

REGULAR MEETING OF THE PITTSFIELD SCHOOL COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2026, 6:00 P.M., CITY HALL, 70 ALLEN STREET, CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS.

I. A. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mayor Marchetti called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**“Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, s. 20, I am hereby informing all attendees that a video and audio recording are being made of the meeting.”**

B. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Hon. Mayor Peter Marchetti  
Carolyn Barry  
Ciara Batory  
Daniel Elias  
Heather McNeice  
Katherine Yon  
Sarah Muil

ADMINISTRATION

Latifah Phillips, Interim Superintendent of Schools  
Tammy Gage, Assistant Superintendent  
Nicole Shepardson, Assistant Superintendent  
Jennifer Stokes, Assistant Superintendent  
Bonnie Howland, Assistant Superintendent

STUDENTS

Elizabeth Klepetar	Pittsfield High School
Romeo Yankey	Taconic High School
Nicholas Martinez	Taconic High School

Ms. Muil declared a quorum.

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

D. MOMENT OF SILENCE

E. BRIGHT SPOTS OF PITTSFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Interim Superintendent Phillips said they want to make sure they are highlighting some of the wonderful programs happening in the schools and today they are highlighting Reid Middle School, and the Mock Trial program.

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Reid Guidance Counselor, Kristen Shepardson, said this is the fourth year they have been participating in this program, and introduced the students. The students present introduced themselves as Maxwell Bryan, Latifah Ahmed, and Karyssa Daniels. Ms. Shepardson said there were fifteen student participants total, this was a ten week program, and they had local lawyers, Jennifer Carpenter, and Ahmed Ismail who came every week and facilitated the curriculum. She thanked them for their community support and dedication to the program.

Maxwell Bryan said this program was a fun learning experience and he really enjoyed learning about all of the lawyers and the process of taking a case.

Ms. Shepardson said thank you to Principal Debra Roloson and the district for their support. She said this is an amazing opportunity for students to have hands-on time with lawyers, and some students found they wanted to pursue this as a career.

Dr. Phillips said she wanted to acknowledge Ms. Shepardson because this is not required for schools and this is something Ms. Shepardson has taken to heart to make sure students can have this opportunity. She said this type of program could not happen without someone in the school stepping up and coordinating this.

Ms. Batory said thank you and that this is awesome. She asked if students learn about trials or basic laws as well.

Ms. Shepardson said students learn about both, then they run a Mock trial at the courthouse.

Students participants of the Mock Trial said they do recommend continuing this program and finding other opportunities.

II. A. PARTICIPATION BY THE PUBLIC

A. NONE

B. PARTICIPATION BY THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Chair Mayor Marchetti said he attended the Massachusetts Municipal Association Conference in Boston. He asked that people be patient with them as they dive into what this may look like. He said the Chapter 70 increase is about 400,000 and it appears the health insurance for the city is looking at a potential ten percent

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increase which would relate to four million dollars. He said for the mock trial, Judge Tyne appointed him as the foreman. He said the students did an awesome job because the jury was only in conference for three minutes before they came back with a verdict. He said congratulations to the students for taking the time and making the case, and for the great experience.

Ms. Batory requested her motion be moved earlier in agenda to after the report of the subcommittee item, to ensure there is adequate time.

Chair Mayor Marchetti said yes.

Ms. Muil congratulated Egremont on their award. She said she attended the Reid Middle School orchestra, chorus, and jazz band concert and it was wonderful and well attended. She said she was disappointed the Open House for Taconic was tonight and she is not able to be there with son. She said if they could try to encourage events to be held on evenings they are not in session that would be great.

Mr. Elias said at the open microphone session, Brenda Connaughton wanted to speak but she took ill earlier today, so he shared a statement she wrote and asked to have it shared on her behalf. This statement was in regards to people driving past stopped buses when the lights are flashing and stop signs are out (See Pages). She said this was a serious safety issue. She also said she would like the Pittsfield High report released to restore trust in the community.

He said Jake Eberwein, former superintendent, reached out to remind him there were surveys done at one time about school choice for why students may be leaving the district and these should be on file at Mercer. He said it would be valuable to do something like this again and would provide insight. He said Mr. Eberwein reminded him there was a large PR campaign done before for recruitment with billboards and surveys that yielded great results. He said he went to Taconic for their school council session and they are finalizing a grant for BCC early college credit. He said they did have the open house tonight, and he thinks it is very valuable for School Committee members to be able to go and walk class by class and engage. He said he does not know why this schedule conflict happened, but he is hoping it will not happen again. He said there is hope and anticipation for the building of the garage, and possible plumbing program. He shared upcoming events of flag football and the Student Voice Summit. He said the staff were concerned with lack of communication from the district and said they will most likely be happy with the spotlighting tonight.

