

DRAFT
TOWN OF PELHAM
BUDGET COMMITTEE – MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, November 16th, 2023

1 **CALL TO ORDER** – Ms. Meg Bressette opened the meeting at approximately 6:34 PM.

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4 **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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7 Ms. Bressette called attendance:

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9 **PRESENT:** Chair Meg Bressette
10 Vice Chair Greg Smith
11 Bob Sherman
12 Ellen Cormier
13 Phil Haberlen
14 Paul Grant
15 David Silva
16 Garrett Abare
17 Selectmen Representative Jason Croteau
18 School Board Representative David Wilkerson
19 Recording Secretary Heidi Zagorski

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21 **ABSENT:** Secretary Deborah Ryan - *excused*

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24 **BUSINESS**

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27 **MINUTES REVIEW: November 2nd, 2023 and November 9th, 2023**

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30 **MOTION:** (Sherman/Grant) To place the November 2nd, 2023 Budget Committee Meeting minutes on file.

31 **VOTE:** (9-0-1) The motion passed.

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34 **MOTION:** (Sherman/Silva) To place the amended November 9th, 2023 Budget Committee Meeting minutes
35 on file.

36 **VOTE:** (9-0-1) The motion passed.

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38 Mr. David Silva requested a correction on line 69 to remove an extra “i” in the name David.

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41 **TOWN BUDGET**

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43 Ms. Bressette welcomed Town Administrator Mr. Joe Roark and Town Finance Director Ms. Tammy Penny.

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45 Ms. Bressette stated the town budget as of right now is \$22,003,547.

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MOTION: (Sherman/Smith) To open the discussion of the Town Budget.

Ms. Bressette said she would like to start the discussion about the increase in the insurance, so it is correctly noted in their budget. Ms. Tammy Penny stated the insurance increase is \$97,789. Ms. Penny said she was anticipating a \$126,000 increase but they had some turnover and some of the incoming employees have made different insurance selections.

Mr. Greg Smith asked what the increase was from a percentage perspective. Ms. Penny said it varies by line. She said the dental premiums went up 4.7%, the life insurance was left flat, and the property liability has a 7% cap which they can never go over. She said they are in year two of a three-year cap program. Ms. Penny said the workers' comp is an 8% cap. Ms. Penny said the unemployment went up 37.8% because there are a couple of claims this year. She said health insurance is 10.5%. She said there are insurance waivers where some employees get a set amount instead of taking the insurance and those also went up 10.5%. She said there is a separate line for a new full-time employee which includes the insurance implications for that employee only.

Mr. Bob Sherman asked what the total new figure the Selectmen are requesting is. Ms. Penny said the updated number in total is \$3,477,904. Ms. Bressette said if the Committee agreed to that change, what would be the total budget the town is asking for? Ms. Penny said the new total Town Budget is \$22,101,337. Ms. Penny said the new default Town Budget is \$21,632,408.

MOTION: (Sherman/Smith) To accept the revised insurance budget for discussion.

VOTE: (10-0-0) The motion passed.

Ms. Bressette reminded the members to make a motion, they should present it through a way of motion. A member shall propose a motion stating I move that. The member may state the reason for the motion. Any motion affecting a salary may include the effective date. Before a motion can be discussed it must be seconded. Thereafter if no objection to consideration is sustained, the committee may discuss and decide to approve or disapprove the motion. Ms. Bressette said if a member wishes to change a motion before the committee for consideration, the member must submit the proposal to the committee by making the motion to amend the motion. They may present the proposed amended motion briefly and concisely. A motion to amend must be seconded before it can be discussed.

MOTION: (Abare/Grant) To reduce the Town Budget to \$21,292,605.

Mr. Garrett Abare said this is a flat budget that was voted on last year by the taxpayers for the fiscal year 2023. Mr. Smith clarified if the intent was to try and align what was approved by the taxpayers in 2023, the number appears to be different than the number stated in Mr. Abare's motion. Mr. Abare stated he would like to change his motion to reflect the accurate number which is \$21,292,605. Ms. Bressette confirmed this would be level-funded to the 2023 fiscal year budget. Ms. Bressette stated the current budget ask is \$22,101,337.

