

Ipswich School Committee

Thursday, February 27, 2025
MS/HS Ensemble Room
134 High Street, Ipswich
7:00 PM

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

DF called the meeting to order.

Present: Mat Perry (MP) Dianna Freehan (DF)
 Jenny Connolly (JC) Kate Eliot (KE)
 Haley Rist (HR) Sasha Sopic (SS)
 Jen Donahue (JD)

Also Present: Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools (BB)
 Tom Markham, Director of Finance and Operations (TM)
 Edwin (Charlie) Quimby, HS Student Representative (CQ)

2. Reading of the District Mission Statement

CQ read the mission statement.

3. Announcements and Special Acknowledgements

- The next School Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, March 6th at 7:00 PM in the MS/HS Ensemble Room.
- The School Committee will present their budget to the Finance Committee on Tuesday, March 11th and Wednesday, March 12th. Both meetings will be held at 7:30 PM.
- The Budget Subcommittee will meet remotely on March 3rd at 5:00 PM.
- The School Committee Strategic Planning Working Group will meet on March 4th at 7:00 PM in the MS/HS Guidance Conference Room.
- The Communications Subcommittee will meet remotely on Thursday, March 13th at 5:00 PM.
- BB thanked the Administrative team for working diligently to create the FY27 budget.
- DF acknowledged ChoralFest and the work of the students.

4. Public Comments¹

DF read the statement on public comment.

Michelle Hunton, Turkey Shore Road: Thanks the administration and School Committee for their work on the budget. Wanted to address concern with the proposed World Language program reduction at the elementary schools. This program is critical to a town with little to no ethnic diversity. Think it's important to expose young children to different cultures. Understood that the proposed reduction was partly due to scheduling conflicts and time was limited. It seems that the health class would replace the World Language program. Appreciated the conversation about how to incorporate cultural awareness into current programs, but wondered if that could be done with the new health standards instead.

5. Presentations

A. Overnight Field Trip: Model UN

Jonathan Mitchell, High School Principal discussed the overnight field trip, beginning with a brief overview of the program. The trip has 48 students registered for the trip and there are now five chaperones who will be attending. This will meet with 10:1

¹ Public comment is not a discussion, debate, or dialogue between individuals and the School Committee. It is an individual's opportunity to express an opinion on issues within the School Committee's authority. While the Committee and/or administrators will not typically respond during Public Comment, the Chair, as presiding officer of the meeting, may choose to if s/he seems it expeditious. Further, should the Chair believe that an issue falls outside the purview of the School Committee, s/he may request that citizens direct it to the appropriate person or body so that the matter is given proper consideration. Public comment is limited to three (3) minutes per person and a total of 15 minutes, overall.

student to chaperone ratio outlined in School Committee policy. Chaperones are paid \$100 per night, for a total of \$200 to accompany students on the trip. Mr. Mitchell discussed the ways in which the HS can support students in need of a scholarship for this trip. The burden of extra costs of the additional chaperones will not be passed on to the students. JC said she would love to hear more about how these field trips went after the fact.

- *Motion to support the Model UN overnight field trip was made by JD and seconded by HR. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

B. Overnight Field Trip: Racing Challenge

Mr. Mitchell then presented the Engineering Projects trip on behalf of the students who participate in the Ten8 National STEM League. This trip is a Racing Challenge taking place in Charlotte, NC from April 25-April 27, 2025. Mr. Mitchell provided additional details on the trip and how the team qualifies for the trip. He then reviewed the funding sources for the trip which included community donations, student fundraisers, grants, and student and family fees. There are currently four chaperones attending this trip.

- *Motion to support the Racing Challenge overnight field was made by MP and seconded by JC. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

C. Department Name Change: Pupil Personnel Services

Eric Oxford, the current Director of Pupil Personnel Services Director, approached BB with a request to rename the department the Student Services Department. This request is aligned with current terminology and practices, provides clarity and modernization, and puts an emphasis on student-centered support. The name change is also consistent with state and federal language. There is no change to the department, but simply a title change for the department and Dr. Oxford's title.

