

Ipswich School Committee
MS/HS Ensemble Room
134 High Street, Ipswich
Thursday, September 7, 2023
7:00 PM

AGENDA

1. Call to Order

KE called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

Present: K. Eliot (KE) D. Freehan (DF)
 J. Poirier (JP) S. Sopic (SS)
 J. Donahue (JD) J. Connolly (JC)
 M. Perry (MP)

Also Present: B. Blake, Superintendent of Schools (BB)
 T. Markham, Director of Finance and Operations (TM)

2. Reading of the District Mission Statement

JP read the mission statement.

3. Announcements

- The next School Committee meeting is Thursday, September 21st at 7:00 PM in the MS/HS Ensemble Room.
- The Communications Subcommittee will meet remotely on Thursday, September 14th at 6:00 PM.

4. Special Acknowledgements

There were none.

5. Citizens' Comments

There were none.

6. Presentations

A. New Administrator Introductions/Opening Week Update (Taken out of order)

Principals and assistant principals introduced themselves and shared a brief overview of their first week of school. All administrators expressed how smooth their openings were and excitement for the school year ahead. Building administrators also talked about their new staff and dealing with heat issues the first few days of school.

Jonathan Mitchell, principal of the high school, shared that Jimmy Bornstein was elected by the Student Advisory Council to serve as the High School Student Representative to the School Committee.

B. Handbook Review (Taken out of order)

• **High School Handbook Updates**

Jonathan Mitchell, principal of the high school, reviewed the changes made to the High School Parent and Student Handbook for the 2023-24 school year. Changes included:

- A more culturally sensitive dress code policy,
- Language around the storage of backpacks,
- Language around missing a midterm exam,
- A passing grade went from a 60 to 65, which is in line with high performing schools,
- Language around transfer students and what can be counted towards their GPA,
- Clarifying language around the decision making process for transfer courses,
- An updated personal device usage policy, and
- The addition of the new attendance policy as discussed in the spring.

SS asked for clarification on why the dress code at the middle and high school were different. Mr. Mitchell said the high school's dress code mirrors the School Committee policy and that he could not speak to the middle school's dress code.

- *Motion to support the High School 2023-2024 Student and Parent Handbook as presented was made by JP and seconded by KE. **Motion passed unanimously in favor.***

- **Middle School Dress Code**

Peter Ginolfi, principal of the middle school, presented documents that outlined the proposed changes to the middle school dress code. As a result of a PRS complaint in the 2022-23 school year, the dress code was updated and then reviewed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). DESE responded with recommendations for additional edits to the dress code, which were incorporated into the proposed dress code presented tonight.

The School Committee entered into a discussion around one portion of the proposed dress code that stated students would be in violation if they were wearing "Clothing that excessively reveals the back, buttocks, stomach, torso, or chest". Some argued the line should be removed altogether, while other members were in favor of keeping it. A discussion also took place on the consistency of the dress code across all schools, with some members asking why it may be different at different schools.

It was clarified that the middle school would need to operate under the existing dress code policy until the School Council met and approved the newly approved dress code.

- *Motion to support the proposed changes to the Middle School Dress Code as presented was made by JP and seconded by JC. **Motion passed with 6 in favor and 1 opposed.***

C. Paine Grant Committee New Member Approval

There are several vacancies on the Paine Grant Committee for this school year. Two applications were submitted- one to fill a vacancy for the At-Large Community Member and the other to fill the Community Business Representative position.

- *Motion to approve Emily Cannon as a Paine Grant Committee member for a two year term was made by DF and seconded by MP. **Motion passed unanimously in favor.***
- *Motion to approve Penelope Devoe as a Paine Grant Committee member for a two year term was made by KE and seconded by JP. **Motion passed unanimously in favor.***

D. Review of School Committee Norms with Potential Vote Social Media Addendum

The School Committee reviewed the Social Media Norms, which outline a member's personal use of social media, and then the addendum, which act as guidelines for the newly created Social Media pages. The addendum language stated:

Should the The Ipswich School Committee implement a collective social media presence, the following guidelines will also apply:

- The School Committee Chair and/or designee shall be the administrator of the social media account
- All social media content shall be related to School Committee business only
- Social media content will be directed to the Communications Subcommittee for creation; all content shall then be approved through the entire School Committee before being posted
- Standing approval may be granted for the following content: meeting agendas, budget presentations, notice for presentations and/or forums
- Information delivered through social media shall also be available on the district website
- All public commenting shall be turned "off"; a disclaimer shall note the appropriate means for two-way communication with the School Committee (School Committee email or Citizen Comment at meetings)
- Posting by the School Committee profile outside of the School Committee's own account shall be limited to the purpose of recruitment of followers.