Mr. Smith said there is a default budget number as well which is slightly higher than the budget that Mr. Abare proposed. Mr. Smith asked if they were able to change the budget below the default number. Ms. Penny said the Budget Committee can propose a number. Ms. Penny added, yes, you can go below the default budget however it is not recommended. Ms. Penny explained that the default budget is an adjustment to last year's budget to include Collective Bargaining Agreement

95 (CBA) obligations that the voters have already voted in. She said it also includes any adjustments for insurance, taxes,
96 and debt service. She said they eliminate any one-time expenses that were in last year's budget to come to this calculation
97 adding that although it is not advisable, it is allowable. Ms. Penny further explained you begin with the budget from last
98 year, and certain people were members of the unions and they have increases tied to their positions and other contractual
99 obligations. Ms. Penny said when she is populating the default budget, she considers those things. Mr. Joe Roark said it
100 eliminates any discretionary purchases. Mr. Roark said if the budget was reduced too low and they didn't have enough
101 money to pay some of those people, they would need to reduce staffing, or maybe have a hiring freeze. Mr. Sherman
102 stated you really should not go below the default budget because that is money that is already promised. Mr. Sherman
103 said what is not included is any possible new hires. Mr. David Silva asked if the insurance increase is part of the default
104 budget. Ms. Penny said yes, it is. Ms. Penny said the default budget is higher than the proposed budget by Mr. Abare.

105
106 Mr. Smith explained that he thought looking to have a flat budget across the town and the school was a way of
107 establishing a fair option for the voters. Mr. Smith also stated that good reason was just made towards the default budget.
108 Mr. Smith suggested offering the voters the choice of the town's requested budget of \$22,101,337 or the default budget of
109 \$21,632,408.

110
111 Ms. Penny said the default budget does not contain all contracted obligations. She said it only contains certain things like
112 the CBA, anything that was specifically voted on as a special article. She said there are contractual obligations that are in
113 the budget and increases that you have to conduct business for and sign contracts, adding that you do not put everything in
114 front of the voters. She said that you still have to pay those bills. She said it is hard to manage on a default budget and
115 keep up with inflation and cost increases.

116
117 Mr. Sherman said on the ballot there is a figure that comes from the Budget Committee as to what the budget should be.
118 He said the question is if they are going to recommend it. Mr. Sherman said if the voters reject that, then it's automatic
119 that the default budget is used. Mr. Sherman stated that the Budget Committee provides the budget number that would
120 appear on the ballot, adding that it is not a choice of budgets on the ballot. He said going forward they could adjust within
121 the different departments.

122
123 Mr. Grant said he felt that the departments presented and explained their budgets well. He said he did not agree with
124 going through the budget line by line in each department. Mr. Grant said the default budget would be a good number to
125 start with as opposed to targeted cuts. Ms. Bressette asked for clarification. She asked what budget was being discussed
126 for the proposal. Mr. Grant said the number being discussed is \$21,513,061. Ms. Penny said she does not have that
127 number anywhere. Ms. Bressette asked if the motion was to still level fund the budget from the 2023 fiscal year budget.
128 Mr. Abare stated that he would like to amend his motion.

129
130 Mr. Jason Croteau expressed that they are losing track of where they are as a Committee. Mr. Croteau asked in a world of
131 a default budget or a below default budget, what does that look like for the town? Mr. Roark explained that when he says
132 discretionary it means discretionary on how you spend your money for overtime, filling in for people, and things of this
133 nature. Mr. Roark said the increase that they have had this year is caused by contracts. He said the Budget Committee can
134 lower these budgets, but this has to be done with the understanding that there will be a reduction in the levels of service.
135 Mr. Roark provided examples of what this may look like. Mr. Roark said he understands the suggestion of the department
136 heads to be in control of their budgets, however, they would probably have to reduce some levels of service. He said it
137 only makes sense that if you don't have as much money in your budget, you may not be able to provide the same level
138 you have had before that. Mr. Roark explained operating hours may change or things may not be done as efficiently or
139 quickly. He said this is the balance that needs to be determined.

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141 Mr. Phil Haberlen clarified that if the Budget Committee went with Mr. Abare's proposed budget of \$21,292,605 which is
142 the 2023 budget, if that got approved in the Budget Committee, the voters still get a choice. Mr. Haberlen said they could

143 vote for that number, or if they get defeated, they will get the 2024 default budget.

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145 Ms. Bressette asked Mr. Abare to confirm that his motion is asking for the budget to be at \$21, 292,605. Mr. Abare
146 confirmed this.

147
148 Ms. Bressette said if the motion passes, and gets through reconsideration and deliberative, on the ballot would be the
149 \$21,292,605 budget and the default would be \$21,632,408.

