

Ipswich School Committee
MS/HS Ensemble Room
134 High Street, Ipswich
Thursday, October 19, 2023
7:00 PM

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

KE called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM

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

Also Present: B. Blake, Superintendent of Schools (BB)
 T. Markham, Director of Finance and Operations (TM)
 J. Bornstein, High School Student Representative (JB)

2. Reading of the District Mission Statement

JB read the mission statement.

3. Announcements

- The next School Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, November 2nd at 7:00 PM in the MS/HS ensemble room.
- The Special Town Meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 24th at 7:00 PM at the Dolan Performing Arts Center.
- The Policy Subcommittee will meet on Wednesday, November 1st at 5:30 PM.
- The Feoffees Policy Working Group will meet on Wednesday, November 1st at 6:45 PM.

4. Special Acknowledgements

BB recognized Tracy Wagner, Director of Teaching and Learning, for her work on the Professional Development Day.

5. Remarks from the Chair

This new agenda item will take place at every meeting and will be used as an opportunity for the Chair to clarify anything from the prior meeting or speak to information that may come from the newspaper or social media.

1. KE clarified the role of the student representative and shared that the School Committee welcomed a student perspective at meetings. The student representative receives a copy of the agenda before every meeting and will now also receive meeting materials. There is an open line of communication between the School Committee and the student representative/student advisory council.
2. A headline from a recent local newspaper article stated that a two school option was still under consideration. The article implied that the School Committee was actively looking at a two school option. KE clarified that the spirit of the conversation was about KE's request to have the three boards have a discussion openly and honestly about what the community can afford. Ipswich has not been invited into the MSBA process yet. The School Committee needs to let the process play out. KE requested that the community also let the process play out. There will be a time for all voices to be heard.

6. Public Comments¹

KE read the newly added footnote included on the agenda which outlined the process for public comment. KE stated that School

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 for a total of 15 minutes, overall.

Committee meetings are meetings in public, not with the public.

Gary Champion, Palomino Way: Presented information on the Town warrant article addressing the Town Government Study Committee. The School Committee, at a prior meeting, voted to RATM the article. Mr. Champion asked for the School Committee to consider voting in favor of the Town Government Study Committee.

7. High School Student Representative Report

JB reported on student opportunities at the high school, highlighting the Peer Mentor Program and the National Honors Society.

8. Presentations

A. IEA Snapshot Presentation: Technology Engineering in the 21st Century

Scott Jewell, middle school technology engineering teacher, presented on technology engineering in the 21st century. His presentation highlighted how education, specifically technology, engineering, and science, have evolved over time.

B. MCAS Data Presentation

Tracy Wagner, Director of Teaching and Learning, presented a broad overview of the recently released district MCAS data. Data included in the slideshow is publicly available on the DESE website. MCAS, Ms. Wagner explained, assess student knowledge of the Massachusetts learning standards. Ms. Wagner then reviewed what subjects were assessed and in what grade level, highlighting the new 8th grade Civics field test. It was important to consider that the scores presented at this meeting represented last year's students in a particular grade level. Ipswich uses benchmark assessments at all grade levels for more accurate data on the students who are currently in front of teachers. A reminder was shared that MCAS has looked different between 2019 and 2023, making the year-to-year data often difficult to compare. Ms. Wagner then reviewed the numbers and trends for each grade that took the MCAS.

KE asked a clarifying question about comparing the data. It was noted that 2019 and 2023 were "typical" MCAS years, while 2020-2022 were presented in different variations due to Covid. While you could compare just the two "typical" years, Ms. Wagner said she looks at year-to-year comparisons to help identify curriculum needs and supports or to see the effectiveness of curriculum or additional supports that had been introduced. More than anything, data on student growth is helpful. Ms. Wager also shared that it could be difficult to compare the two elementary schools, although they have the same curriculum, because the base is different.

Although MCAS is done once a year, the district is measuring student learning throughout the year using tools like Star Assessments, i-Ready, DIBELS, Lexia, DRA3, and other local assessments. This year's school improvement plans will show an emphasis on data and how it will be used.

Ms. Wagner then shared the accountability data for Ipswich. Accountability data takes into account several factors including MCAS achievement, student growth percentile, high school completion, chronic absenteeism and advanced coursework completion. The accountability data for each school is well above 50%. Chronic absenteeism has improved greatly at the high school level.