- *Motion to support the department name change from Pupil Personnel Services to Student Service was made by JC and seconded by JD. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

D. Policy Update

DF first presented policy GBGE which is a new policy. It was reviewed by legal and the Policy Subcommittee. It was clarified that this policy lives separately from the collective bargaining agreements.

DF then reviewed policies IDEA and IE. The Policy Subcommittee recommended deleting policy IE from the policy manual.

- *Motion to support policy IDEA with edits as presented and to remove policy IE from the policy manual was made by KE and seconded JB. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

E. School Committee and Superintendent Goals Review

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOALS REVIEW

1. Facilities Management/Maintenance

- Prepare and plan for a new Community Elementary School Building.
- Communicate with the Superintendent to ensure building upgrades, maintenance, and environment initiatives are in good standing for elementary, middle and high school and athletic fields and facilities.

SS, as the Chair of the Elementary School Building Project Working Group, spoke to this goal. The first main goal was to get accepted by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). That goal was accomplished. SS continued, stating that there were no major facilities upgrades or issues that were elevated to the School Committee. Things discussed at the School Committee like flooding at Winthrop and projects scheduled for the school were completed as planned or taken care of in a timely manner.

2. Budget

- Accountability and collaboration with administration to responsibly manage the fiscal year '25 budget and develop a budget and strategy for the upcoming years.
- Accountability for Responsible Financial Management of Educational Stabilization Funds (override funds)

SS explained that the School Committee is progressing well and on track for the Spring Town Meeting. Have gone beyond FY26 with long range planning. KE added that there is more to do with communication around future planning.

DF asked that the Budget Subcommittee continue their work or expand their work with a focus on long term planning once the FY26 budget is approved. KE added that next year the School Committee would like to be more involved in the Capital Plan discussions.

3. Feoffee Policy Review

- In depth review of and update the district policy DDA: Principle Elements for Future Feoffees' Distributions, in order to assure there is guidance to cover all grant requests, and the mission of the trust is being best fulfilled

KE shared that there may need to be some edits to the goal. The original intent was to do an in depth review of the policy DDA. We realized we couldn't fix the policy until we fixed the procedures. The working group has done a lot of work, but has yet to get to the goal. The working group has created an end of year reporting form.

4. Student Achievement and Social Wellbeing

- Provide strategic guidance and support to initiatives that improve academic performance

SS shared that what stood out to him was the post-pandemic social/emotional support showing up in the budget. JC talked about the new competency determination requirements in lieu of the MCAS. SS talked about ensuring that students are able to participate in the events/activities that they want to despite potential financial hardships. SS would also like to ensure that the School Committee is working focusing on the same things that the educators and administration is working on professional development wise. KE added that the more the committee knows how things are run and done at the school level makes the committee understand things better and be more supportive. JD felt it was important to review the DESE report cards at a future meeting.

5. Student Safety Awareness

- Foster a safe and trusting school environment for all students with a focus on bullying prevention, gun safety, and discrimination prevention

The School Committee has been using their monthly newsletter to reinforce what the schools are doing around this topic. CQ made a suggestion to improve active shooter drills. HR suggested a targeted email around safety/security instead of it getting rolled into a weekly or monthly newsletter.

6. Community Engagement

- Identify and review communication practices between the school committee and community

Mainly the Elementary School Building Project Working Group has focused on how to bridge conversations the School Committee has been having since being accepted by the MSBA to really kicking things off in July. Looking at opportunities to push out information or receive questions. The goal is in progress. JC suggested utilizing the Ipswich Local Newspaper to reach the community outside of the school community. DF talked about the communication outreach being done through the Communications Subcommittee. There was a brief discussion on School Committee appointments.

