

Ipswich School Committee
Thursday, August 22, 2019
7:00 PM
MS/HS Ensemble Room
MEETING MINUTES

I. Open Session

Call to Order:

Mr. Hopping, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

Members Present: Mr. Hopping, Dr. O’Flynn, Ms. Gilliam, Ms. Kneedler, Mr. Whitten, Mr. Stevens and Mr. Nylen.

Also present: Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools and Joanne Cuff, Director of Finance and Operations

Reading of the District Mission Statement:

Mr. Stevens read the District Mission Statement.

Announcements:

Mr. Hopping read the following announcements:

- Opening day for all staff is Monday, August 26th.
- The first day of school for all students is Wednesday, August 28th. Thursday, August 29th is a regularly scheduled early release day. There is no school on Friday, August 30th and Monday, September 3rd.
- The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 5th in the MS/HS Ensemble Room at 7:00pm.

Citizens’ Comments:

There were no citizens’ queries.

Special Acknowledgements:

Dr. Blake acknowledged the custodial staff for their work preparing each facility for the opening of schools.

Mr. Hopping welcomed Greg Stevens, the newest School Committee member, to his first meeting.

I.B.Superintendent's Administrative Report

Dr. Blake reported that since the last School Committee meeting, he attended his weekly meeting with the Facilities Director, checked in with Tracy Wagner regarding professional development, met with the Town Manager and Facilities Director to review the Dude Solutions report, met with Beverly Hegedus regarding special education needs and reviewed the closing of FY19 with Joanne Cuff. After his brief vacation, Dr. Blake attended a Northshore Education Consortium Board Meeting and met with both elementary school principals and Tracy Wagner to review the new Social Studies standards.

Dr. Blake hosted an administrative retreat on August 19th and 20th. At the retreat, administrators reviewed the School Committee goals, reviewed the Strategy for District Improvement, discussed the Educator Evaluation System and calibration exercises, as well as reviewed the curriculum review document, discussed school safety, opening day plans and loose ends.

After returning from the retreat, Dr. Blake dealt with a personnel issue, visited the Blue Skies professional development course at Town Hall and is currently preparing for Opening Day and the start of school.

I.B.Financial Report

Ms. Cuff reported that the Business Office had been very busy closing out FY19. She is happy to report that FY19 closed out with a zero dollar balance remaining in the appropriated budget-meaning nothing will be turned back to the Town. She did mention the remaining encumbrance total of over \$400,000 noted in the financial documents provided to the Committee, seemed to be large. Ms. Cuff explained that total was for facilities projects that happened late in the year. The funds were encumbered in anticipation of bills to be paid in July.

There was also an opportunity this year to prepay some FY20 tuitions. Over \$170,000 in tuitions for FY20 can be paid from the FY19 budget. Ms. Cuff explained that this is a legal procedure to help districts move funds forward to the next year.

When looking at the revolving and gift funds, they also closed with remaining positive cash balances. A quarterly report of all those accounts was provided to each member.

Highlights from this report included:

The Choice account ended the year with a balance of \$991,000 and although they budgeted \$300,000 to assist with paying health insurance costs, only \$87,000 was needed to offset that cost.

In the area of circuit breaker funds, the district was a little over budget, using an additional \$90,000 in funds. This was not due to unanticipated expenses, but rather the decision to over-expend the budget was to keep the district in compliance with Circuit Breaker Laws. According to law, the District must spend a year's worth of receipts in the next two years following.

The Food Services Department did very well this year and they were able to close the year with a positive fund balance increase of almost \$30,000. Ms. Cuff attributed this increase to a change in the membership of the buying/purchasing group and the streamlining of personnel hours. She also explained that a new position has been created for someone to do managerial work at the Doyon School and take on the Food Service Director role. With someone "in the trenches" there is a lot of opportunity to improve the food service programs.

Ms. Cuff replied to Dr. O'Flynn's question about student food service debt, stating that the amount of unpaid food service balances from FY19 was roughly \$3,000. The free and reduced lunch letter was sent out to all families for this school year and is also available in the school offices for anyone interested.