The district uses MCAS and other data in a number of ways. It is reviewed in faculty and curriculum meeting and as part of administrative team deep dives. The data is used as part of the Curriculum Review Cycle and by specialists and coaches. It is used for MTSS, classroom interventions, and for identifying professional development needs. Ms. Wagner then reviewed the MCAS-area curriculum review focus for each grade level.

The presentation ended with Ms. Wagner sharing how and where to find MCAS data. She thanked the school community for their hard work and support.

JC asked Ms. Wagner to share her thoughts on the MASC resolution regarding MCAS. This was the first that Ms. Wagner had heard about the resolution and could not speak directly to the resolution itself. Ms. Wagner did share that she believes standards are a good tool for equity. Ms. Wagner felt that the testing required students to be in front of a screen for too long. While she is in favor of MCAS, Ms. Wagner was not in favor of the time it took students away from quality teaching and learning.

JP asked what kind of time the 4th grade teaching teams have to work collaboratively and also whether the district was within a good range for the SGP this year. Ms. Wagner first shared that the district SGP data can be found on the DESE website. She then gave an example of the SGP from 7th grade math. Ms. Wagner then shared that more than ever, teams are working collaboratively

cross district. There are differences between Winthrop and Doyon that will be reviewed. The district will continue to support teachers and dig into data.

C. Strategic Planning Working Group Member Assignment

The Strategic Planning Working Group originally published a strategic plan for Ipswich in 2020. The group would like to begin their work again and are looking for School Committee representation. The plan is to have an updated plan by the end of the fiscal year.

- *Motion to nominate Kate Eliot to the Strategic Planning Working Group was made by MP and seconded by JC. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

D. Discussion and Vote on MASC Resolutions

As part of the MASC annual conference, a delegate assembly votes on resolutions brought forward by member districts for consideration. These eight resolutions are discussed and then potentially voted on by each school committee. The voting delegate then votes at the annual meeting in alignment with their School Committee.

- **RESOLUTION 1: FULL, STABLE FUNDING FOR METCO**

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees calls upon the Governor and the Legislature to create a stable funding structure to support METCO and its partner districts that fully funds the support provided by METCO, and the cost of providing services delivered by METCO's partner districts.

- *Motion to support the full, stable funding for METCO under resolution 1 was made by JC and seconded by JP. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

- **RESOLUTION 2: REGARDING INVESTIGATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRANSPORTATION BIDDING PROCEDURES**

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the MA Association of School Committees prevail upon the Office of the State Auditor to investigate the bidding practices of school transportation providers, and to present such findings and recommendations as may be necessary to contain costs and make more efficient transportation services available for public schools.

- *Motion to support resolution 2 was made by JP and seconded by JC. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

- **RESOLUTION 3: REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION**

THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED that in such case where a pupil resides greater than one and one-half mile from the school of attendance, measured by a commonly traveled route, and the commonwealth reimbursement does not fully cover the amounts expended for such transportation, the regional school district may allow pupils to opt out of such transportation or may charge a fee that in aggregate may not exceed the differential between the amounts expended for furnishing transportation and the commonwealth reimbursement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the MASC encourage the Legislature to modify M.G.L. Title XII c. 71, § 16C, with the aforementioned proposed language (or alternative and remove the period) to provide regional districts the ability if so desired to charge a transportation fee that in aggregate cannot exceed the differential between the and that the Commonwealth reimbursement and the regional school district transportation expense for any pupil that resides greater than one and one-half mile from the school of attendance measured by a commonly traveled route. Pupils may opt out of transportation and not be subject to a transportation fee.

The School Committee took no position on this resolution.

- **RESOLUTION 4: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: that MASC recommends that all districts adopt the position of DEI coordinator to work

towards an anti-racist school system.

While the School Committee is in support of the DEI work that continues in the district, there were concerns over mandating a new position in each district. It was also unclear how this position would be funded.

➤ *Motion to not support resolution 4 was made by JP and seconded by JD. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

- RESOLUTION 5: MA SCHOOL BUILDING AUTHORITY

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees calls upon the Massachusetts Legislature to amend MGL ch.70B, section 7 by removing the \$800,000,000 cap; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees calls upon the Massachusetts School Building Authority to reinstate the Accelerated Repair program for 2024 applications; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees calls upon the Massachusetts Legislature to allow public preschools to be included in the Accelerated Repair Program and Core Program.

