

Pembroke Public Schools

72 Pilgrim Road, Pembroke, MA 02359

www.pembrokek12.org

pembroke@pembrokek12.org



(781) 829-1178
FAX (781) 829-6957

PEMBROKE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Joint Meeting with Selectboard and Advisory Committee
Tuesday, April 15, 2025
North Pembroke Elementary School Library

7:00 PM

The meeting will be recorded

Call to Order

Mr. Chilcott called the meeting to order at 7:15 P.M.

Linda Peterson called the Advisory Committee meeting to order.

Tracy Marino called the Select Board to order.

Present from Administration: Erin Obey, Superintendent; Marybeth Brust, Assistant Superintendent; Jessica DeLorenzo, Director of Student Services

Present from Committee: Patrick Chilcott, Chair; Allison Glennon, Vice Chair; Katrina Delaney, Clerk; David Boyle Susan Bollinger

Present from Select Board: Tracy Marino, Dan Trabucco, Steve Ciciotti, John Brown and Town Manager, William Chenard

Present from Advisory Committee

Linda Peterson, Tim Landy, Stephen Patt, Liz Benotti, Sandra Beaton, Brian Logan and Stephen Walsh

Discussion of FY26 School Department Budget

Mr. Chenard said the town budget process begins at the end of September. Budget guidelines are distributed to all department heads and we start building our revenue stream. The town accountant and Mr. Chenard review this revenue stream, setting the expectations while keeping in mind that there are many unknown factors that can affect revenue. Currently, revenue figures are solid. In Massachusetts, we are required to maintain a balanced budget, which means we can only deficit spend on snow and ice removal. However, we do budget for snow and ice, recognizing that it's an essential service. As of today, the budget is balanced, although it required making significant cuts to the requests from the town departments. The schools face similar challenges, and I regularly communicate with the superintendent about this. He expressed his gratitude to the school committee, the advisory board, and all departments for their efforts during this very challenging year. While the budget is balanced this time, it's important to acknowledge that next year will likely be another struggle. He has been advocating for everyone to support new growth. Under Proposition 2½, communities rely on new growth to thrive. Some upcoming items on the Town Warrant will potentially bring new growth, which is crucial to help offset what appears to be a projected deficit for next year.

Mrs. Obey explained that there is dismal growth in Chapter 70 funding year-over-year, and fiscal year 2025 to fiscal year 2026 is looking to be a 1.28% increase. The school budget makes up 49.96% of the Town budget, and it is important to note that health insurance and pension costs are included in the Town budget, not the school budget.

The fiscal year 2026 Maintenance of Effort Budget is \$40,910,097, plus the adjusted Level I priorities total \$415,500, bringing the budget to \$41,325,597.

Taking into account the adjustments:

Transportation Revolving Offset: (\$100,000)

SPED Tuition Pre-Buy: (\$600,000)
Move of Curricular Materials to Capital: (\$100,000)
Adjustment total of (\$800,000)
FY26 Budget as of 4/1/25: \$40,525,597

Resulting Budget Gap: (\$1,945,597)

5 Enrollment Reductions: (\$459,000)
Remaining Budget Gap: (\$1,486,597)

Additional Revenues: (\$63,500)
Increase in Chapter 70: (\$182,775)
Increase in Town Contribution: (\$1,242,275)
Revenue Total: \$1,488,550

Remaining Budget Gap: \$1,953

Mrs. Obey said if Chapter 70 comes in higher than \$75/per student, there will be an amendment to the budget. Mr. Chilcott noted that the Town contribution also increased, and this shows that the Town is investing in education. Mrs. Obey added that this is the first time in a long time that the district is able to invest the funds from the enrollment-driven reductions.

She explained the Level I priorities are:

1. 1 special education teacher and 1 RBT at Hobomock to start the Behavioral Social Emotional Program.

The hope with this program is to not have to send students to out-of-district placements and potentially take in students from other districts and charge a tuition. Mrs. Beaton asked how many current students could benefit from this program, and Mrs. Obey said about 4-5 current students and one out-of-district student would benefit.

2. A .4 Business Teacher will be added at PHS to allow the Pathways Coordinator to be full-time while still keeping the business course offerings.
3. A BCBA shared across all buildings to help better manage behaviors in classrooms.
4. A Coordinator of Counseling shared across the district, prek-12, with a focus on PCMS/PHS and will be 50% grant-funded.
5. Technology Managed Services to outsource some IT management. Mr. Ciciotti asked if there have been discussions about combining with the Town. Mrs. Obey said she and Mr. Chenard have discussed the options of combining certain positions to serve both the Town and the schools.
6. An Elementary math interventionist shared across all three schools
7. Increase of \$5k in PHS extracurriculars to offer clubs that students suggest.