After some discussion and clarification regarding the addendum, it was decided that the School Committee should reaffirm both their regular norms and social media norms on an annual basis. The School Committee would vote on the addendum tonight and

ask the Communications Subcommittee to review the social media norms document in its entirety and bring it back to the full School Committee at a later date.

- *Motion to approve the addendum to the School Committee Social Media Norms as written and presented was made by JD and seconded by DF. **Motion passed unanimously in favor.***

E. Building Inspection Report: Winthrop School (Taken out of order)

SS, DF, and JC toured Winthrop School prior to the start of school. SS reviewed the renovations that were completed over the summer, as well as the projects that are still in progress and the security improvements. It was noted that administrators and staff were making the most out of limited program space. Overall the building felt warm and inviting for the start of school.

F. Superintendent FY24 Goals Discussion

The Operations Subcommittee met and discussed the superintendent evaluation process/goals for the upcoming school year. BB compiled draft goals and presented them for feedback to the full School Committee. The final goals will be voted on at a later meeting. The draft superintendent goals included:

Standard 1 Instructional Leadership

1A Curriculum Indicator

Student Learning Goal:

Work with the Comprehensive Health and PE Compass Committee to unpack the new Standards that are being rolled out from the DESE.

- Facilitate monthly meetings with Compass Committee
- Ensure participation from all related departments (nursing, guidance, health, PE) in reviewing the Framework.
- Establish a work plan for moving forward with the Framework

(This is a significant shift in curriculum and likely, practice. Standards have not been revised completely since 1999 and a partial revision in 2010. Things like social media, and social emotional learning were not even considered then.)

Standard 2 Management and Operations

Standard 2-A Environment (Professional Practice)

Goal: To ensure the successful integration of new administrators into the Ipswich public schools and build an understanding of the different cultures in the district.

- Provide formal mentoring support as required.
- Introduce new administrators to Rotary and other community groups
- Attend at least 3 faculty meetings in each building
- Attend at least 3 school council meetings in each school.
- Utilize OPTIC, Teachpoint, and RIBAS work to ensure understanding of the educator evaluation process in Ipswich.
- Schedule learning walks with administrators on a regular basis.
- Support and celebrate the different cultures in each building.

Standard 2-E Management and Operations

Goal: Budget/Finance Goal: Given the funding cliff, and anticipated and potential unanticipated expenses, build and defend a fiscally sound budget.

- Work with the Director of Finance to establish a budget calendar that meets SC and town deadlines.
- Review override calculator, anticipated state funding, and Capital plan.

- Based on the above projections, establish a budget goal and priorities with Administrative Team
- Build and present the budget with the administrative team to be presented to budget subcommittee and eventually the full Committee

Standard 3-A Family and Community Engagement

Goal: To continue to improve ongoing communication with the educational community around important issues.

- Continue weekly updates as expected by the community.
- Schedule and document meetings with community groups.
- If accepted into the MSBA process, set up a communication plan to keep the community informed of the process.

Standard 4:B Cultural Proficiency

Goal: Continue to lead the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work in the District

- Participate in monthly DEI district wide meetings
- Participate in “No Place for Hate” implementation meetings at Winthrop and the High School to support their goal of becoming schools recognized by the Anti-Defamation League.
- Consult with EL Teachers to support their work and integration of our EL population into the school community.

It was noted by KE that these goals are not all encompassing of the work the superintendent does throughout the year.

Members discussed a goal that related to researching the Blue Ribbon School award and how the district may be able to elevate themselves educationally. There should be a goal that directly impacts student learning. There was a discussion about the inclusion of measurable goals and what evidence should be used to determine whether these goals were met. SS asked how to calibrate the goals. JP suggested that BB, given his tenure in the district, create a goal that BB would like to achieve this school year, something that outlines where BB sees the district moving.

G. Budget Process Development Discussion

The Budget Subcommittee met the night prior to review the budget timeline and overall budget process. When creating the timeline, the group worked their way backwards from Town Meeting in May 2024. The budget timeline will begin in November and will allow for more time for the School Committee to review the budget and give consideration to feedback heard at the Budget Hearing. A final calendar will be presented at the first School Committee meeting in October. The Budget Subcommittee will also focus on long term budget planning and looking at Capital expenses.

H. School Committee FY24 Goals Discussion

The 2023-24 School Committee draft goals were first presented at the School Committee meeting on August 24th. Goals presented at this meeting include edits and the addition of more actionable items. The School Committee goals include:

1. Communications and Engagement

Create greater engagement with students, parents, guardians, and the entire town. Increase access to and frequency of information about Ipswich Public Schools.

