

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

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

JP called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

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

Also Present: Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools (BB)
 Tom Markham, Director of Finance and Operations (TM)
 Jimmy Bornstein, High School Student Representative (JB)

2. Reading of the District Mission Statement

JB read the district mission statement.

3. Announcements

See handout.

4. Special Acknowledgements

Dr. Blake acknowledged the Ipswich Garden Club for the wreaths at Central Office and Rebecca Pagano for a job well done on the Small Ensemble concert.

5. Remarks from the Chair

No remarks were made.

6. Public Comments¹

JP read the statement on public comment.

Torii Bottomly, Central Street: identified herself as a 30 year veteran educator. She asked if there was a heightened responsibility for School Committee members to protect their children and other people's children and whether the School Committee had a policy to address when/if a member engages in an illegal activity involving students. Ms. Bottomly asked for Sasha to step down as a member of the School Committee. She said her words echo Dan Green's statement in the Ipswich Local News.

7. High School Student Representative Report

JB shared that the Student Advisory Council is now meeting on a regular basis. The group is looking at using social media to share what is being discussed at the meetings and have created a Google Form to solicit topics for discussion. There are also plans to host in-person events to garner interest. JB then discussed the Identity Series and shared that some students felt it would be more impactful if the presentation were led by students. JB reviewed holiday themed events and fundraisers taking place in the upcoming weeks.

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.

8. Presentations

A. Fall Sports Awards

High School Athletic Director, Tom Gallagher, presented the Fall Sports Awards. The Girls Volleyball Team was acknowledged as 3x State Champions.

B. IEA Snapshot: College Readiness

Claire Powers discussed the Dual Enrollment Course offered at the high school, in collaboration with North Shore Community College, that allows Juniors and Seniors who participate 3 college credits. The course is taught by a NSCC professor and includes guest speakers, trips to NSCC and Salem State University, and covers topics that support students with college admissions, as well as build confidence, foster independence, and familiarize them with programs that are frequently used by colleges and universities.

C. Overnight Field Trip Request: Robotics

The Ipswich First Robotics Team has been assigned to competitions in Lewiston, ME and at UNH this upcoming season. Due to the timing of the competition and the distance from Ipswich to Lewiston, ME, the team is requesting approval to stay overnight in Maine for the competition weekend. They estimate that 28 students will be attending over the course of the weekend. A Feoffee Grant is expected to cover the majority of funds needed for the trip and donations will cover the rest. The trip will take place March 15-17, 2024.

- *Motion to approve the overnight field trip for the Robotics Team to Lewiston, ME from March 15-17, 2024 was made by JD and seconded by JC. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

D. Overnight Field Trip Request: Racing Challenge

The High School Racing Challenge Team anticipates qualifying for the national racing challenge competition in Charlotte, NC and has requested approval for the overnight trip. The competition will take place April 26-28, 2024. This is the 10th year that students from Ipswich will participate in the competition. Approximately 30 students will attend with 3-4 chaperones. The cost per student is approximately \$200, with scholarships available for students who may need support.

- *Motion to approve the overnight field trip for the High School Racing Challenge Team to Charlotte, NC was made by DF and seconded by JD. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

E. Discussion of/Potential Vote on Letter to Whittier

JP shared a draft letter written by KE, as Chair, to the Superintendent of Whittier and the Chair of the Whittier School Committee. Tonight's agenda item is to discuss the purpose of the letter and to vote to authorize KE to send the letter on behalf of the School Committee by Monday. The Select Board previously voted to send a letter to Whittier that included requests from Ipswich to Whittier. The letter from the School Committee is intended to ask for those same requests, but through an educational lens. Members should first consider if they believe sending the letter is worthwhile and if so, what should be included.

MP felt the letter was a good step to show that the School Committee understood the need for better facilities, but that there are financial constraints to this project. He felt that the more Whittier hears from people who are supportive of schools, the more likely they may be to respond. SS added that he was in support of sending a letter and suggested that the Ipswich representative to the Whittier School Committee share the School Committee's feedback with the full Whittier School Committee.

After JC raised questions on where the School Committee stood on the project, JP shared that the letter was not intended to take a position on the need for the project, but rather whether the School Committee is in agreement with the recommendations/requests of the Select Board. JP also clarified that if the MSBA approves the project at their December 13th meeting, Whittier will then have 120 days to take a vote.

