Pittsford
School District News

Winter 2024

A publication for the residents of Pittsford Central School District

Moody's Investors Service Reaffirms Pittsford Schools' Aa1 Rating

Fiscal responsibility and stability are top priorities for Pittsford Central School District. The District's ongoing success in maintaining fiscal wellbeing was recognized with an Aa1 credit rating from Moody's Investors Service. The Aa1 rating has been consistently awarded to Pittsford Schools for more than 25 years. It reflects strong financial operations supported by conservative budget practices in support of the District's fiscal commitment to Pittsford taxpayers.

Similar to a personal credit rating score, the District's Aa1 rating reflects financial stability and health, and as a result affords the District favorable borrowing terms (including lower interest rates) when PCSD residents vote to approve debt issuance in potential capital projects.

Below are highlights from the 2024 credit analysis published by Moody's Investors Service:

- The credit position of PCSD is very strong. The Aa1 rating is above the U.S. school district median.
- Key credit factors PCSD demonstrated in order to earn an Aa1 rating included a strong local economy, a healthy reserve position, and very modest fixed costs.

Help Advocate for NYS Aid to Maintain Programs

Pittsford Schools needs the community's help in advocating for its fair share of NYS Foundation Aid. The District's Advocacy Team has met throughout the fall and is comprised of teachers, clerical staff, parents, administrators and Board of Education members. Its focus has been on advocating for more NYS Foundation Aid, the District's second highest revenue source. Foundation Aid is the aid all NYS schools receive to fund basic education operations. It accounts for 22% of Pittsford Schools' total revenue.

Facts about NYS Foundation Aid with Pittsford Central Schools

- Since 2012 PCSD has been underpaid by over $100 million.
- PCSD receives the lowest amount of Foundation Aid per student in Monroe County.
- Pittsford receives 33.5% less Foundation Aid than the next Monroe County School District. Despite inflation, cessation of federal COVID funds, minimum wage increases, and costs of energy, PCSD received only $10,737 in additional Foundation Aid this year which equates to $1.75 per student.

The Problem

Pittsford Schools' primary revenue source is capped annually (tax cap) and the District is not receiving an additional amount of NYS Foundation Aid necessary to maintain programs.

Current Status

Without a change to NYS Foundation Aid, Pittsford Schools will not be able to provide the exceptional educational experiences and robust programming that the District is accustomed to and that students deserve. As the budget process begins for next year, PCSD is forced to actualize $1.5 million in reductions. At the same time, PCSD is advocating for a consistent and predictable increase in NYS Foundation Aid. While the District will use additional reserves (savings accounts) to offset the lack of revenue from NYS, this is not a sustainable practice and will adversely affect future budgets.

Our Beliefs

Pittsford Central School District strives to continue its tradition of staying under the tax cap. Pittsford District taxpayers pay their fair share to support an educational program that is high performing and responsive to student needs. It is time to have a consistent, predictable state aid formula from NYS elected officials that everyone can support and be proud of. Our community should not have to pay more taxes because the NYS budget is not honoring its pledge to have the foundational aid formula fully run for Pittsford.

Advocacy Campaign

Many of our District leaders will be meeting with members of the New York State Assembly/Senate, Governor's Office and NYS Education Department to share data regarding the District's lack of funding and request an appropriate and fair increase in NYS Foundation Aid.

Action

Pittsford Schools' Advocacy Team is asking you to advocate with them by contacting legislators via phone, email, mail or personal meetings.

Visit *www.pittsfordschools.org/advocacy* to access a sample letter you can use. Below are URLs to find your NYS elected official and their contact information:

- State Assembly: www.nyassembly.gov/mem/search
- State Senator: www.nysenate.gov/find-my-senator

Thank you for your continued support of Pittsford Schools.

