

Ipswich School Committee
Thursday, February 1, 2018
7:00pm
MS/HS Ensemble Room

Minutes

I. OPEN SESSION

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Player, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:04pm with the following members present: Mr. Whitten, Ms. Kneedler, Mr. Nylén and Ms. Zito. Also present were Superintendent Dr. Blake and the Director of Finance and Operations, Ms. Cuff. Mr. O’Flynn joined the meeting at 7:27pm.

READING OF DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

Ms. Kneedler read the District Mission Statement.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Player read the following announcements:

1. The next two School Committee meeting will take place on Wednesday, February 7th and Thursday, February 8th in the MS/HS Ensemble Room at 7:00pm.
2. The next School Building Committee meeting will be on Monday, February 12, 2018 at Town Hall. Room to be determined.

CITIZEN’S COMMENTS

None.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

None.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Student Representative Mr. Bergener was not present at the meeting, but did submit a report which was read by Ms. Player:

“Midterms/Final Week went very well at the high school. No one was thrilled to spend two days taking exams. However, the early release did lightened the stress load. The new semester has been going well with no major hiccups. Select members of the environmental science class were invited to a breakfast with the Ipswich Rotary Club and received additional funding for certain projects. NHS is running its annual valentines chocolate fudge sale. It is a great gift for your special someone especially if that someone is yourself because the fudge is extremely delicious.”

Our winter sports have been coming to a close. Our boys track team continued their tradition of dominating the bakers division at CALs and our girls team also performed very well. All our other teams have had very respectable seasons.”

A. SUPERINTENDENT ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Dr. Blake reported on his busy two weeks. He attended a North Shore Superintendent Round Table Legislative Breakfast where Senator Bruce Tarr and Representative Brad Hill presented. The main focus of that presentation was to focus on issues facing superintendents and the circuit breaker amounts. He attended the Mid-Winter Meeting hosted by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, where they discussed the new Computer Science and Digital Literacy Standards. Dr. Blake met with the Department of Public Works to better understand the snow removal process. He attended a Policy Subcommittee meeting, as well as a combined School Building/School Committee meeting. Dr. Blake discussed his involvement with the Town Manager Search Committee. He attended a meeting to review contracts prior to negotiations and visited with the high school sustainability class. He attended his weekly leadership team meeting, where they discussed the budget presentation and reviewed policy. High School Principal, Mr. Dalton, met with Dr. Blake to review the NEASC report from their visit in October. Dr. Blake handled a personnel issue with the bargaining unit. Lastly, he attended a Crest Board of Directors meeting where they discussed the selling and buying/leasing of property in Methuen.

II. SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENTATIONS

B. TRI-BOARD MEETING DEBRIEF

Ms. Player discussed the Tri-Board meeting held on Tuesday, January 30, 2018 at Town Hall. Present at the meeting were the School Committee, Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen. Agenda topics at the meeting addressed town and school budget drivers, capital plans, revenue projections, a school building update and a legislative report from Senator Tarr and Representative Hill. Ms. Zito asked to acknowledge Ms. Cuff for her thorough budget presentation and an overall “job well done”.

It was suggested by a Committee member that the Committee look closely at the capital plan priorities at the elementary school level and suggested looking into alternative plans for maintenance and upkeep stating that if the new school is approved, they will only need to maintain those current buildings for a few more years.

After hearing the legislative report on the foundation budget, it was also suggested that now is the time for the School Committee to make a significant play for additional state funding. It was

decided that members of the Committee were going to reach out to MASC, Representative Hill and Senator Tarr to try and garner support.

C. SCHOOL CHOICE DISCUSSION

Due to the absence of some Committee members at tonight's meeting, Ms. Player decided to defer the full Choice discussion to a later date. A preliminary discussion occurred instead and the Committee was asked to look at the data provided and generate questions and comments for a future discussion. Ms. Player provided the Committee with background information on School Choice, stating that a decision as to whether or not a school is going to accept Choice students must be determined by May 1st. Historically, Ipswich has taken Choice students. The number of students and in what grades varies year to year, but is determined by current class sizes, enrollment projections and recommendations from the administrative team. School Choice is a blind lottery. Our District receives \$5,000 per Choice student. The average cost per pupil in Ipswich is \$14,000. A NESDEC report was created in 2015 to evaluate the Choice program in Ipswich and to investigate whether the program added value to the District. The report did state that Choice students brought value to the District, but it was noted that it did not bring much diversity. Although the report offered many recommendations, it was believed by members of the Committee that few were followed.

