

Ipswich School Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 10, 2018
Middle/ High School Ensemble Room

I. OPEN SESSION

CALL TO ORDER

Sarah Player, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:08 PM with the following members present: C. Whitten, P. Kneedler, B. Hopping, and N. Zito. Also present were Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools, Joanne Cuff, Director of Finance and Operations and High School Student Representative C. Bergner.

READING OF DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

High School Student Representative Chris Bergner read the Mission Statement.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Combined School Committee/ School Committee meeting on Thursday, January 11, 2018 at 7:00pm at Town Hall, meeting room A
- Budget Subcommittee meeting on Tuesday, January 16, 2018 at 7:00pm at Town Hall, Town Manager's Conference Room
- Athletic Subcommittee meeting on Wednesday, January 17, 2018 at 6:00pm in the MS/HS Guidance Conference Room.
- School Committee meeting on Thursday, January 18, 2018 at 7:00pm in the MS/HS Ensemble Room

CITIZEN'S COMMENTS

None.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dr. Blake made the following special acknowledgements:

The Global Art connection project (a Feofee mini-grant), coordinated by Karen Sekiguchi (library/media) and Camela Leigh (visual arts), has reached a milestone. The artwork by third graders at the Winthrop School, as well as their reflection about what it says about our community has been sent to partner classes in Russia and Uganda (2 classrooms there.) Pictures and copies of what is being sent have been made which will allow for a presentation in the spring and displays both around town and at our Art Show. Next step? Awaiting the artwork from these sister classrooms to come to us for exploration and sharing.

Second, Kerry Zagarella (K teacher) has, once again this year, participated in a partnership between NASA and WGBH to create science resources for educators. You can see her highlighted in a video recently shared with the NASA Science Advisory Committee

And Third, Karen Sekiguchi's podcasting leadership has been highlighted in a recent edition of <http://www.maschoolibraries.org>.

Mr. Whitten also mentioned the 6th grade team for their work in helping to raise \$500,000 in 3 weeks to support CureCMJ4T which helped reach their goal of raising \$1 million by year's end.

Ms. Player also mentioned the Middle School Art Show that was happening at the time of the meeting.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

C. Bergner began his report stating that the students had an easy transition back to school after their winter break with the two snow days. Students were gearing up for their midterms in two weeks and he mentioned the Bridge program will begin in April. He further explained that the Bridge program is offered to Seniors who wish to gain "real world" working experience. These participants leave school in April and join the workforce, working 30 hours per week. They have a record high number of students participating in the program this year. Mr. Bergner also mentioned that the Sustainability Club organized a fundraiser where they will pick up your Christmas tree for \$15. Model U.N. is beginning and winter sports are doing well.

A. SUPERINTENDENT'S ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

II. SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENTATIONS

B. TECH CURRICULUM UPDATE

This discussion was moved to a later date.

C. REVIEW OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOALS

S. Player, School Committee Chair discussed the 2017-2018 School Committee Goals with the intent to report on the progress of the goals and discuss what needs more work.

With regard to the Budget Goals:

1. Work to maximize contributions to the educational stabilization fund to extend the life of the override (May 2018)-

This will be discussed later in the year. Joanne Cuff has drafted a warrant as a placeholder. The actual number will not be known until the end of the fiscal year.

2. Use student achievement data to identify and prioritize needs so that funding decisions can best inform budget development (April 2018)

Have not discussed student achievement data with regard to special education.

3. Develop goals for negotiating team to successfully settle affordable agreements with all bargaining units (Nov-Dec 2017)

The School Committee and Superintendent have both received a letter from the unions stating their intent to bargain, but no date has been determined at this point. It was confirmed that P. Kneedler, S. Player and N. Zito will be part of those discussions.

4. Develop internal school capital-planning process and present our priorities to Town authorities (February 2018)

Rob White has reached out to organize a Tri-Board meeting to discuss Capital Plan items. This meeting is going to be scheduled for either January 23, 2018 or January 30, 2018.

5. Investigate benefits of budgeting for grant-writing services for the district (April 2018)

It has been determined that there is a need for outside services, but the discussion has been tabled at this time.

6. Hire marketing individual or firm to increase turf field rental revenue for 2018

This discussion is currently ongoing with the Turf Field Subcommittee.

With regard to Policy Goals:

- 1. Call a vote to gain initial acceptance from SC for the new policy manual with the understanding that the Policy Subcommittee will be providing bimonthly updates apprising the SC of the changes (Fall, Ongoing)**
- 2. In the subcommittee, create a Google Doc and develop a 12-month schedule for policy review to be approved by SC (Ongoing)**
- 3. Allow for time in SC meetings to hear (during the Superintendent Report) updates and then provide ongoing support and recommendations (Ongoing)**

N. Zito explained that the Policy Subcommittee has been meeting almost weekly to review and revise, as needed, each policy. At each meeting, after considering feedback from the Administrative Team, they make revisions to policy, create action items if further information is needed and they discuss how each of the new policies will be rolled out. According to their schedule, the entire new policy manual will be completed by the end of May. The subcommittee is working to identify any gaps in policy and did state that although some policies are going before the full School Committee for approval, there are some that will need to be revisited as laws change.