The Special Education Stabilization Fund has a fund balance of \$266,000 in it. At the last Town Meeting, \$100,000 was put into that account. Ms. Cuff hopes that next year, more money will be put into that account to build the balance to slightly over \$300,000.

The Stabilization Fund has an end of year balance of \$2,563,000 which is significantly greater than the expected balance at this time. That fund lies in wait to use in the years ahead.

Mr. Hopping asked Ms. Cuff about the balance in the School Bus Transportation line. She replied to him stating that the fund has a balance of \$216,000. Each year as the district receives funds for that account, they are banked to offset regular education transportation costs. In the past few years, they district was able to use it less than originally planned because of a greater transportation contract at a rate lower than anticipated. Ms. Cuff also noted that the transportation fee rates have not changed since the inception of the program.

Ms. Cuff spoke to the changes and updates to the bus routes for this school year to address some of the overcrowding issues that the district dealt with last year. All bus routes are posted on the website.

Ms. Cuff shared with the Committee that the district received \$636,000 in grants in FY19. All grants will be expended in full.

She gave a brief FY20 update. A warrant article was submitted to Tony Marino for the upcoming Special Town Meeting this fall. She is expecting \$51, 375 from additional state aid be added to our budget.

Powers and Sullivan has been in for two weeks for an extensive audit of the school and town records and grant programs. Ms. Cuff believes it went very well and that there will be a very good audit report town-wide.

All the Feoffee Grants lines have been established in MUNIS so teachers can begin purchasing.

There was an audit done on the Student Activity Account at the High School that also went very well.

Ms. Cuff addressed Mr. Nylen's questions regarding a decline in funds in the Extended Day Program (EDP) line. She explained that in the spring, Ms. Gooby does a lot of extra activities. This balance does not reflect participation in the program.

II.C.School Committee Workshop Review:

Mr. Hopping reviewed the agenda for the School Committee Retreat held on August 14, 2019. The main focus of the meeting was to discuss the School Committee goals for the 2019-2020 school year. Members were also asked to participate in a visioning exercise where they discussed what the district would look like in 2030.

Goals Review:

Mr. Hopping has asked that the subcommittees work to generate goals that can tie into the full School Committee goals. For example, the Budget Subcommittee should draft the budget goal, the School Building Working Group should draft a School Building goal. He has asked that each subcommittee and working group find a time to meet and discuss their goals prior to the next School Committee meeting on Thursday, September 5th.

Each School Committee member then presented their ideas and comments for each of the four topics for goals.

1. Budget

The first goal is to focus on the budget. At the School Committee Retreat, the group discussed prioritizing the following: Articulating a vision from the Superintendent/Administration, looking at zero-based budgeting, planning for an override(s), focusing budget requests that mirror School Improvement Plans, creating a budget reflective of the needs/goals that have been identified, and Feoffee Grant big requests.

Feedback from the School Committee included:

- If there is to be a focus on zero based budgeting, the current budget timeline would need to significantly change in order for the administrative team to have time to prepare
- Maybe zero based budgeting should not be the format that is followed
- Need to make sure that the administrative team and the School Committee brainstorm what district looks like in 2030 prior to planning for the override
- The School Committee and administrative team need to commit to a vision for the future and the budget will follow
- It would be beneficial for the administrative team to meet with the superintendent earlier in the budgeting process
- The budget should reflect the needs of the school.
- Need to take a closer look at School Improvement Plans to more clearly identify needs in the buildings. Would then like to see money in the budget to address those needs rather than line items just transferred year to year
- The administrative team and teachers need to discuss their needs and what is working.

Mr. Hopping then asked the members of the Budget Subcommittee to create a draft goal that incorporates both short term and long term goals for the district.

2. Infrastructure

The second goal focus is infrastructure. At the School Committee Retreat, the group discussed prioritizing the following: Addressing the needs identified in the Dude Solutions report and restarting the elementary school conversation.

Feedback from the School Committee included:

- Need to make sure that the town and community have their voices heard in the next school proposal
- First discussions should occur in executive session prior to information being released to the public

- There is a need to address the immediate needs found in the Dude Solutions report
- Establish a timeline to address immediate needs

Mr. Hopping has asked Chris Rais, Facilities Director, to attend the next meeting in an effort to dig deeper into the Dude Solutions Report. Mr. Hopping also asked the School Building Working Group to draft a short term and long term goal to be presented at the next School Committee meeting.