It was also explained that at one time the Choice program became a major source of income for the District. The larger enrollment numbers filled the middle school model, but then the high school was seeing overcrowding. At that point, choice funds were not enough and the program became controversial. Since that time, Choice enrollments have decreased, as well as the revenue stream attached.

The question was asked- do we use Choice to balance out enrollment decreases or do we try to right size? It was stated that yes, maintaining enrollment numbers using Choice students could be a good idea, but there needs to be a long term plan for future enrollment decreases.

Members of the School Committee listed several factors they felt would help them make an informed decision on the future of the Choice program in Ipswich that included:

- Enrollment projections
- Cost of Choice students with services
- Information on a middle school model if changed
- Other district choice policies
- A decision on how to react to declining enrollment
- The development of a group to identify the implications of a declining enrollment
- Possibly hire a consultant

It was also noted that the leadership team is looking for direction from the Committee as to how many kids they should be recommending. The leadership team also made the suggestion to Dr. Blake that it would be best to accept Choice students through January 1st and then close the program.

It was agreed that there are a lot of philosophical questions that need to be answered and that this is a far greater conversation than just accepting students from outside districts this current year.

D. POLICY SECTION E

Dr. Blake presented policy section E, *Support Services* 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.

Before the vote took place, members of the Committee discussed the need to more clearly define whose role it is to care for the grounds of each school.

Ms. Kneedler moved, seconded by Mr. O'Flynn to adopt Policy Section E as presented to the School Committee. UNANIMOUS.

E. PRINCIPAL SEARCH UPDATE

Dr. Blake gave a brief report on the status of the principal search. At the time of the meeting, there were 31 total applicants. He asked the Committee to weigh in on how the search process should go, to which they agreed that first a search committee should be formed. Once the committee is formed, all members would screen each resume and score them. They would then interview the top ten applicants and narrow the pool to three candidates. It was also suggested that the committee be comprised of roughly 2 School Committee members, 1 student, 2-3 faculty/staff, 1 special education staff member and 2 parents. All applications for the principal position must be submitted by March 1, 2018.

F. SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECT UPDATE

Ms. Player announced the next combined School Building Committee/ School Committee meeting will be on Monday, February 12th at which time the architects will present a cost estimate and the Committee will take a final vote of the schematic design. Next week, Dr. Blake is planning to meet with the School Councils of both elementary schools to talk more in depth about the status of the project thus far. Prior to the Tri-Board meeting on January 30th, there was

a small meeting held with the architects to discuss materials. Discussion at that meeting included the comparison of different products, colors, and benefits of each material. From there, the architects and project manager do two separate cost estimates and then come together to reconcile and will present the cost estimate at the next combined meeting.

III. SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. VOUCHERS AND BILLS-DONE

B. SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. ATHLETIC SUBCOMMITTEE- NOT MET**
- b. BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE- NOT MET**
- c. GRANT SUBCOMMITTEE- NOT MET. PAV IS MEETING WITH BANDI ON WEDNESDAY, 2/7**
- d. OPERATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE- NOT MET**
- e. POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE- MEETING ON 2/6 AT 7PM IN GUIDANCE CONFERENCE ROOM**
- f. TURF FIELD SUBCOMMITTEE- NOT MET. NEED TO RE-STRATEGIZE**
- g. SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE- ALREADY DISCUSSED**
- h. NEW BUSINESS- Dr. Blake**

IV. CONSENT

A. CONSENT AGENDA

Ms. Player moved, seconded by Mr. Hopping to accept the following:

- The minutes of the January 18, 2018 Open Session Meeting.
- To approve a donation of \$500.00 to support the FRC Robotics team to be deposited into the High School Gift Account.
- To approve a donation of \$1,000.00 to support the FRC Robotics Team to be deposited into the High School Gift Account.
- To approve a second donation of \$1,00.00 to support the FRC Robotics Team to be deposited into the High School Gift Account.
- To approve a donation of \$1,000.00 to support the Student Racing Challenge to be deposited into the High School Gift Account.

UNANIMOUS.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Carl moved, seconded by Nicole to adjourn the meeting at 9:01pm. UNANIMOUS.