150
151 Ms. Bressette said the difference between the fiscal year 2023 budget and the current budget is \$808,732. Ms. Bressette
152 said if the fiscal year 2023 budget is approved, the town will not meet their obligations. Ms. Bressette questioned where
153 the funds would come from for obligations that exist now but were not part of the 2023 budget. Mr. Roark said they
154 would have to pay their obligations and cut from somewhere else. Ms. Bressette stated that they did not have any
155 discussion during the reviews of the department budgets about what would happen to their department if it were funded at
156 the 2023 level. Ms. Bressette opened the discussion to the public and asked if any department heads would like to discuss
157 this.

158
159 Mr. Croteau stated that the Budget Committee had the opportunity to discuss this during the reviews of each department.
160 Mr. Croteau suggested going through each department line by line to determine where the cuts would be made. He said he
161 cannot vote for an arbitrary number without knowing where the cuts are going to be made.

162
163 Ms. Bressette welcomed Chief Anne Perriello to discuss what would happen with the Police Department if they were
164 funded at the 2023 level. Ms. Bressette stated that the 2023 budget for the Police Department was \$3,703,059. Ms.
165 Bressette said the Board of Selectmen approved budget for this year is \$3,896,330.

166
167 Chief Perriello said if they stick with the 2023 budget, a couple of things would take place. Chief Perriello said they have
168 to fund the money that the voters have already voted in. She said they voted in the CBA for the police contract. Chief
169 Perriello said just off the top that is \$137,000 in salary money that she would have to find in a budget that that was not
170 added into. Chief Perriello said that does not include any increases in training from the contractual numbers. She said that
171 is base salaries. She said another aspect is an increase in insurance and retirement. Chief Perriello said at some point the
172 town will say you need to find a way to either fund this or you need to take your services and cut them back or get rid of
173 some positions. Chief Perriello said crimes continue to get more and more violent and the homeless population continues
174 to grow. She said overdoses in Nashua and Manchester reached a record high in October. She said drug problems and
175 mental illness go hand in hand. She said all of these are real-life situations that her agency has been and will contend with
176 as they move forward within 2024. She said the recent Lewiston, Maine mass shooting kept all of those local departments
177 working long hours with little sleep until they could restore the sense of safety back into the community by locating that
178 shooter. Chief Perriello said this type of event could take place locally at any time. She said they do their best to safeguard
179 the community and they will continue to do that however the level of staffing that she holds right now is crucial to
180 maintain the volume of calls they are dealing with. She said with the increased traffic it takes you a little longer to get to
181 the calls and the technology now plays a role in almost every single investigation. She said investigations are very time-
182 consuming. Chief Perriello said the townspeople had a voice and they should have a voice. She said they voted, and they
183 held up that police contract for the increased funding in their budget. Chief Perriello said if the Budget Committee goes
184 with the 2024 default budget that would cover the cost of the increase in insurance, the increase in retirement, and the
185 increase in the CBA. She asked for the support of the Budget Committee at a minimum with this. Chief Perriello
186 expressed that the voters wanted this. She said they want more police presence. She said they voted for a second school
187 resource officer. She said they asked them to increase their staffing to have more people to respond to calls. Chief
188 Perriello said the level of service will be the propriety of patrol. Chief Perriello said the community aspect of the Police
189 Department takes time and money. She said that time and money are going to need to go into the response to keep our
190 personnel going to calls to service to help people. Chief Perriello said the increase that the taxpayers voted in for the

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191 police budget would have raised salaries alone by 3.8%. She said they came in with a 2.93% increase. Chief Perriello
192 said they were fiscally responsible. Chief Perriello said if the Committee was to make any changes at all, please at least
193 bring the budget up to the 2024 default budget.

194
195 Ms. Linda Newcomb introduced herself as the Town Clerk Tax Collector. Ms. Newcomb stated that they have four
196 elections next year. She explained in the 2023 budget, she was only budgeted for one election. Ms. Newcomb said the
197 hours are longer because they have a lot more write-ins. Ms. Newcomb said she does not know where the money to fund
198 this would come from. Ms. Bressette said in the 2024 budget there is a request that wouldn't have been in the 2023
199 budget with the tableting machine that is a mandate from the state. Ms. Newcomb said on the Town Clerk's end of things,
200 most of her increases are for postage. She explained certified mail costs have gone up.

