

# 2022 ANNUAL SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING DELIBERATIVE SESSION MINUTES

## TOWN OF PITTSFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT DELIBERATIVE SESSION February 10, 2022

School District Moderator Gerard LeDuc called the First Session of the 2022 School District Meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Pittsfield Middle High School media center Thursday, February 10, 2022.

After explaining the rules of procedure, School District Moderator Gerard LeDuc read the introduction to the warrant and Article 01:

The inhabitants of the School District of Pittsfield Local School in the state of New Hampshire qualified to vote in School District affairs are hereby notified that the Annual School District Meeting will be held as follows:

The first session of the annual meeting (deliberative session), to be held in the Pittsfield Middle High School Media Center at 23 Oneida Street in said Pittsfield on Thursday, February 10, 2022, at 6:30 p.m. with a snow date of February 12, 2022. The second session of annual meeting (official voting) to be held in the Pittsfield Middle High School gymnasium on Tuesday, March 8, 2022 from 7:00am – 7:00pm.

### ARTICLE 01:

To choose by ballot the following officers:

- two School Board members for a three (3) year term
- one School Board member for a one (1) year term
- one School District Clerk for a three (3) year term

Moderator LeDuc introduced School Board Chairperson Adam Gauthier who in turn introduced the other School Board members in attendance: Diane Rider, Sandra Adams and Molly Goggin. School Board member Justin Clough was unable to attend. School Board Chairperson Gauthier stated they had a PowerPoint presentation to accompany an explanation of each of the warrant articles. Mike Cabral led the *Pledge of Allegiance*.

### ARTICLE 02 Operating Budget

To see if the Pittsfield School District will vote to 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, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$10,165,084. Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$10,246,271, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Pittsfield School District or by law; or the governing body 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.

Estimated tax impact of this article: -\$0.71/\$10.42 per thousand dollars of assessed value.

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Estimated tax impact of the default budget -\$0.48/thousand.) Majority vote required.

Recommended by the Pittsfield School Board (5 Yes, 0 No)

Recommended by the Pittsfield Budget Committee (8 Yes, 1 No)

Article 02 was read by Moderator LeDuc.

Motion made by School Board Chairperson Gauthier to approve Article 02 as read, seconded by School Board Member Adams.

Moderator LeDuc opened the floor for discussion.

Accompanied by the PowerPoint presentation, School Board Chairperson Gauthier stated if all the articles pass, there would be an approximate \$72.00 tax decrease for a property valued at \$200,000. The proposed budget is less than the default budget. The main reason for the decrease is the hiring of over 20 new staff members that started at a lower pay scale and lower health and dental insurance costs than their predecessors, as well as unanticipated overall decreases in health and dental insurance premiums. The proposed budget allows for a replacement program for both furniture and technology. The furniture in a given classroom would be replaced every ten years. Laptops and Chromebooks would be replaced every five years. It also includes reinstating the Family and Consumer Science teacher position. This position was removed from the budget last year when the reductions were made, but is required by the Department of Education for both middle school and high school curriculums. Proposed facility repairs include a five-year plan to replace the carpets in the Elementary School with VCT tile, and replacement of water tanks located at the Middle High School. The School Board plans to source bids for long term contracts for fuel oil and electricity this spring.

Budget Committee Vice Chairperson Bob Schiferle asked for clarification for the discrepancy between the \$10.42 estimated tax impact listed on the warrant, and the estimated tax impact of \$13.01 that he calculated based on the Budget Committee's NH Department of Revenue MS-27 School Budget Form. He did state the overall budget number remains the same. Superintendent Bryan Lane stated he had not seen the MS-27 Budget form prior to this meeting, therefore he would trust Mr. Schiferle's numbers based on his experience and expertise on the Budget Committee and apologized for the error. He explained he based the calculation on the budget approved last year, not the 2022 MS-27.

Mike Cabral felt the presentation should have been shared at the Budget Committee public hearing. He stated it was confusing, and expressed his concern that the numbers are not accurate. He asked if the warrant would be posted with corrections.

Budget Committee Vice Chairperson Bob Schiferle stated he would like to submit an amendment correcting the estimated tax impact.

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School District Attorney Barbara Loughman explained NH law states it is the responsibility of the School Board to determine the tax impact. Therefore, the proposed amendment would not be legally binding. Only the School Board can decide to change the number. She further clarified that the noted tax impact is only an estimate, since the exact amount cannot be determined until all revenue has been received.