➤ *Motion to support resolution 5 was made by KE and seconded by JC. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

- RESOLUTION 6: SCHOOL BUS STOP ARM SURVEILLANCE ACT AND ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees calls on the Massachusetts Legislature to enact legislation to pass into law the ability for cities and towns to install on all school buses live digital video detection monitoring systems for the purpose of enforcing violations against the owner of a motor vehicle whose vehicle failed to stop for a school bus when required to do so by law.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees calls on the Massachusetts Legislature to enact legislation raising the fine for passing a stopped school bus to a significant schedule of fines as penalty whether witnessed by a police officer or recorded by a digital video detection monitoring system.

➤ *Motion to support resolution 6 was made by JP and seconded by MP. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

- RESOLUTION 7: RELATED TO MCAS

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

- that MASC urges Massachusetts to develop a wider, more consensus-built strategy for an evaluation system with meaningful input from legitimate stakeholders.
- that MASC urges the state Legislature to launch a comprehensive evaluation to investigate the extent of biases pertaining to MCAS testing and make these results public.
- that MASC urges Massachusetts to enact a moratorium on MCAS testing effective immediately.
- that MASC urges Massachusetts to develop an alternative to the high-stakes MCAS tests.

Members of the School Committee expressed concern over the time away from teaching and learning. It was of interest that the MASC was in alignment with the Massachusetts Teachers' Association on this topic.

➤ *Motion to support resolution 7 was made by DF and seconded by JC. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

- RESOLUTION 8: SAFE STORAGE OF FIREARMS

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that MASC recommends all districts to urge their Superintendent and staff to create an appropriate communication to parents and guardians that explains the importance of secure firearm storage to protect children and teens from unauthorized access to unsecured firearms, and their legal obligations consistent with Massachusetts safe storage law.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that MASC urges other communities to work with their local law enforcement agencies, health agencies and non-profit organizations to collaborate and increase efforts to inform District parents and guardians of their obligations regarding secure storage of firearms in their homes and vehicles.

➤ *Motion to support resolution 8 was made by DF and seconded by JP. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

- Proposal to Amend the MASC By-laws

Resolutions will expire at the conclusion of the Delegate Assembly three years after their adoption. The MASC Legislative Committee shall provide a list of expiring resolutions to the membership no later than March 1st of the year in which they expire. Readoption of an expiring resolution can be accomplished under the method proscribed in ARTICLE IX, section 1.

➤ *Motion to support the proposal to amend the MASC By-laws as proposed was made by JP and seconded by DF. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

E. Vote on the Voting Delegate to the Annual MASC Business Meeting

➤ *Motion to appoint Jenny Connolly as the School Committee's voting delegate to the MASC annual business meeting was made by JP and seconded by JD. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

F. Discussion and Vote on STM Warrant Articles 7 and 9: Public Safety Facility Bid Contingency Funds; Adoption of the Specialized Stretch Building Code

At an earlier meeting, the School Committee voted not to take a position on Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 7. Tammy Jones, member of the Public Safety Building Committee, and Police Chief Nikas were present at tonight's meeting to answer any questions and give insight into the warrant article request. The Public Safety Building Committee is requesting up to \$500,000 from the town to be used in the event that project costs exceed the original proposed amount. The current project was designed to be cost effective and efficient, however, Covid inflation and building costs have increased. The request for additional funds is not to be used to change the design of the building, but to be able to keep the project moving forward should costs increase. The current proposed building is the right size for a growing department, Chief Nikas said. The cost of the project is high, but not because of its design, but because of the construction costs. Ms. Jones stressed that the \$500,000 would be enough to cover any additional cost increases and will be there as a "cushion". Building in this cushion now is being prepared, Ms. Jones shared. Costs to the project could increase upwards of \$100,000 per month if the project is delayed beyond the schedule that was planned. With this cushion, the project could continue. Both Ms. Jones and Chief Nikas stressed that the building project is not changing and is moving forward as planned. This request now would eliminate the need to have another special town meeting after bids are received should they come in higher than anticipated.

Chief Nikas confirmed, for JP and JD, that the new building will eliminate the need to use the current buildings as storage and that all fire engines can be stored in the new building. The building moving forward is the building plan that has been approved and presented. No changes will be made to the building should this warrant article not be approved.