201
202 Mr. John Ignatowicz introduced himself as the acting Fire Chief. Mr. Ignatowicz explained that when you cut funding,
203 you are cutting the safety services to the town. Mr. Ignatowicz said to imagine if they could not get the ambulances out the
204 door for emergencies due to cuts or because they had to shut down a truck due to repairs that they couldn't fund. Mr.
205 Ignatowicz said in his budget they have money set aside to send people to paramedic school. He said they have four
206 paramedics right now. He said they try to grow these people from within. He said if they lost one paramedic, that would
207 be 25% of the time this town would not have paramedic services. Mr. Ignatowicz said they give back unspent money
208 every year and are fiscally responsible. He said they plan for the worst and hope for the best, adding if they don't need the
209 money, they give it back and it offsets the taxes.

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212 **MOTION:** (Abare/Grant) To withdraw his motion to reduce the Town Budget to \$21,292,605.

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215 **MOTION:** (Abare/Grant) To propose a Town Budget of \$21,632,408 which is the 2024 default budget.

216 **ROLL-CALL VOTE:** Mr. Grant - Yes
217 Mr. Haberlen - Yes
218 Mr. Silva - Yes
219 Ms. Cormier - Yes
220 Mr. Abare - Yes
221 Mr. Wilkerson - No
222 Mr. Croteau - No
223 Mr. Sherman - No
224 Mr. Smith - Yes
225 Ms. Bressette - No
226 (6-4-0) The motion passed.

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229 **MOTION:** (Bressette/Sherman) To amend the proposed Town Budget to \$21,774,962.

230 **ROLL-CALL VOTE:** Mr. Grant - No
231 Mr. Haberlen - No
232 Mr. Silva - No
233 Ms. Cormier - No
234 Mr. Abare - No
235 Mr. Wilkerson - Yes
236 Mr. Croteau - Yes
237 Mr. Sherman - Yes
238 Mr. Smith - No

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239 Ms. Bressette - Yes
240 (4-6-0) The motion failed.

241
242 Ms. Bressette stated that she would like to explain where her cuts come from starting at the \$22,101,337 budget. Ms.
243 Bressette said those cuts would include approximately \$332,675.

244
245 Mr. Croteau confirmed that if the motion made by Mr. Abare for the default budget of \$21,632,408 were to fail at the town
246 meeting, the budget would be the same number which does not give the voters a choice.

247
248 Ms. Bressette stated her motion is to bring the Town Budget to \$21,768,662 which is a difference from the default budget
249 of \$136,254.

250
251 Mr. Abare expressed his apprehension about suggesting individual cuts because he believed it takes the obligation out of
252 each department's hands. Ms. Bressette responded by saying that she thinks it is their job as Budget Committee members
253 because they presented as individual committees, also the numbers from the fiscal year 2023 include some departments
254 having more in their fiscal year 2023 budget than they do in the 2024 budget. She said she would rather start at the 2024
255 budget and show where her cuts are at. Ms. Penny explained that it is the Budget Committee's duty to present a budget
256 and it is a line-by-line budget. Ms. Penny said she has to prepare a form that is signed by members of the Budget
257 Committee and has to upload this to the Department of Revenue. Ms. Penny said if they give her a bottom line, she needs
258 to know how they are allocating that bottom line. Ms. Penny said she does need direction on which lines are being cut if
259 they are not mirroring something she sees before her today.

260
261 Ms. Bressette said she is starting at the \$22,101,337 Town Budget and what she is proposing to adjust from the Town
262 Budget in her motion is:

263 Assessor - \$3,000 due to the clerical clerk coverage.

264 Cemetery - cut the caretaker position, cut the recording clerk, and cut \$500 from the new position that you wouldn't be
265 adding. Cut the overtime by \$2,100 and fund it at 50 units and base the secretarial pay at an \$18.50/hour rate. She said in
266 Cemetery this would be a total cut of \$41,659.

267 Conservation – keep level and cut \$300.

268 Fire Department – fund one paramedic schooling which would be a cut of \$68,976 and also a possible \$10,000 cut from
269 call-backs.

270 Highway Maintenance – cut \$19,300 based on the new salt price.

271 Insurance – decrease by \$22,464 if they do not add in the new cemetery caretaker position.

272 Library - \$5,000 in salary cuts

273 Parks and Recreation – cut because there was a retirement. This would be a comfortable cut of \$13,500 in salary.

274 Retirement – decrease by \$4,713 if they do not add in the new cemetery caretaker position.

275 Senior Center – there is a staffing change which would bring a decrease of \$10,000.

276 Technology – decrease by \$60,840 if they do not go with the new website and this includes the cost that comes with
277 hosting the website.

278 Town Buildings - \$73,829 cut of the Police Department carpets, the A/C in the training room, and the electrical gates.