3. Community Engagement

The third goal focus is on community engagement. At the School Committee Retreat, the group discussed prioritizing the following: creating and distributing an IPS newsletter from the School Committee with Feoffee's highlights and re-engaging the Communications Subcommittee.

Feedback from the School Committee included:

- There should be more communication from the School Committee to the community
- Increase communication from/between Working Groups/Subcommittees
- Centralize a place for information so that anyone from town can easily locate it
- Highlight a Feoffee grant each month
- Links to all building newsletters in one place
- Improve communication from both the School Committee and the District
- Use social media platforms to provide information that is simplified and concise
- Reach out to people i.e. coffee shop hours, visiting different stakeholder groups

Mr. Hopping asked that the newly revived Communications Subcommittee determine short term and long term goals to be presented at the next School Committee meeting.

4. Education Model/District Vision

The fourth goal focus is on the educational model/district vision. At the School Committee Retreat, the group discussed prioritizing the following: the Elementary School, High School and Middle School models.

Feedback from the School Committee included:

- Should be working directly off of the Strategy for District Improvement created by the administrative team
- Need to establish a strategic plan for the district for the next 10 years addressing curriculum, staffing patterns, facilities, etc.
- Think about what we are doing in our classrooms and what does teaching and learning look like
- Start by backwards planning- in 2030, what will be the norm for the district

Vision 2030

Mr. Hopping asked the Committee at their retreat to perform a brainstorming exercise focusing on things the Committee would like to see embedded into our schools and become who we are as a district over the next ten years. He used the example of having a World Language program for all students K-12.

Mr. Hopping then asked the Committee to each provide their ideas for what 2030 looks like, stating that at this stage, no idea was too grandiose. In the year 2030, what should the Ipswich Schools have or be known for? Mr. Hopping asked what do we want our graduates in 2030 to look like, to know?

Comment/suggestions from the School Committee included:

- A need for more support for students' "big picture goals"
- More of a commitment to English/literature
- More focus on reading and writing skills
- A focus on student goals after high school
- Discovering ways to demonstrate a student's intellectual capacities without the SAT/ACT tests
- Possibility of a Dean of Students role, helping kids map out their goals freshmen year
- A larger focus on students not entering college, preparing them for the workforce
- Large College Boot Camp program
- Ensuring that every student is receiving academic rigor
- Need to evaluate what curriculum instruction and assessment looks like
- Establish a K-12 World Language program
- Diversify career and college readiness
- Introduce a dual enrollment program
- Review the transition from elementary school to middle school to high school
- Encourage better communication from administrators in each building with each other
- Re-evaluate athletic fees
- Exposure to more diversity, possibly through volunteer exchange programs
- Provide more opportunities to bring students to the city
- Create a better way of tracking subject matter acquisition and progression
- Reduce and/or eliminate the difference in experience of affluent students
- Reimagine the educational delivery model
- Strengthen the community/school connection
- Expand building use to include more community programming
- New buildings
- Teach students to become better global citizens ex. Sustainability, financial literacy, etc.

- Financial literacy course should become a requirement for high school students
- Involve the community to introduce career paths
- Strengthen internship opportunities
- Working on kids' intrapersonal skills
- Elimination of cell phone use in schools

Mr. Hopping ended the discussion by suggesting that the Committee look at the list they developed and begin working to tie it into what the administrative team developed in their Strategy for District Improvement.

The Vision 2030 discussion will be an ongoing agenda item at future meetings.

II.D.TriBoard Review

A TriBoard meeting was held on Tuesday, August 13, 2019 with the Select Board, the Finance Committee and School Committee. Mr. Hopping asked the Committee to provide and comments or final thoughts on the evening.

Mr. Nylen felt that for the first time, the group was talking at a visionary level.

Ms. Gilliam felt that it was beneficial to have had Chris Rais and Tony Marino present at the meeting to walk everyone through the Dude Solutions report.

Mr. Hopping felt that the Dude Solutions report was a good roadmap to kick things into gear. His concern was that if they were to frontload all this capital to address major needs for the roof or HVAC system, would it then delay the building process?