Ms. Yon said in regards to communication she is not receiving any of the events.

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Ms. Muil said she received it through the district.

D. REPORTS OF SUBCOMMITTEES

A. NONE

Item F was taken out of order.

III. INFORMATION AND PROPOSALS

A. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

Interim Superintendent Phillips...

- Provided an Update on the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) with upcoming dates (See Page 4).
- Provided a Middle School Restructuring Update with confirmation negotiation meetings were held January 21 and 22 with PEAA and UEP and said additional dates for negotiations have been scheduled (See Page 4). She said the strategic scheduling process is ongoing and data is being gathered and shared with the scheduling consultant on Middle School Enrollment, Middle School Courses, Middle School Staffing, Elementary Enrollment, Elementary Staffing, District and State Policies (See Page 4). She also shared an upcoming site visit that is scheduled. Dr. Phillips emphasized the importance of communication and supporting transition activities for each school to build school culture and instill confidence in staff and families alike. She also highlighted how critical communication is to this process and shared that to help with the transition plans, they are developing a 7th and 8th grade student transition planning team for Reid, as well as a staff transition planning team for Reid and Herberg (See Page 4).

Assistant Superintendent Gage shared details on the upcoming open houses where families and students can meet teachers, and walk the schools, as well as introduce the LINK Crew, where ninth graders are paired with other high school students to provide guidance and support (See Page 5). She shared details of multiple programs to help support the transition of school transitions, including a Step Ahead summer program for students referred to by their school adjustment counselor (See Page 5). She also shared Taconic and Pittsfield High offer opportunities for shadow days for students, and eighth graders at both schools tour these high schools to gain an idea of what to expect, while there are presentations at the seventh grade level as well (See Page 5). Ms. Gage shared additional

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opportunities for student growth in line with the Social Emotional Learning competencies.

A discussion followed.

- Shared context to how snow day decisions are made for the district and Introduced Justin Bolio who provided information on the Polar Express (See Pages 6-7).

A discussion followed.

- Shared important upcoming dates including Taconic and Pittsfield High Open Houses, an upcoming Half Day of School, Quarter 2 Report Cards Closing Grades, School Building Needs Commission, and Winter Recess (See Page 7).
- Shared at the next meeting there will be a presentation on the Multilingual Learner Department and a presentation on Budget (See Pages 8-9).

Motion by Sarah Muil, seconded by Heather McNeice, that the School Committee accept Superintendent Phillips' report, was by vote unanimously approved (See Pages 3-9).

## B. SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING PRESENTATION

Christine Macros-Guerrero, Director of Social Emotional Learning & Student Services introduced herself and thanked the Committee. She shared the purpose of the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Department is to promote positive student outcomes by delivering comprehensive social, emotional, and behavioral supports aligned with SEL, MTSS, and PBIS frameworks (See Page 11). She said this is done through universal prevention, targeted interventions, and individualized support, in collaboration with school staff, families, and community partners to foster inclusive school climates, reduce barriers to learning, and support the success and well-being of every student (See Page 11). Ms. Macros-Guerrero defined SEL-Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) as how individuals of all ages develop the skills to understand themselves and others, build positive relationships, and make thoughtful decisions. She shared the five core components of SEL as outlined in the CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) framework as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (See Page 12). Ms. Macros-Guerrero then defined in detail and provided examples of the three tier interventions and supports, universal instruction, targeted interventions, and intensive interventions (See Pages 14-15). Ms. Macros-Guerrero provided primary

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reasons for referrals, such as behavioral and mental health concerns, emotional regulation, attendance, peer conflict, crisis and safety, and Special Education or eligibility determination and IEP services (See Page 13). Ms. Macros-Guerrero reviewed the number of students served by School Adjustment Counselors (SACs) and discussed the Panorama Student Survey results (See Pages 14-18). She shared staffing roles and shared next steps (See Pages 19-24). She emphasized the importance of data collection and developing progress monitoring tools for comparison, tracking growth, and adjusting interventions based on this, as well as authentic student voice to ensure there is meaningful input (See Page 23).

A discussion followed.

Ms. Muil asked about training in classroom management, coaching models, and if it would be possible to provide training for families in SEL. She said she was excited for the telehealth system for families to access. She asked if mental health professionals are allowed to come into classrooms. She said the psychologists are full time employees.