SUPERINTENDENT GOALS REVIEW

1. Facilities: Develop a Plan for New Elementary School and Facilities Upgrades

- Ensure that all identified safety upgrades and repairs are completed on time and within budget for the district's schools and athletic fields
- Ensure completion of all ongoing maintenance projects and enhancements funded through Paine Grants, with a focus on improving indoor and outdoor learning environments

This goal has been met. The safety film project was completed and the rekeying project at the elementary schools was also completed. There has been significant progress towards the second objectives. There have been numerous issues/repairs that have been completed. The field house project is moving forward. BB confirmed there is a mechanism in place to ensure regular maintenance and upkeep of the safety elements added to the buildings.

2. Budget: Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Planning

- Develop and present a balanced FY26 budget in collaboration with district leadership, focusing on educational priorities and sustainability.
- Revise and gain approval for the Capital Plan moving forward.

BB talked about the process of putting together what he thought to be a sound FY26 budget with collaboration from the administrative team. The budget was difficult to put together with shifting priorities and limited funding. The additional challenges of looking to shift resources, the unanticipated insurance increase, and the additional \$600,00 budget shortfall made the process challenging. There were a lot of tough discussions and decisions this year. BB felt he was in the process of meeting the first objective. With changes in personnel on both the school and town side, there was a lot of work put into the Capital Plan this year. BB was happy with the way the Capital Plan came out this year. He reminded the School Committee that the plan is a living document and priorities shift as time goes on and funding changes.

3. Feoffee Policy Review

- Lead a thorough review and update on the district's Feoffee Policy to ensure it meets the needs of the district and aligns with the goals of the Trust.

The working group has done a lot of work around the application process and procedures. BB believes that work will feed into the policy review. As procedures are being written, questions and ideas are coming up to be included in the discussions around the policy itself. The target timeline may not be met, however more was done than included in the original goal.

4. Student Achievement and Social Wellbeing

- Ensure equitable access to academic resources and extracurricular opportunities for all students, with a focus on eliminating achievement gaps.

There have been significant discussions at the school levels around graduation requirements, making the recommended policy changes for the competency determination. We are running regular data meetings. The district has spent a lot of time mapping out the field trips and opportunities for students that occur each year and have a database of those trips. We do have adequate funding opportunities to ensure kids can participate in these activities.

CQ thought it may be helpful for parents and families to have access to the list of school trips/events and clubs that students participate in. SS thought it was important to bring back the discussion on how trips/activities are funded, possible using a rubric.

JC wants to know how personal plans are for students. BB explained that plans are individualized for students. JC felt it would be helpful to see if that system is working and could then determine if the goal is being met. Dr. Oxford stepped in and talked about data meetings.

5. Student Safety Awareness

- Collaborate with local agencies and staff to ensure that school safety measures are consistently communicated to students, parents, and the school community.

There has been significant progress towards meeting this goal. BB updated safety materials, worked with the town to secure evacuation sites. The training manuals have been updated. The schools have participated in drills. Looked closely at counseling resources and ability to respond to events if needed. BB has not done anything towards school safety events at this time. BB spoke about the incident reporting form located on the homepage of the district website, as well as in the newsletter. JC suggested providing opportunities to easily report bullying. KE asked how the cellphone policy has impacted student safety.

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

JD talked about the budget planning/fiscal responsibility goal for the superintendent. Earlier this week, the Select Board was presented with the Capital Plan and the School Committee will see it tonight. JD felt that it would be helpful for the School Committee to be more involved with the feedback of the Capital Plan.

F. FY 26 PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING

The purpose of this Public Budget Hearing is to invite comments from members of the public regarding the proposed FY26 Budget that is pending before this school committee. The Committee will hear comments from persons present who wish to speak for, against, or neither for nor against the proposed FY26 budget for the Ipswich School District. Persons providing any comments at the Public Budget Hearing are advised that the hearing is being video recorded for broadcast on television and the internet.

➤ *Motion to open the Public FY26 Budget Hearing at 8:25 PM was made by HR and seconded by JD.*

KE stressed that this is the public hearing on the budget, not the only opportunity to provide public comment on the budget.

G. FY26 Budget Discussion

The Budget Hearing remained open during this presentation/discussion.