H. O'Flynn joined the meeting at 8:06pm.

With regard to School Building Project Goals:

- 1. Develop and execute a successful campaign for Town approval of the construction of a combined Community Elementary School at the Doyon School property (current- May 2018)**
- 2. Engage and educate community members on the current state of our elementary school facilities and promote the benefits of building one community elementary school at the Doyon site (current -May 2018)**
- 3. Work in collaboration with SBC, MSBA, State legislators, Town Boards, citizens, et al to secure approval at Spring 2018 Town Meeting and Town ballot (current-May 2018)**

The School Building Project goals are currently ongoing. A community group, One Ipswich, has been formed. There has been a lot of work at the building level to discuss the plans and gather input for the design of the spaces. There are two meetings scheduled for tomorrow, January 11th to discuss security, technology and special education needs with school personnel, as well as a combined School Building Committee/School Committee meeting that night. There is a "visioning" meeting scheduled for Wednesday, January 17th where members of each school council and community business owners are being invited to attend to provide feedback on the current stages of the building plan.

With regard to Student Achievement Goals:

- 1. From the administration and data teams, the SC will identify specific data measures to be considered (Oct 2017-March 2018)**
- 2. Gather and collate selected student data (Oct 2017-Mar 2018)**
- 3. Store and present data on an online district dashboard (May 2018)**
- 4. Identify district baselines on each measure to be used to assess future needs (June 2018)**

These goals are a work in progress. A program call ClearGov was purchased with the intent to provide user-friendly, easy to understand state and local District data without having to dig through information

on the DESE website. A discussion formed around what other types of data should the School Committee be looking for, when is that determined and how should they go about retrieving it. Data should “tell a story” of the District and include things like involvement in sports and fine arts programs, effectiveness of co-teaching, the number of students discharged from IEP’s, etc. It was determined that further discussion should include what data is needed and how should it be presented.

D. SUPERINTENDENT MID YEAR REVIEW

Dr. Blake presented his Entry Plan report to the Committee. The time of this report coincided with the timing of his Mid-Year Evaluation, so he decided to merge the two including in the report the standards from the Superintendent Evaluation Rubric that the School Committee approved to evaluate him on. The report was divided into two sections- summative and thematic findings. Dr. Blake performed over 30 interviews with the Central Office staff, building administrators, School Committee members, parents, local business owners, politicians, and students. His objective was to identify key events, values, norms and goals of the community with the intent to help prioritize those same key elements as a school system. He noted that along with the extensive amount of interviews and analysis of data, he was also busy with the current building project. Dr. Blake stated that “the first few months...provided me with a valuable opportunity to explore where the District had been, where we are now, and where we want to be in the future.”

In addition to interviewing members of the community, Dr. Blake also reviewed a variety of reports including the NESDEC Work Flow Study done at Central Office, an Abrahams Group report on Ipswich Public Schools Operational and Efficiency Study, MCAS data, current policies and procedures in the District, as well as attended sports and fine arts events. All this was done to gain a better insight of the culture of our schools. He did note that policies and procedures is an area that needs a lot of attention and he needs to focus on spending more time in the buildings observing teachers and administrators.

Overall, the District’s staff, parents and community are supportive of the Ipswich Schools. Many were Ipswich graduates themselves and look at their work in the community as a way of “giving back”. There has been some animosity between the elementary parents regarding the one school vs. two schools and the location of the proposed new school.

In terms of curriculum, most felt that the curriculum is in a good place, provides ample programs and meets the needs of our students. There was some disagreements in terms of rigor and many felt that those in the “middle of the pack” were not challenged enough and that more attention could go toward them. Dr. Blake discussed how people felt that the two schools were not working as closely together as they should. Staff should not be able to tell which elementary school a student came from. Several people also commented that the District should pay more attention to why so many students elect to attend private schools. The staff and administration would like to see additional/new foreign language instruction at younger ages, more of a focus on global education and dual enrollment in college courses.

A lack of communication was a common complaint among interviews. Community members feel there is not adequate communication with the community around school issues. At this point, the use of social media outlets has not been greatly pushed by the District as a means of instant communication.

Dr. Blake felt that the curriculum was in a really good place and the addition of the Director of Teaching and Learning to the Central Office has made a significant impact on the alignment of curriculum. He mentioned the Compass Committee that is constantly refining, revising, tweaking and updating curriculum documents to align with MA State Frameworks. Dr. Blake spoke about the STEAM team and its focus on the advancement of STEAM education in the District. He talked about the variety of professional development opportunities that help to enhance curriculum work through the District and how Tracy, Director of Teaching and Learning, updates curriculum as soon as it is introduced by the state. Overall, Dr. Blake feels the curriculum is in a good place and continues to improve.

