

Pelham School Board Meeting
Pelham Elementary School
April 2, 2025
6:30 p.m.

School Board Members: Darlene Greenwood, Chair; Rebecca Cummings, Vice-Chair; Garrett Abare; Krista Garcia; and Greg Smith

Superintendent: Chip McGee

Assistant Superintendent: Sarah Marandos

Business Administrator: Deb Mahoney

Absent: None

Also in Attendance: Keith Lord, Director of IT

I. Public Session:

A. Call to Order:

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

II. Public Input @ 6:31 p.m.

The Board encourages public participation. Our approach is based on Policy BEDH, which includes these guidelines:

- a. Public comments are limited to 3 minutes per person.
- b. Please give your name, address, and the group, if any, that is represented.
- c. We welcome comments on our school operations and programs in public sessions; however, the Board will not hear personal complaints from school personnel or complaints against any person connected with the school system.
- d. We appreciate that speakers will conduct themselves in a civil manner.

1. Christina Tetreault, 11 Magnolia Drive

Ms. Tetreault read the following:

"My name is Christina Tetreault, and I live at 11 Magnolia Drive. I am here today to express my strong opposition to the implementation of Yondr bags at the high school next year for several key reasons.

High school is a critical time for students to develop personal responsibility and self-regulation. By forcing them to lock away their phones, the District removes an opportunity for them to learn essential real-world skills. In college, the workplace, and everyday life, they will not have someone managing their phone use for them. Rather than fostering independence, this policy undermines students' ability to regulate their behavior.

Thus far, I have not found another high school in New Hampshire that has implemented Yondr bags. Nearby Districts such as Salem, Hudson, Pinkerton Academy, Timberlane, Windham, and Hollis-Brookline—two of which are considered among the best in the state—do not use this system. If Yondr bags were truly beneficial, why haven't any of these Districts adopted them?

The District has not provided any empirical evidence proving the effectiveness of Yondr bags at the middle school. Furthermore, there is no credible research showing that these expensive bags improve student success. Any supporting claims are purely anecdotal, and even broader research on cell phone bans presents conflicting conclusions. Implementing such a costly system without concrete evidence is not a responsible use of taxpayer money.

Instead of investing in Yondr bags, the District should focus on addressing the real problems at the high school, such as:

- Low proficiency scores.
- High teacher turnover due to a hostile work environment.
- Student vaping, even in classrooms—something that happened in my daughter's advisory last year.
- Frequent fights resulting in physical injuries and property damage, including broken cafeteria tables and holes in the boys' locker room.
- Bathroom vandalism, which the administration has handled by locking the bathrooms and punishing the majority of students for the actions of a few.

Rather than wasting taxpayer dollars on something that is not needed and won't improve the education students receive, the administration should prioritize improving education quality, hiring and retaining qualified staff, and ensuring a safe learning environment. I urge the School Board to not approve the purchase of Yondr bags and instead ensure that the administration focuses on meaningful solutions that will truly benefit our students for once."

2. Debbie Kruzel, 11 Magnolia Drive

Ms. Kruzel read the following:

"Thank you for taking the time to speak; I'm Debbie Kruzel on Beacon Hill Road.

At the March 5th meeting, I asked why the school payroll vouchers hadn't been posted in the meeting notes since September. I never really got a satisfactory answer, and I'm still curious about the reason. When this is resolved, will the public have access to the reports from October to March?

Also, at the March 5th meeting, there was a discussion about pouches possibly being purchased at the HS for next year despite the fact that they weren't in the proposed budget. Since middle school started with the pouches, we've had a report on the progress, but I don't recall having an update on the effectiveness of the new cell phone policy at the HS. Would you be able to request an update from the HS as to the number of offenses for each month, September-March? At that same meeting, I had a conversation with the teacher, Ms. Day, who presented on block scheduling, and she said the "new cell phone policy has been working very well," and she hasn't had any problems. So, before voting on a purchase of pouches, I believe it's important to gather data first, in addition to the potential presentation by the Student Government.

At the last meeting, I understood you were going to be signing the engagement letter with Plodzik & Sanderson, P.A., for doing this year's school audit. I'm curious if there were any other bids received to do the job prior to selecting this firm. (I believe that should be the normal operating procedure, correct?)

