



## **Message from School Committee Chair, Barry W. Hopping**

Hard to believe that we're already well into the month of February and in the midst of the annual operating budget development season again. Dr. Blake and members of our Leadership Team have worked diligently to prepare and present a budget that provides for the needs of all students in the Ipswich Public Schools. Future presentations and public hearings await in the weeks ahead, but we remain ever confident that our requests are justifiable and essential for the intellectual growth and development of our children along with ensuring for their continued social/emotional health and well-being. We invite and encourage you to attend the Public Hearing on the budget at our next meeting scheduled for Thursday, February 27. To this point, we have simply taken the Leadership Team's proposals "under advisement." At the close of the Public Hearing in two weeks, the School Committee will vote to accept the final budget which will then become publicly available, posted on the district website, and go forward to the Finance Committee for their consideration during presentations on March 10 & 12. You are urged to attend those meetings as well in support of our schools.

As we continue to explore different ways to enhance communication between the School Committee and residents of the town, we've encountered some obstacles that have hindered our efforts. First, I want to thank you for your patience as we've been forced to endure countless delays in our attempts to provide live broadcasts of our bi-weekly meetings. The issue has been with the "Tricaster," which is the central piece of the broadcast system. It functions as the brains behind the switcher (camera control), recording server, and signal distributor for the entire system. It broke several weeks ago and had to be sent out to the one place in the country that repairs these units, located in San Antonio, Texas. They had the system for five weeks trying to figure out why the power supply had died, but could not come up with a solution. As a result, we were left with a "faulty part." The problem was that as a computer, it would NOT boot up. Finally, the diagnosis was that the power supply to the computer had died. Today, I am very pleased to inform you that we're back in business. The part has been repaired, returned to us, reinstalled, and we'll be broadcasting live again on February 27.

Next, our sincere gratitude to those of you that have reached out to us over the past several months in reaction to a variety of school-related issues. It's always helpful for us to know what's on your mind and what challenges continue to nag at your impressions of us as a school district. Some of you have also voiced your frustration that no one other than the Chair responds to your emails. Please know that we all take your concerns and questions very seriously, but in an effort to prevent conflicting viewpoints or possible mixed messages, our practice has been and will continue to be that all correspondence channels back through the Chair. We want to ensure that our message is consistent and eliminates any doubt or confusion in regard to content or interpretation. We thank you for your understanding.

# **Building the Budget: A Summary of State and Federal Funding Sources**

This is a busy time in both the Town Hall and in our School's Central Office. Budget season is in full swing, and our Town leaders and committees are hard at work to determine how to best fund the needs of the Town and Schools. We're all well aware that the majority of our core services and school expenses are funded by our real estate taxes. We wanted to take some space in this Newsletter to highlight some of the other funding sources that comprise an important part of our school budget.

## **Chapter 70 Program**

These funds represent the State's contribution to each school district's public education budget. Massachusetts General Law assures "fair and adequate minimum per student funding for public schools in the commonwealth by defining a foundation budget and a standard of local funding effort applicable to every city and town in the commonwealth." To accomplish this, the state uses a complex formula based on factors such as property values, income, demographics, and student enrollment to establish (1) each municipality's minimum spending requirements, or the "Foundation Budget", and (2) the minimum requirements for each municipality's share of school costs, which are funded by local property taxes. Chapter 70 funds then close the gap by providing state aid for the remaining amount. Towns with a higher percentage of low income residents and low property values benefit the most from Chapter 70 funds.

## **Circuit Breaker Funds**

Special Education costs continue to represent a significant, and growing, portion of every city and town's school budget. Special Education funding draws from four major sources: the general funds of the town, federal IDEA special education grants, Chapter 70 funds, and the Massachusetts Circuit Breaker program, which the Commonwealth put into effect in 2004 to help defray the expense to local school districts. Districts are eligible to be reimbursed by the state for a portion of their prior fiscal year's expenses attributed to legally mandated special education costs. The threshold for eligibility is tied to four times the state average foundation budget per pupil (as calculated by Chapter 70); Massachusetts is required to pay up to 75 percent of the costs over that threshold.

## **Title 1 Funding**

Title 1 is a Federal program that provides financial assistance to districts and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. The majority of Title 1 funding in the US is allocated to 1st-6th grades. As with Chapter 70 funds, school districts with a larger percentage of students determined to be "at risk" receive the majority of the funds.

The priorities of Title I Funding are to:

1. Strengthen the core program in schools and provide academic and/or support services to low-achieving students at the preschool, elementary, middle, and high school levels;
2. Provide evidence-based programs that enable participating students to achieve the learning standards of the state curriculum frameworks;
3. Elevate the quality of instruction by providing eligible staff with substantial opportunities for professional development; and,
4. Involve parents/guardians of participating public and private school children as active partners in their children's education at school through open, meaningful communication, training, and, as appropriate, inclusion in decision-making processes.

### **Other outside funds**

Our school budget is also bolstered in part by smaller sources of revenue. Fees charged for things like bus passes, sports user fees and Tiger Tots tuition help pay to fund those budget line items. School Choice and Special Education fees paid to us by school districts from which students transfer also help the bottom line and offset some costs

Fully funding a “right sized” school budget is always a challenge. Fixed costs increase at a rate faster than revenue can keep up. Each year, Ipswich and other similar school districts see our share of State and Federal grants decrease. The task of educating our students falls more than ever on the local taxpayers. As a School Committee, we will continue to push our legislators to find an answer to the decreased State and Federal funding in order help lessen the burden. Please feel free to reach out and let us know if you have any questions about the budget. It is important to us as a committee that everyone understands how the funds allocated to our schools are being spent.

