

Mission

The Ipswich school community is committed to developing in all students the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to succeed and excel throughout life.

IPSWICH SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY, MAY 10, 2017
7:00 PM
MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL ENSEMBLE ROOM
Minutes

II. OPEN SESSION

7:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Player called the meeting to order at 7:10 PM with the following members present: C. Whitten, P. Kneedler, N. Zito, B. Hopping and H. O'Flynn. Also present were Superintendent of Schools Dr. Blake, Ms. Cuff, Director of Finance and Operations and Chris Bergner, Student Representative.

READING OF DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

High School Student Representative Chris Bergner read the Mission Statement.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- There will be a Policy Subcommittee meeting on Tuesday, May 15th at 7pm in the MS/HS guidance conference room.
- There will be an Operations Subcommittee meeting on Tuesday, May 22nd at 7pm in the MS/HS guidance conference room.
- The next School Committee meeting is Thursday, May 31, 2018 at 7pm in the MS/HS ensemble room.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

Ms. Player opened the floor to citizen's queries. There were several citizen's comments surrounding the Article 5 question at the Town Meeting, the results of that vote and next steps.

Citizen 1: Asked Ms. Player what the rationale was behind the decision to allow public comment only at the beginning of the meeting. He asked that the Committee address Ms. Player's comments in the newspaper surrounding the vote and wanted clarification as to what was possible with the building project going forward.

Citizen 2: Referenced the Town Counsel memo from Anderson & Krieger. He spoke about the Town Moderator who stated at Town Meeting that if Article 5 did not pass at Town Meeting, the ballot vote would not matter and would become meaningless. He questioned how there could be a credible outcome if the vote at the ballot does in fact count for something after an elected official said otherwise.

Citizen 3: Town Moderator is the Town Moderator and has nothing to do with the ballot vote. He misspoke and now knows that. He also spoke about the outcomes of Town Meeting votes in other towns where towns could reconsider a decision at the ballot vote.

Citizen 4: Had never heard of an instance that a Town meeting vote against an article was overturned. We are dealing with an ethical problem.

Citizen 5: Would like the School Committee to exercise patience and reevaluate possibilities that may have been overlooked. The School Committee needs to go with what is best for the students, town and schools.

Citizen 6: The Town Counsel said that the vote at the ballot box will be counted and if a second Town Meeting is held on the same issue and Article 5 passes, the project would move forward. He questioned if that was the understanding of the School Committee.

Ms. Player responded by reading page 3 of George Hall of Anderson & Krieger's Town Counsel's memorandum regarding this vote.

Citizen 6 continued and stated that this was very confusing to voters and he urged the Committee to accept the decision at Town Meeting and to let the public know that their vote will not count at the ballot.

Mr. Whitten then quoted Tom Murphy, Town Moderator, saying "Let me say it this way, if it doesn't pass tonight, it doesn't matter what happens at the ballot". That is what a

Citizen 7: The town did not get the $\frac{2}{3}$ vote for the feasibility study and did not get $\frac{2}{3}$ vote for Article 5 on Tuesday. Why continue this process?

Ms. Player responded- You are right. We did not get $\frac{2}{3}$ vote at Town Meeting for the feasibility study, but we did get a majority. The discussion then became that Town Meeting had already approved \$945,000 for a feasibility study and it was the expectation that the Town would complete the study and put forth a project. The SC then had a tough decision to either let that money go with no project or find the money in their budget to complete the study and move forward with the project. She said, "my comment in the Salem News was about the possibility, not a recommendation. It was an answer to a question...disheartening it went to a dark place."

Citizen 9: Confusion is coming from a John Muldoon post where Ms. Player was still encouraging people to vote yes at the ballot on May 15th.

Ms. Player responded by saying she thinks that it is important to vote and have their voices be heard.

Citizen 10: The only way to correct this issue is to dispel the public of the disabuse is to reassemble all 1451 people from Town Meeting and those watching at home and tell them that the vote on the ballot would count. Otherwise, it would be unfair and misleading.

