

Ipswich School Committee

MS/HS Ensemble Room
134 High Street, Ipswich
Thursday, May 18, 2023
7:00 PM

MEETING MINUTES

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

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

1. Call to Order: KE called the meeting to order at 7:01pm.
2. Reading of District Mission Statement - JP
3. Announcements: The next SC meeting will be on Thursday, June 1, 2023 at 7:00pm in the Ensemble Room.
4. Special Acknowledgements - SE & BB
 - Welcome new members: Jenny Connolly, Sasha Sopic, Mathew Perry. Congratulations! JC is excited to be here, to learn, and make decisions. SS is excited to be here, thanks for voting and representing. MP is also excited and happy to be part of "this side of the table". All have been sworn in, can participate, & vote, paperwork still needs to be completed, orientation to be scheduled over next 2 weeks, mentoring.
 - The engineering projects class traveled to Miami to compete in the Ten80 Student Racing Challenge and finished in 1st place in race events and 3rd place overall. Congratulations to Bill Gallant and all of the students.
 - Thanks to Mr. Ames & the National Honor Society for the Day of Service, which was held on Wednesday 5/17/2023. Close to the entire high school population participated all over town.
 - Tracy Wagner, Amanda Larson, the entire STEAM Team, and Pavica Kneedler for this year's STEAM Showcase, which was held today 5/18/2023. Incredible work, great exhibits, including one from Jenna Woodworth, which will be presented here later. It was a really good turnout.
5. Citizens' Comments:
 - Becky Slawson (handout to new members), IEA President. Welcome Matt, Sasha, Jenny to SC. Congratulations. She extended an invitation to visit the schools (TriBoard members visited a couple weeks ago) to see what is happening, what teachers & students are doing. You are welcome to do one or all schools. Contact Gretchen Marinopoulos or Becky to set up a schedule.
 - Heather Leonard, Doyon parent: Thank you all for what you do; your work is really appreciated. Comment regarding Doyon principal leaving. Worried that we have had 50% turnover for principalships over the last 2 years. It is her hope that the SC is proactive in preventative measures in the process. Kathy McMahon & Sarah Goodale-O'Brien are phenomenal; would like to know what the plan is to seek input from parents and students in the search process.
6. Presentations:
 - **IEA Snapshot Presentation: Coding in the Classroom** - Jenna Woodworth, Kindergarten/1st grade teacher, presented robotics in K & 1st grade with three students. The program uses robotics to cover any curriculum area. Currently, 4 baby chicks hatched in their classroom, so they are using the Gobot to study the life cycle of chickens. Coding: "Game board", students program robots to land on specific spaces, where they will learn about the object/topic on the board. Ties in social emotional, problem solving, turn taking. This past fall, they held a "Macy's Day Parade" with a balloon attached to each Gobot that was

programmed to move around the room. They had a lot of fun. It has been at least 4 years since this has been incorporated into the curriculum. The library has a different type of robot, geared toward older students.

○ Superintendent's Evaluation (KE)

KE gave an overview of evaluation, based on frameworks set up by DESE. The superintendent sets up his goals based on DESE standards. Each SC member fills out evaluation sheets grading Unsatisfactory, Needs Improvement, Proficient, or Exemplary, along with comments on each goal. Dr. Blake receives individual evaluations from each member, which is then combined for the summative evaluation (former SC members & current members, except for tonight's newly elected members). The Summative Report was read into the record. Key initiatives this year have included:

- working to re-establish baselines for local assessments and student achievement across the district
- implementing a plan/response to the Comprehensive District Accountability review
- starting us on a path towards a future elementary building project
- spearheading Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives

These are ambitious goals, and only reflect a subset of the work Dr. Blake and our administrators do every day in our district. Dr. Blake has shown strong leadership amid a challenging year. While the following summative evaluation below includes several areas labeled as Needs Improvement, We are fortunate to have Dr. Blake at the head of our district and appreciative of his dedication and leadership.

Student Learning Goal: Instructional Leadership, Standard 1C Assessment

Overall Proficient

Professional Practice Goal: Management & Operations, Standard 2A Environment & School Safety

Majority members rated Needs Improvement, Remaining members rated Proficient

District Improvement Goal 1: Family and Community Engagement, Standard 3A-C Engagement and Communication

Majority members rated Needs Improvement, Remaining members rated Proficient

District Improvement Goal 2: Professional Culture, Standard 4B: Cultural Proficiency

Overall Proficient

Dr. Blake received an Overall Summative Performance rating of Proficient from all members of the School Committee.

Recommendations:

Future goals should focus on improved communication and transparency with staff and families; short- and long-term student achievement goals; robust school safety goals with actionable, measurable outcomes; and continued attention and progress on DEI initiatives.

JD stated the evaluation is not an easy form to fill out, tough to work with.

JP made a motion to accept summative evaluation for 2022-2023 as read into the record, DF seconded, and the vote passed 4:0 in favor; 3 abstained.

