

IPSWICH SCHOOL COMMITTEE WORKSHOP
AUGUST 10, 2017
TURNER HILL

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson S. Player called the workshop to order at 6:12 p.m. with the following persons in attendance: C. Nylen, B. Hopping, C. Whitten, P. Kneedler, N. Zito, H. O'Flynn, and Superintendent B. Blake.

Dorothy Presser, MASC Field Director, began the group meeting with introductions. Experience with School Committee work ran from Mr. Hopping's 19 years, Dr. O'Flynn's 14, C. Nylen's 6, S. Player's 5, C. Whitten's 2, the new members P. Kneedler and N. Zito at 2+ months, and Dr. Blake at five weeks. Because of the new members and the new Superintendent, who formerly worked in NH for many years, the workshop focused on duties, ethics, and State requirements for the Ipswich school leaders in their various roles. Education Reform in 1993 brought about many changes.

Mrs. Presser's first question to the School Committee was: "What is your most important responsibility? Answer: Hiring of a superintendent, and, following that, policy-making and budget preparation. Mrs. Presser added: setting goals for the District, striving for continuous improvement of student achievement, and writing curriculum.

"What makes an effective School Committee?" In discussion, the group covered vision of high expectation and focus on accountability for themselves and others in the system, and fostering strong relationships among themselves and with the Superintendent for operating effectively. Mrs. Presser mentioned using data to monitor progress but cautioned against DRIP (data rich, information poor). The School Committee must lead as a united team in collaboration, trust, and respect. Best practices are goal-setting and monitoring progress toward those goals, being able to change course if the desires aren't achieved with varied purposeful meetings focused on student achievement. Mr. Hopping commented that School Committee business meetings do not provide substantive conversations about teaching and learning.

She presented a chart for trust and respect including the SC's bridge between the community/Superintendent and the Superintendent's bridge between the staff/SC. The SC authorizes and monitors; the Superintendent recommends and implements. The SC has power exercised through official action at properly posted meetings, and governs through policy, financial resources, and community engagement. The whole process is sustained by SC/Superintendent relationship.

Individual SC members have no individual authority, no greater power than any other qualified voter, contribute to and communicate the vision and goals, support committee decisions, and are dedicated to the work on behalf of students.

Responsibilities by the School Committee, the Superintendent, or shared by both.

These were delineated and discussed individually, including hiring personnel, setting goals for the school system, evaluation of principals, setting policies, hiring the Finance Director, inspecting school buildings, handling complaints, contract negotiations, discipline of administrators, district calendar, length of lunch periods, student suspensions, overnight field trips, student dress, fall coaching applications, adoption of budget for the system, giving direction to employees, candidate recommendations, hiring and firing of teachers. On the matter of suspensions, Mr. Hopping questioned the law requiring parents to meet with principal prior to suspension decision. Mrs. Presser replied if the student is a threat to himself or others. If a SPED student, suspension can be up to ten days and the team must reconvene beyond the ten days.

Members asked Mrs. Presser a few questions re protocol. Dr. Blake advised that the SC members shouldn't be spending countless hours on SC matters—it is not a fulltime job—and Mrs. Presser agreed, saying it is time for the SC to move back when the Superintendent void is filled.

Open Meeting Laws.

Mrs. Presser cautioned that, if you have a phone with you during a meeting or read it, a phone becomes part of public record.

Protocol before meetings: Sharing of the template of plans for Board meetings and receiving supporting material before the meeting.

Protocol at meetings: School Committee members voiced complaints about the arrangement of chairs in relation to the audience, the room temperature which is often uncomfortable, the agenda which is too full and meetings which are too long and trying to accomplish too much, interruption by students with musical instruments, and public commentary which is not limited to a certain time. Mrs. Presser has a document entitled "Guidelines for Staff Presentations" and advised that presenters need to send information out a week ahead of time. SC members should give questions in advance to the presenters to answer that evening. There is need to tighten up AV and technology at the meetings, and subcommittees need more structure with a Chair and Minutes. Mrs. Presser suggested putting subcommittee minutes, using a template, into the pre-meeting package and not reporting at SC meetings.

Protocol between meetings: Discussion took place regarding individual members having phone conversations with other members. Some agreed that the chain of command has been broken. Dr. Zito spoke about best practice to save deliberations until the meetings. Facebook postings are illegal. Mrs. Presser distributed a document on operating protocols for a School Committee including samples by three Massachusetts towns. As a Lynnfield resident, she commented that the list in her town is updated every year, voted on, and put on the website.

Goal Setting.

Mrs. Presser reviewed student goals, teacher goals, administration goals, and concurrently, Superintendent, School Committee, and School Improvement Plan

goals, followed in descending order to Overarching Goals (big ideas). With the Superintendent's entry plan due to be completed some time in October, Ms. Player feels the SC should be in a holding pattern for now.

Key questions: Where do you want to be?

What goals will ensure progress this year?

How do SC and Supt work together?

Discussion: What do we view as the outcome for a goal?

How will the district "look" different when this goal is accomplished?

What steps (outputs) will lead to the desired outcome?

What evidence will help us understand progress toward achieving this goal?

Ms. Player laid out the steps: (1)Write the goals, (2)Write the steps, and (3)Include the outcomes. To Mr. Nylen's question of how to set up the goal session, Mrs. Presser suggested that a subcommittee make a draft of the goals. Ms. Player suggested that the Operations Subcommittee could come up with norms or protocols, asking members to send each of the committee's preferences.

Mr. Nylen and Mr. Hopping want to develop a message early on and be consistent, such as with the vote of funding a feasibility study for the new elementary school from the budget and needing to get to a better place with common language.

Meeting adjourned at 9:36 p.m. UNANIMOUS.