I am encouraged by all the discussion regarding improving math proficiencies in the last 3 months. I know that the budget included a curriculum purchase for the middle school, which would lock us in for 6 years, I believe... Was it Reveal Math, maybe? I plead to you to carefully critique whether this is a high-level math curriculum that will increase our scores or not. Over the last 5-10 years, the buildings have been the focus of our budgets; now, we owe it to our children, parents, and teachers to increase student scores dramatically. What is the track record of the newly proposed curriculum? Are we only getting it because it goes with Reveal Math at the elementary school? Does Windham, who scores 67% efficiency in math, use Reveal? What other schools are using Reveal Math and have had major successes with it? Thank you for considering these important factors before diving into a 6-year commitment!

At the last meeting, you said you'd postpone the discussion about WA #3 in the school elections. I just wanted to remind you because I didn't see it on the agenda."

3. Doug Vincent, 167 Arlene Drive

Doug Vincent, who lives at 167 Arlene Dr., extended his congratulations to the new members and expressed gratitude to returning members for their continued service. He acknowledged the significant responsibility they bear toward students and the community and emphasized his appreciation for their commitment.

Before addressing his main point, Mr. Vincent provided a brief personal background. He and his wife have had three children progress through the Pelham school system under the 4x4 high school scheduling model. Their eldest son, a 2012 graduate, is now in his eighth year as a Science Teacher, having taught for six years in Pelham and the past two years in Bedford. Their eldest daughter has built a successful six-year career at Sun Life Financial, a multinational insurance company. Their youngest, a 2024 graduate, excels in her freshman year at Marist University and aspires to become a teacher, following in her older brother's footsteps. Mr. Vincent noted that two of his children had been taught by current School Board members, acknowledging their role in his children's success and expressing his gratitude.

Mr. Vincent then shared an observation about parenting, describing it as a humbling experience. He compared it to teaching, noting that both roles are demanding, ever-changing, and unique to each child. He acknowledged the complexity of educators' challenges, particularly regarding student proficiency.

Mr. Vincent's main point focused on analyzing the root causes of concerns about student proficiency. He urged the Board to consider whether the issue lies in supply and delivery, which could be addressed with curriculum changes, a new high school schedule, or if it is fundamentally a demand problem. He suggested that Pelham has faced a persistent demand issue and emphasized the need for broader community discussions involving parents and students beyond the one-third of students deemed proficient. He encouraged unconventional approaches to foster deeper, meaningful conversations to drive lasting solutions.

Before concluding, Mr. Vincent expressed his hope that the Board's efforts would strengthen the community fabric and counteract the divisive national trends. He advocated for fostering a culture where community stewardship outweighs celebrity worship and where civic engagement, as demonstrated by the Board members, prevails over consumerism. He ended by thanking the Board for their time and service.

Public Input closed at 6:42 p.m.

III. Non-Public Session:

A. (b) The hiring of any person as a public employee.

Mr. Abare moved to enter non-public under RSA 91-A:3, II (b) - Hiring of any person at 6:43 p.m. Ms. Cummings seconded the motion, which passed (5-0-0).

a.	D. Greenwood	-	Aye
b.	R. Cummings	-	Aye
c.	G. Abare	-	Aye
d.	K. Garcia	-	Aye
e.	G. Smith	-	Aye

III. Public Session Reconvened @ 7:17 p.m.:

A. Opening Remarks:

a. Superintendent:

Dr. McGee commented that he is looking forward to April 16, as the juniors will be taking their SATs on that day. He considered the SAT scores a significant indicator. He added that April is the beginning of the final run-up to the Grade 8 trip to Washington, D.C. This is the first year the District will fly to Washington, D.C.

Dr. McGee acknowledged that he was out for two weeks, which was a tough time for the District. He thanked Dr. Marandos for running the District, Ms. Mahoney for running business operations and payroll without technology, and Mr. Lord for managing the network disruption.

Chair Greenwood thanked Dr. Marandos, Ms. Mahoney, and the rest of the SAU staff for handling the difficult situation.

Mr. Smith raised a question regarding student representatives, specifically whether they were expected to attend or had been unable to join. Ms. Greenwood clarified that this year's Student Representative role was shared among a couple of students, and Dr. McGee added that the students are selected through a Student Government vote.

The Board expressed that while there is no formal requirement for the Representatives to be seniors, they are generally selected from upper-level students. Ms. Greenwood noted that the participation of Student Representatives has historically varied in terms of dedication.

The Board agreed to add the Student Representative discussion to the future agenda planning, acknowledging its importance from multiple perspectives, including optics and student voice. The group emphasized the value of Student Representatives attending meetings, recognizing it as a significant opportunity to participate in school decision-making processes.