○ Town Meeting Debrief (KE)

Thanks to Ipswich for passing the school district budget & roof replacement. We had to defend the budget pretty hard and it will be a challenge for SC next year. There is a lot of work to be done. (JP) Anything requiring $\frac{2}{3}$ majority is difficult, very narrow room in balancing fiduciary vs. students vs. communication & getting input. We need to look at how to improve that process. The town released next year's budget calendar today. (JD) wonders what was different this year than prior to when she became a member. When principals did their presentations, she thought there were larger crowds. BB remembers one, held in the MS/HS library, that had a large crowd, but does not remember what was in the budget that year that led to the large crowd. Communication is key for support. (JP) appreciated the prompt start to the

town meeting and getting down to business. KE said that was because there was a quorum right away and they were not scrambling to get to quorum in order to open the meeting.

○ Social Media as a Mode of SC Communication (DF)

Communication Sub-Committee (DF, sole member): If used correctly, social media will help the SC. (slide deck) Options: F/B, IG, Twitter. IPS F/B page - District, Laura is administrator. IPS IG - last active 2019. Laura & DF Contacted other districts.

- Masco: F/B group, public, administrator is SC designee, chair has access and directs content. Whatever is put up, Like & Share only, no comments allowed; however, once shared, people can make comments on other pages. SC can right the wrong on their own page if misinformation is disseminated. Compliant to all laws.
- Medfield: F/B page, new - started by emailing families in district, SC is administrator, chair, & superintendent - broader includes snippets for week, limits commenting. IG & Twitter mirrors F/B page.
- Andover: F/B group, comments on, but they don't get a lot.
- Weston: IG page, similar content.

IPS social media policy reviews for SC and members (no conflicts). Next steps - would like SC input as to what & how we want to do it. KE thanked DF for all her hard work & effort. Would like to review the slide deck before giving feedback. DF wants to include meeting agendas. SS said this is an opportunity to tap into parents who work in that area. Is it ready for policy or should a new subcommittee be created? DF said to start with agendas, newsletters, snippets to bolster social media. KE asked if members have issues with SC having social media presence. More to think about with a new F/B page, requires a new policy, but takes responsibility off of Laura and puts it on SC. JD is not comfortable with minutes being on SC social media as they are public anyway. Has received comments on her own personal social media regarding decisions made within SC. KE said there must be strict posting criteria - at least 2 people deciding. JD likes the idea of broader engagement. DF likes the idea of better directing information. BB sees other districts getting into trouble with social media i.e., hacking, misinformation, worries about long-term viability; have done SC newsletter for 4 years, now looking at potentially changing that, but it is a good opportunity to "cross pollinate". KE said this needs to be a bigger discussion. JD thinks SC should try it and if it doesn't work, change it. Roll out next school year. Draft policy to discuss at the next meeting. Policy subcommittee is on June 1st, an hour before the SC meeting. KE likes the idea of using social media as a way to educate people on what we do and who we are, where to find, do you know? . . . KE suggested that DF speak to Tracy Novac at MASC who is a big SC social media field rep - should be good to reach out to for information. JP wondered if it is worth having a separate SC page rather than put our content on the district website. SS likes streamlining within one social media (district) and post individually. Maybe the Policy Sub-Committee should start hashing out a policy, then discuss rolling out a social media plan. Policy committee now includes DF & JD. Decision was made to go to the Policy Committee for further discussion.

○ Debrief on Ballot Questions (KE)

Intent: 4 possible scenarios regarding school buildings, non-binding. SC felt we did not want to assign arbitrary costs or timelines so early in the process, some of which were extremely challenging. It was a post check of the community after listening sessions (200 people attended), never designed to be "the majority wins scenario". The options & results were:

1. **55.6%** One new school with pre-K to grade five students at Doyon.
2. **14.2%** Split configuration: One new school for grades one through five at Doyon and a repaired Winthrop for pre-K and kindergarten.
3. **4.6%** Split configuration: One new school for grades pre-K to two at Doyon, one new school for grades three through five downtown.
4. **19.4%** Two new schools: Sequential projects to build a new school at Doyon and build a new school downtown. Both schools would be pre-K to grade five.

This is a valuable datapoint, giving an idea of what voters wanted at that time. Waiting for a call from MSBA. Discussion followed. 2,319 total votes with 6.2% blanks. More broad than expected. This information helps to support next steps in SOIs if they proceed.

