

Dear Pittsford Community,

To say that the 2019-2020 school year has been extra-ordinary would hardly do it justice. We began last September filled with such promise and hope. As a District and as a community, we were making great strides toward realizing those dreams.

The social-emotional and physical health of our students and staff remains our top priority. Based on guidance from infectious disease experts, Governor Cuomo issued an executive order in mid-March to close schools here and across NY State. The goal of his decision, like so many we make as parents and educators, was to keep our children safe. We appreciate that Governor Cuomo shares our commitment to safety.

Its immediacy, though, forced families and District educators to find creative solutions that meet the needs of our children. Their wide-ranging educational and social-emotional needs remain, which is why we are working hard to prepare for their safe return to school in the Fall. If we are to fulfill our District Mission, we must sustain the outstanding curricular and extracurricular programs and services that our students need and deserve.

That preparation is reflected in the 2020-2021 Proposed Budget. The budget plan crafted by our District Planning Team, presented by the Superintendent, and adopted by the Board of Education is designed to preserve the programs that make the Pittsford experience such a special one – in a financially responsible way.

Our District entered the pandemic in its best fiscal health in decades – a statement reaffirmed by external auditors, Moody's rating service, and the NYS Comptroller's Office. From that strong foundation, the 2020-2021 Proposed Budget gives us a solid "plan to diverge from." Now more than ever, we need a budget that reflects flexibility and responsiveness to address an uncertain and rapidly changing landscape.

For example –

- For the first time in history, voters across New York will determine their District's operating budgets and boards of education by mail-in absentee voting.
- The NYS Legislature, in passing the state's 2020-2021 budget plan, has granted Governor Cuomo the authority to issue "rolling reductions" of school aid – the timing and amounts of which we do not know.
- If the 2020-2021 Proposed Budget were defeated on June 9, the District would have almost *no time* to craft and adopt a revised plan – and have it voted on – before the end of its fiscal year June 30.
- Under state law, a defeated budget would almost certainly lead to implementation of a contingency budget for the 2020-2021 school year.

Given NYS budget laws, here's what such a contingency plan would look like:

- A \$3.9 million budget gap, requiring drastic reductions in programs and services and further use of our Reserves to balance the budget. (**Note:** the District would still face the Governor's rolling reductions, leading to even more severe cuts in program.)
- To get to that \$3.9 million figure, District leaders would examine non-mandated staff and programs for potential cuts. The BOE would then be required to vote on their recommendations.

Examples of non-mandated programs include:

- Mental health/social-emotional supports, enrichment and AP's, Kindergarten, high school electives, music/arts, athletics, extracurricular clubs, field trips, etc.
- A contingent budget would also prohibit community use of school facilities, as well as non-contingent expenses such as equipment.
- All subsequent operating budgets will be based on prior years' expenses. In other words, the pain of a contingent budget would be felt for years to come.

As your Board of Education, we acknowledge the tragic loss of life this pandemic has inflicted on our community. We recognize the tremendous sacrifice you have made to guide your children through this unsettling time. And

we remain sensitive to the uncertain future caused by job loss and economic pain many families continue to experience.

We also appreciate the value you place in education. We continue to honor your investment by confidently presenting a budget plan – within the tax cap – that balances the educational needs of your children with our community’s finite resources.

Our District’s 2020-2021 spending plan seeks to retain the comprehensive programs our students have come to embrace – and that our community has come to expect. It is a plan that gives us the greatest flexibility from which we can address future challenges.

We encourage you to learn more about the [2020-2021 Proposed Budget](#) and to review the [Annual Budget Public Hearing video](#).

We look forward to a brighter future together, as one Pittsford.

Be well. Stay safe. See you soon.

The PCSD Board of Education

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