Coach Keating Recognized for 52 Years of Outstanding Leadership



Coach Marty Keating (center) with current director of athletics Patrick Irving (left) and former director Scott Barker

Varsity Swim and Dive Coach Marty Keating was honored on October 8, 2024, for his 52 years of coaching at Pittsford Schools. Under his tutelage, Pittsford's Girls Swimming and Diving teams have won 22 consecutive Section V titles and numerous state championships. At 81 years old, Coach Keating has won 34 Section V titles, multiple national coaching awards and has led Pittsford's "S'women" program to over 500 straight dual meet victories. As head coach of the girls' swimming and diving program and assistant coach of the boys' program, Keating retires in March.

"Coach Keating is an inspiration and a legend who has demonstrated time and time again that hard work, commitment and humility leads to success," said Superintendent Pero. "He is the picture of what successful leadership looks like. During his 52 years with Pittsford Schools, Coach Keating has not only broken numerous records, he has also been a beloved coach to students and a friend and role model to all who have been fortunate enough to know him," said Superintendent Pero.

Colden Forney Selected to Wear Jersey #9 for Second Consecutive Season



(Left to right) Assistant Coach Rory Foster, Colden Forney, Head Coach Mark Hurley

During a brief ceremony before the start of the MHS varsity soccer game on September 11, 2024, Mendon High School senior Colden Forney was awarded jersey # 9 for the second year in a row in honor of alum Todd Pelino who was killed on 9/11 while working at the World Trade Center. Forney was selected for this honor by unanimous vote from both teammates and coaches.

The handing down of Pelino's jersey number is a tradition that carries on the memory of Todd Pelino who was a standout soccer player known for his scholarship and leadership, both on the field and off.

"The awarding of the #9 jersey recognizes a player's leadership and ability to make those around them better," said Mendon varsity coach Mark Hurley. "It is given to the person the coaches and players believe to be the ideal teammate. Colden is the definition of that," said Hurley.

In the history of this tradition that started in 2002, there have only been two other Mendon players to wear the "Jersey of Honor" for two seasons: Peter Hill (2004, 2005) and Steven Suozzi (2006, 2007).

Board of Education Development Meeting Schedule

The development of a school district's budget is a thoughtful, year-long, multi-faceted process. It includes careful long-term planning, budget preparation, presentation, review by the Board of Education and community members, formal budget adoption, further sharing with the community, and Board election. During this process there are a variety of meetings held by the Board of Education including Budget Work Sessions which are used by the Board of Education to gather information and ask questions about particular sections of the budget. These sessions are held outside of regular Board of Education meetings. Most decisions will be discussed during these sessions, however formal action is only taken during Board of Education meetings.

The Pittsford Central School District community is invited and encouraged to attend and observe these sessions as they are open to the public. Community members will have the opportunity to comment at the subsequent regular Board of Education meetings.

All meetings take place in the Barker Road Middle School McCluski Room.

Tuesday, February 4, 6 - 7 p.m.
Budget Work Session

Tuesday, February 25, 6 - 7 p.m.
Budget Work Session

Tuesday, March 11, 6 - 7 p.m.
Budget Work Session

Tuesday, April 8, 7-9 p.m.
Budget Adoption and Regular Board of Education Meeting

Tuesday, May 6, 7 p.m.
PTSA Meet the Board of Education Candidates Night

Tuesday, May 13, 7 p.m.
Budget Hearing and Regular Board of Education Meeting

Tuesday, May 20, 7 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Budget Vote and Board Election.
Voter identification is required.

NEW VOTE LOCATION: Calkins Road Middle School Gym

32 Pittsford Seniors Recognized in 2025 National Merit® Scholarship Program

Pittsford Central School District congratulates its 16 Semifinalists and 16 Commended Students recently recognized in 2025 National Merit® Scholarship Program. Pittsford's Semifinalists are among the 16,000 highest-scoring entrants and Commended Students placed among the top 50,000 entrants selected from an initial pool of 1.3 million students who took the 2023 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®), which served as an initial screen of program entrants.

Semifinalists, who represent less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors, will advance in the competition for a chance to win one of 6,870 scholarships. While Commended Students will not advance in the competition, they are recognized for their outstanding potential for academic success.

