

IPSWICH SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2019
MIDDLE/HIGH MEDIA CENTER
134 HIGH STREET, IPSWICH, MA

MEETING MINUTES

I. EXECUTIVE SESSION

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Player called the meeting to order at 6:40 PM with the following members present: Mr. Hopping, Ms. Zito, Dr. O’Flynn, Ms. Kneedler, Mr. Whitten. Also present was Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools, Joanne Cuff, Director of Finance and Operations.

Ms. Player moved to enter into Executive Session for the following reason:

- A. *MGL, Subsection of Law – Chapter 30A, Section 21*
Topic(s)
 - 2. *To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations*

Seconded by Mr. Whitten. A roll call vote was taken: 6 Yes, 0 No.

II. OPEN SESSION

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

The School Committee returned to open session at 7:12 PM. Student Representative Stuart Gellar, joined the meeting at that time.

READING OF DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

Mr. Geller read the mission statement.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The next School Committee meeting will be Thursday, March 7th at 7:00pm. Location TBD.
- The Turf Field Subcommittee will meet on Tuesday, March 5th at 5:30pm in the MS/HS Guidance Conference Room.
- The Budget Subcommittee will meet on Tuesday, March 5th at 7:00pm in the MS/HS Guidance Conference Room.
- The Athletic Subcommittee will meet on Wednesday, March 6th at 6:00pm in the MS/HS Guidance Conference Room.

CITIZENS’ COMMENTS

None at this time. Citizens participated in the Public Budget Hearing.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dr. Blake acknowledged the participants of the Choral Fest.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Stuart Geller, High School Student Representative

Mr. Geller reported that the Choral Fest was a huge success. A group of Seniors have returned from France. As a participant in the trip, he reported that it was a great experience. Intramural volleyball has begun. Lastly, the Middle School and High School are holding a contest to create a poster and video to address school attendance issues.

A. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Blake did not present his report tonight. He will present an extended report at the March 7, 2019 meeting.

<h2>III. SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENTATIONS</h2>

B. GREEN SCHOOLS PRESENTATION

Lori LaFrance, High School Teacher

Ipswich High School students, Eva Capobianco and Joanna Mullen were happy to report that Ipswich Public Schools had been chosen as one of three Green Ribbon Schools by the State. The district was able to achieve this level of certification through an application process the girls successfully submitted as part of their sustainability project. Both girls spoke to the significant research that went into this application process. They spoke to some of the strengths within the district to help reach the Green Ribbon status which included the reduction of energy use, replacing light bulbs with LED ones, composting in the cafeteria, carpooling, the garden outside of the high school and the placement of rain barrels at the schools. Both Eva and Joanne also discussed areas that the district could improve which included taking a closer look at the energy use at the middle and high school, as well as switching out the more environmentally hazardous cleaning supplies. Appliances throughout the school need to be updated to energy star appliances and there is still a significant amount of paper waste. To bring more awareness to the district's sustainability efforts, the group will be hosting a "ride your bike to school day" in the Spring and will be looking at ways to use more of the food from the garden in the cafeterias.

The girls are now in the running to achieve Green Ribbon status on the federal level. They will be visiting the State House to be acknowledged for their efforts.

C. ELEMENTARY FOREIGN LANGUAGE UPDATE

Sheila McAdams, Winthrop School Principal

Sheila McAdams, along with Sheila Halloran and members on a World Language Acquisition working group spoke to the Committee about their work researching the benefits of bringing world languages to the elementary level. This work is being done thanks to a FY19 Payne Grant awarded to them. Their research included work with a consultant to explore different types of programs. They began by creating a vision statement and included the goal of positioning students as global learners. Their focus is to create learners who can be adaptable in a diverse community, develop and share ideas across boundaries and who can be flexible, critical thinkers. The group also spoke to the cognitive benefits of exposure to world languages at a young age.

The rollout of this program would take place over the course of three years. The first year, one FTE would be shared between schools and funded through a grant. Kindergarten through grade two students would

receive language instruction in a co-teaching model. In year two, there would be two FTEs allocated in the appropriated budget and instruction would also be introduced to grades three and four. In year three, grade five and six would also be introduced to language instruction and an additional FTE would be funded. The group stressed that the additional FTE would not be a specialist, but rather a teacher integrated into the classroom. These FTEs could be regular teachers with a world language background or they could be world language teachers visiting for a year.

A discussion formed around what language would be taught at the elementary schools and it was explained by the group that they have yet to decide what languages to offer. More often at this age level, it is less about learning one language and more about how you learn any language. The goal of this new program is not to have children take eight to nine years of one language, but to be introduced to all types of languages and to integrate those into their learning.

When asked what the next steps were for the working group, they responded that they require reassurance that this position can come to fruition from a Payne Grant in FY20. The School Committee responded well to the presentation and asked that the working group provide them with their research, written proposal and an overview of the learning objectives.

D. FACILITIES UPDATE

Chris Rais, Facilities Director

Mr. Rais, the newly hired Facilities Director, introduced himself to the Committee and provided background on his experience prior to working in the district. He gave a brief overview of his first weeks in the district, touching on the hiring of his administrative assistant and Assistant Facilities Director. The School Dude assessment was completed and he is now waiting for the results. Mr. Rais updated the Committee on the status of the ensemble room, the condition of the boilers at the Winthrop School and the hydration station that will be installed during April vacation at the High School.

