

IPSWICH SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 2019
MS/HS MEDIA CENTER
134 HIGH STREET, IPSWICH, MA

MINUTES

I. EXECUTIVE SESSION CANCELLED
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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

II. OPEN SESSION

OPEN SESSION

Charles “Chub” Whitten, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM with the following members present: N. Zito, C. Nysten, P. Kneedler and H. O’Flynn. Also present was Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools, Joanne Cuff, Director of Finance and Operations and Stuart Geller, Student Representative.

READING OF DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

Stuart Geller read the mission statement.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The Ipswich School Committee will present the FY20 School Budget to the Finance Committee at 7:30 PM on Tuesday, March 12th, Wednesday, March 13th and Thursday, March 14th in meeting room A in Town Hall
- The Mutual Concerns Subcommittee will meet on Tuesday, March 19th at 7:00 PM in the MS/HS guidance conference room.

CITIZENS’ COMMENTS

None

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dr. Blake thanked Mel Powsner, the PAC Director, for her service to the Ipswich Public Schools. Mel was leaving the district to pursue a new job opportunity.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Stuart Geller, High School Student Representative

Mr. Geller reported that twelve students from the High School performed in the All-State music event and were selected to perform at Symphony Hall. There was a snow day on March 4th, which was enjoyed by the students. A blood drive was held at the school and well attended. Registration for Spring sports was going to close out this upcoming weekend. The Close-Up Washington, D.C. trip was taking place next

week and Mr. Geller was attending. He concluded that overall, it has been a good few weeks at the High School.

A. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Blake reported on a busy few weeks in the district, stating that the Educator Evaluation Committee has met and will continue to meet to refine the educator evaluation process. They anticipate to finalize the details by April. He has participated in negotiations for the clerical, teaching assistants and custodial bargaining units. Dr. Blake attended a North Shore Superintendent Round Table meeting, as well as a Crest Collaborative meeting and one with the Northshore Consortium. He also spent a day in Marlborough at the M.A.S.S. Mid-Winter meeting. He attended a Professional Development Committee meeting and has also dealt with various grievances. Dr. Blake is participating in a SEI/ ELL recertification course that consists of two days in person and four additional webinars. He has met with his leadership team and participated in a K-9 safety search at the High School. Dr. Blake met with both the Athletic Director and Director of Technology and also attended his weekly meetings with the Town Manager and the Human Resources Director. He spoke to his work with various subcommittees and working groups. Dr. Blake reported that an Assistant Facilities Director was hired and the position of Human Resources Manager was offered to a candidate. Lastly, he reported that he attended the Empty Bowl Dinner sponsored by the Rotary, visited the schools, attended the choral fest and dealt with some personnel matters. Overall, it has been a busy time in the district.

<h3>III. SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENTATIONS</h3>

B. FINANCIAL UPDATE

Joanne Cuff, Director of Finance and Operations

Ms. Cuff reported that all accounts are currently in good standing and the appropriated budget is in good shape. She spoke to the budget transfer sheet that was included in tonight's packet and explained that the reason for the transfers was to move money from grants. She also spoke to a Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) food service audit. This audit takes place every three years and is done at a different location each time. This year's audit was done at the High School. Overall, Joanne believed this to be a successful audit with thirteen, non-substantial findings. These findings included: paperwork errors, under-training staff, the sale of caffeinated beverages, food handling procedures, acceptance of foreign made foods, and the lack of a wellness policy and committee. Joanne and her staff were working to address these errors and report back to the State.

C. TURF FIELD DISCUSSION

Hugh O'Flynn, School Committee Member

Dr. O'Flynn had forwarded the latest estimate for the Turf Field Building. He reminded the Committee that the turf field subcommittee has been working on this project for some time and had hired the firm S3 Design to work as consultants to create a biddable document. The subcommittee has spent six meetings working with the firm to create the document that was shared with the committee. At their last meeting, the subcommittee and firm took what was considered to be the most expensive design and brought the cost down as far as they could. He explained that the 3,000 square foot building is estimated to cost \$1.5 million, which is more expensive than they had originally planned. Ultimately, they will need to raise \$1 million. Dr. O'Flynn explained that public sector construction is expensive and the breakdown in cost is roughly \$513 a square foot. This did ask if they could go outside of the public bidding process by using volunteer work, but were still awaiting an answer from legal counsel.

The subcommittee is now at a point where they can create a biddable document, which would require more collaboration with S3 Design. If the plan was to build this year, Dr. O’Flynn would suggest creating that document. The alternative is to leave the estimate in the state it is in and glook to begin fundraising

Dr. O’Flynn reminded the committee that funding for this project is from Feoffee funds and private donations. A discussion began with committee members as to whether Feoffee money is considered “public funds” and whether this building project may create a public image issue going forward. Ms. Zito expressed that there are more pressing concerns with school infrastructure and it may present an issue later when the committee goes to the public for another override. Mr. Nysten agreed that the committee will need to do a good job explaining this project and how it was funded.