Semifinalists

- **MHS:** Andrew He, Surya Man, James Mou, Sami Ali Ozdemir, Timothy Seo, Andrew Shen, Howard Tang, John Wadsworth, Rowan Wilkens
- **SHS:** Christopher Gargan, Franklin Scharf, Deven Spencer, Kimberly Wang, Alexander Wu, Matthew Xie, Elijah Yaar

Commended Students

- **MHS:** Aria Banks, Alexander Delregno, Cailey Huang, Fiyinfoluwa Okwechime, Cayden Rathnam, Mara Ricks, Thehara Ubayawardena, Taylor Wray
- **SHS:** Lena Gilbertson, Vansh Gujarati, Christopher Johnson, Koren Mahmoodi, Grace Prasad, Sohan Shrikhande, Logan Tomeny, Harper Wallace

On Stage This Winter

MHS Drama

The Play That Goes Wrong High School Edition

December 12-14 at 7 p.m.

$12 Tickets

Purchase at the door before the shows via cash or cc or in advance at https://dramaclubmhs.ludus.com/200464207

BRMS 7/8th Grade Musical

Anastasia Youth Edition

at Mendon High School

January 31 at 7 p.m.

February 1 at 2 p.m. & 7 p.m.

Tickets cost $12 for students, seniors (65+), and military; $15 for adults

Purchase at the door before the shows via cash or cc or in advance at https://brmsdramaclub.ludus.com/200466070

CRMS 7/8 Grade Musical

Annie

February 6 and 7 at 7 p.m.

February 8 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Tickets cost $12 for students, seniors (65+), and military; $15 for adults

Purchase at the door before the shows via cash or cc or in advance at https://crmsdramaclub.ludus.com/200468700

Intergenerational Club Connects Students with Seniors for Friendship and Fun

Sutherland High School's Intergenerational Club bridges the gap between local high school-aged students and senior citizens. The club was founded in 2023 by Sutherland student Chloe Cunniffe who first saw the need for more interaction between generations after the isolation she and others experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic. To launch the club, Cunniffe met with the Town of Pittsford's previous Senior Center Director Dolores DeCoste and the Recreation Director Jessie Hollenbeck to talk about her idea and discuss ways they could bring students and senior citizens together for friendship, food and fun.

"Since Covid-19, loneliness has been an epidemic that has gotten harder to fight," said Cunniffe. "Studies show that connection is huge when combating it, especially in our two generations. Our lunch events are a way to get to know one another and for high school students to learn from the senior citizens' past experiences," she explained.

Cunniffe serves as president of the club with the help of fellow student officers Jordyn Leader and Charlotte Miller as well as their faculty advisor Ms. Baroody-Solomon. Since its start in 2023, the Intergenerational Club has hosted three events in collaboration with the Town of Pittsford, working with current Senior Center Director Jennifer Morrow and her staff. The events take place at the senior center and are typically attended by approximately 25-30 senior citizens and 25 high school students. Cunniffe said she was shocked to see the amount of people who were interested in being a part of the club. While there is a 25-student cap for field trips, she said the number of students who turn in permission slips exceeds that number and those that attend are chosen on a first-come, first-served basis. "It has been such a delightful surprise to see how much people care at Sutherland," she said.

The Intergenerational Club's most recent gathering was a Halloween pizza party that included arts and crafts, games, and discussion. Each table had questions to serve as icebreakers that both generations could talk about. A Halloween-themed question asked attendees if they believe in ghosts or the supernatural. Both students and senior citizens talked about the potential for supernatural occurrences and whether or not they had encountered any. Some seniors also shared how Halloween traditions have changed over time.





When asked "what's one piece of advice you'd give a student," many senior citizens drew upon their own life experiences and spoke about the need for students to have confidence in themselves so that they can benefit from all the opportunities available to them. They also talked about how important it is for the students to learn to advocate for themselves.