BB provided an update on the superintendent's proposed budget, which was presented on February 5th and discussed again on February 12th. During the February 12th meeting, it was revealed that the anticipated 15% insurance increase would actually be closer to 20%, creating a need to find \$184,000 in adjustments. Additionally, the town proposed a 1.6% reduction in their contribution to the district, which resulted in a \$608,000 gap. Initially, the Finance Committee had been working with a 4.5% growth in the town's contribution to the school budget, but the Town Manager's office was working with a 2.9% increase. This left the district to bridge the 1.9% difference. BB also discussed several factors contributing to these changes.

TM then reviewed a slide that shows the current FY26 proposal from February 12th that showed a 4.29% overall budget increase and the anticipated FY26 town contribution of 4.5%. The slide also shows the impact of the reduced town contribution for FY26, leaving a funding gap of \$609,079. The use of Stabilization Funds has not changed in this new scenario. The revised FY26 budget being presented tonight has an overall increase of 2.76% over the FY25 budget.

TM briefly reviewed the slide that outlines the then fiscal reality factors to consider in making the difficult decision now to face budget reductions before going into FY26 and the cliff of FY27. This information was originally shared with the Budget Subcommittee.

BB outlined the budget considerations when building this new proposed budget. Considerations included:

- All suggestions made by the School Committee on February 5th and 12th
- Reorganization/restructuring of absolute need for proposed new positions in FY26 budget
- Shifting costs to Paine Grant proposals for newly innovative teacher positions
- Closer review of class size structures and impact of further staff reductions
- Sharper review of student services needed in FY26 v. FY27 planning
- Shifting additional costs to reliable grants (rewriting of IDEA federal grant)
- Shifting additional eligible costs to reliable replenishable revolving funds (PreK tuition, Circuit Breaker for FY26 based on FY25 reimbursements to remain consistent, SFS)

In looking at where the district was heading, goals included:

- Focus on students’ needs to minimize impact on classrooms
- Evaluate and reconsider the ongoing known operations of schools and classrooms to maximize efficiencies
- Review and adjust staff patterns to continue lowest class size possible at middle and high schools
- Address fiscal expectations of FY27 with an eye on reducing dependency on ever depleting revolving funds (i.e. School Choice) and seek to not charge recurring costs to one-time funding sources
- Maximize appropriate use of reliable and replenishing revolving funds (i.e. Circuit Breaker, PreK, SFS, EDP)
- Consider staffing realignment in planning to address retirements and vacant existing positions to maximize existing staff in order to minimize staff RIFs (reductions in force)
- Emphasize maintaining quality staff, staffing levels and professional development practice
- Ensure collaborative planning among school leaders to ensure care and mindful difficult decisions
- Recommend reductions or adjustments to reduce the FY26 appropriated budget by \$792,434
- Plan on future available funding for the Town Contribution to grow by 3.0% a year (not 4.5%) for FY27-FY29 and operate schools and all support functions within those means

Revisions to Feb 5th Superintendent’s Budget Proposal on Feb 27th included:

- Eliminate new proposed Secretary position (District) \$ 55,933

- Shift one OOD tuition to federal IDEA grant (District) \$ 60,000
- Shift one OOD tuition to Circuit Breaker state reimbursement fund (District) \$ 93,000
- Eliminate 1.0 new proposed Speech Lang Pathologist Asst (SLPA) (elementary schools) \$ 48,558
- Reorg .5 Math, .5 Science, 1.0 Computer Tech teachers (elim vacant position) (Middle School) \$ 93,082
- Shift new proposed elementary comprehensive health teacher to Paine Grant (elementary schools) \$ 87,042
- Shift new proposed high school drama/dance teacher to Paine Grant (High School) \$ 67,091
- Retirement/New Hire net savings for elementary teacher (Doyon Elementary) \$ 42,533
- Retirement net savings for elementary paraprofessional, realign staffing (Doyon Elementary) \$ 31,496
- Reduce/delay technology purchases, services, device turnover (District) \$ 27,784
- Realign work year contract for next Asst Principal from full year to 220 days (Doyon Elementary) \$ 17,692
- Offset Preschool teacher salary to Preschool Tuition Revolving Fund (Doyon Elementary) \$ 64,426
- Offset Preschool teacher salary to Preschool Tuition Revolving Fund (Winthrop Elementary) \$ 69,767
- Savings in cost of employment/benefits due to lost positions (District) \$ 40,970

The total savings with the proposed budget totals \$799,374.