Both Dr. Blake and Mr. Rais explained that School Dude has been brought in to help create an inventory of the district's systems and help to create a workflow system and a preventative maintenance plan going forward.

It was suggested that Mr. Rais report to the School Committee on a regular basis.

E. PUBLIC HEARING FOR SCHOOL BUDGET

Sarah Player, School Committee Chair

Ms. Player opened the Public Hearing for the FY20 School Budget at 8:20 PM.

T. Wilson, Howe Street- Identified himself as a parent of four kids who attend the Doyon School. He expressed frustration with the preschool consolidation, stating that the logistics of getting his preschool student to Winthrop School while also having to get his other three children to Doyon is worrisome. He asked the Committee if there was a better way to handle the need to consolidate or make cuts to the program.

Ana L, Mt. Pleasant Street- Identified herself as a Winthrop parent. She expressed concern for the preschool consolidation and what she called the slashing of the RTI pyramid. She was sad to see that students in the program would be losing peer models and thought it would be a disruption to the kids on IEPs if the peer models were to leave the program early. She also expressed concern that changing school environments for students on IEPs may be challenging for them. She did ask the Committee if the fees for the program could increase to support teacher salaries.

Stacey K- identified herself as a Winthrop parent. She wanted to discuss communication around the proposed budget and asked the Committee how the proposed budget was advertised to the public. She expressed the need to be more transparent with the community about changes made in the budget like the loss of a reading specialist. She then asked for clarification on the Stabilization Fund and why it couldn't be used now.

Sara Allen, East Street- Discussed her concern regarding the cut of a reading specialist in relation to the digital crisis in our society. She believes that reading and world languages combat a number of issues like anxiety and are a critical skill children need to have.

Ms. Zito then address the Committee, asking what more could be done to be transparent. She emphasized a need to tell a positive story about what the district is doing. Mr. Hopping agreed, but also stated that with the inability to get a live feed of the meetings while the ensemble room is being finished and the impossible budget timeline, it creates a sort of "perfect storm".

It was stated that the decision to consolidate the preschool was not an easy one to make. The consolidation was done for efficiency purposes and the retirement of a teacher was the perfect timing to make that change.

Joanne Cuff explained in detail what the Stabilization Fund is and how it is used.

Marcia Gray, Beechwood Avenue- spoke about her experience with the last override and said the stabilization fund tells a good story for the community about how the School Committee has been good stewards. She also commented that the district should be mindful of per pupil expenses and the decreasing class sizes.

Ms. Player closed the Public Hearing for the FY20 School Budget at 9:08 PM.

F. BUDGET DISCUSSION

Sarah Player, School Committee Chair

A final discussion of the FY20 budget took place once the Public Hearing had closed. Dr. O'Flynn discussed the possibility of other ways to handle overrides and used Marblehead as an example of ways that both the Town and Schools could collaborate on negotiations.

Ms. Zito talked about the direction that was given to the leadership team prior to creating their budgets. The School Committee has tasked each administrator to build a zero increase budget. The Committee didn't ask them to look at it creatively or differently. She felt that the leadership team did well with what they were asked to do.

Ms. Player added that the administrators have been innovative. She reminded the Committee that it was not within their jurisdiction to weigh in educational guidelines.

Mr. Hopping said that based on the results he sees, the district is doing really well. He would like to focus on getting the appropriate resources for teachers in the classroom

Dr. Blake reminded the Committee of the question that Mr. Nysten asked of the administrators during the budget discussion which was to provide a wishlist should they have the money. Dr. Blake felt this was an

unfair question to ask “off the cuff” and pitted the leadership team against one another. The ideas, wants and needs were not already included in the budget because they were tasked with creating a zero budget.

Lastly, it was suggested that information about the impending budget “cliff” should be included in the presentation to the Finance Committee. It is important that the School Committee highlights and celebrates the fact they have been good stewards of the override money.

Mr. Hopping moved to Committee to accept the FY20 Appropriated Budget at \$31,040,701 plus the MS.HS outside debt portion of \$2,534,700 for a total FY20 Budget of \$33,575,401. Seconded by Mr. Whitten, UNANIMOUS.

G. FIELD TRIP COST DISCUSSION

Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools

H. DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN DISCUSSION

Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools

This agenda item was tabled until the March 7, 2019 meeting due to time restraints.

I. FINANCIAL UPDATE

Joanne Cuff, Director of Finance and Operations

This agenda item was tabled until the March 7, 2019 meeting due to time restraints.

J. TURF FIELD DISCUSSION

Hugh O’Flynn, School Committee Member

This agenda item was tabled until the March 7, 2019 meeting due to time restraints.

IV. SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were no School Committee reports at this meeting due to time constraints. There will be a report at the School Committee meeting on March 7, 2019.

A. VOUCHERS/BILLS

B. SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. ATHLETIC SUBCOMMITTEE

2. BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE

3. GRANT SUBCOMMITTEES

a. Payne Grant Subcommittee

b. Instructional Mini-Grant Subcommittee

4. OPERATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

5. POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE

6. TURF FIELD SUBCOMMITTEE

7. WORKING GROUPS

8. NEW BUSINESS*

V. CONSENT

A. CONSENT AGENDA

There was no vote taken on the consent agenda due to time constraints.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hopping moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:06 PM, seconded by Ms. Kneedler. UNANIMOUS.