Assistant Superintendent Stokes said yes they are allowed in the classroom, they just need to contact the building principals first, and the Principal will escort them.

Ms. Macros-Guerrero, said they have four full time psychologists, and one full time psychologist intern.

Dr. Phillips said she wanted to acknowledge there are four vacancies and this is ongoing. She said as they think about the recruitment and hiring season, they will be looking at these hard to staff positions and thinking about what they need to do, especially with positions where they are consistently seeing high vacancies.

Ms. Macros-Guerrero said they are using contracted and virtual school psychologists as well as full time, and they just received a list of all of the colleges in Massachusetts and New York that have school psychology programs so they are in the process of reaching out for recruitment when possible.

Ms. McNeice said they could look at the plumbing pathways example of looking at local needs and with the pathways being added at Pittsfield High, if they look at the city and need for mental health services, they could look at encouraging students through classwork, experience, and internships to pursue this career path and maybe this could also be something homegrown in the long term.

Mr. Elias thanked Ms. Macros-Guerrero for the presentation and said she could outline the bullying prevention program that can be implemented through the

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second step. She said this is concentrated on the development of the five SEL skills.

Ms. Macros-Guerrero said this is integrated in the Second Step and in Middle school it is a separate program. She said a lot of students are feeling bullied so she recognizes she and her department have to do more with stakeholders such as parents, teachers, and students.

Ms. Yon said she was impressed at the dedicated School Adjustment Counselors at the schools serving responsibilities as Family and Community liaisons.

Ms. Stokes clarified there are two family attendance and engagement coordinators at Conte and Crosby schools.

Motion by Sarah Muil, seconded by Katherine Yon, that the School Committee accept the Social Emotional Learning Presentation, as outlined in Enclosure No. 1, was by vote unanimously approved (See Pages 10-24).

Chair Mayor gave an apology to students, as during the participation by the School Committee item they were not called on. He asked if they would like to speak.

Ms. Klepetar said this Tuesday and Thursday the LINK leaders at Pittsfield High will be giving tours and a Q & A panel to eighth grade students. She shared learning about the engineering lab, that the students loved it and had no idea Pittsfield had this option. She said this changed their thinking on this, and the upcoming Open House shows how much the schools have to offer with pathways, theatre, and musical performances, and more.

Ms. Batory said you sold that, and she will be at the Open House.

Mr. Yankey said Taconic High Student Voice Summit is this Friday, and Mr. Martinez and himself are student facilitators; they are excited to see what discussions are brought up.

Mr. Elias said thank you to Ms. Klepetar for mentioning the engineering pathway.

Ms. Klepetar said she did not even know had the lab until she had to give the tours as it is tucked away and a lot currently do not know the pathways that are offered.

Ms. Muil asked the students if they had any comments on the SEL presentation and if they felt it was working well.

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Ms. Klepetar said she has not taken advantage of it because it is not something she feels she can personally seek out. She said especially with bullying, there should be teaching about empathy at all grade levels.

IV. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS – UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. NONE

V. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS – NEW BUSINESS

A. FY27 BUDGET PLANNING AND GOVERNOR’S BUDGET UPDATE

Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance, Bonnie Howland provided an update on the FY27 Budget Planning and the Governor’s Budget Update. She began by framing the FY27 budget process to align student needs and shared individual schools are required to have their budget reviewed by their School Council materials have been provided for planning (See Page 26). She outlined some items the school budget must consider including but not limited to, stipends for professional development, after school activities and ILT’s, contracted services, supplies and miscellaneous costs, walkie repairs, and field trips (See Page 30). She shared school-based budgeting from an equity lens following the students, considering student count, low-income students, English Language Learners, and Special Education enrollment (See Page 29). Ms. Howland explained large budget drivers are salaries, enrollment, students transportation needs, energy and utility costs, and instructional technology and materials (See Page 27). Ms. Howland provided the Governor’s Budget Update which was released today and shared Pittsfield Public Schools had a modest increase in funding, however they dropped from level 11 to level 10 on the foundation budget (See Page 31). She shared they would need 333 more students categorized as low income to meet the level 11 then had last year. She said the challenge is that while there is a modest increase, anticipated rising costs such as current and potential contractual obligations, insurance and fuel increases, will result in a budgetary shortfall. She shared next steps including opportunities for communication and engagement (See Page 32).

Dr. Phillips added there is a slight increase in the budget but as costs have increased, they are working on intently understanding how much the costs are increasing.