## **School Committee Meet & Greet with the Ipswich Rotary Club**



School Committee members Pavica Kneedler, Greg Stevens and Carl Nylen participated in an Ipswich Rotary Club meeting on Thursday, January 23rd. This event was the second of three scheduled

community engagement events this school year. Thank you to the Ipswich Rotary Club for your hospitality!

These Meet & Greets are an important component of the School Committee's goal to increase communication and transparency in 2019-20. They are intended to foster and encourage in-person dialogue with community members who may not be able to attend our evening meetings. The third community Meet & Greet will be with the Council on Aging on May 19 at 11:30 a.m.

## 4th Annual Ipswich STEAM Showcase



**IPSWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
ENCOURAGES YOU TO ATTEND OUR  
4TH ANNUAL

# STEAM SHOWCASE

**Tuesday, April 7, 2020**  
**5:00 - 7:00 PM**  
**Ipswich High School, Lower Gym**

**Interactive STEAM Projects & Exhibits**  
**Performance Arts**  
**Connect with STEAM Businesses & Community Groups**

*STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math)  
fosters creative problem-solving, innovation,  
critical thinking and collaboration.  
You'll be amazed at the possibilities!*

Mark your calendars for our district-wide Ipswich STEAM Showcase on Tuesday, April 7, 2020, from 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. in the lower gym at Ipswich High School. This will be the 4th year of our annual family-friendly, free exhibition of STEAM projects in Pre-K to Grade 12 classrooms. Come be amazed at our students' and staff's innovation, collaboration, and creative problem-solving methods. There will also be interactive exhibits from STEAM businesses and community groups to highlight the progression from STEAM school projects to real-life STEAM implementation in careers and our community!

Our STEAM Showcase Exhibitors include representatives from:

- PreK - 8th Grade Projects
- 9th Grade Bio Science Fair Projects
- High School Independent & Collaborative Projects
- New England Biolabs
- Ipswich YMCA
- EBSCO
- General Electric
- The Trustees, Appleton Farms
- Ipswich Robotics
- Ipswich River Watershed Association
- Ipswich Junior Sailing
- Mass Audubon
- East Coast Metrology
- Gloucester Biotechnology Academy
- Change is Simple, Inc
- Ipswich Moving Company Youth Dance Ensemble
- Ipswich student musicians
- Seaside Sustainability
- Ipswich Green Team
- Birth to Three
- Peabody Essex Museum
- Tufts University
- Gloucester Area Astronomy Club
- Girls, Inc of the Seacoast Area
- Ipswich Police Department
- Three Sisters Garden Project
- The Open Door
- Play is the Way
- And more!

## **School Committee Subcommittees, Working Groups, and Liaisons**

Beyond our twice-monthly Open Session meetings, each School Committee member serves on several subcommittees and working groups. This work is vital when considering budget, policy, and other issues facing the district. These small groups of School Committee members are assigned annually, typically meet at least monthly, and are responsible for providing the Committee information necessary to take action on school related matters.

Liaison positions, which are assigned each year just like subcommittees and working groups, afford School Committee representatives the opportunity to participate in other community meetings with relevance to Ipswich Public Schools. Our subcommittees, working groups, and liaisons give reports to the rest of the School Committee during our Open Session meetings.

For a meeting calendar and more information about our subcommittees, working groups, and liaison positions, please visit our website at <https://www.ipsk12.net/Page/775>. We will be highlighting these groups in each of this year's newsletters to help further our goal of increasing transparency and strengthening

community connections. This month, we'll take a look at the responsibilities for the following committees and working groups:

**Community Development Plan Steering Committee:** The School Committee has two representatives on the town-wide Community Plan Steering Committee, which works to provide a long-term vision and plan for Ipswich. This committee includes appointed representatives from Ipswich boards, local businesses and interest groups, and interested community members. 2019-20 committee members: Carl Nylen and Chub Whitten.

**Strategic Planning Working Group:** The School Committee has a representative in the town-wide Strategic Planning Working Group, which is tasked with using information from the ongoing Community Development Plan discussion as well as other data and reports to formulate a cost projection and investment model for future key infrastructure development in Ipswich. This working group includes appointed representatives from Ipswich Boards, town staff, and community members. 2019-20 working group member: Carl Nylen.

**STEAM Team:** The Ipswich STEAM Team is comprised of Ipswich Public Schools teachers, high school student representatives, business and community members, and one School Committee member. The STEAM Team supports the development of the STEAM vision, mentorship and alignment in Ipswich Public Schools, and they also plan the annual STEAM Showcase. 2019-20 STEAM Team member: Sara Gilliam.

## School Committee Meeting Highlights

### January

- 10-year visioning exercise
- Superintendent mid-year review
- High School Student proposals for an electric vehicle charging station, a town straw ban, and Interact Club overnight event
- History and Social Sciences Standards presentation from Tracy Wagner, IPS Director of Teaching and Learning

### February

- FY21 Budget Presentations

## Upcoming District Events

- **February 17-21:** Winter Break
- **February 27:** School Committee Open Session Meeting - Public Hearing for the FY21 Budget\*
- **March 5:** School Committee Open Session Meeting\*
- **March 10:** FY21 Budget Presentation to the Finance Committee, 7:30 p.m. at Town Hall
- **March 12:** FY21 Budget Presentation to the Finance Committee, 7:30 p.m. at Town Hall
- **March 26:** School Committee Open Session Meeting\*
- **April 2:** School Committee Open Session Meeting\*
- **April 4:** Bean Counting, 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. at Town Hall

- **April 16:** School Committee Open Session Meeting\*
- **April 20-24:** Spring Break
- **May 12:** Annual Town Meeting

\* School Committee Open Session Meetings are typically held on the first and third Thursday of the month in the MS/HS Ensemble Room located at 134 High Street, Ipswich and begin at 7:00 PM. 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](http://www.icamipswich.com).

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