While students enjoy the fun these events provide, the benefits are more far-reaching than that, said Cunniffe. "The greatest gifts students have gained are the friendships and skill to be able to talk to other generations," said Cunniffe. "Sometimes it's hard for students to interact with adults, and this gives them the chance to work to improve that skill—a skill that is extremely necessary to have in college," she said.

Fall Sports Wrap-up

Pittsford varsity athletes excelled during the Fall 2024 Season winning six Section V team championship titles, one NYS state team championship title and one individual title, with additional state competitions still underway at the time of this newsletter's press date. **To view final season results, visit *pittsfordschools.org/departments/athletics*.**

NYS Team Champion
- MHS Girls Soccer

NYS Individual Champion
- Will Tempest – NYS Individual Class B Cross Country

Section V Team Champions
- MHS Field Hockey
- MHS Girls Soccer
- MHS Boys Cross Country
- SHS Girls Cross Country
- SHS Girls Volleyball
- Pittsford Girls Swimming and Diving

Section V Individual Champions
- Jasmine Wu and Caroline Fitzsimmons (SHS) – Doubles Tennis
- Will Tempest (SHS) –Boys Cross Country



Pittsford Mendon Girls Soccer Won the State Championship, its first since 1988

Electric School Buses in New York State and Pittsford

As part of its climate agenda, New York has set ambitious goals for the electrification of school bus fleets. The State encourages school districts to prioritize electric bus purchases in their procurement plans. Specifically, New York aims to have a fully electrified fleet by 2035, emphasizing the importance of transitioning away from fossil fuel-powered buses.

The Environmental Bond Act, passed by New Yorkers in 2022, offers both public school districts and contracted fleet operators over $500 million in funding toward school bus electrification. This and other State and federal incentives and resources are available to help school districts efficiently and cost-effectively convert their fleet towards the State's goal for a cleaner, electric future.

School districts are also required to assess and develop charging infrastructure to support their electric bus fleets. This includes identifying suitable locations for charging stations, ensuring adequate power supply, and planning for future expansion as electric bus adoption increases.

In the spring, at the annual budget vote, Pittsford voters will be asked to decide whether Pittsford Schools should begin this transition with the possible purchase of up to two electric buses and charging stations in the 2025-2026 school year and incur the costs associated with it. Those costs are currently under review and will be shared when available.

The transition to electric school buses in New York State represents a significant step toward a more sustainable and healthier future for student transportation. With State support, funding opportunities, and clear requirements for school districts, New York is setting a course for full electric fleets by 2035.



Capital Project Construction Update

Phase II of the capital project that residents voted on in March 2023 has begun. Phase II plans have been sent to the State Education Department (SED) where they passed the architectural review and are now being assessed for their engineering integrity.

Once these plans are released from SED, Pittsford Central School District will create bid specifications and invite prospective contractors to review the plans and conduct walk throughs of the properties.

It is expected that contracts for Phase II will be awarded in the spring of 2025 and construction will begin in the summer of 2025. Construction will take place over the next four years and will occur year-round.

In line with the District's goal of providing the best and safest learning environments for our students, Phase I focused on safety upgrades including the construction of single-point-of-entry, double-door vestibules; the installation of intruder locks in large areas of assembly; enhancements to security systems with a new Visitor Aware point of entry software system and upgrades to security cameras and PA systems; window and roof repairs; and improvements to air quality with HVAC system upgrades and replacements where needed.

As we enter Phase II of this multi-year capital improvement project, the focus continues to remain on maximizing the safety and efficacy of academic and athletic facilities while minimizing disruption to students and staff during the construction process. Safety meetings with construction teams are held on a regular basis, and strict adherence to safety protocols is maintained throughout each phase of the project.

