

**IPSWICH SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
MAY 25, 2016
MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL ENSEMBLE ROOM**

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Nylen called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m. Attending were C. Whitten, J. Bauman, H. O'Flynn, S. Player, and B. Hopping. Also present were R. Dolan and Dr. Hart.

READING OF DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

Reed Dolan read the Mission Statement.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Mr. Whitten spoke of the Sustainability Education dinner attended by over 100 people and served by 4th – 12th grade students just completed as a fabulous event.

Dr. O'Flynn commented on the IMADA celebration in the PAC, currently still taking place.

I. SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENTATIONS

A. SCHOOL BUILDING

Mr. Nylen outlined his process for proceeding. The action which is needed is submission of a document to MSBA, due by June 2. Secondly, the School Committee will be reviewing and discussing the vote which the School Committee had taken on a 775-student school. He thanked the audience of about 50 parents, teachers, and citizens for coming and encouraged them to speak but to be constructive and positive, with a shared interest in doing things for the Town and the kids. Compromises will be required and what is desired is a successful outcome with a new school. He wished to diffuse the tension and encouraged open mindedness. He then reviewed the status: School Committee has voted to support single 775-student configuration, supported by SBC consensus. Three sites are under active consideration. A submission, a pretty significant piece of work and a culmination of months of work, is due to the MSBA by June 2. The options are to submit or not, but not to change it. Next is a feasibility and design consideration that culminates in a preferred option which must be completed by September 29. Lastly, he gave a historic timeline of activities and votes: April 7 – 6/1 vote in favor of 775-student single configuration, April 28 and beyond - two Tri Board meetings reviewing the SC's rationale for the team, discussing financial considerations and tax impacts. Fin Com voted 4/3 in favor of the single school and BOS was unable to vote that night but three of them clearly supported a different option. On May 15- BOS voted 3/1 to support a 420-student school at Winthrop and a capital plan for Doyon to be developed. On May 18- SBC (11 members present) expressed their views about what had transpired. Almost all made comments and the TM read her letter. The position of SBC was largely unchanged: 7 in support/3 preferred other considerations/one didn't make a clear statement. On May 19- SC was going to

discuss/vote again, but the vote was postponed because the Board was 3 short on member attendance/voting power. SBC meets tomorrow night with a directive from the SC.

Mr. Nysten commented on emails on both sides of the issue. He opened up comments from the audience. More than twenty-five individuals from the audience gave their preferences, mostly for neighborhood schools with walkability and caring professionals.

Reed Dolan, SC student rep, went to the microphone as an eleventh grader and a former Winthrop student. He said he was torn because of the multiple pros and cons and takes his own experience into consideration. He remembered his preference for his small community but felt that we can take a risk to make a decision that benefits logistically, economically, etc. He is confident that the builders can maintain a small school community, and he hopes that the students will accept and like this. If we are talking about a tight-knit community, there is no better way. He didn't know half of the kids in the town until he was 12; he would have liked to have known them a lot earlier. He is in support of one school. The setting he had, being immersed as he was, is that it should be kept downtown.

Mr. Nysten then opened it up to SC members. Mrs. Bauman respects the opinions of Winthrop parents, is concerned about divisiveness, remembers the trials of Feoffee/Little Neck land sale, overrides, and feels that eliminating the far-away site is appealing. She supports the one K-5 school for elementary students.

Mr. Whitten, referring to his minority vote for a small school at Winthrop, appreciated Mr. Hopping's reminder to always keep the best interest of the students first. 775 is just too big. Doyon and Winthrop each have their own personalities. Doyon does need work and it would become a priority in the future, but political will has changed with a FinCom recommendation of 4/3 and a 3/1 recommendation from the BOS for two different options. The TM wrote a strong letter and SC should change as well. SC is not the majority of the Town of Ipswich. Many people don't want the Bialek site to be changed and \$60 million is needed to fund the large school. The Winthrop School has soul as a truly community-oriented school which serves at-risk children. Going to the opposite side of town isn't in anybody's best interest. Most of the best schools in the State are well under 500 students. Our teachers and administrators are our most important people.

Dr. Hart spoke of the themes of continuity, desired outcomes, and equity. The economics is a different question. Currently both elementary schools have wonderful school cultures and people are fearful of losing that. This K-5 school would have continuity of building relationships over time. Walkability seems to be absolutely critical. Decisions are made that align with values and goals. The point of a 775-student school is not a big school but creating a small-school feel. We have 3+ years to figure out how programmatically that will come—a program that creates a sense of community. The big building will work. It is the programs that will work.

We have two antique buildings, and kids deserve a better environment in which to work. Education within Ipswich is on fire with collaboration. All its children deserve room, facilities, technology, and he cannot do anything but advocate for that as Superintendent of Schools. While he is concerned about how much it will cost, he will advocate for the 775 so that the elementary program that addresses all of the values and goals can be created as it has been supported over the last two years.