- Increase the frequency of the School Committee to monthly **newsletters**.
- Broaden the School Committee’s messaging by utilizing **social media**.
- Foster a **respectful environment** for citizens to raise topics to the school committee.
- Foster unity and promote **diversity, equity and inclusion**.

2. Facilities

Ensure building upgrades, maintenance, and environment initiatives are in good standing.

- Support the **development of a solution** to address the aging elementary school buildings.

- **Build consensus** within the town for a cost-effective and equitable solution for the aging elementary buildings.
- Ensure necessary **safety upgrades and repairs** are completed to increase the safety and security of Ipswich Public School students, teachers, administrators, and staff.
- See through the completion of indoor and outdoor learning **facilities enhancements**, including those funded through Paine Grants.
- See through the completion of approved and funded **maintenance projects**.

3. Budget

Responsibly manage the fiscal year '24 budget, and develop a budget and strategy for the upcoming years.

- Pass a **budget for fiscal year '25 at town meeting**, that meets educational priorities, financial constraints, and accounts for expiring Esser funds.
- Review and approve a **budget review process and schedule** by Oct 5 that includes regular and transparent communication with the School Committee, Administration, Select Board, and Finance Committee, with a focus on earlier and frequent updates and feedback.
- Explore **State, Federal, and private grant** opportunities to increase funding for critical projects and initiatives by May 1, resulting in an increase in grant revenue.
- Create a **long-range budget strategy** for the district by March 4. Incorporate strategies to extend the usability of override funds through FY27, fair and competitive compensation, and anticipated capital expenditures.

4. Feoffee Policy Review

Update the district policy DDA: Principle Elements for Future Feoffees' Distributions, by January 31, 2024, in order to assure there is guidance to cover all grant requests, and the mission of the trust is being best fulfilled.

Included in these updates will be specific direction on:

- the specific direction of eligible grant types,
- allocation of the annual distribution,
- what constitutes a "qualifying request",
- usage of previously returned funds,
- and adopts a standardized approach for grant recipients to report out the impact the Trust is having on students.

5. Policy

Improve the policy review cycle.

- By June 2024, policy review will be up to date, including completing the Year 3 and Year 1 Review Cycles.
- By December, the Subcommittee will update the full School Committee and the public regarding the shift to the Massachusetts Association of School Committees Policy Manual service.

➤ *Motion to approve the 2023-2024 School Committee Goals as written and edited was made by KE and seconded by JC. Motion passed unanimously in favor.*

I. Finance Update

TM reviewed the Year-to-Date finance reporting, noting that 24% of the FY24 budget was encumbered and/or spent. Salaries for FY24 had not been encumbered to date.

TM reviewed the Revolving Account balances for this year, highlighting the balance of the Feoffees account, Food Services, the School Stabilization Fund and High School Athletics. TM reminded the School Committee that the revolving and gift accounts were not discretionary funds. Money in those accounts were received for a purpose and must be spent for that purpose.

The transition from FY23 to FY24 went smoothly for the business office.

TM briefly discussed the safeguards in place to protect school funds and suggested that he present a more detailed explanation at a

future meeting.

7. Superintendent's Administrative Report

BB reported that that:

- The opening of school was a success;
- Transportation issues continue to be a concern due to that lack of drivers, route issues and communication;
- The first week of school schedule, with two school days followed by a long weekend, works well;
- He participated in the North Shore Superintendents' Roundtable planning meeting;
- He attended several subcommittee meetings;
- The district is still hiring for open positions;
- The new Extended Day Program Director is starting on Monday;
- Staff were released early on Thursday and asked to complete their ALICE training at home

8. Subcommittee, Working Group and Liaison Reports

- Town Government Study Committee: The committee met on August 30th. JC reviewed the votes taken at the meeting.
- Communications Subcommittee: DF reported that the School Committee social media accounts were active. The School Committee was asked to approve two draft social media postings. Discussion on how to recruit followers/share the social media pages took place.
- Policy Subcommittee: There are a significant number of policies to review this school year. The subcommittee discussed how to review these policies.

9. New Business*

No new business was presented.

10. Vouchers and Bills

All were reviewed and signed.

11. Consent Agenda

- *Motion to accept the consent agenda as presented was made by JP and seconded by JD. **Motion passed unanimously in favor.***

12. Adjournment

- *Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by JP and seconded by KE. **Motion passed unanimously in favor.***

Meeting adjourned at 9:52 PM