DF continued the discussion by sharing that she liked the letter and how it was written through the lens of the School Committee, including the tone. JP said that the School Committee could provide feedback to KE on the letter to ensure it was reflective of the group.

JC felt there were more questions to ask of the Whittier representatives and requested that Mr. James attend a School Committee to answer questions and provide additional information.

DF asked if School Committees in member districts were also sending letters to Whittier, but it was unclear if they were. JP said there was discussion at the Tri-Board meeting about the benefits of one letter from the Tri-Board or letters from each board separately. The School Committee has a different perspective with education as a priority.

- *Motion to authorize the Chair to send a letter on behalf of the School Committee on the subject of the Whittier School Building Project was made by MP and seconded by JC. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

JP then read each of the bulleted items listed in the draft letter. Committee members discussed each item, wordsmithing where needed.

- *Motion to direct the Chair to include the bulleted items, as noted, in the Chair's letter to Whittier Tech was made by SS and seconded by MP. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

F. Update on School Tour

On Monday, November 27th, members of the School Committee visited the East Veterans Elementary School in Gloucester, a new school that was partially funded by the MSBA. This was a K-5 school with approximately 400 students that opened this past August. Each member who attended the tour shared their thoughts on the building. JD started, noting the spaces for services and the outstanding musical stage. DF shared that she loved the school and felt it was well thought out. JP enjoyed being in the school and liked how the two schools that were combined were still able to bring in their own culture and history. JP spoke about the school logo that brought the two schools together. JP also felt it was helpful to tour the school with the principal who focused on the educational aspects of the school rather than the mechanics. BB felt the safety and security features of the building were great and liked the configuration of the building. JC liked seeing the two school cultures come together. MP also acknowledged the combining of the two school cultures and was impressed with their ability to create a school that creates a sense of pride.

G. POLICY Update

DF reviewed policies JL, JLA, JLC, JLCA, JLCB, JLCC, and JLCD.

- *Motion to approve the policy changes as presented was made by MP and seconded by JC. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

9. Superintendent's Administrative Report

BB's report included:

- Attendance at a North Shore Superintendents Round Table meeting that focused on negotiations preparation
- A meeting with the Athletic Director
- The school tour in Gloucester
- A monthly Ipswich Education Foundation meeting
- Administrative Team meetings
- A DESE webinar on the Comprehensive Health Standards
- Participation in a REDI Course which included a self assessment on adaptive leadership
- A Budget Subcommittee meeting
- A meeting with Jonathan Mitchell to discuss virtual reality opportunities in the classroom
- A meeting with the Extended Day Program Director to discuss the potential for summer programming
- Attendance at Northshore Education Consortium and CREST Collaborative Board of Directors meetings
- Participating in the DEI Team meeting
- Attendance at the High School Small Ensemble concert
- A MASS Executive Board meeting

JD questioned whether seasonal athletic awards needed to be presented at a School Committee meeting or whether it could be done in a more special way. She suggested that this topic has been brought up to the Athletic Director in years past. JD also asked when the results from the student athlete surveys would be shared.

10. Subcommittee, Working Group and Liaison Reports

- **Budget Subcommittee:** The group met on November 29th and earlier this evening to prepare for the FY25 budget. Three main things have been taken into consideration- the override calculator, the end of ESSER funding, and bargaining unit contract negotiations. TM reviewed several financial documents included in the meeting folder which include a YTD report and a review of the Stabilization Funds, revolving, and gift accounts. TM shared that the State has approved a second supplemental budget and that the impact to Ipswich is still being looked at.
- **Communications Subcommittee:** The group is considering sending out a short newsletter ahead of the winter break. The School Committee then reviewed draft social media posts for the School Committee accounts.
- **STEAM TEAM:** The STEAM Showcase is taking place on May 16, 2024. The group is focused on spreading awareness for the event and soliciting participation.
- **Ipswich Education Foundation:** The annual fundraising notice came out in the Ipswich Local News. The group is working on a framework for future fundraising.
- **Policy Subcommittee:** The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 20th at 5:30 PM.

11. New Business*

No new business was presented.

12. Vouchers and Bills

All reviewed and signed.

13. Consent Agenda

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

14. Adjournment

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

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM