



## **Message from School Committee Chair, Chub Whitten**

The Ipswich School Committee would like to wish all a happy, healthy, and safe upcoming holiday season.

One of the most important charges of the School Committee is to set policies for the district. The School Committee would like to emphasize that our district fosters an inclusive understanding culture that provides a welcoming educational experience to all.

As a backdrop to these overarching beliefs, we have many policies that support this. These policies are found on the School Committee tab of the district website, [www.ipsk12.net](http://www.ipsk12.net). Please note the following policies: AC, ACAB, ACE, GBA, GBEB, JB, JBB, JICFA, JICFA-E, JICFB, JK.

At our November 18 School Committee meeting the School Committee unanimously endorsed and affirmed the following statement drafted by Committee member Emily Cannon;

The Ipswich School Committee is committed to promoting policies that support an atmosphere that is inviting and safe for all students and employees both during school hours and while participating in extracurricular activities. Recent events have highlighted and reminded us of the continued existence of hatred and hazing in our Commonwealth's schools. While we understand that these events are being investigated by the Districts they occurred in we, the Ipswich School Committee, wanted to take the opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to abide by our anti-hazing and anti-discriminatory policies and remind the public that any individuals found to be in violation of those policies will be held accountable to their school and town communities as well as to those victimized by such actions. As always, the members of the Ipswich School Committee encourage students and staff to come forward as engaged citizens and report any violations of the policies reviewed here tonight.

I am constantly encouraged by the code of conduct I witness by all members of our Ipswich community. We must all remain vigilant that these inclusive practices continue.

Once again, have a great holiday season,

Chub Whitten

*How useful do you find this newsletter? Do you have suggestions for future topics to cover? We'd love to hear from you, email us at [schoolcommittee@ipswichma.gov](mailto:schoolcommittee@ipswichma.gov)*

## **Budget Subcommittee Update**

In our last issue we discussed the challenges of providing high quality education for our students as costs continue to climb each year, a challenge that is not unique to Ipswich. Overall, our school district's budget increases at an average rate of 4.25% annually while revenue allocated to the schools from tax revenue collected by the Town increases by about 3.1% each year. This difference is what we mean when we talk about the structural deficit, the money coming in is not enough to cover our expenses. This makes it very hard to "live within our means", as that would entail making budget cuts every year just to stay within budget and provide the same programming year to year.

Periodically the taxpayers are asked to approve an operational override, which raises taxes above the standard increase allowed under Proposition 2 ½. These tax increases give us sufficient tax revenue to adequately fund our schools. The School Committee takes these requests very seriously and are well aware of the tax implications it has for our citizens. In 2015, as part of the last operational override approved by taxpayers, the Education stabilization fund was created, which allowed the School Committee to spread out that override money and provide financial stability throughout the district. In 2015 the School Committee stated the override money would be enough to provide a sufficient budget for the next 5 years (FY16-FY20), but with good fiscal management and oversight, the funds have given us 7 years of financial stability (currently through FY22). We will be coming before the taxpayers in Spring 2022 with a request for an operational override to continue to provide a stable budget and services for our students and make up the shortfall of the structural deficit.

## **Role of Citizen's Comments at meetings**

The Ipswich School Committee welcomes and encourages members of the community to attend its meetings in an effort to become better acquainted with the operations and programs of our local public schools. In accordance with School Committee Policy BEDH "Public Comment at School Committee Meetings" and the Town of Ipswich By-Laws, the School Committee will include a "Citizen's Queries/Public Comment" agenda item at the start of each regularly scheduled School Committee meeting. This public comment segment is built into the agenda to ensure citizens who wish to be heard before the Committee have a chance, while still allowing the Committee to conduct the District's business in an orderly and timely manner. Once all citizens have had the opportunity to be heard, the meeting resumes with the planned agenda.

When preparing for participation, the School Committee asks the public to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Before addressing the Chair, the individual must state their full name and address for the record.

- Remarks should be kept to a three (3) minute maximum. It is up to the Chair’s discretion to extend an individual’s speaking time beyond three minutes.
- All remarks should be addressed through the Chair of the meeting.
- Topics for discussion should be limited to those items listed on the School Committee meeting agenda for that evening.
- Speakers may offer such objective criticisms of the school operations and programs as concern them, but in public session the Committee will not hear personal complaints of school personnel nor against any member of the school community. Under most circumstances, administrative channels are the proper means for disposition of legitimate complaints involving staff members.
- Written comments longer than three (3) minutes may be presented to the Committee before or after the meeting for the Committee members’ review and consideration at an appropriate time.

In an effort to facilitate meaningful conversation and effective dialogue, we ask that members of the community approach public comment with respect for one another and the process. As a School Committee, we will do the same. Improper conduct and remarks will not be allowed and defamatory or abusive remarks are always out of order. If a speaker persists in improper conduct or remarks, the Chair may terminate that individual’s privilege of address.

The Ipswich School Committee, as well as subcommittees and working groups are considered public bodies and must comply with [Massachusetts Open Meeting Laws \(OML\)](#). According to OML, “all meetings of a public body must be open to the public”. It is important to note that while committee, subcommittee, and working group meetings are meetings of the public body *in* public, they are not necessarily meant to be meetings *with* the public. The Open Meeting Law encourages public attendance at meetings; however, there is no specific provision for public comment. Queries/comments are taken under consideration and the Committee may or may not respond at that meeting.

The School Committee values the input and involvement from the citizens of Ipswich. Along with public comment, we encourage continued communication through email, our Meet and Greet opportunities, community listening sessions, surveys and bi-monthly newsletters.

## **Strategic Planning Working Group Overview**

The Town’s Strategic Planning Working Group was created to identify short and long term planning and infrastructure needs in Ipswich and the costs associated with each. The projects identified by this group range from the need for a new public safety building and elementary school(s) to upgrades to our electrical and water systems townwide. School and Town operational overrides are also included in the list of needs.

The Working Group ranked the projects by order of importance. This ranking was supported by the individual boards at various tri-board meetings in 2020 and 2021. Currently, water and wastewater

improvements are happening throughout Town. The next item on the list is the construction of a new public safety building, which was approved at the October 2021 Town Meeting. Next in line is the request to taxpayers for an operational override for our schools followed by a feasibility study to address the needs of our aging elementary schools.

Projects identified by the Strategic Planning Working Group are not unique to Ipswich. All towns grapple with how to plan and pay for the critical infrastructure needed by their residents. It is important that we, as taxpayers, understand what needs improvement in Ipswich. The Strategic Planning Working Group has done an excellent job creating a document which lays out proposed projects and override needs for the next 10-15 years. That document can be found on the Town of Ipswich website.

<https://www.ipswichma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/12606/Strategic-Planning-Working-Group-Presentation-?bidId>

## School Committee Meeting Highlights

### October

- Presentation on Illustrative Math Program by Jen Spencer and Lina Lopez-Ryan
- Presentation on MCAS results by Tracy Wagner
- Vote on Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) Resolutions 2021
- Approval of field trips for Model UN and Close-Up trip to Washington D.C.

### November

- Presentation on High School Rankings by Jonathan Mitchell
- Update on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Ipswich schools by Brian Blake
- School Committee Self-evaluation review
- Presentation of School Improvement Plans from building principals

## Upcoming District Events

- **November 18:** School Committee Open Session Meeting\*
- **November 24:** Thanksgiving Early Release
- **November 25-26:** No School - Thanksgiving Break
- **December 2:** School Committee Open Session Meeting\*
- **December 16:** School Committee Open Session Meeting\*
- **December 23:** Winter Break Early Release
- **December 24-31:** No School - Winter Holiday Break

\* School Committee Open Session Meetings are typically held on the first and third Thursday of the month in the MS/HS Ensemble Room located at 134 High Street, Ipswich and begin at 7:00 PM. Meeting agendas, minutes, folders with applicable meeting documents, and calendar may be

found on the [district website](#). These meetings are broadcast live on YouTube, with a link in the agenda for each meeting. To view past meetings, please tune into Comcast Channel 98 and Verizon Channel 31. Past meetings can also be viewed on the ICAM Ipswich website on the Education channel: [www.icamipswich.com](http://www.icamipswich.com).

## Contact Information

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The Ipswich School Committee places great value on feedback from our community and welcomes the opportunity for dialogue and transparency. Per our policy, communication sent to the School Committee as a group is replied to by the School Committee Chair.

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