➤ *Motion to support Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 7 was made by DF and seconded by MP. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

At a previous meeting, the School Committee voted to RATM Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 9 regarding the Specialized Stretch Code. Members were encouraged to watch the Select Board meeting and/or read their meeting minutes where this was discussed. The warrant article applies to all new construction, including any school project. KE shared that the MSBA gives incentive points to schools that adhere to the specialized stretch code, as they are encouraging districts to build green schools. JD clarified that it could be more expensive to use the specialized stretch codes, but the reimbursement rate from MSBA could be higher. A discussion took place on whether the district could decide to build green without approving this article and therefore mandating it for all of Ipswich. KE said the School Committee needed to consider this warrant article and the stance of the School Committee. Individual members could vote differently as individual citizens. JC expressed concern that this article would mandate this for all citizens. KE shared that advocates of this article are saying that electrification is coming and the farther we fall behind on implementation, the higher the costs will be for retrofitting. The non-supporters argue that this is still new and only 21 communities in Massachusetts have adopted this. KE added that the schools are large consumers of energy and she'd like to think

that the school project would be built as green as possible with or without this article passing. JP added that he would like to see other communities get behind this before supporting it in Ipswich.

- *Motion to recommend to support Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 9 was made by KE and seconded by DF. **The motion failed with 2 in favor and 4 in opposition.***

G. School Facilities: School Tour Logistics Discussion

The School Facilities Working Group met on Monday and discussed options for school tours. The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), in a recent call, suggested the School Committee visit schools and begin to consider the guiding principles in the next school building project. With that in mind, the School Facilities Working Group was tasked with recommending the first schools to tour. Those two schools were in Acton-Boxborough and Amesbury. The Acton-Boxborough elementary school opened in 2022 and was chosen for its size and enrollment. The Acton-Boxborough school was a consolidation and built on one school site. The Amesbury elementary school opened this fall and is pre-k through grade 2. Some members requested to also see a neighborhood school. It was agreed upon that BB would reach out to the superintendent in Gloucester to schedule a tour of k-5 elementary school. JD felt there was value in seeing a split configuration school, a large combined school, and a smaller k-5 schools before MSBA approval. Discussion continued on the guiding principles with KE noting that a lot of guiding principles would not be determined until Ipswich is accepted by MSBA. BB was going to reach out to each superintendent to get times that worked for tours and share out with the School Committee.

H. Communications: Newsletter and Social Media Review

DF reviewed the content of the School Committee newsletter that is scheduled to be sent out on October 31st, as well as social media that will be posted to both Facebook and Instagram. DF shared that the Communications Subcommittee is looking at ways to enhance outreach.

9. Superintendent's Administrative Report

- The high school roofing project has an anticipated end date of October 20th.
- The district received a quote for a roofing project on the ticket booth and is currently seeking additional bids for that project.
- The Doyon roof project has begun and will be completed within 3-5 weeks, weather permitting. The project at Winthrop will begin once Doyon is complete. The entire roofing project is anticipated to be completed by mid-December.
- Professional Development Day was a success and provided staff with a variety of options.
- Ipswich Aware continues to meet.
- BB attended several meetings including with:
 - Ipswich Aware, School Committee subcommittees, MASS Executive Board, Educator Evaluation Committee, Compass Kickoff, North Shore Superintendents Round Table, Technology department; NORESO, Administrative team, organizers for Ipswich Illumination, community stakeholders, Facilities Department and Crest Collaborative Board of Directors

BB shared that there will be times that the roof project will be loud for students and staff. BB also gave a brief update on the construction for the outdoor learning space at the middle school.

10. Subcommittee, Working Group and Liaison Reports

- **Feoffee policy Working Group:** First meeting was spent creating a plan and deciding on what to tackle and in what order. good second meeting. Laid out a good plan, what we want to tackle and what order. Hope to have an updated policy completed by the end of the school year
- **Budget:** Discussed a strategy around their meeting with the administrative team; reviewed the override calculator; discussed preliminary budget drivers and athletic funding
- **Mutual Concerns:** Discussed signage on MS/HS grounds, clarification on student advisory council and where teachers fall into that, keeping schools in session on excessively hot days, kindergarten school year.

11. New Business

No new business was presented.

12. Vouchers and Bills

All were reviewed and signed.

13. Consent Agenda

- *Motion to approve the consent agenda as presented was made by KE and seconded by DF. **The motion passed with 5 in favor and 1 abstention.***

14. Adjournment

- *Motion to adjourn was made by KE and seconded by DF. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

Meeting adjourned at 10:05 PM