Citizen 11: The amount of \$945,000 was to examine the Winthrop School site to accommodate the gray area students and then immediately address the Doyon site. We all know what

happened after that in April to combine the schools. The decision should have been vetted better and you were painted in the corner. Has the town been reimbursed for any of the money for the feasibility study? The loss and risk has been misrepresented by the Committee if the Town is actually being reimbursed for some of the funds. Not all is wasted from the study and is transferable from site to site.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dr. Blake acknowledged Amy Borgman, Nicole Whitten, the Green Team and Generation Growers for their work on the gardens in front of the High School. He also acknowledged Emily Allman who was asked to speak at the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Conference in Washington, D.C. two week ago. There are also a list of teachers from both Doyon and Winthrop who are featured in a recently published mathematics book, *Why We Write in Mathematics*.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Christopher Bergner, Ipswich High School Student Representative

- The Junior class held its prom
- National Honors Society is holding a shoe drive
- Senior Week activities are beginning in the upcoming weeks
- Spring sports are performing well

SUPERINTENDENT'S ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent

- April School Vacation took place, making it more quiet in the District
- He is in the process of contract negotiations
- Town Meeting preparation
- End of the Year preparation
- Met with Police to discuss security measures
 - Re-keyed school entrances so police have instance access into buildings
 - Improved security cameras
- Attended Leadership meetings
 - Discussed policy
 - Two policy sections left to go
- He participated in presentations to inform citizens of the new building project
 - YMCA, Rotary, Senior Center
- Ipswich Public Schools became members of the Rotary
 - Three administrators, along with himself will represent the District
- Attended an Ipswich Aware meeting
 - Ipswich Aware held a successful Drug Take Back Day where 100 lbs of medications were safely disposed of

III. SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENTATIONS

B. FEOFFEEES REPRESENTATIVE RE-APPOINTMENT

Sarah Player, School Committee Chair

Ms. Player explained to the Committee that Dick Fate's term on the New Feoffees Committee had expired in April and he was seeking reappointment. Ms. Player read the following about Mr. Fates:

"Dick received his BA from Yale and then spent 7 years in the Navy as a F-4 pilot. In 1975 Dick joined Bank of Boston. During his 25 year stint with the bank he was a lender, ran the Merchant bank in London and finished as Regional President responsible for Worcester County. During his banking career, Dick was Chairman of the Finance Committee for the town of Hamilton and served on numerous non-profit boards. In 2001 Dick earned his CFP and for 15 years was a Financial Planner helping families organize and improve their financial affairs. Dick has retired but served on the Financial Advisory Board of IBYC and is the Chairman of the Trust Fund Commission for the Town of Ipswich."

Mr. Fates then spoke about his time on the New Feoffees Committee and his desire to seek reappointment stating that participating on the Committee is "thoroughly enjoyable" and he feels very satisfied having the ability to serve the town and the schools in a meaningful way.

Ms. Player thanked Mr. Fates for his commitment, stating how impressive of a group it was. Mr. Nysten asked if there was more that the School Committee could be doing. Mr. Fates said that Ms. Player had gone to a meeting and explained to the Committee what the grant process was and that the Feoffee Committee was thrilled with what they heard.

Dr. O'Flynn moved to appoint Dick Fates to a three year term on the New Feoffees Committee. Seconded by Mr. Nysten. UNANIMOUS.

C. SCHOOL CALENDAR APPROVAL

Dr. Blake presented the 2018-2019 School Calendar which had been vetted by the Teacher's Bargaining Unit. Highlights of the calendar included:

- Professional development days on August 29 and 30th.
- First day of school will be Tuesday, September 4th
- Thursdays will continue as half days
- Winter vacation is Monday, December 24-Tuesday, January 2nd
- February vacation is February 18-February 22
- April vacation is April 15-April 19
- The last day of school is June 17th
- The last day of school with 5 snow days is June 24th

Dr. O'Flynn stated that historically school begins after Labor Day and we have run into problems at the end of the year, especially this year with the excessive amount of snow days. He asked, is there any reason we cannot look at starting before Labor Day, as it was done a long time ago. He also asked if there was any consideration given to changing the breaks and making one break in March.

Dr. Blake responded yes to both questions. A second calendar was presented to the Teacher's Bargaining Unit that had the start date before Labor Day and it was met with a split vote. He said that if the School Committee is going to consider making major changes to the schedule, it warrants a larger conversation.