Ms. Player equated the process to the failed first override because people were afraid. Once focused on what the district needed a year later and increased SC outreach, a decision was not made out of fear, and success was achieved. Originally the State invited only one school but when they visited, they realized both schools were in a mess. This project represents an opportunity for both districts. She is not aware that the State can fund another project in Ipswich. The combined costs, long term, are less by far. We would be losing millions of dollars. This is an incredible opportunity to improve the learning environment for elementary schools. The method of teaching is great, but the facilities hinder us. We need to change. Other districts like Andover and Amherst are doing exactly what we propose. We are representing students who have not yet been born. The SC cannot control where students live or their mode of transportation to school. We need to choose the best option on the table. The Feoffee battle left the Town reeling; now we have a program that allows tremendous opportunities for enhanced education. She urged the SC to make a decision that is right, not necessarily popular, but right and not out of fear.

Mr. Hopping explained that his concept of one school has not eroded. His professional life as a teacher and principal was a result of smaller schools that were closed because of the need for efficiency. He does take exception to some of the things that were said tonight. He sees equity as a pretty straightforward point: equal opportunity for teaching and learning for all students and staff. When you put materials and supplies into substandard buildings and overcrowded classrooms, kids sitting on floors, kids sitting on top of each other, desks crammed together, it is not conducive to teaching and learning. MSBA knows that "equity" was put on the table. With a small school, Doyon would be lost in the shuffle. He is huge on walkability and the Wegzyn property pushes walkability. He will not support a 775-student school at Doyon but wants a school in the downtown area as a single school. The kids come first whether a large school or a small school. We would be building this school from the inside out—design starts from the inside. That is when the community gets involved. Placed in the hands of the professionals, we can make this happen.

Dr. O'Flynn gave his prospective from years with SC. He reviewed student testing in both schools, an era of discussion re K-2 and 3-5, gifted programs, SPED in the Winthrop modular building, 480 kids in a school, then full-day K, a decade-old study which showed that population would go down, moved SPED's location, planned enormous investments in the schools and huge commitments to class size that didn't materialize. He reviewed his own experiences with transitions to schools in Town. The financial picture is much cheaper to do one big school. Demographics

are shrinking with five levels of elementary; it will be hard to balance class size at two schools. We could solve structural problems with equity, and distribute more opportunities for children. Separate education is inherently impossible and he believes in the 775-student school in Town. One single building with the best option is K-5. The original M/HS concept was feared—now it is a great success. A single building can be transformative for the kids.

Mr. Nylen sees, rather than the loss of community schools, the opportunity to come together to enhance education. The quality of education is the primary focus. With the idea that teachers will succeed regardless of small or large, why not give them the better resource of a large school. We get to design a building from scratch, do what we want to do for our educational system. It comes as a once-in-50-year opportunity. We have been reassured by educators that we can do it. Both principals whom he has talked with say that this single school model will work really well. Concern about the cost is shared, but the argument of too big is a failure of logic. It would be more expensive to replace two buildings over time than to do one building now—that is a fact. We shouldn't be driven solely by what the taxpayer thinks because every bit of financial information is to build a single facility. He considers Bialek to be a viable option for location because of the downtown location and still be sensitive to neighbors' concerns. We need the support of Town Boards and we may not have it at the moment. While it is troubling, it is no reason to stop and over time, he hopes to achieve the same success as with the second override attempt. The need is to put energy into making the approach that this move is the best for the Town: the single facility in the downtown location.

Mr. Hopping moved, seconded by Mr. Whitten, to eliminate the Doyon site option from further consideration. Mr. Whitten explained that the 775-student facility on the Winthrop site is problematic because the building barely fits and there would be parking for 60 cars when parking needs number up to 160 cars.

Mr. Kevin Murphy, SBC Chair, explained that MSBA requires that Winthrop cannot be removed as a site because a baseline model must be provided to them for a bare minimum submission. Mr. Murphy further stated that even the 420 or 490 Winthrop school would be difficult given the acreage and other issues. UNAN.

Dr. O'Flynn moved, seconded by Mr. Hopping, to approve a single 775-student elementary school in the walkable downtown area. While there was discussion among the audience members to include a cost figure in the motion, the SC felt that it is too soon to attach a number to the project. Mr. Hopping reiterated that, if all else failed, in order not to lose everything, the option is still needed to go back to a smaller school and a voted number would not be appropriate. Paul Queeney, OPM, came forward to give details of the certification of the vote and options for the future. Mr. Murphy stated that the preferred site plan is due on September 29 and the drop-dead alternate site search would probably be mid-August. Dr. O'Flynn asked the community for an option viable beyond Bialek. Mr. Nylen asked the audience (present and at home) to direct attention to

helping make this work and not see this as an opportunity to disrupt. This will be the best effort that the SC can make. VOTE: IN FAVOR- Bauman, Nysten, Player, O'Flynn, Hopping; OPPOSED- Whitten. Mrs. Krason, not present, had sent a letter in support of the single 775-student school.

Suggestions made by the audience for moving on were as follows:

1. Poll the citizens of Ipswich for consensus
2. Take the subject up at Fall Town Meeting
3. Decide on a deadline for another site
4. Give a cost figure. (K. Murphy was confident with a figure of \$58 - \$62 million)

B. SCHOOL BUILDING PDP SUBMISSION

Ms. Player moved, seconded by Mr. Hopping, that the SC advise the SBC and architect to submit the PDP to MSBA. UNANIMOUS.

III. CONSENT

A. CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. Nysten moved, seconded by Mrs. Bauman, to accept the May 19, 2016, Open Session Minutes. UNANIMOUS.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Bauman moved, seconded by Ms. Player, to adjourn the meeting at 11:22 p.m. UNANIMOUS.