- Security Update (BB)

Public forum last Wednesday welcomed 50 in-person participants, plus streaming. He has had several follow-up conversations & emails, and is looking to set up coffee chats with 6-8 parents at a time. 24 staff members, administrators, counselors, and nurses were certified in level 2 school threat assessment, (4 hr training). The doors at Doyon must lock from outside, so they have installed temporary magnetic strips to go in and out during the day, then will pull strips to lock when needed. Maintenance issues for phones, locks, intercom issues are being worked on. BB has reached out to 508 Group do risk threat & vulnerability assessments (Todd Magee), who has sent a proposal that includes Phase 1 on-site assessments, surveys, threat analysis, and gap analysis. Phase 2 includes stakeholder engagement, providing a town hall-type meeting to disseminate his report. TriTown District recommended this company. BB gave background on Todd Magee and he feels very comfortable with this person/company that they are able to do what SC and public have asked for. JD commented that it sounds comprehensive but large. Discussion regarding notification app for staff/faculty. Before that decision is made, we have to do research as all apps do different things and bring up privacy/location issues. Phase 1 will be at the end of May and the report by mid-June. Phase 2 will begin afterward. Cost is in \$12K-\$15K range - charges by building. BB will try to negotiate because of the size differences of the 4 buildings (MS/HS, D, W, and Central).

JC suggested signs on doors from inside i.e., Do Not Open as reminders and Under Video Surveillance as deterrent, etc; encourages updating security on weekly emails (conversations with community on Safety Values as a District, current work in motion to repair, replace smaller issues (phone replacements, door planing, etc.), the hiring of an additional elementary School Resource Officer for the remainder of this school year. Without app notification, can there be a code announcement? BB law enforcement does not recommend code words. ALICE - each thing means something different. "Interior Lock-in" was used in this week's incident. Every scenario is different, so each announcement uses different language. Suggestion for SC to visit an older school building that has been retrofitted. JP asked BB to speak about the forum, specifically elaborating on the small discussion after the meeting. BB said the forum went as planned - information-sharing with moderated questions from ahead of time. He went back and answered some questions that were not answered. Parents were upset there was no Q&A. When the forum ended, streaming shut off. About 20 people stayed to speak with BB regarding their concerns and where they'd like things to go, systems in place, and wanted additional discussions. He is working with them to do some small coffee sessions (6-8 parents at a time). JP would like him to share those discussions. Communication with this week's incident was not clear. BB made it clear that he put out as much information as he could, because it DID involve people from the community. He reiterated that he needs to protect everyone's identity, followed locked-in protocols, students went about business as usual, and within 20 minutes it was over. In this particular situation, we were quick to act. There need to be standards as to what communication parents are receiving and why.

7. Superintendent's Administrative Report (BB)

- Met with Police chief & town manager to secure an SRO for elementary schools
- Attended Town Meeting, which was a long night
- Set up the Interview Team for MS principal. 1st round of interviews were this week, 2nd round is next week, will be followed by a meet & greet with finalists (community, staff, students). JP & JD are on the interview committee. JD was surprised that there were only 2 MS staff (teacher & guidance counselor) plus one parent and it would be better to have general ed representation from every grade. If more are involved in the screening process, maybe it would have a better outcome. There was a question regarding whether exit interviews are done (yes). Could the SC do their own exit interviews? They could, but it must be a formal process and he would have to check with legal counsel. He will research and get back to them.
- Participated in a stakeholder meeting regarding funding from opioid use
- Attended the 4 hour Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Training (CSTAT)
- Special Ed TFM exit interview (file reviews, post-outcome)
- Meetings regarding PreK space options and visited them

- Met with Amy Gregory, Integration Specialist, regarding her summer schedule and student achievement and apps/programs purchased during COVID that are no longer used - will save money
 - Met with Tom Gallagher - discussed new field house (not utilizing school funds)
 - Attended several NEC meetings this week
 - Attended STEAM Showcase before this meeting. It was fabulous.
8. Subcommittee, Working Group & Liaison Reports
- No meetings
9. New Business
- End of year events: SC members attend (proms, grad, baccalaureate)
 Sr. Prom 5/25 (JD, KE), public event anyone can come
 Doyon Moving on Ceremony 6/9 1:30pm (JP, JC)
 MS Grad 6/15 7pm-9pm (JD)
 Winthrop Grad 6/16 9:30am (MP, JP)
 HS Grad 6/4 10am (KE) Need to decide soon because of reserved seating
 Baccalaureate 5/31 7pm (KE, DF)
 Senior Boston Harbor Dinner Cruise (BB)
 - JP read the policy and when the Chair and/or Vice Chair seat becomes vacant, a new one needs to be elected. Since Ms. Cannon resigned, the seat should be filled until the end of the year. KE reached out to the existing SC for interest in the Vice Chair seat. JP expressed his interest. KE made it clear that this is until July, when new elections take place.
JD made a motion to nominate JP as the new Vice Chair until July 2023, MP seconded, and the vote passed with 5 in favor and 1 abstention.
10. Vouchers & Bills - all set
11. Consent Agenda
JP made a motion to approve 5/4/2023 SC meeting minutes as written, DF seconded, and the vote passed with 4 in favor and 2 abstentions.
12. Adjournment - 9:12pm
JD made a motion to adjourn, DF seconded, and the vote passed unanimously in favor.