:

The meeting shifted to the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget. The Board reviewed the preliminary fiscal year 2026 budget. Business Administrator Deb Mahoney discussed how the District came up with the Default Budget amount. She noted that the process started with the previous year's budget, adjusted for collective bargaining agreements and legally mandated costs, and removed costs for eliminated positions. **Two classroom Teachers** and **some Special Education positions** were removed, lowering staffing costs. The budget adjustments include reduced interest costs on debt service due to favorable rates and removing one-time items such as maintenance trucks and equipment purchased in the previous fiscal year.

The initial default budget calculation for fiscal year 2026 is **\$43,349,068**, an increase of **\$913,949** over the fiscal year 2025 Default Budget. The Board reviewed this amount by comparing each budget line item, such as salaries, benefits, and Special Education services, against last year's figures. After further adjustments, a final budget vote will occur in January, particularly on health insurance rates and any additional Special Education needs identified in December.

The Board also examined the proposed language for the Operating Budget warrant article, including the Proposed Budget of **\$44,668,848** and the Default Budget of **\$43,349,068**. The Board approved the wording, ensuring the Budget Committee receives it for further review. Mr. Bressette clarified that the difference between the Proposed and Default budgets is approximately **\$1.3 million**.

Mr. Bressette commented that the Board had a couple of outstanding requests, including a boiler and other energy-efficiency projects and audio/video equipment. He hoped that once the costs became available, the District would be able to narrow the difference between the Proposed and Default Budgets.

2025 MS-22 Appropriation	Reductions	Additions	Change
Deductions:	\$ 42,435,119		
Fund Transfers - Food Service Fund	\$ (1,143,423)	\$ 1,143,423	
Fund Transfers - Grants Fund	\$ (723,577)	\$ 723,577	
Fund Transfers - Other Special Rev Fund	\$ (52,000)	\$ 52,000	
Operating Budget (2025 Gross & 2026 Net)	\$ 40,516,119	\$ 5,025,762	
<i>Existing Level of Services</i>			
Total Salaries (110-130)	\$ (17,937,549)	\$ 18,111,388	\$ 173,838
Total Benefits (211:291)	\$ (9,564,496)	\$ 10,092,666	\$ 528,170
SPED Professional Services (1210, 1280/330,332,643)	\$ (356,159)	\$ 445,419	\$ 89,260
SPED Tuition (1210,1280/561,564,569)	\$ (2,209,772)	\$ 2,289,154	\$ 79,382
Vocational Tuition (1300, 561)	\$ (115,213)	\$ 115,213	
Psychological Professional Services (2140/330,325)	\$ (115,922)	\$ 180,372	\$ 64,450
Speech & Language Prof Services. (2150/330,325)	\$ (169,589)	\$ 97,608	\$ (71,981)
PT Professional Services (2162/330,321,734)	\$ (49,450)	\$ 49,650	\$ 200
OT Professional Services (2163/330,325)	\$ (4,672)	\$ 9,238	\$ 4,566

160	SPED Transportation (2722/519)	\$ (843,874)	\$ 1,130,430	\$ 286,556
161	Liability Insurance CAP Agreement (2620/521)	\$ (76,762)	\$ 83,691	\$ 6,929
162	Debt Service (5100, 5120/ 830,910)	\$ (3,778,270)	\$ 3,665,710	\$ (112,560)
163	SAU Energy Performance Lease (4600/441)	\$ (133,768)	\$ 133,768	
164				
165	<i>One-Time Expenditures</i>			
166	DW Maintenance Truck (2630/738)	\$ (58,000)		\$ (58,000)
167	PES Site Improvement (4200/433)	\$ (60,000)		\$ (60,000)
168	PMS Burnisher Equipment (2620/734)	\$ (11,000)		\$ (11,000)
169	PHS Library Laminator/Table (2222/738)	\$ (2,661)		\$ (2,661)
170	SB CBA Printing (2311/890)	\$ (3,200)		\$ (3,200)
171				
172	<i>Legal/Regulatory Requirement Adjustments</i>			
173	None			
174				
175	Net 2024-2025 Operating Budget	\$ 5,025,762		
176	2026 Default General Fund Operating Budget		\$ 41,430,068	\$ 913,949
177	2026 Default Food Service Budget		\$ 1,143,423	
178	2026 Default Grants Fund Budget		\$ 723,577	
179	2026 Default Special Other Budget		\$ 52,000	
180	Total PSD 2026 Default Budget		\$ 43,349,068	\$ 913,949

**2025 Pelham School District Warrant
State of New Hampshire**

To the inhabitants of the School District of the Town of Pelham in the County of Hillsborough and the State of New Hampshire, qualified to vote upon district affairs:

First Session of the Annual Meeting (Deliberative Session)

You are hereby notified that the first session of the annual meeting of the School District of the Town of Pelham will be held at Town Hall, 6 Village Green, in said Pelham on Wednesday, February 5, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. for explanation, discussion, and debate of warrant articles number 1 through number 1. Warrant articles may be amended subject to the following limitations: (a) warrant articles whose wording is prescribed by law shall not be amended, (b) warrant articles that are amended shall be placed on the official ballot for a final vote on the main motion, as amended, and (c) no warrant article shall be amended to eliminate the subject matter of the article.