279
280 Ms. Bressette stated in all this would be a \$332,675 reduction from the Town Budget. Ms. Bressette said this would bring
281 the budget to \$21,768,662.

282
283 Ms. Bressette stated there was a discussion to add the \$6,300 stipends back to the Board of Selectmen. She said if she
284 were to add those back in, the final number she would be proposing is \$21,774,962. She said this is a difference of
285 \$142,554 from the default budget.

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287 Ms. Bressette said the article for the Town's operating budget would read as follows: Shall the town vote to raise an
288 appropriate as an operating budget not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted
289 separately the amount set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session for the
290 purposes to set forth herein totaling \$21,632,408. Should this article be defeated the default budget shall be \$21,632,408
291 which is the same as last year with certain adjustments required by previous action of the town or by law where the
292 governing body may hold one special meeting in accordance with RSA 40:13, 10, and 16 to take up the issue of revised
293 operating budget only.

294
295 Ms. Bressette said the numbers now in the Budget Committee approved column would be the same as the default on the
296 budget master.

297
298 Ms. Bressette read the default budgets for the following departments:

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300 Assessor \$229,793
301 Budget Committee \$2.
302 Cable Department \$173,055
303 Cemetery \$200,870
304 Conservation Committee \$10,700
305 Debt Service Interest \$52,857
306 Debt Service Principle \$359,200
307 Elections \$60,768
308 Emergency Management \$10,673
309 Fire Department \$3,096,089
310 Health Officer \$87,956
311 Health Services \$73,700
312 Highway Maintenance \$2,119,159
313 Human Services \$75,640
314 Insurance \$3,477,904
315 Legal \$96,000
316 Library \$536,656
317 Parks and Recreation \$294,513
318 Planning Department \$574,870
319 Police Department \$3,899,221
320 Retirement \$2,542,339
321 Selectmen \$671,644
322 Senior Center \$207,580
323 Technology \$310,334
324 Town Buildings \$856,199
325 Town Celebration \$24,960
326 Town Clerk/Tax Collector \$321,689
327 Transfer Station \$1,252,478
328 Treasurer \$15,224
329 Trust Funds \$335

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332 **TOWN WARRANT ARTICLES**

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334 Ms. Bressette stated the total Town Budget as amended is \$21,632,408.

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Ms. Bressette stated that they would vote on the proposed warrant article as revised.

ROLL-CALL VOTE: Mr. Grant - Yes
Mr. Haberlen - Yes
Mr. Silva - Yes
Ms. Cormier - Yes
Mr. Abare - Yes
Mr. Wilkerson - No
Mr. Croteau - No
Mr. Sherman - No
Mr. Smith - Yes
Ms. Bressette - No
(6-4-0) The motion passed.

Ms. Bressette said as it stands now if they have no changes at reconsideration or at the deliberative session to vote on, what would appear on the warrant is (6) in favor and (4) against the budget. Mr. Sherman added and (1) abstained as member Ms. Deborah Ryan was absent from this meeting.

Ms. Bressette stated they would be moving on to the special warrant article Support Union CBA. Ms. Bressette read the language as follows: “Shall the town vote to approve cost items included in the five (5) year collective bargaining agreement ratified by the Board of Selectmen and the Pelham Public Works and Municipal Employees, Local 1801 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), which calls for the following increases in salary and benefits and to further raise and appropriate the sum of One Hundred Forty-Two Thousand, Seven Hundred and Thirteen Dollars (\$142,713) to fund this year of the agreement, 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. (Recommended by the Selectmen (5-0-0).”

The 2024 cost is as just read, the 2025 cost is \$122,644 and the accumulated cost is \$265,357, the year 2026 cost is \$98,605 and the accumulated cost is \$363,962, the year 2027 cost is \$90,784 and the accumulated cost is \$454,756, and year 2028 cost which includes three months of 2029 is \$100,114 and the accumulated cost is \$554,860.

Mr. Roark said the union this speaks to is their support staff which includes all the administrative employees of the Town Hall, and their Highway and Transfer Station workers. Mr. Roark said this can be challenging to collectively bargain for because they have very physical jobs and mentally demanding jobs mixed together. He said their main goal on the town side was to start to bring the pay up of some of the lower-paid employees. He said some were significantly under comparable to other towns. Mr. Roark said their goal was to bring these pay scales up, give modest cost of living raises to the other employees, and begin to increase the employee contribution towards health insurance. Mr. Roark asked the members to support this.

