



**TOWN OF PITTSFIELD
BUDGET COMMITTEE
TOWN HALL, 85 MAIN STREET
PITTSFIELD, NH 03263**

MEETING MINUTES OF Thursday, January 14, 2021, Public Hearing

CALL TO ORDER

Call to order at 7:00 PM by Robert Schiferle, Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT (11)

Robert Schiferle, Chair (IP)
Katie Bachelder, Vice Chair (IP)
Jeremy Everson, Secretary (IP)
Carol Richardson, Select Board Rep. (IP)
John Christakos (IP)
Fred Hast (IP)
Larry Konopka (IP)
Mary Paradise (IP)
Ammy Ramsey (IP)
Helen Schiff (IP)
Randy Severance (IP)

(IP) member attended in person

(R) member attended remotely

MEMBERS ABSENT (2)

Ted Mitchell, School Board Rep.
Ralph O'Dell

GUESTS PRESENT

Dr. John Graziano, Interim Superintendent of Schools
School Board Members
Select Board Members

Approximately 41 members of the public present, including the Select Board, Town Department Heads, Town Administrator, Schools Interim Superintendent, School Board and School Administration members. (counted at 7:30pm by J. Everson)
There were 9 callers attending by conference call.

DOCUMENTS DISTRIBUTED:

- *Town of Pittsfield 2021 Budget Recap by Department*
- *Annual Town Meeting Warrant*
- *2021 MS-DTB Default Budget*

- *Pittsfield School District 2021-2022 Budget*
- *2021 School Warrant*
- *2021 MS-DSB Default Budget*
- *Pittsfield Revenue Summary 2021-2022 (Schools)*
- *Pittsfield Revenue Summary 2021-2022 Default Budget (Schools)*

This meeting was available for attendance in person as well as by conference call. Chairman Schiferle introduced the purpose of the Public Hearing and our desired goals for this time. A reminder was given that we need to stay with budget items only at this meeting. Covid-19 guidelines were given for the meeting.

Agenda Item 1: Pittsfield Town Budget

Documents Referenced:

- *Town of Pittsfield 2021 Budget Recap by Department*
- *Annual Town Meeting Warrant*
- *2021 MS-DTB Default Budget*

Discussion: Chairman B. Schiferle introduced the documents containing the Town of Pittsfield Budget items. Public input was requested.

B. Schiferle talked through the Warrant Articles from the Town Meeting Warrant.

- Article 6 – Municipal Operating Budget
- Article 7 – AFT – NH Local #6214 Bargaining Unit
- Article 9 – Municipal Sidewalks Improvement
- Article 10 – Fire Department Grant (for radios)
- Article 11 – Cruiser Replacement
- Article 12 – Backhoe Replacement
- Article 13 – Police Cruiser Capital Reserve Fund
- Article 14 – Fire Department Small Equipment Capital Reserve Fund
- Article 15 – Fire Department Pumper Capital Reserve Fund
- Article 16 – Fire Department Tanker Capital Reserve Fund
- Article 17 – Fire Department Forestry Truck Capital Reserve Fund
- Article 18 – Small Highway Truck Capital Reserve Fund
- Article 19 – Dump Truck Capital Reserve Fund
- Article 20 – Loader Capital Reserve Fund
- Article 21 – Grader Capital Reserve Fund
- Article 22 – Backhoe Capital Reserve Fund
- Article 23 – Sidewalk Tractor Capital Reserve Fund

B. Schiferle again requested input from the public... there was none.

Agenda Item 2: Pittsfield Schools Budget

Documents Referenced:

- *Pittsfield School District 2021-2022 Budget*
- *2021 School Warrant*
- *2021 MS-DSB Default Budget*
- *Pittsfield Revenue Summary 2021-2022 (Schools)*
- *Pittsfield Revenue Summary 2021-2022 Default Budget (Schools)*

Discussion: Chairman B. Schiferle introduced the Pittsfield Schools Budget documents and introduced the Interim Superintendent Dr. John Graziano. Dr. Graziano gave a brief summary of the Schools Budget items and the considerations that have impacted the budget proposal for the coming school year.

B. Schiferle read input from the public that had been emailed ahead of the meeting. See attached letters.

- Letter from Carole Dodge, Daniel J. Greene, Justin Greene
- Letter from Kim DeDucca
- Letter from Dan Schroth
- Letter from Matthew White
- Letter from Meredith and Michael Baer
- Letter from Tim Danton
- Letter from Jennifer Kotsay

- Scott Palmer stated that the schools need to change and adjust just like the rest of the tax payers in the town. He believes that if our taxes continue to go up we will lose businesses and residents who will leave Pittsfield.

- Paul Ripplinger stated that the school budget is too big a pill to swallow. As a small business owner wanting to move his business to Pittsfield he is second guessing that idea with the potential increase in taxes. He stated that it is time to make some hard decisions and drastic cuts.

B. Schiferle talked through the Schools Warrant Articles.

- Article 1 Food Service Program
- Article 2 Receive and Expend Grant Funds
- Article 3 Operating Budget
- Article 4 Special Education Capital Reserve Fund
- Article 5 Dumpster Capital Reserve Fund

- Tracy Huyck asked about the changes at the schools from Deans to Principals and Assistant Principals. Bea Douglas answered that these changes were made

before the last Superintendent left in order to offer stability to the students and school administrations. Ms. Huyck asked about the difference in salaries with these changes. B. Schiferle explained that the personnel at the school did not change and the salary line item changes reflect these moves between departments at the schools, but not increases. Ms. Huyck stated that she has a problem with the health insurance costs for the school employees and teachers and the impact on the taxpayers. Dr. Graziano gave clarification on the current health insurance plan that the school offers to the teachers. Jessica Bickford clarified details about Medicaid billing for special education therapists.

- Shea Ripplinger asked about the daily attendance of the schools. Dr. Graziano answered that there are 535 students in our schools, down 35 students from last year. 258 students at the elementary school and 277 students at the high school. Mrs. Ripplinger asked about the costs of transportation. J. Bickford replied that Marston Transportation is not able to meet all of our transportation needs and so the district has had to hire expensive transportation to fill the mandated needs. Mrs. Ripplinger stated that the increase of \$5 per thousand to the tax rate is not sustainable.
- Jim Allard, Select Board Chairman, State Representative and member of the Education Committee, stated that the state legislature has enshrined the adequacy grant funds to the schools and there will be no more decreases in funds for that purpose in the coming years. Also, there will be more than \$156 million dollars from the federal government for the state to use for our schools to meet Covid-19 costs. He stated that one factor in the decrease in state funding is due to lower enrollments in our schools.
- Justin Clough stated that while he doesn't want our taxes to go up he understands that the costs of living will always go up. He thanked the school board members for their hard work. He stated that even if we send our kids to another school we still have to pay for that. Transportation costs would go up to bus the kids to another school. He stated that he noticed that there are no line items in the municipal budget for working toward getting more small businesses into the town.
- Chris Smith stated that the shortfall in the schools budget should not fall to the tax payers.

Next Meeting

Next meeting will be on Tuesday, January 19, 2021, starting at 6:00 PM.

Meeting adjourned at 8:13 PM.

Submitted by: Jeremy Everson, Secretary

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert L. Schiferle", is written over a horizontal line.

Robert Schiferle, Chair

01/21/2021

Date