A discussion followed.

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Motion by Sarah Muil, seconded by Heather McNeice, that the School Committee accept the FY27 Budget Planning and Governor's Budget Update, as outlined in Enclosure No. 2, was by vote unanimously approved (See Pages 25-32).

B. ESTABLISHMENT OF SUPERINTENDENT SUMMATIVE EVALUATION PROCESS FOR 2026-2027

Chair Mayor recommended referring this motion to the Personnel/Negotiations subcommittee to discuss this item and get on track.

A discussion followed.

Motion by Sarah Muil, seconded by Heather McNeice, that the School Committee refer the Establishment of Superintendent Summative Evaluation Process for 2026-2027 to the Personnel Negotiations Subcommittee, was by vote unanimously approved.

C. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO SERVE ON THE SCHOOL BUILDING NEEDS COMMISSION (SBNC)

Interim Superintendent Phillips said for the charter for the School Building Needs Commission, the Superintendent has five appointments to make. She said two members have already been appointed, Candy Alessio, the principal at Crosby Elementary and Jennifer Teichert, teacher at Allendale and Capeless Elementaries. They both expressed their interest in wanting to continue. She said for two additional seats, Mike Lausier, the district's Technical Services Coordinator, raised interest in the technology department being a part of this through the Taconic build as there were several technical aspects that were critical in this build. She said considering the design will be potentially for Crosby, Conte and Stearns, the principal of Stearns recommended Courtney Meisberger. She said there is a final seat for a parent and she noticed Conte school is not represented, so if not a parent, she would like it to be someone from Conte school.

Mr. Elias said he thinks this is a very good list of caring individuals and they have great records.

Chair Mayor said the School Building Needs Commission (SBNC) itself asked to change the makeup and reduce the number of individuals that served on the SBNC due to quorum issues so the city council approved last evening the new SBNC

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makeup. He said this allows for seven appointments from the Mayor, five members from the Superintendent, and seven members based on their position within the city

and reviewed these members. He said this provides some direction for subcommittees as they get further into the project, and shared there is a subcommittee to get student voices.

Motion by Sarah Muil, seconded by Heather McNeice, that the School Committee accept the Appointment of Members to Serve on the School Building Needs Commission (SBNC), as outlined in Enclosure No. 3, was by vote unanimously approved (See Page 33).

Dr. Phillips said they will be looking for student representatives to be a part of a different process and that maybe the School Committee Student Representatives could support this process.

Ms. Klepetar said their position is appointed through student government and they can support facilitating this.

D. ACCEPTANCE OF REPORTS

Dr. Phillips said these are recurring reports, and they are happy to answer any questions.

Motion by Sarah Muil, seconded by Heather McNeice, that the School Committee accept the Cafeteria Report, as outlined in Enclosure No. 4A, was by vote unanimously approved (See Pages 33-35).

Motion by Sarah Muil, seconded by Heather McNeice, that the School Committee accept the Scholarship Report as outlined in Enclosure No. 4B, was by vote unanimously approved (See Page 36-37).

Motion by Sarah Muil, seconded by Heather McNeice, that the School Committee accept the Student Activity Report as outlined in Enclosure No. 4C, was by vote unanimously approved (See Page 38-40).

E. OVERNIGHT FIELD TRIP REQUEST

The next item we have is Overnight Field Trip Request to the Clark Terry Jazz Festival.

Assistant Superintendent Shepardson said at the last meeting there was a question on funding for field trips. She shared they have a private foundation, the Gilson

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family, a local family, alumni from Pittsfield High, and the majority of this goes to study abroad costs. She said this field trip is split with parent payments, fundraising, and funding through the Tri-M Music program and no students are turned away from any hardships with funds.

Ms. Muil said this is exciting.

Motion by Sarah Muil, seconded by Heather McNeice, that the School Committee approve Overnight Field Trip Request to the Clark Terry Jazz Festival March 14, 2026 to March 15, 2026, as outlined in Enclosure No. 5, was by vote unanimously approved (See Pages 41-48).

F. MOTION REQUEST BY COMMITTEE MEMBER CIARA BATORY TO RELEASE PITTSFIELD HIGH SCHOOL INVESTIGATIVE REPORT WITH REQUIRED REDACTIONS

Ms. Batory said she requested this item to be on the agenda for trust and transparency. She said releasing the report with appropriate redactions will help the community move forward, and gain public trust with the large changes through this transparency. She said she is asking for the required redactions to protect privacy.