MOTION: (Sherman/Cormier) To approve the 5-year 2024 Collective Bargaining Agreement warrant article as written.

ROLL-CALL VOTE: Mr. Grant - Yes
Mr. Haberlen - Yes
Mr. Silva - Yes
Ms. Cormier - Yes

383 Mr. Abare - Yes
384 Mr. Wilkerson - Yes
385 Mr. Croteau - Yes
386 Mr. Sherman - Yes
387 Mr. Smith - Yes
388 Ms. Bressette - Yes
389 (10-0-0) The motion passed.

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392 Ms. Bressette stated the next special warrant article for the town is the Highway Block Grant aid. Ms. Bressette read the
393 language as follows: "Shall the town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Three Hundred Forty-Five Thousand Dollars
394 (\$345,000) for repair, maintenance, purchase of equipment and upgrading of Town roads, to be offset by anticipated
395 Highway Block Grant funds. This special article will a be non-lapsing appropriation per RSA 32:7, IV. No money to be
396 raised by taxation (Recommended by the Selectmen 5-0-0)."

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399 **MOTION:** (Smith/Grant) To approve the Highway Block Grant Fund warrant article as written.

400 **ROLL-CALL VOTE:** Mr. Grant - Yes
401 Ms. Cormier - Yes
402 Mr. Haberlen - Yes
403 Mr. Silva - Yes
404 Mr. Abare - Yes
405 Mr. Wilkerson - Yes
406 Mr. Croteau - Yes
407 Mr. Sherman - Yes
408 Mr. Smith - Yes
409 Ms. Bressette - Yes
410 (10-0-0) The motion passed.

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413 Ms. Bressette said the next special warrant article reads: "Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Three-
414 Million Four Hundred Sixty Thousand Dollars (\$3,460,000) to construct the roundabouts at the intersections of Sherburne
415 Road and Mammoth Road and Mammoth Road and Marsh Road. Said appropriation will be offset by a Congestion
416 Mitigation Air Quality Program (CMAQ) Grant in the amount of Two Million-Six Hundred Eighty Thousand Dollars
417 (\$2,680,000) and to be partially offset with exaction fees on deposit of One Hundred and Ten Thousand (\$110,000)
418 Dollars and to authorize the Selectmen to expend not more than Six Hundred and Seventy Thousand Dollars (\$670,000)
419 from the Unassigned Fund Balance to offset the remaining cost of the project. No money is to be raised by taxation. This
420 special article will be a non-lapsing appropriation per RSA 32:7, IV. (Recommended by the Board of Selectmen 5-0-0)."

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422 Ms. Bressette said if this does not pass, there is a cost involved. Ms. Penny said it would be refunding the State \$103,000
423 for engineering services that were already paid for and reimbursed.

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427 **MOTION:** (Smith/Sherman) To approve the warrant article as written for the construction of the roundabouts
428 at the intersections of Sherburne Road and Mammoth Road and Mammoth Road and Marsh Road.

429 **ROLL-CALL VOTE:** Mr. Grant - Yes
430 Ms. Cormier - Yes
431 Mr. Haberlen - Yes
432 Mr. Silva - Yes
433 Mr. Abare - Yes
434 Mr. Wilkerson - Yes
435 Mr. Croteau - Yes
436 Mr. Sherman - Yes
437 Mr. Smith - Yes
438 Ms. Bressette - Yes
439 (10-0-0) The motion passed.
440
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442 Ms. Bressette announced a brief recess. The Budget Committee returned from recess at 8:46 PM.
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445 **SCHOOL BUDGET**
446

447 Ms. Bressette announced the school budget request is \$41,768,453. Ms. Bressette said the default budget is \$41,503,442
448 which is a difference of \$265,011.
449

450 Mr. Sherman made a motion to open the discussion of the school budget request of \$41,768,453 and the default budget of
451 \$41,503,442.
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454 **MOTION:** (Sherman/Silva) To approve the School Budget at \$41,503,442 which is the 2024 default budget.
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457 Mr. Sherman said the school system is legally obligated and therefore the budget should not go lower than the default
458 budget.
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461 **MOTION:** (Haberlen/Abare) To amend the proposed School Budget to \$40,965,693.