Budget Committee Vice Chairperson Bob Schiferle withdrew his proposed amendment.

**There being no further discussion, Article 02 shall appear on the ballot as written.**

### **ARTICLE 03 COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT**

To see if the School District will vote to approve the cost items included in the collective bargaining agreement reached between the Pittsfield School Board and the Education Association of Pittsfield which calls for the following increases in salaries and benefits at the current staffing level:

Fiscal Year	Estimated Increase
2022-23	\$121,119
2023-24	\$ 95,619
2024-25	\$109,871

and further to raise and appropriate \$121,119 for the 2022-2023 fiscal year, such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels.

Recommendations required. (Majority vote required) Estimated Tax Impact \$.34

Recommended by the Pittsfield School Board (5 Yes, 0 No)

Recommended by the Budget Committee (7 Yes, 1 No, 1 abstention)

Article 03 was read by Moderator LeDuc.

Motion made by School Board Member Goggin to approve Article 03 as read, seconded by School Board Chairperson Gauthier.

Moderator LeDuc opened the floor for discussion.

Accompanied by the PowerPoint presentation, School Board member Goggin stated this would be a three-year contract with the Education Association of Pittsfield. Staff on steps 1-5 with lower salaries would have a greater increase than those staff at the top of the scale. The average salary increase in the first year would be 4%. With the reduction in the proposed budget, the School Board felt that an increase of this kind was appropriate. About 20% of the teaching staff left the School District last year. The primary reason was low pay. The current salary structure in Pittsfield is not competitive with school districts in surrounding towns, and we have lost strong candidates. The current starting salaries in Pittsfield are for a Bachelor's degree - \$32,794 and for a Master's degree - \$36,962. The starting salary in surrounding school

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districts for a Bachelor's degree ranges from \$4,023 up to \$10,715 greater than Pittsfield. For a master's degree, the starting salary ranges from \$4,526 to \$8,723 greater than Pittsfield. This contract is an effort to recruit and retain good teachers. The constant turnover is not good for our students.

Mike Cabral asked how many teachers were let go last year due to the \$1,000,000 budget cut. School Board Chairperson Gauthier stated 37 staff members chose to leave.

Dan Schroth stated the teachers are doing incredibly well under the circumstances they are working under. He expressed his support, and encouraged them to keep up the good work.

**There being no further discussion, Article 03 shall appear on the ballot as written.**

### **ARTICLE 04 RECONSIDERATION OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT**

Shall the School District, if warrant article # 3 is defeated, authorize the governing body to call one special meeting, at its option, to address warrant article # 3 cost items only? (Majority vote required)

Recommended by the Pittsfield School Board (4 Yes, 0 No)

Article 04 was read by Moderator LeDuc.

Motion made by School Board Member Goggin to approve Article 04 as read, seconded by School Board Chairperson Gauthier.

Accompanied by the PowerPoint presentation, School Board member Goggin stated a "yes" vote on this article would allow the School Board and the Education Association of Pittsfield to re-negotiate a different contract should article 3 fail.

**There being no further discussion, Article 04 shall appear on the ballot as written.**

### **ARTICLE 05 ESTABLISHMENT OF A SCHOOL DISTRICT RESERVE FUND**

To see if the Pittsfield School District will vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 198:4-b,II enacted in 2020, which allows the District to authorize, indefinitely until rescinded to retain up to 5% of the districts net assessments in any year, and allows the expenditure of any amount retained after the School Board first holds the public hearing, and requires the School Board to include an annual reporting of the retained fund balance in its annual report to the District.

Recommended by the Pittsfield School Board (4 Yes, 0 No)

Not recommended by the Budget Committee (8 Yes, 1 No)

Article 05 was read by Moderator LeDuc.

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Motion made by School Board Chairperson Gauthier to approve Article 05 as read, seconded by School Board Member Adams.

Moderator LeDuc opened the floor for discussion.

Accompanied by the PowerPoint presentation, School Board Chairperson Gauthier stated the purpose of this warrant article is to set up a fund that would allow the School District to retain a portion of an unexpended fund balance at the end of every school year. There are two options for expending the funds. One would be for a proposed project for the benefit of the School District. The second option would be to offset taxes. A proposed School Board policy would include: 1.) No more than 50% of the unexpended fund balance would be placed into the fund in any one fiscal year. 2.) The School District would not put more than \$150,000 into the fund in any one fiscal year. 3.) The fund would have a cap of \$400,000. The School Board would be the agents to determine how much, if any, funds would be used to offset budget increases that may take place in any given school year. The purpose behind this would be to limit any large tax impacts due to unanticipated issues that come up in the School District annually.

