

Ipswich School Committee
MS/HS Ensemble Room
134 High Street, Ipswich
Thursday, October 5, 2023
7:00 PM

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

KE called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

Present: K. Eliot (KE) D. Freehan (DF)
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)
J. Bornstein, High School Student Representative

2. Reading of the District Mission Statement

JB read the mission statement.

3. Announcements

- The next School Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, October 19th at 7:00 PM in the MS/HS Ensemble Room.
- The Feoffees Policy Working Group is meeting remotely on Wednesday, October 11th at 5:00 PM.
- The School Facilities Working Group is meeting remotely on Wednesday, October 11th at 6:00 PM.
- The Communications Subcommittee is meeting remotely on Thursday, October 12th at 5:00 PM.
- The Budget Subcommittee is meeting on Tuesday, October 17th at 6:00 PM.
- All schools and district offices will be closed on Monday, October 9th for Indigenous People's Day.
- Schools will be closed for students on Tuesday, October 10th for Professional Development Day.
- The School Committee has a new email address. The group email address for the School Committee is school_committee@ipsk12.net.
- The Town Government Study Committee is meeting on October 18th at 7:00 PM at Town Hall.
- Beginning next month, the IEA will present a Snapshot Presentation once a month.
- The School Committee will be voting on the MASC Resolutions at the next meeting.

4. Special Acknowledgements

There were none.

5. Citizens' Comments

Nat Pulsifer, Waldingfield Road: as a member of the Feoffees and liaison to the School Committee, shared that the Feoffees would like to suggest that the School Committee look at a method of recording how the funds are used to the benefit of the school. KE suggested the Mr. Pulsifer attend a meeting of the Feoffee Policy Working Group or a grant committee meeting.

*Kayla Oliva, County Road:*Expressed concerns over unsafe conditions relating to the football team. She shared that a lot of players were injured at a recent game and parents were trying to forfeit the game on Friday over concerns for player safety. Ms. Oliva felt that the team needed a new coach and athletic director, as well as an ambulance at all games.

6. High School Student Representative Report

Jimmy Bornstein, a senior at the high school, was elected by members of the Student Advisory Council to return as the High School Student Representative. JB shared that he hoped the position would be more involved with the School Committee and at meetings. JB felt that communication between the School Committee and the student representative could be improved.

Prior to the meeting, JB surveyed high school students on a number of topics that included what students were looking forward to in the school year ahead and whether students felt supported at school. Students shared that they were looking forward to Spirit

Week, prom, classes, leadership opportunities, graduation, and sports, among other things. Of the 57 students who completed the survey, 73% felt supported in school.

KE apologized for the communication error and encouraged JB to participate in the discussions.

7. Presentations

A. Overnight Field Trip Request: Middle School Ecology Trip and Middle School Washington, DC/Philadelphia Trip
Peter Ginolfi, principal of the middle school, spoke to the Grade 6 Ecology School overnight field trip and the Grade 8 Washington, D.C./Philadelphia overnight field trip. Both trips take place annually.

The Ecology School overnight trip will take place May 23-26, 2024 at Riverbend Farm in Maine. Students who choose not to participate will take part in similar activities in Ipswich. A Paine Grant was approved that helps support families who need additional help with the cost of the trip. They estimate that approximately 120 students will attend the trip with at least 10 chaperones, including a nurse.

- *Motion to support the Grade 6 Ecology School trip in 2024 was made by DF and seconded by JC. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

The trip to Washington, D.C./Philadelphia will take place June 4-7, 2024. Students will travel by bus to Washington, D.C. and then stop in Philadelphia for one night on the return trip to Ipswich. Most Grade 8 staff attend the trip, as well as the nurse. Student cellphones are not allowed on this trip. Funding is available to help alleviate the cost of the trip should families need it.

- *Motion to support the Middle School Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia trip was made by DF and seconded by JC. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

B. Tri-Board Meeting Recap

The Tri-Board meeting was held on Tuesday, September 26th. Agenda items included an update on the Whittier school project, an update on the call with the MSBA, and a discussion regarding the Strategic Planning Working Group.

Members were asked how they felt the Tri-Board meeting went.

JC felt the presentation on Whittier was helpful and that their building is clearly struggling. Supporting this building project would be a worthy cause. KE added that while there is a small percentage of Ipswich students attending Whittier, they are still Ipswich students. At some point, it will be important for the School Committee to have a larger discussion and vote on whether they support the project or not. KE asked what additional information the committee would need ahead of a larger discussion.