Highlights of Phase II construction include the following:

- The renovation of Mendon High School science rooms along with a new addition to the school that will include new science and language classrooms.
- There will be significant renovations at Barker Road Middle School. These will include the creation of a central commons area and cafeteria along with the addition of several classrooms that will replace the temporary classrooms in the portable building. Modifications will also be made to classrooms for the subjects of band, technology and world languages.
- Calkins Road Middle School will receive a new protective coating to its roof.
- Improvements to Mendon and Sutherland High Schools' outdoor athletic spaces will include new tennis courts as well as improved drainage systems on the baseball and softball fields.
- Existing tennis courts at Sutherland High School will be converted to pickleball courts.



Board of Education Honors Pittsford Pride Recipients

Nine students received the Pittsford Pride Citizenship Recognition Award during the November 12, 2024, Board of Education Meeting for demonstrating excellent citizenship and positive leadership.

Congratulations to: **Finn Bates**, grade 8, Calkins Road Middle School; **Griffin Derrick**, grade 8, Barker Road Middle School; **Bailey Elliott**, grade 5, Allen Creek Elementary School; **Charlotte Engin**, grade 12, Mendon High School; **Audrey Lim**, grade 3, Thornell Road Elementary School; **Holden Magnant**, grade 5, Mendon Center Elementary School; **Josephine "Peebs" Ness**, grade 5, Jefferson Road Elementary School; **Mary Nudds**, grade 5, Park Road Elementary School; **Hazal Sahin**, grade 12, Sutherland High School.



Energy Performance Contract Allows for Cost Savings through Efficiency Upgrades

As part of PCSD's commitment to fiscal responsibility and sustainability, it is considering the approval of another Energy Performance Contract (EPC). These contracts offer a structured approach to energy efficiency upgrades allowing schools to reduce costs, enhance sustainability, and improve educational environments. This allows the District to make much needed infrastructure upgrades and improvements without an increase in taxes.

An energy performance contract is a partnership between the school district and an energy services company – in this case Johnson Controls – that allows the District to implement energy-efficient upgrades with little to no upfront cost. Throughout the Summer/Fall 2024, Johnson Controls has been conducting an energy audit to identify opportunities for improvement, and guarantee savings from the energy efficiency measures implemented.

One of the most significant advantages of EPCs is the potential for substantial cost savings. By improving energy efficiency, the District can lower its utility bills, freeing up funds for educational programs and resources.

The EPC aligns with the sustainability initiatives of Pittsford Schools. By implementing energy-efficient technologies and practices, our schools can significantly reduce their carbon footprint. This commitment to sustainability not only benefits the environment but also sets a positive example for students, teaching them the importance of responsible energy use.



Energy performance contracts present a unique opportunity for the District to enhance its energy efficiency while achieving significant cost savings. By eliminating the burden of upfront costs and providing a comprehensive approach to energy upgrades, EPCs allow schools to focus on their primary mission: educating students. As the demand for sustainable and efficient school operations continues to grow, this energy performance contract takes Pittsford one step closer to its sustainability and fiscal goals.

20 Students Earn a Seat in the 2024-25 Hochstein Youth Symphony Orchestra



Congratulations to the 20 Pittsford Central School District students who were selected to be part of the 2024–25 Hochstein Youth Symphony Orchestra (HYSO), the highest-level youth orchestra in The Hochstein School's four-tier youth orchestra program.

Students compete annually for a seat in the orchestra, performing professional repertoire in at least three concerts throughout the school year.

Mendon High School: Aria Banks, viola; Evan Dai, violin; Siqi (Libby) Du, clarinet; Marina Foley, viola; Omika Patel, violin; Rowan Wilkens, French horn; Youyou Wu, violin; Leon Ye, trumpet; Emily Yu, violin; Quincy Zuo, percussion

Sutherland High School: Zachary Canning, trombone; Grace Lee, violin; Leif Johnson, violin; Mara Pastirk, bassoon; Brynn Serafin, viola; Shu Shu Wu, violin; Matthew Xie, violin

Barker Road Middle School: David Wu, violin; Emma Yu, violin; Henry Zhang, French horn

School Bus Delays and Cancellations Due to Bus Driver Shortage

Pittsford Schools continues to be impacted by a shortage of bus drivers.

