

Ipswich School Committee
Budget Presentation to the Finance Committee
Tuesday, March 13, 2019
Ipswich Town Hall, Meeting Room A

Meeting Minutes

School Committee Members: Sarah Player, Charles Whitten, Pavica Kneedler, Nicole Zito, Barry Hopping (7:40pm), Hugh O’Flynn (7:42pm), Carl Nysten (7:45pm)

Finance Committee Members (FINCOM): Jamie Fay (JF), Walter Hartford (WH), Janice Clements-Skelton (JCS), Tammy Jones (TJ), Mike Dougherty (MD), Robert White (RW), Christopher Doucette (7:41) (CD)

School Administrators: Sheila Halloran, Sheila McAdams, Beverly Hegedus, Tracy Wagner, Dave Fabrizio, Keith Borgen, Jonathan Mitchell, Joanne Cuff, Brian Blake

Call to Order: Sarah Player, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:37pm.

Citizen Queries: None

Budget Presentation: Dr. Brian Blake presented his FY20 budget on Tuesday, March 12, 2019. Tonight’s meeting is a continuation of the discussion/questions from the Finance Committee (FINCOM) to the School Administrators.

Discussion/Questions:

Circuit Breaker Fund:

WH- Asked if Beverly Hegedus could speak to the special education programming

- Bev reviewed a good overview of the Special Ed department

Fixed Costs:

JCS- Wanted to hear more about the health insurance and the 2.5% decrease in costs that was discussed.

- Sarah Johnson, Town Finance Director explained the cost of healthcare in FY20

Special Education Expense Budget:

JCS- Was happy to see between FY18-19-20 that costs are stabilizing. She talked about combining the preschool programs and asked how it would affect the special needs program. Is it still integrated?

- It is an integrated preschool with peer models
- Prime time do it- consolidating while still addressing needs of the targeted needs of children

MD- how are we managing space in one location? Was there an issue with space? Why one school over another?

- Sheila M- space not an issue. In same preschool space. Being creative with scheduling to avoid overcrowding. Have changed amount of slots oen

MD- what is the space at Doyon being used for?

- Will be creative with the space

RW- how many Special Education students from last year to this year

- Bev- roughly 300 students, just below 17%
- Ebbs and flows

JCS- is Special Education transportation also captured in this budget?

- Bev-Yes. Transportation has been a challenge for us and throughout the area

RW- from transportation perspective, how much can you spend from the 6.8 million in the Special Education budget?

- Joanne- For contractors, budgeted \$390,000
 - \$75,000 for vehicle supplies, repair, in district drivers

Compensation:

JCS- Is this number the totality of services for everyone in district?

- Brian- also includes stipends

JCS- Are all of the bargaining units in contracts or are they still being negotiated?

- Settled teachers and clerical. Settling custodians and TAs

JF- can you describe what you settled on?

- Joanne explained contracts

JCS- does this include staff brought on by grants?

- No. Those are not included in this budget. Does not include funding source from revolving accounts or grants

JCS-Do we use revolving/ grant money for staff?

- Jo- yes, help to pay for TAs

MD- If this year and last year is maintenance, the budget has increased by \$1mil each year. With declining enrollment, what are the drivers for the increase each year?

- Sped, salaries, healthcare

MD- Why such a large increase? Seems like a lot of money

- Jo- Biggest increase is professional staff. Not only their increase, but the movement of categories. Totalling 3.9%
- Supplies/ material going up, fixed costs always going out

JF- over the 5 years, are we roughly at the same staffing levels?

- Yes. May have decreases some teaching staff, but may have had to bring on more support staff based on the needs of the students. Although enrollment may decrease, the needs of the students we do have may increase

JF-when talking about the override, we talking about long term trends.

MD- should we expect million dollar increases each year. Seems unsustainable

- Hugh- always unsustainable. The only way to beat that are overrides. All address the structural deficits- settlements with the staff and fixed costs. The way out is money.

RW- are teachers compensated fairly compared to other districts?

- Brian- I believe so. Did a comparison in the negotiating process

JF- Increase in compensation is roughly %%. Not a huge jump. Has been bigger before

RW- Town side, broke barrier of 100k per person. Thinking about a 2% increase each year means over 100k at the end of the contract for 40+ teachers.

Professional Salary:

Done.

Elementary Schools:

JCS- Would like both Sheila H. and Sheila M to speak to how the schools will be working together.