The discussion continued around the enrollment trends and the number of Ipswich students attending Whittier over the years. Have enrollment numbers been consistent over the years? What does the overall impact on students in Ipswich look like? Is there a cap on the number of students from Ipswich that can attend Whittier each year and does Ipswich reach that cap? There was a concern that there may be an influx of students who wish to attend Whittier once a new school is built.

TM shared the FY24 enrollment numbers for Whittier, noting that the October 1st count will be considered the official enrollment for the year according to DESE. BB said that communities are looking at their area agreements with Whittier. The current agreement was written 50 years ago and is due for a review.

KE asked for information on what programs students have historically enrolled in at both Whittier and Essex Tech.

There was clarification on the procedure for a vote. BB explained that Whittier is running the vote, therefore it will be by ballot at the polls. The vote on this project takes place in each community on the same day and within the same timeframe.

It was suggested that the School Committee dedicate a large portion of an upcoming meeting to discussing this topic and potentially taking a position.

Whittier presented to Ipswich first and plans to continue to present the same information to all communities that send students to Whittier.

KE will be circulating an email to all members to gauge interest in serving on the Strategic Planning Working Group.

It was noted that the Finance Committee, in particular, wanted answers on the MSBA process. In their most recent phone call, the MSBA suggested the School Committee go on building tours and speak with administrators who have recently completed the MSBA process. Members of the School Committee agreed that would be a proactive step to accomplish in the next 2-3 months. KE encouraged new members to review the work that has been done with regard to the MSBA process in Ipswich thus far.

C. Superintendent 2023-24 Goals Review and Approval

BB presented his draft 2023-24 Superintendent Goals which were first presented at the last School Committee and then reworked and reviewed at the most recent Operations Subcommittee meeting. His goals were:

Standard: Instructional Leadership
Indicator: 1-A Curriculum
Goal: Work with the Comprehensive Health and PE Compass Committee to unpack the new Standards that are being rolled out by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).
Action:
Participate in monthly meetings with Compass Committee
Review current curriculum in each area.
Identify gaps in our current curriculum.
Product:
Establish a work plan for moving forward with the Framework.

Indicator: 4-B Cultural Proficiency
Goal: Continue to lead the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work in the District
Action:
Participate in monthly DEI district wide meetings
Participate in “No Place for Hate” implementation meetings at Winthrop and the High School to support the goal of all schools in the district becoming recognized by the Anti-Defamation League.
Participate in MASS REDI Seminar Foundations 2 and Adaptive Leadership Case Consultancy. (2 all day sessions and 6- 2 hour virtual sessions.)
Discuss information learned from the Foundations course with the Leadership team during Administrative team meetings and a formal presentation to SC.
Product:
Consult with EL Teachers to support their work and integration of our EL population into the school community and participate in EL sponsored events.

BB clarified that the goals would be completed by the end of the school year. Discussion followed on what the end product would be for the second goal. One member asked if the goal or end product could be that the Traverso-Weatherall and Paine Grant applications be comparable per school. KE felt that the goal was to not to ensure that the grants were exactly the same at each school, but that one school would not submit a grant for a big or new initiative without the other school knowing about it. The goal would be to ensure better communication and collaboration. DF suggested it may be more difficult to evaluate BB working towards something, rather than seeing the grants and how they are balanced. BB reiterated that it was important for the schools to communicate with each other about the grants they were submitting.

JD added that she liked the way the goals were written and anticipated that if the product is achieved, specifically for Standard 2-A, BB would have a lot of evidence to show how the work was done.

- *Motion to support the superintendent goals for the 2023-2024 school year was made by JD and seconded by MP. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

D. Special Town Meeting Warrant Discussion and Speaker Assignments

The Special Town Meeting will be held on October 24th. While the School Committee cannot vote on the warrant articles that they voted to RATM at a previous meeting until October 24th, KE encouraged all members to watch and/or read the minutes from the Finance Committee and Select Board meetings where the warrant articles were discussed. It was suggested that it would be a good place to get additional information ahead of Special Town Meeting. Tonight, the School Committee needed to assign speakers to a number of warrant articles.