Second Session of the Annual Meeting (Official Ballot Voting)

You are hereby notified that the second session of the annual meeting of the School District of the Town of Pelham will be held at Pelham High School gymnasium, 85 Marsh Road, in said Pelham on Tuesday, March 11, 2025, at 7:00 a.m. for the choice of School District Officers elected by official ballot, to vote on questions required by law to be inserted on the official ballot, and to vote on all Warrant Articles from the first session on official ballot per RSA 40:13, VII. The polls for the election of School District Officers and other action required to be inserted on said ballot will open on said date at 7:00 a.m. and will not close earlier than 8:00 p.m.

ARTICLE A

To elect by ballot the following School District Officers:

- a. School Board Member 3-Year Term
- b. School Board Member 3-Year Term

Article 1 – Operating Budget

Shall the Pelham 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 of the annual school district meeting, for the purposes set forth herein, totaling Forty-Four Million, Six Hundred Sixty-Eight Thousand, Eight Hundred Forty-Eight Dollars **(\$44,668,848)**? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be Forty-Three Million, Three Hundred Forty-Nine Thousand, Sixty-Eight Dollars **(\$43,349,068)**, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Pelham School District or by law; or the Pelham School Board 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. (Majority vote required)

Recommended by the School Board (3-1-0)
_____ by the Budget Committee (x-x-x)

Mr. Wilkerson moved to approve Article 1, as presented. Ms. Greenwood seconded the motion, which passed (3-1-0). (Mr. Abare voted 'No')

C. Progress on Goals (Year 2 of 3):

The meeting moved to Progress on District Goals. Dr. McGee said he was going to report on making Pelham the best place to work and on students' performance in mathematics.

Dr. McGee noted that, regarding the goal of making Pelham a top workplace, the District reported an 88% retention rate for salaried staff, just short of the 90% target but an improvement over the previous year's 82%. Retention for hourly instructional staff met the target with a 70% retention rate. Initiatives to Support Staff retention include comprehensive onboarding processes and "Speed of Trust" training, which fosters workplace culture and belonging.

There was acknowledgment of challenges in student outcomes in academic performance, specifically in mathematics. Dr. McGee committed to addressing and improving math performance.

Mr. Bressette acknowledged and commended Dr. McGee for almost reaching the retention goals. **Teacher retention** had reached **88%**, a remarkable accomplishment attributed to the District's leadership and strategic actions. Despite the recent PEA agreement, the District's average teacher salary remained around **\$55,000**, below the state average of **\$65,000 to \$66,000**, a point the Board considered in evaluating future retention efforts.

The Board then requested an update on the District's performance in mathematics, which has been a focus for the past three years. Dr. Marandos explained that the high school's goal was to increase by **5% annually** the number of students at PHS whose SAT scores indicated college and career readiness. The Class of 2025 scores increased by **7%** over their PSAT score. Additionally, in the state assessment, the District's goal was to place in the top **5% among 12 Peer Districts**. Current standings were **8 out of 12** at the elementary level and **12 out of 12** at the middle school level, falling short of the goal.

Dr. Marandos said that in 2023-2024, the Mathematic's Vertical Team undertook significant curriculum updates in response to these goals. The K-12 curriculum was revised and approved for mathematics, and a new elementary math program called Reveal, which emphasizes mathematical practices, was implemented. Changes were also made at the middle school level, including adding a supplemental math course for below-proficient students in Grade 8 and replacing Spanish in their schedules. An accelerated algebra program was introduced, with Grade 8 students now able to complete Algebra I, which supports math progression into high school.

An **SAT boot camp** for juniors was extended to address specific areas of difficulty. Professional Development has been a priority, with elementary and middle schools receiving year-long math coaching. Efforts also included incorporating mathematical practice streaming and working closely with the textbook provider to improve access and effectiveness.