Both Mr. Whitten and Dr. O'Flynn agreed that a larger discussion was needed to look into scheduling for next year. It was then discussed that a subcommittee should be formed in the fall to look into major schedule changes.

Mr. Hopping asked why there were not more options for the calendar and stated that each year more than one calendar is presented to the School Committee for a final vote. Dr. Blake was unaware that more than one calendar went before the Committee.

Mr. Whitten moved to accept the 2018-2019 Ipswich School District Calendar, seconded by Mr. Nylan. UNANIMOUS.

D. PRINCIPAL SEARCH UPDATE

Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Blake introduced the new High School Principal, Jonathan Mitchell. He explained that there were a total of 45 applicants and from that pool, the search committee narrowed it down to 12 applicants. Of the twelve, 8 of those people were interviewed by the Search Committee. Two finalists were determined and spent a day at the High School being interviewed by administrators, teachers, students, parents and Dr. Blake. The Search Committee then did a site visit to each applicant's current school.

Jonathan is currently the Deputy Principal at Revere High School where he has been working as both a teacher and administrator for 20 years. He lives with his family in Hamilton and is looking forward to new new chapter in Ipswich building relationships with the students and community and focusing on students as flexible learners. He will be coming onboard on July 1, 2018.

E. TOWN MEETING DEBRIEF

Sarah Player, School Committee Chair

Ms. Player began by debriefing the Committee and the public of the outcome of the school specific votes at Town Meeting:

- Article 4- the FY19 School Budget was approved
 - Anticipated open positions were going to be posted
- Article 6- unanimous vote to to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the sum of \$520,000, or a greater or lesser sum, to cover the Town's share of the ensuing year's annual operating and debt service expenses of the Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School
- Article 7- unanimous vote to to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the sum of \$189,000, or a greater or lesser sum, to cover the Town's share of the ensuing year's annual operating and debt service expenses of the Essex County Technical Institute
- Article 8- unanimous support to transfer available funds from FY 2018 school budget to the Educational Stabilization Fund or take any action relative thereto
 - Balance is continuing to build
 - A Town Meeting vote must take place to access these funds

- Article 9- vote to transfer available funds from FY 2018 school budget to the Special Education Reserve Fund or take any action relative thereto
 - First year funding this reserve
 - Limited to how much can be deposited
 - Monies can be removed for emergency by a vote of the School Committee and Board of Selectmen
 - Can only be used for Special Education
- Article 10- Capital Plans approved
- Article 5- School Building Project
 - Needed a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote
 - 1451 people attended and voted at Town Meeting
 - 929 in support
 - 522 against
 - Did not get $\frac{2}{3}$ majority
 - The MSBA called on Wednesday to discuss the next steps after a failed vote:
 - Submit a letter within 10 days-due May 23rd stating:
 - A record of the vote
 - What we thought happened/why the vote failed
 - Remedy to get vote- minor changes that we believe would change the vote
 - If changes were significant, would have to reapply with the MSBA
 - The letter comes from the Town Manager
 - Mr. Nylén read a statement from the OPM regarding the MSBA Failed Vote Policy which specifically outlines the next steps
 - Ms. Player requested a Tri-Board meeting to discuss the letter prior to it being drafted and sent to the MSBA.

Ms. Zito asked to share her feelings regarding the failed vote where she stated it would be disingenuous to move forward with the project after it failed to get $\frac{2}{3}$ vote. She said we shouldn't move goal posts and that we would be undermining the democratic process if the project moved forward. She urged the Committee to honor the process.

Mr. Hopping asked a question as to why School Committee needed a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote to request money from the stabilization fund for the feasibility study, but the request for a public safety study only needed a majority vote. He felt they were playing by different rules and was curious why it was not consistent across the board.

The answer to Mr. Hopping's question came from the audience. There was simply not enough free cash. Mr. Hopping was directed to speak with Sarah Johnson so get a clearer understanding of the process.

Dr. Blake read the policy from the MSBA that discusses the timeline for project submittals and noted that we have missed the deadline to submit a new proposal for next year.

Mr. Nylén asked if the Committee would like to share their feelings.