Budget Committee Vice Chairperson Bob Schiferle asked who would determine the proposed policy dollar amounts. School Board Chairperson Gauthier responded the School Board would determine the amount, but State law sets a maximum of 5% of net assessment. He stated the purpose of the article is to allow the School Board the option of lowering their portion of the tax rate with unexpended funds instead of leaving the responsibility solely with the Select Board.

Mike Cabral asked why the Budget Committee did not recommend this article. Superintendent Lane responded that the Budget Committee did not feel they had enough information.

**There being no further discussion, Article 05 shall appear on the ballot as written.**

### **ARTICLE 06 DUMPSTER CAPITAL RESERVE FUND**

To see if the Pittsfield School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$3,000 to be added to the Dumpster Replacement Capital Reserve Fund previously established to fund replacement of dumpsters at the schools of the district. (Estimated tax impact of this article: \$0.01/thousand) Majority vote required.

Recommended by the Pittsfield School Board. (4 Yes, 0 No)

Recommended by the Pittsfield Budget Committee (8 yes, 0 no, 1 abstention)

Article 06 was read by Moderator LeDuc.

Motion made by School Board Member Adams to approve Article 06 as read, seconded by School Board Chairperson Gauthier.

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Moderator LeDuc opened the floor for discussion.

Accompanied by the PowerPoint presentation, School Board member Adams stated the current dumpsters belong to the Transfer station, and B.C.E.P. will no longer be providing the service. They have been gracious in giving the District time to purchase our own. The cost is about \$12,000 to \$15,000 for each dumpster. The fund currently has approximately \$9,009.

Mike Cabral expressed concern with the way the article is written.

Fred Hast stated a dumpster lasts 10-12 years. Based on the age of the current dumpsters, he expressed concern with whether there is enough money in fund.

**There being no further discussion, Article 06 shall appear on the ballot as written.**

### **ARTICLE 07 FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM**

To see if the Pittsfield School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$330,000 for the support of the School Lunch Program. This appropriation will be funded by a like amount of revenue from the sales of food and State and Federal sources. (Estimated tax impact of this article: \$0) Majority vote required.

Recommended by the Pittsfield School Board. (5 Yes, 0 No)

Recommended by the Pittsfield Budget Committee (8 yes, 0 no, 1 abstention)

Article 07 was read by Moderator LeDuc.

Motion made by School Board Member Adams to approve Article 07 as read, seconded by School Board Chairperson Gauthier.

Moderator LeDuc opened the floor for discussion.

Accompanied by the PowerPoint presentation, School Board member Adams stated this article allows the School District to accept federal funds to support the food service program. Without approval, those funds would need to come from tax dollars. There would be no cost to the taxpayer if this warrant is approved.

**There being no further discussion, Article 07 shall appear on the ballot as written.**

### **ARTICLE 08 RECEIVE AND EXPEND GRANT FUNDS**

To see if the Pittsfield School District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$850,000 for the support of Federal and private foundation grant-funded educational programs of the Pittsfield School District. This appropriation is contingent upon receiving revenue from Federal grants and private foundations and will be expended in accordance with Federal and State

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requirements upon approval by the NH Department of Education or private foundation requirements. (Estimated tax impact of this article: \$0) Majority vote required.

Recommended by the Pittsfield School Board. (5 Yes, 0 No)

Recommended by the Pittsfield Budget Committee (9 yes, 0 no)

Motion made by School Board Chairperson Gauthier to approve Article 08 as read, seconded by School Board Member Goggin.

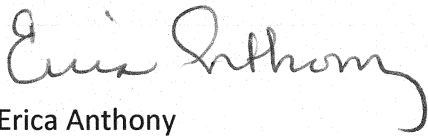
Moderator LeDuc opened the floor for discussion.

Accompanied by the PowerPoint presentation, School Board Chairperson Gauthier stated similar to warrant article 7, this warrant article allows the School District to accept federal funds without the requirement to hold a public hearing. If the warrant fails, the School District would need to find funds within the budget.

**There being no further discussion, Article 08 shall appear on the ballot as written.**

Moderator Leduc adjourned the meeting at 7:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Erica Anthony".

Erica Anthony  
School District Clerk