Dr. Marandos highlighted several ongoing challenges, including significant teacher turnover, particularly at PMS and PHS. For example, the current year at PMS marks the first time in eight years that the same Math Teaching Team has returned from the previous year. Turnover has resulted in limited continuity, impacting instructional consistency and

student progress. Additionally, the District has been using an older textbook at PMS and has piloted the new Reveal series in Grades 6-8, with plans for full implementation next year.

The Professional Development needs are also critical, as new teaching strategies require continuous support. Class size has been addressed by reducing accelerated math class sizes, offering supplemental math classes, and adding core classes. An increase in i-Ready (diagnostic assessment) training was also noted as essential, as it provides a diagnostic tool used three times a year to identify and support struggling students with personalized skill plans.

Ms. Greenwood expressed her concern regarding the information provided to the Board. She noted that mathematics has always been a problem in Pelham, and the Board cannot forget the mathematics goal after three years. She asked if the IXL for mathematics was cut from the budget, but Dr. Marandos clarified that the Board cut IXL for reading from the budget. Grades 1 – 9 will receive IXL for mathematics next year.

The Board understood these challenges, with members recognizing the impact of turnover on curriculum consistency. The Board was also reminded of the importance of the state-mandated assessment, which measures proficiency in both math and literacy. These skills were identified as essential for student success beyond school.

Mr. Wilkerson asked for the definition of proficiency in mathematics. Dr. Marandos said that the state defines it as a score of 3 or 4 in the statewide assessment. In high school, the proficiency score is 530 on the SAT. Dr. McGee added that a score of 530 means that a student should be able to pass college-level classes.

The Board members emphasized the need to continue pursuing improvement in these areas, expressing disappointment over the persistent challenges and the District's below-average performance. The Board also recognized the need to retain high-quality teachers, provide consistent Professional Development, and offer stable leadership to encourage a supportive environment for staff and students.

Mr. Abare asked what the Board could do to decrease teacher turnover, not including the CBA. Dr. McGee said that the District has to provide steady leadership from the School Board. He noted that steady leadership from the Board leads to steady leadership with the Leadership Team.

Ms. Greenwood emphasized the importance of retaining teachers within their areas of expertise, allowing them to become curriculum experts who could provide valuable insights to colleagues.

The Board agreed to re-adopt mathematics as a primary goal, emphasizing that it could not be overlooked, given its essential role in student success. The Board admitted the need to maintain this goal alongside literacy as a fundamental measure of the District's educational objectives, pledging to continue improving student achievement and addressing the identified challenges.

Mr. Bressette suggested moving the "Student Belonging" from a School Board Goal and charging the Building Administrators with creating tailored action plans. An early draft of these plans was discussed, with a request for regular reporting on progress. He added that **PES data** from 2018 to 2024 showed fluctuations in school performance, with a drop from fourth place in 2021 to eighth. Board members expressed concern and a desire to learn from Peer Districts' practices in achieving mathematics proficiency.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
PES	12	10	No Test	4	9	5	8
PMS	10	9	No Test	7	12	11	12

Peer Districts: Auburn, Candia, Derry Cooperative, Hampstead, Hooksett, Hudson, Litchfield, Londonderry, Pelham, Salem, Timberlane Regional, and Windham.

Dr. Marandos highlighted the collaboration with counterparts in neighboring Districts and proposed a deeper peer review of their successful strategies. Reflecting on the original goal-setting process, the key elements were specificity

and actionable metrics. Despite efforts, progress in mathematics proficiency remained a concern, attributed partly to **teacher turnover** and the need for continued Professional Development.

Dr. Marandos explained that last year's curriculum revisions, including adopting a new elementary math program, required extensive training. She emphasized the importance of supporting teachers through ongoing development. She suggested creating additional action steps to aid teachers in becoming subject experts, especially given the challenge of mastery across multiple subjects at the elementary level.

Mr. Bressette then shifted to whether a Task Force was necessary to guide these initiatives. Dr. McGee expressed confidence in the current actions and stressed the importance of continuity rather than resetting goals annually due to staffing changes. It was agreed that while results are necessary, achieving lasting improvement would take time.

Ms. Greenwood raised the issue of ensuring that the **PMS Math Coach** is fully utilized for coaching rather than teaching. Discussions focused on maximizing the Coach's availability by freeing her from teaching duties to focus on supporting the six math teachers at PMS.

Enrollment and class size were also discussed, particularly the need for smaller, accelerated math classes at the eighth-grade level. The District currently maintains class sizes below 25, in line with the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), by adding additional accelerated classes when necessary.

Dr. Marandos noted the availability of Professional Development opportunities, including training in math practices.

The Board discussed the suggestion to indefinitely extend the math goal, with periodic monitoring and adjustments as needed. The Board also proposed moving the "Student Belonging" goal to the building level to avoid overloading the District's goals.

