



Message from School Committee Chair, Barry W. Hopping

In the words of Moira Rogers, *"The two hardest things to say in life are hello for the first time and goodbye for the last."* As I near the end of my twenty-one years as a member of the Ipswich School Committee, I find myself at a loss for words knowing that nothing I say will adequately express how much I appreciate the many people that have supported me throughout my seven terms. I began my tenure in public service in 1999 after spending nineteen years teaching English/Language Arts at the Ipswich Middle School. Even though my career path at that point had taken me to Hanscom Air Force Base in Bedford where I served as middle school principal for the next twelve years, I remained a resident of High Street and looked for a way to continue working in support of the public school children of Ipswich. I managed to get elected to the School Committee in May of 1999 and the rest, as they say, is history. The school budget was \$13,340,788 back then with a staff of 144+ and a student body of 2,014.

To me, there is no greater calling in life than to provide for the health and well-being of our children. A well-respected friend and fellow educator commented recently when he heard I was stepping down from School Committee after twenty-one years, *"That's such a long time to stay in such a thankless job!"* I was quick to respond after just spending the night before celebrating my son's graduation at Crane Beach, *"My thanks each year comes from seeing the smiles on the faces of our graduates and their parents as they cross the stage to receive their diplomas."* As teachers, it's not always the subject content that we impart that has the greatest impact on our students' lives. Sometimes our greatest lessons are taught without words as we lead by example. We are tremendously blessed in this town that so many exceptional educators have chosen Ipswich, our schools, and our children to pursue their careers as the sculptors of young minds. As School Committee members, we don't get that same opportunity to engage students on a daily basis. Instead, we must make our impact by overseeing operating budgets, hiring the best Superintendent, visionary, and educational leader to guide our schools, and develop policies that ensure that all children are safe, intellectually challenged, and have the means available to fully maximize their potential.

I step away knowing that our school district is in the best of hands. It has indeed been an honor and privilege to serve with colleagues, past and present, that have never taken their duties and responsibilities for granted and never placed personal agendas ahead of the greater good. *"Thankless job!"* Never crossed my mind. Only frustrated at times that I couldn't accomplish more, couldn't effectuate more change when a new or different direction seemed necessary, and sorry to those that felt I let them down or that somehow an uninformed view of an issue had skewed my vote. Please know that I was always prepared, always well versed on the *"topic du jour,"* and made every decision with the best interest of children at heart. That was my duty and obligation to the town as an elected

official, but that was also my pledge to myself and the students I served. They deserved nothing less than the very best I had to offer. I step away knowing that they'll always be more challenges to be met, but ever confident that the very best and brightest minds are in place to continue the work that needs to be done. Thank you, Ipswich!

Fall 2020: School Reopening Planning

To date, there remain uncertainties around the plans for reopening schools across the Commonwealth. The Secretary of Education has formed a Working Group to develop guidelines and recommendations for schools and we anticipate the release of the first draft of those guidelines by the end of the week of June 15th. In the meantime, the School Committee has worked with the School Leadership team to form a Facilities Working Group whose membership includes the Superintendent, School Committee members, all Building Administrators, and the Director of Facilities. The Working Group is charged with identifying the most likely re-opening scenarios and the considerations that will need to be addressed under each scenario. Considerations being discussed include, among other topics, how teaching and learning will be delivered, how facilities will be managed, how transportation will be impacted and addressed, and how before and after school programming will be affected. This preliminary planning will give the school district a jumpstart in developing detailed plans that respond to the guidance released by the Department of Education. The working group anticipates releasing information on reopening plans in July and will work to provide as much advance notice to students, parents and family as possible on what to expect for the upcoming school year. Stay tuned for new information. In the meantime, should you have any questions please contact the Superintendent's Office or the School Committee members of the Facilities Working Group: Chub Whitten, Carl Nylén and Sara Gilliam.

Update: The School District Budget

The 2020 budget season for the Ipswich Public Schools was certainly a memorable one. The School Committee tasked our Superintendent, Dr. Blake, with presenting a “right sized” budget that could be used as a baseline for future years. After meetings with the School Committee’s Budget Subcommittee, Dr. Blake and his Administration team presented the School Committee with a budget that provides for the current needs of our district and fills in some of the gaps left from past years. The School Committee approved the budget - and then the quarantine followed by the school shutdown happened. The economic fall out forced all municipalities and school districts to immediately cut their FY21 budgets. Many were forced to layoff teachers and support staff in order to meet decreased revenue projections. Fortunately, due in large part to prudent long term budget planning and the use of our stabilization fund, the Ipswich Schools were able to make relatively minor cuts to the budget. These cuts will have minimal impact on the programs our teachers and administrators need to move our district forward.

Schools throughout the country face a constant, uphill battle when it comes to funding. The cost to educate our kids in an continually evolving world consistently exceeds the amount of revenue allocated to school districts. This structural deficit means that schools must ask for additional support from taxpayers in the form of operational overrides. Fortunately for Ipswich, sound financial

management of the funds received from the 2015 override have paid off. The prudent use of the funds has extended the original 5 year override projection to 7 years.