III. Presentations:

A. None

IV. Main Issues:

A. Network Disruption Update:

Keith Lord, Director of Technology, provided a comprehensive update on the network disruption. He confirmed that the District experienced a major outage due to a necessary disconnection from the internet, which affected numerous services across all buildings for approximately one and a half to two weeks. Some interruptions extended to the phone systems; however, emergency services were not impacted, as they are not dependent on the internet. Since the disruption, full internet access and network services have been restored across the District.

The only remaining limitation is that staff operate on Chromebooks instead of their standard Windows laptops, which are still being reprocessed. Due to the size of the District, this transition will take additional time. Nonetheless, staff devices are operating at approximately **90%** functionality.

Mr. Smith asked if the District had a stockpile of readily available Chromebooks. Mr. Lord clarified that although there was no dedicated Chromebook stockpile, the team could quickly redeploy devices from kindergarten and first-grade classrooms, supplemented by a small reserve of spare units.

Dr. Marandos, representing the Instructional Team, thanked the resilience and flexibility of the teaching staff and administration. Despite the disruption, effective teaching and learning continued. She extended appreciation to all the educators who managed through the challenging circumstances.

Dr. Marandos also confirmed that external communications with families were maintained throughout the event. With systems restored, PowerSchool is now fully operational for students and parents. Accordingly, Trimester 2 report cards for elementary and middle schools will be distributed in the coming days, and the high school Quarter 3 report cards will follow shortly, as Quarter 4 begins on Friday.

B. FY 2026 Budget Approval:

Dr. McGee reviewed upcoming meeting dates and noted a proposed change to the August schedule, shifting the session from August 2 to the first week of the month. Board members discussed holding a full-day Saturday budget session and weighing the family time commitment involved. The proposal was met with mixed reactions, and Mr. Abare suggested receiving input from the new members before finalizing the decision.

The discussion continued with concerns over scheduling Board meetings on Saturdays. Some members expressed reservations about the feasibility of conducting budget reviews in a single Saturday session, citing the volume of material and the need for adequate time to absorb financial details. Other members acknowledged the challenge of reviewing a **500-page** budget in one session, advocating for a two-meeting approach. The Board considered the timing of budget development, recognizing that September presents a particularly demanding timeframe with multiple financial deadlines.

Board members shared differing opinions on the best format for budget discussions. While some preferred consolidating sessions for efficiency, others required more time between meetings to review materials thoroughly. Ultimately, the consensus leaned toward dividing the budget review into two sessions.

The discussion shifted to the upcoming **August 6 Board Retreat**, which was confirmed at the high school library with dinner included. The Board also addressed the possibility of relocating future meetings to the Hal Lynde Conference Center. Mr. Abare noted that Town Hall was available on Wednesday nights except for a monthly forestry meeting. Given these considerations, the Board agreed to move meetings to the Hal Lynde Conference Center immediately.

Mr. Abare moved to adopt the schedule as presented with the change to the location. Mr. Smith seconded the motion, which passed (5-0-0).

C. Committee Assignments:

The Board then proceeded to assign Committee responsibilities. New and continuing assignments were as follows:

Board/Commission/Committee	Board Representative and Alternate
Budget Committee	G. Abare / G. Smith (alt)
Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Committee	R. Cummings
New Hampshire School Boards Association (NHSBA) Delegate	N/A
Performance Compensation Model (PCM) Committee	R. Cummings
Pelham School-Age Childcare Committee (PSACC)	D. Greenwood
Professional Development Committee	K. Garcia
Wellness Committee	K. Garcia / D. Greenwood (alt)
Sick Bank and Catastrophic Illness Committee	K. Garcia
Joint Loss Management Committee (Quarterly Meetings)	G. Smith / G. Abare (alt)
Negotiations	D. Greenwood / G. Smith (alt)
Policy Committee	D. Greenwood / K. Garcia (alt)
Master Plan	N/A

D. FY 2026 Budget Approval:

Ms. Mahoney distributed forms for review and mentioned the MS-22, a Department of Revenue report that indicates what was voted. The report, which was handed out, shows the totals by function and is broken down by elementary, middle, and high school.

Ms. Mahoney commented that three copies needed to be signed by the Board members.

Due to technical issues within the District, the Department of Revenue granted an extension. The necessary signatures were collected, and Dr. McGee thanked the voters for their support.