TM clarified the revised FY26 Town contribution to the budget. TM then was asked what he projected returning to the Stabilization Fund in FY26. TM was not comfortable making that projection yet, but did refer to the expectations of the Override Calculator.

SS expressed concern that, over the next ten years, the district may need to pursue three overrides totaling nearly \$10 million to sustain the budget at its current rate. SS emphasized the importance of changing the course of spending, starting with this year, to prevent future financial challenges. To address this, SS recommended making additional reductions beyond what is currently proposed to ensure the district can maintain its spending without facing catastrophic cuts in the future.

TM agreed with SS, noting that the projected growth in spending for FY26 was around 7.5% at the February 5th presentation, but they were able to offset this by charging , which is not a sustainable approach. TM suggested revising the override calculator by replacing the 4.5% growth assumption with something closer to 2.9% or 3%. SS responded, emphasizing the importance of aligning the budget growth with the town's growth to avoid needing additional overrides in the future, especially given the anticipated need for a new elementary school. SS proposed that achieving a sustainable path would require a 2.65% budget increase annually, starting this year with an additional reduction of \$285,000 below the current proposal, and asked the group to explore ways to reach this target.

TM talked about how the administrative team discussed the budget beyond the necessary reductions proposed tonight. BB added that the district just passed collective bargaining agreements coming in at 4% plus associated costs with that. SS did acknowledge that reductions may mean reduction in services.

There was a brief discussion about health insurance, opportunities to change vendors, and how rates are determined.

JC asked if the situation, where the district didn't receive the expected increase from the town, had happened before. BB responded that there have been up and down years, with the COVID years being an exception, but the last four years saw increases in the range of 3.5-4+%. JC inquired if this was the usual time to learn about such changes or if the district could have known earlier. BB explained that several factors influenced the percentage, and suggested that next year the district should work with the town to better plan for these situations. JD noted that the frequency of tri-board meetings has increased and the override calculator had been discussed in multiple meetings. KE pointed out that the town needs to be more informed, highlighting potential inefficiencies in communication. BB added that this issue is not unique to Ipswich.

TM asked whether the Town Manager's office was aware of the override calculator and clarified that the calculator does not drive the town's decisions. Instead, the town administration focuses on a cautious approach based on known expenses and anticipated revenue increases. TM explained that they worked with the Town's Finance Director to review the town's spreadsheets, noting that while the calculations are consistent, the projections may be overly cautious.

CQ raised concerns about the long-term sustainability of positions funded through Paine Grants, noting that the district can't rely on these grants year after year for the same positions. He asked whether these positions would eventually be absorbed into the budget. BB responded that the budget is reviewed annually, with adjustments made based on various factors, such as retirements

and insurance rate changes. TM clarified that these two Paine Grants will be written for two-year requests. TM also clarified that revolving accounts can only be used for specific purposes. While there is room for creativity, the district must ensure that any use of those funds complies with legal limitations.

JD clarified that the presented recommendations are from the superintendent, not the school committee budget, and noted that much of the information presented tonight was new. She asked how to proceed with the public hearing—whether the committee should comment or ask questions. DF suggested that the discussion would continue at the next meeting. BB explained that the superintendent's proposed budget no longer includes positions that the district intends to apply for through the Paine Grants. The Paine Grants process is separate, and if a grant is approved, the positions will come before the School Committee for final approval. If a position is not approved through the Paine Grant, it will be removed from consideration.

DF raised questions about compliance with state standards under the current proposal, specifically regarding the reduction of the language teacher and reduction of the health teacher. BB explained that while some health standards could be incorporated, not all would be met if the health teacher is not funded. Regarding world language standards, BB noted that there are no concerns at the elementary level. SS expressed uncertainty about how the district could absorb these positions into the budget if there was a desire for the School Committee to not risk them not being approved through the Paine Grant process.