462 **ROLL-CALL VOTE:** Mr. Grant - Yes
463 Ms. Cormier - Yes
464 Mr. Haberlen - Yes
465 Mr. Silva - Yes
466 Mr. Abare - Yes
467 Mr. Wilkerson - No
468 Mr. Croteau - Yes
469 Mr. Sherman - No
470 Mr. Smith - Yes
471 Ms. Bressette - No
472 (7-3-0) The motion passed.
473
474

475 Mr. Haberlen stated his budget proposal of \$40,965,693 was the budget that was approved in March 2023. Mr. Haberlen
476 stated that we have had an 81% increase in cost per pupil from 2000-2022. Mr. Haberlen said he is proposing about
477 \$800,000 less than the default budget, which is about a 2% cut.
478

479 Ms. Bressette stated if Mr. Haberlen's budget amendment proposal should pass, then this would be the budget approved
480 by the Budget Committee. Ms. Bressette clarified that this would be a cut of \$537,749 from the default budget.
481

482 Mr. Sherman stated that this cut would relate to staffing cuts. Mr. Haberlen said the data presented has shown a steady
483 drop in the student-to-teacher ratio.
484

485 Mr. Wilkerson asked the Assistant Superintendent Ms. Sarah Marandos to speak about the student-to-teacher ratio. Ms.
486 Marandos said if they reduce teachers, that will increase the class sizes. Ms. Marandos said in the CBA they have outlined
487 by grade span what the numbers are. Mr. Wilkerson confirmed with Ms. Marandos that with regard to how many students
488 there are in each class is in part driven by contractual obligations. Ms. Marandos said this does vary by age level adding
489 for third grade and/or the elementary grade level, the max classroom size is 25 students. Mr. Wilkerson asked what the
490 current class size is for third grade. Ms. Marandos said there are 107 students in third grade, and they have six third-grade
491 teachers. Ms. Marandos said that there would be 18 students per teacher. Ms. Marandos said the benefit of smaller class
492 sizes is better quality instruction, being able to work with students of varying needs, and being able to provide all the
493 services the current students require.
494

495 Mr. Haberlen stated that the data that Superintendent Dr. Chip McGee had presented from 2007 was around 16 for student
496 to teacher ratio. Mr. Haberlen said it has dropped to about 11.8 now. Ms. Deb Mahoney, the School Finance Director
497 stated that 11.8 for the student-to-teacher ratio seemed very low and questioned this number. Mr. Haberlen explained that
498 the way they apportion their classrooms, that number is not exactly what the class size is. Mr. Wilkerson discussed that
499 there must be more teachers in addition to the one teacher in each classroom. Mr. Wilkerson asked if the case managers
500 and special education teachers are factored into the teacher-to-student ratio. Mr. Haberlen said he had asked Dr. McGee
501 this question and the ratio did not include members of the district that are paid but do not have the title of teacher. Mr.
502 Wilkerson said they have Federal mandates that place increasing burdens on the district that are often unfunded which
503 could result in a ratio like this and not necessarily by their own choosing. Mr. Wilkerson said he is not sold on the measure
504 of how much they should or should not spend strictly on the student-to-teacher ratio.
505

506 Mr. Haberlen reminded the Budget Committee members that the budget he proposed is a 2% cut from the School
507 District's requested budget of \$41,768,453. Mr. Haberlen said the budget he is proposing is \$40,965,693. He said they
508 have had an 81% increase in the expense per student over about a 22-year period.
509

510 Mr. Wilkerson asked Ms. Mahoney what the money is at the end of the year that the School District returns to the
511 taxpayers that was not spent. Ms. Mahoney stated that Special Services was underspent by \$1,679,652. Ms. Mahoney
512 explained that the Special Education budget is segregated in the way that they manage it and if they do not have a need,
513 they do not transfer these funds. Ms. Mahoney said they committed that it would get returned to offset the future tax. Ms.
514 Mahoney said that they budgeted for Special Education that is needed based on the current year which is \$860,000 more
515 than they needed in the prior year. She said when cuts are talked about, she does recognize that those cuts cannot come
516 from Special Education so other programs and other systems will need to be impacted in order to meet obligations that
517 they have today.
518

519 Mr. Haberlen asked Ms. Mahoney what the total underspend balance was for this year. Ms. Mahoney said the total in the
520 unassigned fund balance for this current taxation period is \$2,667,475, adding that 1.7 million of this is Special Education.
521 Mr. Haberlen said he is proposing to reduce the budget by \$800,000 which is less than half of the underspend, adding that
522 the district may not even have to cut anything if the Budget Committee approves this number.

523

524 Ms. Mahoney said they did propose some cuts to the budget. Ms. Mahoney said they have removed 6.5 Instructional
525 Assistants as well as a Business Teacher from the School District's requested budget.