Management and operations is the area that Dr. Blake said he has spent most of his time. Last year, NESDEC conducted a study of the workflow in the Central Office and it became apparent that it needed the most attention. Some restructuring and reorganizing was done, new staff was hired including the addition of a Human Resource Specialist.

Some of the problems that need to be addressed include communication with the town, access to data from Town Hall with regard to school district staff, a lack of written procedures for the most basic functions throughout the District, antiquated systems, and a lack of emergency plans for the District. In addition, Dr. Blake expressed his ongoing concern with the facilities department, lack of oversight and continual maintenance issues.

Overall, the District has relatively active parents. The District operates a successful before and after school program and there is very strong support for the arts and music, and athletic programs. The most significant engagement issue the District is facing is the school building project. Dr. Blake explained that it is mission critical to build community support around the project.

Dr. Blake stated that he believes the staff are hard working and dedicated to providing the best education possible and meeting the individual needs of all their students. They readily participate in professional development opportunities both during the school year and in the summer. The District has moved to a co-teaching model to better meet the needs of all students. Staff contribute the success of the Winthrop Elementary School moving up to Level 1 according to DESE to the co-teaching model.

This year, bargaining unit contracts are up for negotiation. Dr. Blake explained there is a lot of work to do. Most contracts are outdated, filled with irrelevant articles and confusing statements. There also needs to be a discussion surrounding the system in place for stipends.

Dr. Blake described Ipswich School District as a ship afloat with no clear direction. There is a lack of identity and there is currently no strategic plan for the District. He asked the question, where do we see ourselves in five years?

In reference to the MCAS, Dr. Blake believes that the District has had and continues to have solid assessment results. It is encouraging that under the new changes, Ipswich students have done so well.

Going forward, Dr. Blake listed issues for consideration that include:

Passing the building project and all that entails;

Negotiating all the contracts;

Developing and passing budget with an toward the funding “cliff and

Conducting a visioning process and developing a five year strategic plan.

The entry plan was a good opportunity for Dr. Blake to pull things together and create a “road map” to tackle. He feels comfortable so far and has enjoyed his time with the District.

E. POLICY SECTION D REVIEW

Dr. Blake presented policy section D, *Fiscal Management* for School Committee approval. These policies were first brought to the administrative team for feedback and then brought to the Policy Subcommittee for review and possible revision. Dr. Blake reminded the Committee that the final copy, approved by the Policy Subcommittee, is then presented to the full School Committee for final approval. It is the understanding that at the time the policies are presented to the School Committee, they have been fully edited and vetted.

There was some discussion about the policy DDA, *Principal Elements for Future Feoffees’ Distributions*. It was explained that at this point, minor wordsmith changes were made to the policy and that at a later point, the policy needs to be reviewed again and tightened up. Before any changes were made, however, they Committee should gather input from the people who administer the grants.

Mr. Whitten moved, seconded by Ms. Zito to approve policy section D. UNANIMOUS.

F. PRINCIPAL SEARCH UPDATE

Dr. Blake updated the Committee on the status of the High School Principal search. At this stage, Dr. Blake is reviewing the current principal job description, looking at similar job postings in other districts and working to create a job posting. He agreed to share the draft posting with the Committee for input before officially posting. It was suggested that along with School Spring, the job should be posted on the MASC website or the Superintendent listserv. At this point, a search committee has not been formed.

G. SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECT UPDATE

The School Building Committee and the School Committee will be holding a combined meeting in Thursday, January 11, 2018 at Town Hall in Meeting Room A at 7:00pm. The original agenda included a vote to submit the special education plan layout to DESE, but that vote has been postponed. Tomorrow night’s meeting will be a discussion on exteriors, massing and elevation. There are also meetings organized for Thursday, January 11th throughout the day to discuss special education layout plans, technology needed in the building and security. These discussion are taking place with Dr. Blake, the architects and school personnel. There are also two meetings on Wednesday, January 17th for invited

school council members and community members to learn about the project so far and to provide feedback on the project going forward.

III. SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. VOUCHERS AND BILLS

B. SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. ATHLETIC SUBCOMMITTEE-** Meeting on Wednesday, January 17th in the Guidance Conference Room at 6:00pm
- b. BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE-** Meeting on Tuesday, January 16th in the own Manager's Conference Room at 7:00pm
- c. GRANT SUBCOMMITTEES-**Have not met.
- d. OPERATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE-**Have not met.
- e. POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE-**Need to reschedule meeting.
- f. TURF FIELD SUBCOMMITTEE-**Have not met.
- g. SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE-**Previously discussed.
- h. NEW BUSINESS-** No new business.

IV. CONSENT

A. CONSENT AGENDA

S. Player moved, seconded by B. Hopping to accept the minutes of the December 21, 2017 Open Session Meeting. UNANIMOUS.

V. ADJOURNMENT

B. Hopping moved, seconded by P. Kneedler to adjourn the meeting at 9:07pm. UNANIMOUS.