BB emphasized the importance of balancing the district's goals and priorities with the need to meet student needs and fiscal obligations when building the budget. BB also discussed various budget scenarios that have been explored, including changes to the co-teaching model, restructuring grade levels, and adjustments to out-of-district placements. KE acknowledged that these are complex discussions that will take time.

JD expressed frustration about why the town did not communicate earlier about the changes, noting that the district had been communicative about its projections. She highlighted the tight turnaround and the impact of the \$184,000 increase due to the health insurance change. JD acknowledged the significant reductions made in the past week, totaling nearly \$800,000, and questioned whether these reductions should have been considered earlier. She noted that these reductions don't significantly affect students and asked whether the district should have been more stringent in its budget planning from the start.

JD asked whether the Computer Science position was originally funded through a Paine Grant, and it was confirmed that it was. She expressed concern that over the years, the district has discussed the unsustainability of relying on such funding for additional positions, citing the example of the World Language program at the elementary school. JD noted that the district is now facing the same issue with the health position, and suggested that rather than funding it through a Feoffees Grant, the health position should be absorbed into the regular classroom, where many standards are already being met. She proposed exploring a Paine Grant for World Language to ensure language instruction is integrated into the elementary school day in some capacity. JD pointed out a pattern of adding standards through Paine Grants that ultimately dissolve. HR clarified that the World Language grant was an innovation, not a response to changing standards, while the health position was introduced due to a change in standards, emphasizing the distinction between the two. BB acknowledged the challenge of fitting everything into the limited school day, highlighting that while the Feoffees program is valuable, it is difficult to sustain many of the initiatives funded through them.

Members continued the conversation around the World Language position and the health position.

Final Comments/Questions:

JD recalled that during the budget subcommittee discussion, a dollar amount of \$700,000 was attached to the Whittier projection, which seemed like a rounded figure. She asked if the town did not pay exactly the \$700,000, could those funds be redirected to the schools. BB explained that the increase in the Whittier assessment was due to the failed building project vote last year, which created a need for additional capital expenditures to maintain the building. BB confirmed that they would discuss with the town if any funds become available.

It was clarified for HR that there is a net savings when a teacher retires at the top of the salary schedule and is replaced by a new employee at a lower salary. HR also mentioned a proposed shift for the assistant principal position to a 210-day schedule. The adjustment would apply to the new assistant principal hire. KE asked if this adjustment could be implemented for the other assistant principal, if negotiated.

SS expressed ongoing concern about the current level of spending and its potential impact on the district's future. SS requested a revised budget that is \$300,000 less to be presented at the Budget Subcommittee meeting on Monday for further discussion. Additionally, SS asked for a historical review of the revolving accounts' beginning and end balances to understand how much these funds are being depleted. SS also suggested that in the coming weeks, a meeting should be held to better understand the costs "taken off the top" of the town budget before the FY26 budget vote.

KE inquired about the new reductions, specifically regarding the shift of one out-of-district tuition to the Federal IDEA Grant, asking what the IDEA Grant is currently funding. It was explained that the IDEA Grant is currently funding salaries for a few staff members, including one special education teacher at each school, one BCBA, and some half salaries. Through reallocations, additional funds were freed up. KE also raised a question about shifting another out-of-district tuition to the Circuit Breaker fund, questioning whether relying on it more could be problematic if the district doesn't receive as much in return. Dr. Oxford acknowledged that relying on Circuit Breaker is not sustainable and mentioned that the district is exploring long-term programmatic changes to reduce this dependence. KE also asked about potential concerns regarding federal grants under the current administration. Dr. Oxford stated that he has heard nothing suggesting changes and will continue to operate under the assumption that there will be no changes.

KE asked if BB had considered cuts at the administrative level. BB responded that they had explored reductions to the assistant principals at the elementary level but emphasized that there are other potential reductions that could be made before considering cuts to the administrative team.