526

527 Ms. Cormier asked once a student is given an IEP and it is budgeted if a student no longer needs those services, is this
528 budgeted back out? Ms. Marandos said there is a three-year evaluation process for students, adding if they are no longer in
529 need of services, the money is no longer allocated for them.

530

531 Ms. Mahoney explained that she would need information on where to make the budget cuts to generate the report for the
532 Budget Committee to sign off on.

533

534

535 **MOTION:** (Bressette/Wilkerson) To amend the amended School Budget proposal to \$41,318,286.

536 **ROLL-CALL VOTE:** Mr. Grant - No

537 Ms. Cormier - No

538 Mr. Haberlen - No

539 Mr. Silva - No

540 Mr. Abare - No

541 Mr. Wilkerson - Yes

542 Mr. Croteau - No

543 Mr. Sherman - No

544 Mr. Smith - No

545 Ms. Bressette - Yes

546 (2-8-0) The motion failed.

547

548 Ms. Bressette stated this amended budget would be to cut \$450,167 from the School District's requested budget. She
549 identified the areas that would receive the budget cuts as \$250,000 off of Special Education, the requested pickup truck,
550 cut \$14,813 from the request of team leaders, department heads, and deans to be brought up to the same amount, cut \$500
551 from requested shirts, cut \$18,219 from the requested desk chairs and broken furniture, cut \$3,000 from SEL furniture
552 replacement, furniture for PES school admin furniture would be cut down to \$2,500, ground supplies based on actuals
553 would be cut by \$2,000 for PES, supplies to protect Chromebook covers would be cut by \$750 based on actual numbers,
554 café tables would be cut to \$2,200, visual camera requests would be cut by \$1,100, vinyl cuter supplies would be cut by
555 by1,000, 2 IA positions (1 PHS / 1 PES), cut admin supplies for \$800, building service overtime would be cut to \$4,000,
556 cheer mats would be cut by \$10,000, building services overtime for PES would be cut by \$3,000, equipment would be cut
557 by \$11,000 for the new furbisher, PHS FACS furniture would be cut by \$500, office furniture would be cut by \$1,000,
558 other furniture would be cut by \$4,785, art supplies by \$5,000, and co-curricular supplies by \$1,000. Ms. Bressette said
559 these budget cuts would total \$450,167. Ms. Bressette said her total budget proposal would be \$41,318,286.

560

561 Mr. Sherman suggested at reconsideration to allow the department heads, the school principals, and the superintendent to
562 provide an appeal if indeed they feel this is too drastic.

563

564

565 SCHOOL WARRANT ARTICLES

566

567 Ms. Bressette stated the motion passed for \$46,965,693. Ms. Bressette said the article for the School District's operating
568 budget would read as follows: Shall the Pelham School District raise an appropriate as an operating budget not including
569 appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amount set forth on the budget
570 posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session of the annual school district meeting for the purpose set

571 forth here totaling \$40,965,693. Should this article be defeated the default budget shall be \$41,503,442 which is the same
572 as last year with certain adjustments required by previous actions of the Pelham School District or by law or the Pelham
573 School Board may hold one special meeting in accordance with RSA 40:13, 10, and 16 to take up the issue of revised
574 operating budget only.

575
576
577 Ms. Bressette stated that they would vote on the operating budget warrant article #1 as revised.
578

579 **ROLL-CALL VOTE:** Mr. Grant - Yes
580 Mr. Haberlen - Yes
581 Mr. Silva - Yes
582 Ms. Cormier - Yes
583 Mr. Abare - Yes
584 Mr. Wilkerson - No
585 Mr. Croteau - Yes
586 Mr. Sherman - No
587 Mr. Smith - Yes
588 Ms. Bressette - No
589 (7-3-0) The motion passed.
590
591

592 Ms. Bressette confirmed with Ms. Mahoney that the Pelham Education Association CBA would be discussed at
593 reconsideration.
594
595

596 **NEW BUSINESS**
597

598 Ms. Bressette stated that the reconsideration meeting would be on January 11th, 2024 at 6:30 PM. Ms. Bressette stated that
599 the meeting following this would be the deliberative session and then the town vote in March. Ms. Bressette said the
600 Budget Committee would have one meeting after the deliberative session as well.
601
602

603 **ADJOURNMENT**
604

605 **MOTION:** (Sherman/Wilkerson) To adjourn the meeting at approximately 10:16 PM.

606 **VOTE:** (10-0-0) The motion carried.
607
608

609 Respectively Submitted,
610 Heidi Zagorski
611 Recording Secretary