We ask for your support and partnership as the daily plans for morning and afternoon runs are in constant flux due to medical leaves, illness, planned absences and jury duty. We anticipate that bus driver availability may become even more limited during the winter months and flu season, compounding an already difficult situation.

Families may feel the impact of this in **delayed/canceled bus runs to and from school, as well as the cancellation of extra-curricular and athletic bus runs.**

What Parents/Guardians Can Do

In the event that the District is unable to cover bus routes as scheduled:

- Parents/guardians will receive an email and a notice in the StopFinder application from the District detailing the bus number. **Please check your email and application each morning and afternoon before your child(ren)'s normal bus run to learn about any delays or cancellations.**
- Parents/guardians who wish to pick up their child(ren) at school should inform the school's main office and arrange a time for pick-up
- If your child is stranded at home in the morning, please contact the Transportation Department, using email (Carla_Grove@pittsford.monroe.edu). We may be able to deploy a later bus after morning runs are complete
- **After-school activities and athletic bus runs may be canceled** due to this labor shortage. We are making every effort to avoid these situations, but these scenarios are possible in the current environment. Please check your email for notifications about cancellations or delays
- If you are able to drive your child and/or willing to carpool with a neighbor, that may help alleviate some of the burden on the current system

Similar to other Districts, we are experiencing virtually no applicants in the areas of Bus Driver, Food Services and Operations & Maintenance (custodial/cleaner). If you or someone you know is interested in a career with PCSD please ask them to visit ***Support Services Openings and Applications*** on the website.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we work through this difficult situation. We are grateful for your partnership, now more than ever.





Homecoming Highlights

Homecoming 2024 was a hit! Highlights included fun theme days, pep rallies, multiple athletic competitions throughout the week and a homecoming parade and football game on Saturday, September 28. Pittsford's 2024 Hall of Fame inductees were recognized during halftime of the Panthers' homecoming football game. Congratulations to Scott Barker, Sydney Ciufo, Max Kaufman and Alison Rolaf (Curwin). Thanks to all our Pittsford students, families and community members for supporting our athletes and demonstrating your Pittsford Pride!



PTSA®
everychild. onevoice.

Call for Nominations - Pittsford PTSA Life Membership Award

Now is the time to recognize those special individuals (teachers, staff, coaches, parents, community members) who go above and beyond in supporting our students.

The Pittsford PTSA invites you to help honor an individual who makes our school community a better place by nominating them for the 2025 Pittsford PTSA Life Membership Award. The NYS PTA Honorary Life Membership Award acknowledges members of the community who have gone above and beyond normal job or volunteer expectations in serving Pittsford youth.

Recipients are chosen by a committee of PTSA leaders from nominees submitted by the wider Pittsford community. Nominees must have demonstrated dedication to the youth of Pittsford in three categories:

- **Volunteer efforts** and/or significant contributions above and beyond normal job expectations over an extended period of time.
- **Outstanding personal qualities** that have enabled the nominee to serve as a role model for youth.
- **Ongoing availability and willingness** to serve the needs of youth, directly or in an administrative capacity.

To make a nomination and for more information, visit the Pittsford PTSA website at ***https://www.pittsfordptsa.net/lifemembershipaward***. Nominations are due by February 12, 2025.

A ceremony to honor recipients is scheduled for April 24, 2025.

The Pittsford Central School District does not discriminate in access, admission, employment, or treatment of participants in any of its programs and activities on the basis of race, religion, age, sex, color, handicapping condition, or ethnic or national origin. This is in compliance with Title IX, OCR Guidelines, and other applicable federal and state laws and regulations. Inquiries regarding compliance issues may be addressed to: Shawn Clark, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Administration Building, Pittsford Central Schools, 75 Barker Road, Pittsford, New York 14534.

State and National Award Winning Publication

NSPRA National School Public Relations Association

PRSA Public Relations Society of America

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