Mr. Bressette moved to reevaluate the math goal indefinitely and de-escalate the "Student Belonging" goal. Mr. Wilkerson seconded the motion, which passed (4-0-0).

D. Policy Review:

The Board reviewed the policies listed below.

a. First Reading:

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| i. BBBF | - Student Members of the School Board |
| ii. GBGNA/JLCEA/KFD | - Use of Automated External Defibrillators(s) (AED) |
| iii. IC | - School Year and School Year Calendar |
| iv. IJOA | - Field Trips |
| v. JRA | - Student Records and Access - FERPA |
| vi. IHBA | - Programs for Pupils with Disabilities |

b. Second Reading:

- | | |
|--------|----------------------------|
| i. CFB | - Administrator Evaluation |
|--------|----------------------------|

Mr. Wilkerson moved to approve Policy CFB, as presented. Ms. Greenwood seconded the motion, which passed (4-0-0).

VI. Other:

- A.** None

VII. Board Member Reports:

- A.** Mr. Bressette mentioned that the Budget Committee is meeting tomorrow to review and ask questions regarding the School District Budget. The Committee will vote on the Town and School District budgets and warrant articles next Thursday.

- B. Mr. Wilkerson noted that he would attend an upcoming regional meeting in Salem next week on November 14.
- C. Dr. McGee commented that the event that Mr. Wilkerson would be attending is to honor educators and local service providers. The annual breakfast recognizes teachers and professionals, including police and fire personnel, from the region. **Katie McGuire**, a Grade 5 Teacher from the Pelham School District, was named "Teacher of the Year" by the event's panel. The Board congratulated Ms. McGuire.

VIII. Consent Agenda:

A. Adoption of Minutes

- a. October 2, 2024 – Draft Public Minutes
- b. October 16, 2024 – Draft Public Minutes

A. Vendor and Payroll Manifests:

- a. 556 \$633,229.55
- b. 559 \$641,310.88
- c. 560 \$674,938.78
- d. AP110624 \$909,471.64
- e. DU110624 \$3,412.47
- f. PAY559P \$320,408.49
- g. PAY560P \$21,534.96

C. Correspondence & Information:

- a. None

D. Enrollment Report:

- a. November 1, 2024 Enrollment Report
The enrollment report showed a net change of **+3** over the previous month, highlighting a typical fluctuation of ins and outs.

E. Staffing Updates:

- a. **Leaves:**
 - i. None
- b. **Resignations:**
 - i. None
- c. **Retirements:**
 - i. None
- d. **Nominations:**
 - i. None

Mr. Wilkerson reminded the Board that he was not present at the October 16 meeting. Mr. Bressette proposed that the Board remove the October 16 minutes from the first motion, and the Board agreed.

Mr. Wilkerson moved to approve the Consent Agenda with a modification as requested. Ms. Greenwood seconded the motion, which passed (4-0-0).

Mr. Abare motioned to approve the October 16, 2024, meeting minutes. Ms. Greenwood seconded the motion, which passed (3-0-1). (Mr. Wilkerson abstained)

IX. Future Agenda Planning:

- A. None**

November 6, 2024

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X. Future Meetings:

- A. 11/20/2024 – 6:30 p.m. School Board Meeting @ PES Library
- B. 12/04/2024 – 6:30 p.m. School Board Meeting @ PES Library

XI. Non-Public Session:

(c) Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely adversely affect the reputation of any person other than a public body member, unless such person requests an open meeting. This exemption shall extend to any application for assistance or tax abatement or waiver of a fee, fine, or other levy is based on the applicant's inability to pay or poverty.

(i) Consideration of matters relating to the preparation for and the carrying out of emergency functions, including training to carry out such functions, developed by local or state safety officials that are directly intended to thwart a deliberate act that is intended to result in widespread or severe damage to property or widespread injury or loss of life.

Mr. Wilkerson moved to enter non-public 91-A:3, II (c)—Reputation and 91-A:3, II (i)—Emergency Functions at 7:49 p.m.
Ms. Greenwood seconded the motion, which passed (4-0-0).

- a. T. Bressette - Aye
- b. D. Wilkerson - Aye
- c. G. Abare - Aye
- d. D. Greenwood - Aye

XII. Reconvene:

8:14 p.m.

XIII. Adjournment:

Mr. Wilkerson moved to adjourn the School Board Meeting at 8:15 p.m. Mr. Abare seconded the motion, which passed (4-0-0).

Respectfully Submitted,
Matthew Sullivan
School Board Recording Secretary