DF expressed appreciation for the adjustments made to the budget and asked if there were any other potential creative solutions to consider. She suggested compiling a list of standout positions or programs that were initially approved through a Paine Grant and have since been moved to the operating budget, to see if there is an opportunity to reconsider those. DF emphasized the need to rethink how enrichment and enhancement are defined. BB responded that while they could certainly look into this, given the current position where a new policy has not yet been finalized, it may not be a productive exercise without revising the Paine Grant policy first.

BB asked if it was the committee's wish to find an additional \$300,000 in reductions. HR acknowledged that while this would be a challenging task, she understood the need to explore it. KE suggested identifying the next 5-6 items for potential reduction, rather than aiming for a set dollar amount, so the committee could weigh in on those options. JD agreed with this approach. HR raised concerns about maintaining the district's standards and values, and how to balance those within the operating budget versus relying on grants, emphasizing the importance of understanding this process. JD echoed HR's concerns, stating that while \$300,000 in further reductions would be difficult, it would be helpful to see what the next layer of cuts might look like. KE expressed uncertainty about projecting a 2.9% growth for the town until meetings with the town take place, wanting to ensure they have a reliable number to work from. SS cautioned against focusing solely on this year, noting that if the town's growth rate was matched, the district would face even more reductions next year. SS emphasized the need to correct the course moving forward. JD concluded that one of the current goals of the budget subcommittee is to find ways to live within the budget and avoid relying on operational overrides.

TM said that for two years we have been talking about FY28. This is a forced opportunity for the district. Let's make the best decisions to help inform FY27 and beyond.

TM clarified that the February 5th budget has been amended. The current proposed budget is what was presented at tonight's February 27th meeting.

DF asked for any additional comments as part of the Public Budget Hearing. The budget discussion will continue at the March 6th School Committee meeting.

Having heard all comments, seeing no other board comments or public comments, this Public Budget Hearing.

➤ *Motion to close the Public FY26 Budget Hearing was made by HR and seconded by JD. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

Public Budget Hearing closed at 10:17 PM.

H. Capital Plan Update

BB explained that the Capital Plan is a living document that is based on priorities and can shift over time. While the projects listed for future years are anticipated to remain, there is flexibility for adjustments. BB provided examples of some projects that have been moved to future years. BB reviewed the items listed in the Capital Plan for each school property.

BB discussed the proposed modular classroom for the Winthrop Site, which is planned to accommodate two classrooms. SS inquired whether there had been any consideration to move incoming students to Doyon in order to create space there. The conversation continued with various configuration options being discussed as potential ways to minimize costs.

TM clarified that the Capital Plan is separate from the operational budget and is funded through Town Meeting. The committee then discussed how the capital projects are funded, emphasizing the distinction between the two budgets.

The conversation continued as BB reviewed each Capital project, with members asking clarifying questions.

The modular classroom was discussed in further detail, including its size, the use, and location. Members have additional questions about the modular. There was a discussion on the procedure moving forward if there are any items that the School Committee or another board would like removed from the Capital Plan.

6. Superintendent's Administrative Report

BB's report included:

- Budget discussions
- Tech update to review work completed over vacation break
- Facilities update to review work completed over vacation break
- Addressing a leaking roof at Doyon
- Budget meeting with the Town to review the amount the town was giving the school this year
- Meeting with the Director of Finance to review the Capital Plan
- Several subcommittee meetings
- IEA meeting regarding a grievance
- MASS Executive Board meeting

7. Subcommittee, Working Group and Liaison Reports

This item was not addressed.

8. High School Student Representative Report (Taken out of order)

CQ mentioned that students have returned from vacation and are already looking forward to the next one. The next student advisory meeting is scheduled for next week, and the Yellowstone trip is departing soon.

DF suggested that CQ could reach out to the student leadership groups at the other schools to gather a report and feedback, which will be presented at a future meeting.

9. Finance Report

This item was not addressed.

10. New Business*

No new business was presented.

11. Consent Agenda

- *Motion to approve the consent agenda was made by JC and seconded by JD. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

12. Adjournment

- *Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by JC and seconded by JD. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***