It was agreed that if the community could be involved in the construction of this project through volunteer work with the hopes to alleviate some of the costs, the perception of the project could change. It was decided that prior to making the decision to either create a biddable document or begin fundraising, the committee will wait to hear feedback from counsel on public vs. private work. Joanne agreed to report back her findings at a later meeting.

D. BUDGET PRESENTATION DISCUSSION

Sarah Player, School Committee Chair

Ms. Player discussed the upcoming presentation of the FY20 School Budget to the Finance Committee on March 12, 13 and 14th and asked the committee if they had any feedback or suggestions to improve the presentation. The committee discussed changing the colors of the slide so that it was easier to read, adding more detail regarding the override plan, including MCAS results/data, information on the elementary facilities plan, including School Choice data, adding more information on the Middle School model, an explanation of the preschool consolidation and details of the strategic planning. The committee thought it important to discuss in more detail the Feoffees Grant distribution and the use of the funds, as well as further explain the stabilization fund, its use and how it is funded. Ms. Zito also acknowledged the objectives and “educational priorities” listed in the District Plan for Strategic Improvement and felt it was important to highlight how the district has stayed true to these priorities within their budget constraints and that the budget being presented supports those values.

It was asked by the committee that they be allowed to preview the updated presentation prior to the first night of the Finance Committee presentation.

E. FIELD TRIP COST DISCUSSION

Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Blake began the discussion by explaining to the Committee that this discussion is a continuation from the one that took place at the meeting on February 28th.

The Field Trip Working Group has created a rubric to be completed as part of the field trip application process to help determine each field trip’s connection to curriculum, cost, and accessibility. It is the understanding that this newly created rubric would help to prioritize which trips students are going on. The working group has asked that the School Committee determine how much is too much for a field trip and how much is too much per year for field trips for families and/or individual students with the hope they can input these numbers into their rubric.

At first, numbers were thrown out by different committee members for a limit for families to pay per year. The discussion then grew to include the cost of transportation, the difference in policies for field trips at

each school and the use of grants to further fund these trips. It was decided that ultimately, the School Committee could not hone in on a specific cap for families and it was suggested that there is further discussion about costs with the leadership team and working group.

F. DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN DISCUSSION

Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Blake explained to the Committee that the purpose of this discussion item on the agenda was to answer any lingering questions around the Strategy for District Improvement that was presented to the Committee at an earlier meeting. He explained that this document originated from the leadership team retreat this past summer and has been worked on, finalized and now implemented in the schools. The document includes three main objectives, priorities for the district, action items for each priority and checkpoints to insure that each objective is being met.

Mr. Whitten suggested the title be changed from the word “improvement” to “excellence”. The Committee and Dr. Blake agreed with this suggestion. It was also suggested that this document be uploaded to the district website for the community to view. It should also be included in the budget presentation as it acts as a major budget driver.

Dr. Blake explained that this is a living document and will be revised as priorities are being met.

<h2>IV. SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS</h2>
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A. VOUCHERS/BILLS

Done.

B. SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. ATHLETIC SUBCOMMITTEE

The Athletic Subcommittee met on Wednesday, March 6th. They discussed the following:

- Hiring of a new Varsity Softball coach
- Hiring of Gardy O’Flynn as the Varsity Tennis Coach
- Two open positions- JV Softball Coach and Throwing Coach for Track
- Mandatory Impact testing for lacrosse
- The potential to lease two vans
- Increase in transportation costs
- Capital Projects
- Scoreboard installation
- Assessment of the tennis courts
- Chemical Health policies
- Middle School sports participation up
- Numbers for swimming are down, especially for the boys
- Kathy Simms is retiring after her 21st year as the girls tennis coach

2. BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE

The Budget Subcommittee met on Tuesday, March 5th and discussed the following:

- The development of a district-wide strategic plan
- Financial updates
- The potential lease of two vans to be used for athletics
- Analyzing key budget influencers

3. GRANT SUBCOMMITTEES

a. Payne Grant Subcommittee

The Payne Grant Committee has not met. It is currently looking for several new members.

b. Instructional Mini-Grant Subcommittee

This Committee is looking for a student representative.

4. OPERATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

This committee has not met.

5. POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE

This committee has not met. Is working to find a time to meet.

6. TURF FIELD SUBCOMMITTEE

Dr. O’Flynn discussed this meeting during an earlier agenda item.

7. WORKING GROUPS

The Elementary Working Group met at the end of February and discussed the following:

- Reworked next steps
- Finalized a draft plan
- Revised the Education Plan
- Scheduled their next meeting for March 20th

8. NEW BUSINESS*

None.

V. CONSENT

A. CONSENT AGENDA

Ms. Player moved the Ipswich School Committee to:

- *To approve the School Committee Open Session meeting minutes from February 6, 2019.*
- *To accept a \$1,000 donation from Axis New England to the FRC Robotics Team to be deposited into the High School Gift Account.*
- *To accept a check from the IEF to the Class of 2019 for the Senior Fashion Show to be deposited into the Class of 2019 Student Activity Account.*

Seconded by Ms. Kneeder. UNANIMOUS.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Nysten moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:49 PM, seconded by Mr. Whitten. UNANIMOUS.