E. 2025 – 2026 Teacher and Professional Staff Nominations:

The Board reviewed Teacher and Professional Staff nominations for the 2025-26 school year. Dr. McGee presented the list, reaffirming the District's commitment to a robust teacher evaluation system involving goal setting, observations, self-reflection, and supervisor feedback.

The Board recognized the importance of retention efforts and ensuring staff receive adequate support.

Mr. Abare moved to accept the nominations as presented. Ms. Garcia seconded the motion, which passed (5-0-0).

F. PHS Proposed Change to Program of Study:

Dr. Marandos presented a proposed change to the high school program of study. The administration sought approval for an amendment regarding early release and late arrival privileges. Due to COVID-19, these privileges were previously extended to both juniors and seniors; however, the proposal aimed to revert the policy to a senior-only

privilege.

Eligibility criteria, including academic performance and disciplinary standing, were reviewed. The Board discussed the procedural aspects of the privilege, ensuring students met specific requirements.

Mr. Abare moved to accept the proposed change to the high school's program of study. Ms. Cummings seconded the motion, which passed (5-0-0).

G. PHS Athletics Boys' Ice Hockey Proposal:

The meeting shifted to proposing a boys' hockey team co-op agreement. Dr. McGee commented that previously, the District partnered with Nashua South, but that arrangement ended when Nashua South merged with Nashua North. Five students expressed interest in continuing hockey, leading the Athletic Director to secure an agreement with Timberlane Regional High School.

Dr. McGee discussed the financial impact and assured the Board that the transition fell within the approved budget. The Board deliberated on the logistics of the co-op arrangement, including coaching responsibilities and student oversight.

Ms. Cummings asked about the possibility of introducing girls' hockey to Pelham. Dr. McGee noted that there was no known interest at present. However, interest in the sport across the state was acknowledged, primarily in larger schools.

Regarding administrative presence at games and practices, Dr. McGee confirmed that an administrator or Athletic Director ensures coverage for all events. While trainers are typically available, there was some uncertainty about practice attendance. No action was required.

H. Last Day of School:

The discussion then shifted to the last day of school. It was confirmed that based on instructional hours, the school year would conclude on **Friday, June 13**. A half-day schedule was also confirmed for the final day. Dr. McGee noted that if the last day was determined by days, it would have ended on **Monday, June 16**.

I. Policy Review:

The Board reviewed the policies listed below.

a. First Reading:

i. None

b. Second Reading:

i. None

V. Other:

A. None

VI. Board Member Reports:

A. None

VII. Consent Agenda:

A. Adoption of Minutes

a. March 5, 2025 School Board Minutes

Mr. Abare moved to accept the March 5, 2025, School Board Meeting Minutes. Ms. Cummings seconded the motion, which passed (3-0-2). (Ms. Garcia and Mr. Smith abstained)

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B. Vendor and Payroll Manifests:

- a. 569 \$609,423.18
- b. 570 \$671,578.03
- c. 569M \$2,281.28
- d. AP040225 \$454,717.04
- e. BFPMS \$19,455.00
- f. PAY569P \$11,530.70
- g. PAY570P \$305,437.35

Mr. Abare moved to accept the Vendor and Payroll Manifests as presented. Ms. Cummings seconded the motion, which passed (5-0-0).

C. Correspondence & Information:

- a. None

D. Enrollment Report:

- a. Dr. McGee presented the Enrollment Report, outlining monthly grade enrollment data. He noted that four students had increased preschool enrollment, reflecting the natural progression of children qualifying for the program. The District experienced a net gain of six students for the month.

E. Staffing Updates:

a. Leaves:

- i. None

b. Resignations:

- i. None

c. Retirements:

- | | | | |
|------|-----------------|-----|--------------------|
| i. | Wendy Henderson | PES | Teacher – Grade 1 |
| ii. | Kathrene Byrne | PHS | Teacher – Business |
| iii. | Jeffrey Tobin | PHS | Teacher – STEAM |

d. Nominations:

- i. None

Dr. McGee took a moment to recognize the teachers who submitted for retirement. He noted that Wendy Henderson is a First-Grade Teacher with 16 years of service, and before PES, she worked at Saint Patrick's School. Dr. McGee then mentioned Jeff Tobin, a STEAM teacher at PHS with 20 years of service. Mr. Tobin is known for being able to find students who love to tinker in the PHS lab. Finally, Dr. McGee recognized Kathrene Byrne, a Business Teacher at PHS, is retiring after an impressive 45-year career. She started working for the District in 1984.