Mr. Whitten echoed Ms. Zito's sentiment

- They have visited the Doyon site twice now
- If they visit the idea of the Doyon site a third time, integrity comes into question
- Votes are lost by 2% all the time
- Future credibility is at stake

Mr. Hopping felt this was too raw still

- He apologized to his family for time away he cannot get back
- Still processing
- Disappointed
- Has always had children's best interest at heart
- Very personal for him
- Asks for patience and time to regroup

Dr. O'Flynn was a true one school believer

- Morally opposed to re-voting the issue
- Comes down to an ethical decision

Mr. Nylen shares similar feelings with Barry

- Questioned his effectiveness on School Committee
- Still thinking about next steps
- Regretful how the School Committee was portrayed
- Wants public to know that decisions were made with good intentions
- Not attracted to the idea of re-voting

Ms. Kneedler still believes that one school is the right thing for Ipswich

- Saddened by the divisiveness of the town
- Does not believe they should vote again

Ms. Player stated the cost of this project was great and it wasn't all money

- There is a lot of healing to do
- Doesn't take decisions like this lightly
- Hard road
- Felt like someone died
- We need to be careful about what we say and how we say it

Dr. Blake said this project consumed most of his first year

- Battle lines were already drawn when he came to the District
- Tried hard to support the project

It was discussed among several members that what needs to happen now is healing. Feelings and opinions are still strong and that healing may take months, years or generations. At this time, they don't want to yell back and forth anymore. At the end of the day, as Dr. Blake said, the school doors will still open.

Mr Nylen thanked Dr. Blake and told him that he did what the School Committee has asked of him.

Ms. Player said the work of the board still continues and their focus is always on the students and the District. At the end of the day, we are a team. It is not always easy work, but it is important work.

Mr. Hopping then asked what the purpose of the Tri-Board was, to which Ms. Player replied that it was to discuss the Town Meeting and the letter to the MSBA.

F. GUN VIOLENCE PROCLAMATION

Mr. Whitten began by reading a draft statement he had written addressing gun violence. That statement read:

“The Ipswich School Committee abhors the mass shootings that have been gripping the nation.

The School Committee urges our local, state, and national legislators to take a more active regulatory approach towards common sense gun regulations that help save lives.

Such measures may include; banning military assault rifles, banning large capacity ammunition magazines, banning accessories such as bump stocks, a reformed gun permit background check that includes significant mental health screenings, and increased health counseling for those identified in need in the screening process.”

Mr. Hopping agreed that in light of recent events, this is a topic that must be discussed and would support the statement as written. Mr. Nylén suggested that a statement that gun violence is a NATIONAL problem, not one just found in schools should be added to the proclamation Mr. Whitten read. He also mentioned that he did not like the connections the statement makes like shootings and schools, mental health and gun violence. In the same discussion, Dr. O’Flynn suggested the statement not be overly specific, but be simple and clear. Mr. Whitten asked that this topic be wrapped up by next meeting. Mr. Hopping then suggested that Mr. Nylén and Ms. Zito create a draft document to be shared at the next meeting with the audience being legislative members.

IV. SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. VOUCHERS/BILLS

B. SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

- 1. ATHLETIC SUBCOMMITTEE-** Meeting on 5/16/18 has been cancelled
- 2. BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE-**Budget passed at Town Meeting. Need to schedule a meeting
- 3. GRANT SUBCOMMITTEES**
 - a. Payne Grant Subcommittee-** Meeting at the end of May. Waiting for final date
 - b. Instructional Mini-Grant Subcommittee-**Meeting on 5/16/18

4. **OPERATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE**- Meeting on 5/22/18 in guidance conference room
5. **POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE**-Meeting on 5/15/18 in guidance conference room at 7 PM
6. **TURF FIELD SUBCOMMITTEE**-Need to regroup
7. **SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE**- Covered
8. **NEW BUSINESS*** None

V. CONSENT

A. CONSENT AGENDA

Ms. Player moved the Ipswich School Committee to approve a \$500.00 donation to support the Student Racing Challenge to be deposited into the High School Gifts Accounts and to approve a \$5,000.00 donation from the Ipswich Educators Foundation to support student scholarships for the 8th grade Washington, D.C. field trip to be deposited into the 8th Grade Trip Student Activities Account. Seconded by Mr. Hopping. UNANIMOUS.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hopping moved, seconded by Mr. Nysten to adjourn the meeting at 9:02 PM. UNANIMOUS.