- SH- staff do professional development together.
- SM- everytime the town offers opportunities for kids to work together, like sports, the kids know each other. It is easy to find different kids on different playgrounds. If there a program at one school, it is often offered at the other schools.
- SH- FRIES at both schools work well together
- SM- B23 also helps that
- Brian- SC has a working group to discuss the elementary schools
 - Want to make sure that the experiences are similar at each school, curriculum is aligned, kids are have similar experiences at each building

RW- What are the challenges you are experiences this year? Either unique or worries you as these kids grow older?

- SH- attendance is not an issue at the elem. Level
- SH- social/ emotional needs of students big challenge
- SM- Stresses on families are real and filter down to the kids. Parents can't get to the meetings and in the schools. Communication becomes a bug challenge. No denying that tech access is a challenge in multiple ways good/bad
 - Doing lots of interventions in both schools with reading and vocabulary enrichment

Doyon Enrollment-

TJ- Both Schools: Starting to get below 20 kids per class. If numbers continue to decline, have you started to look at creative ways to decrease staff if we can't support them?

- SH- A lot of kids come in at first grade. Hard to predict numbers. Need to maintain smaller class sizes
- SM- configuration complicated. Had some convos about the future. Need to look at what the state will allow with consideration to testing. It will take a consider amount of planning and research to implement

RW- Feoffee grants for FY20, do you have ideas that tie to the one school that could be done for both schools?

- SOAR grant was written for both schools
- World language for both schools
- Everytime we write a grant, we consider both schools

RW- are there field trips that you're not doing because of costs?

- SM- Opposite, most towns do far fewer

JF- Please explain the staffing changes at each school.

- SH-Down a preschool teacher
- SH-TA/RBTs that will be shifted over to schools
- SM- changed the preschool configuration-
- SM- early childhood speech pathologist
- SM-Cut a reading specialist because of honing RTI
 - Gamble, but cost savings
- SM-Had changes in SPED needs, reduction of RBTs that moved to middle school

Building conditions- Doyon

MD- why don't you have your own office?

- Building are 57 years old. If there is a leak or problem, we need to shift and make due

MD- at times, there are sometimes classrooms offline due to issues

Brian- in this instance, yes.

MD- what was the overall cost of the last problem? What is the overall issue of the leaky roof?

- Leaks at times of snow and rain, most weather problems
- Brian- we've been chasing a number of problems with the roof in the past two years.

MD- What are some other concerns with the building that pops out?

- SH- roof and univents

Brian- in capital plan, we have \$50,000 set aside to address the Doyon roof

MD- after this last event, is there a way to assess the other conditions to be proactive rather reactive.

- Brian- would defer the questions to facilities
- CD- School Dude is being proactive

Highlights- Doyon

- SH walked the FINCOM through the each bullet point

JCS- any accomplishments or programs that went well last year

- SH- very proud of the staff, students, parents. Students love the STEAM projects and literacy work with that

JF- Are there any male teachers at Doyon? DO you recruit

- 3. SPED, PE, and Music
- SM- maybe you should ask if we are recruiting more diverse to meet the needs of our students. Right now our teachers don't look like the students. It's difficult.
- Tracy- research shows that students of color are taught by teachers of color, those students are more likely to continue onto college

Winthrop School

JCS- looking at numbers, eerily similar enrollments at both schools

JCS- Is there a reason the combined grades don't exist anymore?

- SM- based on the state standards which have changes. Accountability for grades are tighter

MD- What are your attendance issues?

- SM- no issues

Sheila M- walked FINCOM through the highlight slide

JCS- can you explain co-teaching

- SM explained the co-teaching model

JF- can you go over the changes in staffing.

- FY19 added a psychologist under the counselor line
 - No change in staff for that

JF- is there a benefit to having it a Special Education position?

- No. Easier to report

MD- What are the biggest building challenges?

- Leaks. Heating issues, but had proactive work on that in classrooms and with boilers over winter break

Middle School:

Enrollment:

TJ- Set up pods based on class size of 160. Classes are significantly smaller. Ratio now 1:17. Don't think this is sustainable. What are you doing to address class sizes?

- DF- looking at this. Moving toward a humanities model. MS is a philosophy. Looking to maintain philosophy while making cuts. We recognize this as a need to address

JCS- is there a point where the class size lowers enough that it impedes the learning?

- They say 20 kids is the ideal class. 12 or less would be difficult

RW- With regard to private school interest in 8th grade, where does that stand?