Mr. Abare moved to accept the retirements as presented. Ms. Cummings seconded the motion, which passed (5-0-0).

Ms. Greenwood mentioned that Ms. Henderson, Ms. Byrne, and Mr. Tobin are amazing people and teachers. She noted that her children are in the field they are in because of Ms. Byrne's guidance. Ms. Cummings commented that Ms. Henderson was her mentor and taught her everything she needed to know about hatching chicks.

Mr. Abare added that it is excellent to see people have great careers and retire from the Pelham School District. Ms. Garcia thanked Ms. Byrne for teaching her how to type.

VIII. Future Agenda Planning:

The meeting then moved on to future agenda planning. Topics included Student Representatives, with the Student Government scheduled to attend the next meeting to provide input on the Yondr pouches.

Ms. Garcia requested teacher feedback regarding the Yondr pouches. She also requested data regarding the infractions under the new policy, with data comparisons between this year and the previous year for both PHS and PMS. Dr. McGee stressed that he could not promise the information would be ready for the next meeting. The Board acknowledged that it would be difficult to collect all the data before the next meeting.

The Board acknowledged the importance of teacher input but recognized the logistical challenges of requiring their presence at meetings. The members stressed that they would like teacher input regarding the Yondr pouches and how the new policy is going.

Mr. Smith suggested that if teachers have preferences regarding the pouches but cannot make the meeting, they should communicate them via email.

Mr. Smith expressed the need for an elected Student Representative who would actively engage in discussions and advocate for their peers. Mr. Abare was concerned that a Student Representative might support policies favoring unrestricted cell phone use due to peer pressure.

The consensus was that this is an ongoing discussion that does not require immediate resolution. The matter will be reviewed and appropriately scheduled for future deliberation.

Response to Ms. Kruzel

Regarding payroll vouchers, Ms. Mahoney addressed Ms. Kruzel's concerns regarding the absence of payroll voucher postings. Ms. Mahoney clarified that cybersecurity training indicated that publishing manifests containing check numbers, names, and amounts is inappropriate. As a result, the practice was immediately discontinued. A new report format was intended to be developed, but due to budgeting priorities and a subsequent cyber incident, access to the necessary systems has been delayed. She noted that efforts are ongoing to create a report that maintains essential information while ensuring compliance with security guidelines.

Ms. Mahoney also discussed the procurement policy concerning auditing services. She noted that while the policy does not mandate competitive bidding for services, the Board can solicit bids if dissatisfied with current service providers. Given the cost implications of transitioning audit firms, the Board previously opted to switch audit teams within the same firm rather than change firms entirely. This decision was made to maintain continuity while ensuring a fresh perspective on financial oversight.

The conversation shifted to Warrant Article 3, which was an Advisory Warrant Article. Ms. Garcia emphasized the importance of considering voter input, while others expressed reservations about implementing an Advisory Warrant Article due to its potential impact on staff and District operations. It was agreed that the topic would be included in a future agenda for further examination.

IX. Future Meetings:

A. 04/16/2025 – 6:30 p.m. School Board Meeting @ Hal Lynde Conference Room

B. 05/07/2025 – 6:30 p.m. School Board Meeting @ Hal Lynde Conference Room

Before entering the non-public session, Ms. Garcia addressed the community, encouraging parents, students, teachers, and residents to attend in-person meetings.

X. Non-Public Session:

(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

398 a deliberate act that is intended to result in widespread or severe damage to property or widespread injury or
399 loss
400 of life.
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402 Mr. Abare moved to enter non-public under RSA 91-A:3, II (i)—Emergency Function at 8:17 p.m. Ms. Cummings
403 seconded the motion, which passed (5-0-0).
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405	a.	D. Greenwood	-	Aye
406	b.	R. Cummings	-	Aye
407	c.	G. Abare	-	Aye
408	d.	K. Garcia	-	Aye
409	e.	G. Smith	-	Aye

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411 **XI. Reconvene:**

412 8:58 p.m.
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414 **XII. Adjournment:**

415 Ms. Greenwood moved to adjourn the School Board Meeting at 9:00 p.m. Mr. Abare seconded the motion, which passed
416 (5-0-0).
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418	a.	D. Greenwood	-	Aye
419	b.	R. Cummings	-	Aye
420	c.	G. Abare	-	Aye
421	d.	K. Garcia	-	Aye
422	e.	G. Smith	-	Aye

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426 Respectfully Submitted,
427 Matthew Sullivan
428 School Board Recording Secretary