Dr. Blake shared the importance of addressing those short term needs and taking care of the buildings that are in current existence. Even if they begin the process for building something new next year, it could be 7+ years before the building is built.

Mr. Nylen reminded the Committee that they needed to assign members to the new subgroups that were identified at the meeting.

Mr. Hopping shared that he would reach out for more direction prior to assigning members to any more groups.

II.E.Subcommittee and Working Group Assignments

At this time, Mr. Hopping reviewed each subcommittee and working group. He then read the names of the Committee members who had volunteered for each group. Those Committee members are as follows:

Athletics	Budget	Operations	Policy
Barry Hopping	Hugh O’Flynn	Pavica Kneedler	Barry Hopping
Greg Stevens	Carl Nylén	Chub Whitten	Sara Gilliam
X	Greg Stevens	Barry Hopping	Pavica Kneedler

Birth to Three Representative	Mutual Concerns	Turf Field	MASC Voting Delegate to Annual Business Meeting
Sara Gilliam	Barry Hopping	Hugh O’Flynn	Sara Gilliam
X	Pavica Kneedler	Greg Stevens	X
	Chub Whitten		

Special Education Parent Advisory Representative	Instructional Mini-Grant	Payne Grant	Communications
Pavica Kneedler	Chub Whitten	Pavica Kneedler	Pavica Kneedler
X	X	X	Sara Gilliam
			Greg Stevens

Audit Committee
Carl Nylén

Working Groups

Feoffee Report	Feoffee Policy	Climate	School Building	District Strategy

Barry Hopping	Barry Hopping	Chub Whitten	Chub Whitten	Barry Hopping
Carl Nylen	Carl Nylen	Carl Nylen	Sara Gilliam	Carl Nylen
	Joanne Cuff	X	Carl Nylen	Pavica Kneedler

Mr. Hopping then asked for each subcommittee and working group to report out more formally this year. Each group should use the meeting template that former School Committee member, Nicole Zito, created last year.

II.F. Opening Day Plans

Dr. Blake shared the agenda for Opening Day on Monday, August 26, 2019. The agenda included the following items:

7:45-8:15 AM	Collegiality, Connections, Coffee
8:15 AM	Convene in the Dolan Performing Arts Center
8:20 AM	Pledge of Allegiance
8:25-8:35 AM	Barry Hopping, Chair, Ipswich School Committee
8:35-9:05 AM	Welcome, Dr. Brian J. Blake, Superintendent of Schools
9:05-9:25 AM	Introductions of New Staff by Administrators
9:25-9:45 AM	Acknowledgement of Years of Service
9:45-10:00 AM	Rebecca Slawson, Margaret Madeiros, Co-Presidents, IEA
10:00 AM	Staff Meet with Principals in their Respective Schools

Dr. Blake also mentioned the New Hire Breakfast taking place on Tuesday, August 27, 2019. He extended an invitation for School Committee member participation.

II.G. Staffing Update

Dr. Blake reported that all hiring is complete with the exception of a part-time robotics instructor at the high school. This position has been difficult to fill.

Mr. Nylen asked that the new Middle School administrative team attend an upcoming meeting.

III. School Committee Reports

1. Vouchers and Bills- complete
2. School Committee Reports- all subcommittees have not met
3. New Business

After the Legislative Update at the TriBoard meeting, the School Committee discussed drafting a letter to Governor Baker to discuss the decline in state aid funding for Ipswich. A draft letter was

created and read by Mr. Hopping. He then asked the School Committee to review the letter and have all edits complete by August 28th. The letter would then be signed by Mr. Hopping and sent out on August 30th.

Mr. Nylen moved to authorize the Chair of the School Committee to sign the final letter. Seconded by Mr. Whitten. The motion passed unanimously.

IV.Consent Agenda

Mr. Hopping moved the Ipswich School Committee to accept a donation in the amount of \$700.00 from the Ipswich Education Foundation to be deposited into the High School Gifts Accounts. Seconded by Dr. O'Flynn. The motion passed unanimously.

V.Adjournment

Mr. Nylen moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 PM, seconded by Mr. Whitten. The motion passed unanimously.