- Not yet. Too early to predict. Usually 13% leave. Smaller number applied to Whittier/Essex.

Dave F walked FINCOM through the highlights

JCS- Do the FTEs leaving elementary match the increase FTEs coming to middle school?

- Not always a 1:1 correlation

RW- with regard to cuts, do we still have what we need to perform tech wise? This won't harm anything?

- Still in good shape

JF- Added TA in health services

- Same position, just moved from TA line to health services
- 4 staff moved up from elementary schools

JF- What is the gender makeup of the faculty

- 25% male
- No diversity

JF- Do you find it helpful to have a male teacher?

- Yes, but we hire the best teacher in the interview process
- Tracy- nationally, 80% of teachers are white women

RW- Challenges at the MS?

- Pressures of society have changes
- Kids with high anxiety
- Hormonal changes
- Pressures of tech/ social media

RW- Are field trips happening?

- Yes. very big on site based learning

JCS- what is the device policy at MS?

- Dave explained the policy to FINCOM

High School:

Jon introduced himself and gave a little background.

Enrollment:

Jon- classes are deceptive. Offer wide variety of electives, some have small sizes and other more popular classes are larger

RW- how many choice students in 9th grade would you like to take?

- As many as we can

RW- what are strengths of school/ challenge you see

- JM- nature of kids, lot of teacher leadership impressed
- JM- need to find ways to continue to show improvement, complacency. Continue to push past good and strive for great

JCS- is no choice students, how do we structure class sizes with the 121 class size.

- Can be creative with elective offerings

JCS- What are we seeing about the movement away from block schedule?

- Teaches and students like to stay for full year. No perfect schedule

JCS- Retirements. How are we looking for possible retirements in the future

- No one this year, but maybe 2-3 in the upcoming years

RW- college acceptances looking for class?

- Always looking really good.
- Students do well with financial aid
- It's not always about the big name schools, but more about the school best matched for the student

MD- who decides the curriculum?

- State standards decide that

JCS- Is there still an Institution for Savings branch in the HS?

FINCOM/Admin discuss financial burden/ teaching finances to students

Jon M. reviewed the highlights for the FINCOM

Jon/ Dave spoke to the heating issues within the MS/HS

WH to Brian- how are you tracking air quality?

- Have brought in companies to test. Have those results in the facilities department

RW- what percentage of kids take AP courses?

- Hard to tell at this time. At least 20% of kids take at least one exam

RW- Are kids still doing virtual high school?

- Fill up every year

JF- how are we doing with the bottom 5% of kids

- If they're here, they're doing great
- A lot involved in robotics, empowers kids to problem solve
 - Wish we had more offerings
- Tracy- new guidelines about lowest performing students with the state and how to target them

JF- how are we doing with the dropout rate?

- Lower percentage. Uptick because one student dropped out recently
- Where we are struggling is with chronic absenteeism

RW- Can you talk about your absenteeism again

- 10% of students will be deemed chronically absent

District Wide Operations:

JCS- provide quick overview of what is included in district wide operations

- Brian referenced two the section of the book

JCS- What are the factors driving the 6.56% increase?

- A little bit of everything
- Wind turbine credits coming to end at rate they were
- Fuel oil is increasing
- Gas is increasing

JF- what is basis of gas/electricity cost projections

- Based on rates electricity company provided/ gas provided
- Increase in electricity due to increase rates and lack of wind turbine credit (\$80,000)
- Increase in gas is based on rate increase that was locked in October

JF- what is the \$10,000 for wind turbine repairs

- Smaller maintenance repairs

District Wide/Central Office Highlights:

JCS- what falls under this category?

- Reserve funding for anticipated contract increases
- 1.0 Integrated tech specialist

RW- Can we talk about the new hiring

- Was previously in the budget, reduced in last year's budget
- Based on future needs, added it back it.
 - Overseeing tech committee
 - PD
 - Working on tech plan
 - Overseeing development of computer science standards/curriculum
 - Would have a teaching background
 - Liaison between teachers and tech

RW- are there computer programming classes?

- Yes. Looks different at different levels

JF- Unemployment increased significantly

- FY19 was budgeted low
- Looked at staffing changes in the year ahead and did calculations based on changes
- Unemployment self-funded by district

JCS- Do not need another meeting.

Adjourn: Ms. Player moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:43 PM, seconded by Mr. Nysten. UNANIMOUS