Mrs. Obey stated that there are other priorities at Levels 2 and 3. The committee has submitted three funding requests to the state legislators through the pothole grants. The first request is for funding to support the start-up of the new behavioral program, the second is for assistance with technology funding, and the third is for capital needs related to the Pathways Program at PHS. If the funding is approved, the committee will review the priorities at Levels 2 and 3 to determine if any additional items should be included. Mrs. Beaton asked where the district is in the Chromebook and access point replacement cycle, and Mrs. Obey explained that the district is currently in a position to replace Chromebooks for students in grades two, six, and nine. Approximately 500 Chromebooks should be replaced moving into the next school year, however, if the funding is not available, it is not uncommon to keep a Chromebook for four years.

Mrs. Obey explained that enrollment is declining and therefore, there are enrollment reductions. The FY26 enrollment reductions include one less section of grade at NPES, one less section of grade 6 at Hobomock, and one less section of science and social studies at PCMS. Additionally, one less district-wide ESL teacher, a position that the district has not been able to fill for the past two years. Fortunately, no staff are being let go for these reductions, as there were retirements and resignations. Mr. Chilcott explained that Mrs. Obey is both the superintendent and business manager, and many people wear different hats to keep administrative costs down, but there will be a point where this is not sustainable.

Mr. Landy suggested presenting the full percentage of the school as the Town budget by including the benefits piece. Mr. Ciciotti stated that both the town and the school district budgets are tight. However, the fact that per-pupil spending is less than the state average, while MCAS performance is above the state average, demonstrates that the performance of PPS relative to its funding is truly impressive. Mr. Trabucco said the comparative data from like communities for per-pupil cost, as opposed to the surrounding communities comparison, is the most important demographic.

Mr. Landy asked if there is a plan in place for the maintenance of the proposed new Hobomock playground. Mrs. Obey responded that it receives extensive use outside of school hours, so to the extent possible, the playground will be maintained by the custodial staff. She said there is funding available for the installation of security cameras, but there is a need for community involvement in the upkeep of the playground. Mr. Chilcott mentioned that the district has done well considering the current age of the existing playground. He added that as a Town, there needs to be a better strategy for maintaining facilities. Mrs. Delaney said custodians are checking on it after the weekend. Mr. Landy said there was no log of maintenance on the playground and wants to be sure the wear and tear will be kept up. Mrs. Obey said the contractor doing the replacement will be able to guide the maintenance process. Additionally, there are dedicated maintenance staff at the elementary schools to do the work, and there is a maintenance budget of about \$1,500 to \$2,000 for each school.

Mr. Trabucco clarified that, for the benefit of everyone present in the room and watching from home, he asked both the Superintendent and the Town Manager if they agree with the budget being presented at the Town Meeting. Both confirmed their agreement.

Mr. Chenard stated that the Town is interested in commercial development because it does not add students to the schools and generates significantly higher tax revenue than residential properties. However, he also emphasized the need for some residential development. All development contributes to the new growth number and helps address the budget deficits. He encouraged everyone to consider this option, as it will not strain the schools.

Mrs. Peterson asked about the process for deciding which courses to offer. In response, Mrs. Obey explained that there is a comprehensive program of studies available at both the middle school and high school levels, and that student and family preferences play a significant role in guiding those offerings.

Mrs. Benotti asked about vocational education, and Mrs. Obey said there is currently no option for vocational education due to the legislative change in the admission language, so there is no longer access to Silver Lake or South Shore Tech. The school committee is looking into possibly joining South Shore Tech as a member town.

Mr. Ciciotti questioned the reasons for the declining enrollment. Mrs. Obey said the birth rate in the State is down, and Mrs. Chilcott added that the population in the Commonwealth is also declining. Mrs. Glennon said the Pembroke population is aging at home, so homes aren't turning over.

Mr. Ciciotti asked why the per-pupil increase is higher than the rate of inflation. Mrs. Obey explained that the level of service provided by a school district extends beyond just classroom teachers. Five years ago, the district employed two social workers; now there are six. The support that students require from the school district has significantly increased compared to the past. Additionally, there are social needs and academic gaps that have emerged as a result of COVID-19.

At 8:36 PM, the Select Board and Advisory Committee adjourned. The School Committee entered Executive Session.

APPROVED: May 6, 2025