

IPSWICH SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2018
7:00 PM
MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL ENSEMBLE ROOM
MINUTES

I. OPEN SESSION

CALL TO ORDER

Sarah Player, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM with the following members present: Ms. Zito, Ms. Kneedler, Mr. Hopping, Dr. O'Flynn, and Mr. Whitten. My. Nylen joined the meeting at 7:48 PM. Also present were Joanne Cuff, Director of Finance and Operations and Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools.

READING OF DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

Mr. Whitten read the Mission Statement.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The next School Committee meeting will be on Thursday, December 6, 2018 at 7:00 PM in the MS/HS Ensemble Room.
- There will be a Mutual Concerns Subcommittee meeting on Tuesday, November 20, 2018 in the MS/HS Guidance Conference Room at 7:00 PM
- The Policy Subcommittee will meet on Wednesday, November 28, 2018 in the MS/HS Guidance Conference Room at 7:00 PM.
- On Wednesday, November 21st, students at the Middle School and High School will be dismissed at 11:20am. Elementary School students will be dismissed at 11:55am.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

None.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

None.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Stuart was unable to attend this meeting, however he sent in a report for the Committee via email stating "We had a vaping awareness assembly on Wednesday following the doors being taken off of all of the bathrooms in the school which is unprecedented at Ipswich. There has been negative reactions from parents teachers and students about this as we feel it doesn't allow enough privacy and it is a bit unsanitary considering the close proximity of the bathrooms and hallway."

A. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Dr. Blake reported on a busy few weeks in his office-

- Meeting with the Town Manager to discuss staffing patterns that include the hiring of a new payroll/HR department
 - Both the new HR Director and the Payroll Associate began work this week
- Meeting with Joanne, Laura H. and Mary G. regarding streamlining benefits for snon employees
- Meeting with the Feoffees policy working group
- Meeting with the IEA regarding a filed grievance
- Attended a NEC Board of Directors meeting
- Attended a Safety/Security meeting to discuss the drills that are taking place within the schools
- Meeting with Tom Gallagher, Athletic Director
- Attended an Athletic Subcommittee meeting
- Attended a Budget Subcommittee meeting
- Hired Co-Directors for the Tiger Tots Learning Center
- Participated in a Northshore Consortium policy meeting
- Attended a meeting with the IEA Stipend Committee

Dr. Blake answered SC questions around the status of the Facilities Director position that is going to be opening in December. He stated the job was currently posted and both him and the Town Manager will be conducting the interviews, hoping for a start date in December.

II. SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENTATIONS

B. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN- MIDDLE SCHOOL

Middle School Principal, Dave Fabrizio, presented is School Improvement Plan which included:

Goal Statement for Student Learning: : To improve student learning through continued training in personalized instruction, inclusion and innovative practices

Action

- Use Professional Development time to continue to train the Middle School staff to employ innovative practices in the classroom that improve student learning.

Benchmarks

- During summer 2018 offer staff opportunity write innovative curriculum during the district sponsored Blue Skies: Writing 21st Century Curriculum Workshop and the on-line Innovative Practices course
- Beginning in September we will allow workshop time and provide substitutes for our staff so that they can collaborate on curriculum and lessons.
- Beginning in September 2018 and continuing throughout the school year, provide staff with professional development that will drive innovative instruction.
- Beginning in July 2018 encourage staff to present about their innovative practices at state and national conventions.
- Beginning in July 2018 encourage staff to attend national conferences on innovative practices.
- Throughout the school year staff will continue to share and celebrate innovative ideas.

Goal Statement for Communication: Continue to improve communication between the middle school and the parents and community.

Actions

- The middle school staff will continue to look for opportunities to improve communication between school, parents and the community.

Benchmarks

- In September 2018 IMS staff will continue the practice of welcoming telephone calls to parents and guardians of all of our students.
- Beginning in September 2018 IMS Staff will continue to develop a more efficient method for parents to access Google Classroom.
- Beginning in September and continuing throughout the school year the IMS Staff will use Twitter and other safe social media sites to share the great work going on in our school.
- The IMS Administration and Staff will work with the district social media director to find new and efficient means to share information with the public
- Beginning in July 2018 the Administration will continue to update the school website

Goal Statement for Curriculum and Instruction: Support the 8th grade staff as they shift to a Humanities Model.

Action

- Offer staff the opportunity to participate in Blue Skies curriculum writing in the summer.
- Provide professional development time in the summer for teachers to create Transdisciplinary Units.
- Provide time and support for the Humanities Department to create curriculum

Benchmarks

- Encourage staff to take advantage of district-offered summer curriculum writing
- Beginnings in September 2018 provide professional development time for the Humanities staff to collaboratively create transdisciplinary lessons.
- Beginning in July 2018 afford the Humanities staff time to work with the Director of Teaching and Learning
- Beginning in July 2018 , Administration will meet with Humanities staff monthly to reflect on the class and discuss needs
- Beginning in September 2018 Meet with 6th and 7th grade Humanities teams to reflect on change process and needs.
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Mr. Hopping, seconded by Dr. O'Flynn, moved to support the Middle School School Improvement Plan as presented. UNANIMOUS.