Motion by Ciara Batory, seconded by Carolyn Barry that the School Committee review the May 2026 Pittsfield High School Investigative Report With Required Redactions before it is released to the public.

Mr. Elias said it is important people know what the thought process from the previous School Committee to not release the report was. He said with many investigations that happen, this opens the door for any and all to be opened moving forward. He said the district works so hard to retain and recruit. He said they need to make sure bad behavior does not happen, is not allowed and there are consequences for actions, and to do this, they rely heavily on people moving forward to share information in cases. He said if this was released they may end up hurting the thing they were trying to help. He said last year, some people wanted to release it but after asking the state first, they said to not release it after they reviewed it. He said if they release it knowing the state said no, what liability do they open themselves to.

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Chair Mayor Marchetti said he did speak with Ms. Batory before the meeting and asked to have the report be reviewed by the School Committee first so they know what has been redacted in the version sent to the public. He said this as her initial request was to have the School Committee authorize the Superintendent to send out a redacted version. He said he has been told by legal counsel that what will be released as a redacted version will be less information than the summary report.

Ms. Barry said she thinks this should be released.

Ms. Batory said she understands the concern for protecting future investigations and having protection for individuals by removing identifiable language, but releasing the report is a way she believes they will gain public trust.

Mr. Elias said the fact they released the report as they did was an unprecedented occurrence, and that they were advised not to do this but they tried to meet the public halfway. He said there are many ways to look at this but he is very worried about the future if there is an investigation that people may just be silent and stand by comments.

Chair Mayor Marchetti said it is important for the School Committee to see the redacted version first because there may be less information in it than other version.

Ms. Muil said she would like to see the redacted before the Committee releases anything. She said she would want to be able to trust the school department for protections to be in place if there was something to happen to herself.

Motion by Ciara Batory, seconded by Carolyn Barry that the School Committee review the Pittsfield High School Investigative Report with required redactions and approve it before it is released to the public, was by vote approved 6 to 1, with Daniel Elias voting in opposition.

## VI. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS - ROUTINE MATTERS

### A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Sarah Muil, seconded by Heather McNeice, that the School Committee approve the School Committee minutes from the meeting held on December 1,

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2025, as outlined in Enclosure No. 5A, was by vote unanimously approved, with all members except Chair Mayor Marchetti and Daniel Elias, abstaining as they were not present (See Pages 48-53).

Motion by Sarah Muil, seconded by Heather McNeice, that the School Committee approve the School Committee minutes from the meeting held on January 5, 2026, with one amendment deleting the Interim from Tammy Gage, Assistant Superintendent Roll Call section, as outlined in Enclosure No. 5B, was by vote unanimously approved (See Pages 54-57).

B. ACCEPTANCE OF PERSONNEL REPORT

Motion by Sarah Muil, seconded by Heather McNeice, that the School Committee accept the Personnel Report, as outlined in Enclosure No. 6 was by vote unanimously approved (see Pages 58-60).

Mr. Elias said thank you to Kerry Light who was always kind, engaged and he said he is happy to see, and to Luke Hescoock on the personnel report.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. ITEMS OF NEGOTIATIONS

Motion by Sarah Muil, seconded by Heather McNeice, that the School Committee go into Executive Session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, s. 21 (a)(3), to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the United Educators of Pittsfield (UEP) and the Pittsfield Educational Administrators' Association (PEAA), if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares was by roll call vote unanimously approved.

Motion by Sarah Muil, seconded by Heather McNeice, that the School Committee go into Executive Session pursuant to M.G.L. c.30A, s.21(a)(7) to comply with or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant in-aid requirements (vote on Executive Session minutes from the meeting held on January 14, 2026) was by roll call vote unanimously approved.

Chair Mayor Marchetti said one vote will be taken on the Executive Session minutes and they will return to Regular Session after Executive Session.

The School Committee went into Executive Session at 8:27 p.m.

Motion by Sarah Muil, seconded by Heather McNeice to return to the regular order of business, was by roll call vote unanimously approved.

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The School Committee returned to the regular order of business at 8:53 p.m.

Let the record show one vote was taken in Executive Session to approve the Executive Session minutes from the January 14, 2026 meeting.

VIII. FUTURE BUSINESS

- A. Next Scheduled Meeting, Wednesday, February 11, 2026, 6:00 p.m., City Council Chambers, City Hall

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Sarah Muil, seconded by Heather McNeice that the School Committee adjourn, was by vote unanimously approved.

The School Committee adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

SARAH MUIL