The following people were assigned to speak on behalf of warrant article at Special Town Meeting:

- Article 2: J. Poirier
- Article 4: J. Donahue

KE suggested that the School Committee consider taking a position on Article 7. KE also clarified that the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) would give more reimbursement points if districts complied with the stretch code. The School Committee has voted to RATM Article 9 which discusses the stretch code.

E. School Committee Workshop Recap

Members felt the workshop was useful, highlighting the “issues” section as being particularly important. Many felt that the presentation clarified a lot. KE added that some things that came up could be dealt with in agenda planning, like adding more information about public comments, adding specific links to goals, or creating more lengthy, detailed, or specific superintendent reports. DF added that the Communications Subcommittee is working on language around public comment.

F. Finance Update/Budget Timeline Review

TM discussed the Year-to-Date report, noting that things were progressing naturally and there was nothing to call attention to. The business office is monitoring certain spending that is coming in higher and unanticipated costs, particularly around facilities. The FY24 budget is 32% expended which is reasonable for October.

There is little to no difference to the Revolving, Stabilization, and Gift accounts from the August report. The biggest fluctuation to any account is where a salary is drawn from like Tiger Tots.

TM then reviewed the draft budget timeline, calling attention to the end of January and beginning of February when the budget presentations to the School Committee begin. At this time, there are no definite dates for the budget presentations to the Finance Committee, although they are typically in early March. Bean Counting will take place sometime after March 21st.

TM discussed the Food Services revolving account and how it worked with the universal free lunch program. The state will reimburse districts for an anticipated, yet capped, amount per meal served. The reimbursement amount is currently being negotiated in the legislature. The district will bring in receipts from the state reimbursement, as well as catering from Food Services and when students choose to purchase additional food. The high balance in the Food Services account is attributed to the reimbursements that accumulated during the Covid years.

JD asked for clarification on the account line designated for the athletic complex, specifically where the funding came from and what it could be used for. The funding, TM explained, was set aside when the athletic complex was built. The remaining funds can be used for enhancements and improvements to the athletic complex.

G. Policy Approval

The following policies were reviewed and revised by the Policy Subcommittee: JICFB, JICH, JIE, JIH, JII, JJ, JJA, JJF, JJH, JJH-R, JJIB. DF explained the revisions made to each policy.

*Motion to support policies in Section J with edits as presented was made by DF and seconded by JC. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

8. Superintendent's Administrative Report

- Attended an Ipswich Athletic Advisory Council meeting and discussed:
 - Town website update
 - All-sport booster group
 - Review of survey results
 - Snack shack at the football field
 - STAC Committee and potential plans to build an additional building by the stadium
- Lead an administrative team meeting that included a review of MCAS scores
- Spent time at both Winthrop and Doyon, meeting with administrators and participating in walkthroughs at each building
- Attended the Tri-Board meeting
- Attended an Educator Evaluation Committee meeting
- Participated in the first of the Foundations II Course with M.A.S.S., focusing on DEI initiatives
- Held a meeting with the Extended Day Program Director
- Attended a North Shore Superintendent Round Table meeting and was voted Vice President
- Met with Joe Perna and the Tiger Tots staff to discuss safety protocols
- Attended a webinar on responding to hoax bomb threats and swatting calls
- Attended a NERAC training on school safety along with four school administrators and members of the Ipswich Police Department
- Participated in a pre-construction meeting for the roofing projects

BB then discussed the new visitor management system. The program has been set up and is currently being piloted at the middle school. No official launch date has been determined yet.

BB spoke to the current status of hiring in the district. There are some positions still open.

As of October 1st, the total enrollment in the district is 1,635.

9. Subcommittee, Working Group and Liaison Reports

- **Ipswich Athletic Advisory Committee:** Previously discussed.
- **Audit Subcommittee Meeting:** The annual audit of all town accounts took place. It was a clean audit with two minor recommendations.
- **Climate Resiliency Committee:** Discussed the Specialized Stretch Code and the electric school bus initiative.
- **Policy:** Previously discussed.
- **Communications:** Reviewed the scheduled social media posts which include information that mirrors what is in the newsletter.
- **Operations:** Previously discussed.
- **Mutual Concerns:** Meeting on October 17th from 5:00-6:00 PM.

10. New Business*

No new business was presented.

11. Vouchers and Bills

All were reviewed and signed.

12. Consent Agenda

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

13. Adjournment

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

Meeting adjourned at 9:12 PM