A larger discussion about the overall process of creating a School Improvement Plan emerged with some School Committee members wanting a more uniform process and more aligned goals. There was discussion about the timing of when these plans are created and how it seems off. Some felt that the formatting of School Improvement Plans should be the same and it is often hard to provide feedback when each plan differs so much. It was also suggested that if the plans are created in the spring, then the administrators should be also presenting them to the School Committee in the spring.

Ferry Beach Update- Mr. Fabrizio took time after his School Improvement Plan presentation to update the Committee on some changes to the 6th Grade Ferry Beach Trip. The location of the trip has changed from their original plan to The Ecology School in Poland, Maine. Mr. Fabrizio has visited this new location and spoke highly of it. He explained that the curriculum itself would not be changing, but only enhanced.

Dr. O'Flynn moved, seconded by Ms. Kneedler to support the change in location for the 6th Grade trip as proposed by Dave Fabrizio. UNANIMOUS.

C. DISCUSSION ON RECENT IHS STUDENT BODY CONCERNS

Dr. Blake wanted to bring some recent issues taking place within the High School community to the School Committee to discuss. In recent weeks, there were two parties in town where underage drinking was taking place and police took kids into custody. Some student athletes were involved and were then disciplined based on the MIAA regulations. In total, there have been 32 student athletes that have been involved in chemical health related violation this year. Some parents are feeling frustrated with the punishment for student athletes and feel it is unequal to what other students in the school are given. Non-athletes who are caught within the community are not receiving discipline from the school. It has been proposed that the School Committee begin looking at their policies regarding discipline. It was agreed upon that they need to find a way to deal with all students, not just the athletes.

Another concern within the High School and the town is vaping. School administrators are finding that students are using the bathrooms as a place to vape and other kids who are not participating in that are afraid to use the facilities. Because of that issue, Principal Jonathan Mitchell has removed the doors off of all bathrooms in the High School. Dr. Blake clarified that stall doors remain on and there is no direct line of sight into the bathrooms, therefore still protecting the privacy of those who are using them properly. Initially there was some negative feedback, however the move has now garnered a lot of support.

To help address the issue of vaping, Dr. Blake is working with Ipswich Aware and there have been assemblies for students, teachers and parents. Ms. Player explained that vaping is not unique to Ipswich. When asked what the next steps are, Dr. Blake explained that the district needs to continue doing what they are doing- informing students and parents, working with Ipswich Aware, studying the results of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and building positive partnerships with the community.

D. HS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Mr. Hopping moved, seconded by Ms. Kneedler to accept the Ipswich High School Improvement Plan as presented. UNANIMOUS.

E. FINANCIAL UPDATE

Joanne Cuff, Director of Finance and Operations reported that:

- The business office has been watching the budget closely and although it remains in good parameters, there are three areas they are watching closely because they are seeing unexpected overages
 - May be \$30,000 short in the area of unemployment
 - MS/HS electric bills
 - The electricity is running high, not it usage, but in credits we should be receiving on the wind turbine
 - Joanne will continue to watch this and says it will be more important after the heating season to know exactly what the deficit will be in that account. Right now she thinks it will be about \$20,000
 - Legal fees and settlements
 - Unanticipated costs that have run about \$15,000
- Joanne also brought to the School Committee's attention the Town Recreation grants
 - Since the grants were first set out, the district has lost about \$16,000 from when they were first awarded
 - The grants are going to be greatly reduced for FY19 and the intention was that they were going to stop funding those grants entirely in FY20
 - These grants support many of the after school programs that the district runs at the elementary schools and middle school
 - As of 11/14, Joanne was notified that the grants will be funded for FY20 at the FY19 amounts- a total of \$9,500 across the district
 - Kerrie Bates explained to Joanne that the money previously used for grants was going to be repurposed for other initiatives
- The town went through an audit with no findings and one recommendation
 - The town should consider establishing a Compensated Absences Stabilization Fund
 - Would cover payouts of sick and vacation time should employees leave employment
 - It is estimated that should the town have to pay all employees at once, the total would be \$1.2 million
 - Annually, the town pays about \$40,000 in those types of costs
 - Joanne believes the town is going to create this fund
- The SC went through a thorough audit of our federal programs with no audit findings or recommendations
- The town and school are transitioning to the Harpers Payroll system
 - Has been an incredible process and Joanne wanted to thank all staff who have helped with this transition
- Joanne also included the projected target budget for FY20

F. INITIAL BUDGET DISCUSSION

Ms. Player first spoke about the projected target budget for FY20, a document that was submitted to the SC folder. Joanne helped to walk through the document with the Committee:

- Left Column A: The first section of the document came straight from the Override Budget Calculator.
 - Bring us to what the calculator had for a planned budget for FY20
- Column D: Comparison to what is actual for FY20 based on Sarah Johnson's budget calculation
 - If we use the budget that Sarah J. presented and FinCom approved, the school will only have to use \$454,000 from the stabilization fund
 - This is in comparison to us using the planned \$626,000
- Under the GREEN bar: The calculation as to what will be left in the stabilization fund if we fund to target using the \$454,000 to support the town budget.
- Question: what is the effect on the future of a possible override?
 - Mr. Nylen explained that the Budget Subcommittee had done some work and will continue to do some work, but believes that they are able to cover a sixth year of the override and possibly a little into a seventh year. He feels comfortable in saying the SC can extend the override another year with the contributions to date.
- Big picture challenge: This year the school district is going to take \$454,000 out of a \$2.3mil stabilization fund, the following year it will take out a million dollars and then the year after that it will be gone. One of the ways to improve the ability to get another override and improve the school's capacity to survive once the override has ended is to bend the curve now. The SC should be giving direction to the administrators and Superintendent.
 - Possibly not take all of the \$454,000 out of the stabilization fund
 - Not spend all of the money
 - In light of declining enrollment, we should be making adjustments to our personnel
 - If we lose another override, we don't want to be facing a \$2mil cut
 - Bending the curve now makes it easier down the road
- Administrators will be receiving their budget documents in the upcoming weeks and are looking for guidance from the School Committee
 - Part of the issue is the SC just signed a new contract with teachers that have salary increases for the upcoming years, yet the administrators are still tasked with having costs low
 - The models in the schools remains the same, so it is hard to eliminate staff or change at this point
- At this time, the budget calculator has produced a number of \$33,575,00
 - Does the SC want to advise the administrators to target a different number or remain at the \$33 mil mark?
 - The administrators need a target number prior to their individual meetings the week of January 7th
- Dr. Blake shared that it is hard for him to ask for more cuts to a budget that he feels is already grossly underfunded. He said the SC has already made a commitment to a philosophy and is now trying to tweak it, meaning making cuts, in order to extend an override longer than they had originally promised

- The SC discussed the need for another override and the continuous need for overrides to sustain the budget
- It was suggested that the administrators should do some long range planning- in two years with the end of the override, what will the budget look like
 - Prior to going back to the town to ask for another override, the administrators and SC will need to explain why they have not made cuts and justify their current practices/ staffing patterns, as well as acknowledging the enrollment numbers
- It was decided that because FY20 is the last year of the override, it would be beneficial to begin the conversation about next steps now with the administrators, etc.
 - It was asked if the administrative team is aware of the cliff coming and when, to which Dr. Blake replied, yes. He said their focus is on teaching the kids they have the best they can with what they have both this year and next year and it is the SC's job to figure out a way to get them the funds to educate their kids
- Ultimately, the SC will use the next couple of meetings to determine clear direction for the administrative team

G. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATE

Mr. Nylen spoke about the Community Development Plan Committee which he is a member of. There are currently 21 members led by Ethan Parsons of the Planning Board. They have held one meeting and have decided that they need to find a planning consultant. A subcommittee has been formed to select the consultant. Prior to the end of this current year or the start of the 2019, the committee would like to begin the conversation about the focus of this community development plan. The goal of the document that they are trying to create would be a resource for the town, not a planning board document created to identify some issue. Mr. Nylen will keep the Committee posted on any new developments.

III. SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. VOUCHERS/BILLS

Done.

B. SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. ATHLETIC SUBCOMMITTEE

- Discussed the following:
 - Student athlete chemical health issues
 - Participation numbers in HS sports
 - Post season update
 - Contract for the turf field building
 - IMPACT testing
 - Challenged of transportation
 - User fees
 - Capital projects

2. BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE

- Discussed the following:
 - Long range budgeting

- Budget calculator
- Next meeting is December 11, 2018

3. **GRANT SUBCOMMITTEES**
4. **OPERATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE**
5. **POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE**
6. **TURF FIELD SUBCOMMITTEE**
7. **WORKING GROUPS**

Feoffees Working Group

- Discussed the following:
 - Final draft of survey to be sent to teaching staff
 - Confirmed participants in study
 - Next meeting is November 29, 2018

8. **NEW BUSINESS***

IV. CONSENT

A. CONSENT AGENDA

Ms. Player moved the Ipswich School Committee to approve the donation to be deposited into the High School Gift Account from the Ipswich Education Foundation in the amount of \$1500 for expenses associated with activities hosting exchange students from France. Seconded by Ms. Kneedler. UNANIMOUS.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hopping moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 PM, seconded by Mr. Nylan. UNANIMOUS.