The Ipswich school district uses a stabilization fund to even out the uncertainties of revenue and expenses from year to year. In simple terms, this fund is added to during the early years of the override when tax revenues exceed our budget needs and drawn from in later years when the revenue allocated to the Schools from tax payments and outside funding sources fall short. The use of the fund helped cushion the blow of a deep cut in State funding to the Ipswich schools for FY21. In addition, our Central office was able to save approximately \$1 million during the school shutdown while continuing to pay our teachers and support staff through the end of the school year as they managed the remote learning process. These savings were due in large part to releasing money set aside in the FY20 budget to cover unexpected salary and purchase expenses which were no longer needed due the closure. A portion of these funds helped cover our subsequent budget shortfall announced in late May. The remainder was added to the stabilization fund for use in future years.

The economic outlook due to the impact of Covid-19 remains uncertain. Our School Committee, Central office and Administration is committed to the prudent management of our budget and will continue to effectively provide for the needs of all students while navigating turbulent economic waters.

Annual Town Meeting and Election

The Ipswich Annual Town Meeting is scheduled for Saturday, June 27 at 9:00 a.m., outdoors on the fields at Ipswich Middle/High School. The Annual Report with updated procedural information has been mailed out, and the [town website](#) has posted the Warrant, the FY21 Proposed Operating Budget, and a 2020 Town Meeting Preview Video with Town Moderator Tom Murphy.

The Annual Town Election will be held on Tuesday, June 30 from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. at the Ipswich YMCA, 110 County Road. Absentee ballots and in-person voting at the Town Clerk's office in Town Hall are also available: [more information](#) is posted on the town website.

Resolutions

The Ipswich School Committee voted unanimously to adopt two resolutions, COVID-19 State Funding and Anti-Racism, at the June 18 Open Session meeting. Both resolutions are being circulated statewide by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees in a collaborative effort to address (1) funding for the COVID-19-related expenses needed to help schools reopen safely, and (2) the response to issues of racism, equity, and diversity as a call to action. Once signed, these resolutions will be forwarded to Governor Baker, Education Secretary James Peyser, Senator Bruce Tarr, Representative Brad Hill, Senate President Karen Spilka, and House Speaker Robert DeLeo.

School Committee Meeting Folders now on Website

In addition to the regularly-posted meeting agendas and minutes, School Committee Open Session Meeting Folders are now available for public viewing on the Ipswich Public Schools [website](#). Each folder contains items that are discussed at that particular Open Session meeting, such as financial documents, announcements, presentations from administrators, policies, reports, and more. Providing these Meeting Folders is an important component of the School Committee's 2019-20 goal to improve access and frequency of information about Ipswich Public Schools for the community-at-large.

Youth Fall Sports

The various youth sports programs in Ipswich offer our students a continuation of their learning experience outside of the classroom. While not affiliated with the schools directly, these programs teach kids the value of teamwork, how to cope with adversity and can help them develop more self confidence. They also promote physical fitness and the importance of making good choices in life.

We chose to highlight two of our fall sports programs in this newsletter: youth football and youth cheering. Our local youth football and cheering program (ITYFL) is a cooperative effort with the elementary and middle schools in the Triton district. This program offers teams at various age levels for kids in grades 3-8. The football program plays surrounding towns as part of the Cape Ann League. The cheer team competes at regional competitions in addition to supporting the football teams at their games.

ITYFL has a long history of tradition in Ipswich. All coaches are certified by USA Football, a national organization responsible for setting best practices safe coaching. All home games are played on the Ipswich High School turf field on Sundays and teams practice on the fields behind the Ipswich Town Hall, typically 3 days a week beginning in mid August.

With the start of the season still uncertain due to Covid-19 restrictions, ITYFL is asking any interested players to sign up now and delay payment until the league offers more certainty around a start date. Signing up now gives the league a sense of what levels it will be able to field this season. A summer camp run by the Ipswich High School head coach Kevin Fessette and his varsity players is tentatively scheduled for the second week in August. More information will be released when the league knows for sure what the State guidelines allow for.

Please go to www.ITYFL.org for more information and to register for the season.

School Committee Meeting Highlights

May

- Feoffees Distribution Presentation
- School Choice Discussion/Vote
- Override Discussion
- Technology Plan Review
- Renaming of the Mini Grants to the Traverso-Weatherall Innovation Grants

June

- Approval of William Paine Enhancement Grants
- Covid 19/School Closure and End of the Year Event Updates
- Budget Discussions
- Handbook Approval
- Superintendent End of Year Evaluation
- Honoring Barry Hopping



Upcoming District Events

Note: As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to impact our daily life in uncertain ways, these dates are subject to change. On March 12, Governor Baker signed an Executive Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law during the State of Emergency and authorizing government boards and committees to meet virtually as long as adequate alternative means of public access are provided through audio and visual technology services. Additionally, the Ipswich Select Board and Town Manager have acquired access to Zoom remote meeting tools and coordinated with ICAM to broadcast these virtual meetings.

- **June 27:** Annual Town Meeting, 9:00 a.m. at the fields behind the middle/high school
- **June 30:** Town Election, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. at the Ipswich YMCA, 110 County Rd

*Meeting agendas, minutes, and calendar may be found on the [district website](#). These meetings are broadcast live on ICAM. To view these meetings, please tune into Comcast Channel 98 and Verizon Channel 31. Meetings can also be viewed on the ICAM Ipswich website: www.icamipswich.com.

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