

Ipswich School Committee

MS/HS Ensemble Room

134 High Street, Ipswich

Thursday, April 6, 2023

7:00 PM

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

KE called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

Members Present: K. Eliot (KE) J. Poirier (JP)
 J. Donahue (JD) D. Freehan (DF)
 P. Kneedler (PK) E. Cannon (EC)

Also Present: B. Blake, Superintendent of Schools (BB)
 T. Markham, Director of Finance and Operations (TM)
 J. Bornstein, High School Student Representative (JB)

2. Reading of the District Mission Statement

JB read the mission statement.

3. Announcements

- The next School Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, April 27, 2023 in the MS/HS Ensemble Room at 7:00 PM.
- Schools will be closed Monday, April 17 through Friday, April 21st for April school vacation.
- District offices will be closed on Monday, April 17th.

4. Special Acknowledgements

BB acknowledged the following groups:

- Participants of Stringfest
- High School Chamber Orchestra
- High School Band- silver status
- High School ESports Team

5. Citizens' Comments

There were none.

6. High School Student Representative Report

- Girls tennis team was hosting a bake sale
- The Class of 2024 held a "Pie in Face" fundraiser that allowed students to throw a pie in a teacher's face
- The Bridge Program starts for seniors

7. Presentations

A. IEA Snapshot Presentation: Finding Area-Decomposing and Rearranging

Middle School teacher, Alan Laroche, presented a glimpse into Illustrative Math, a problem-based curriculum where lessons typically include a warm-up exercise, the instructional routine, and then a cool-down exercise. Mr. Laroche shared a sample lesson, along with student work.

B. Presentation on Warrant Article 12, Citizen's Petition: The Empower Act

An IHS Junior presented information on Article 12, the Empower Act, which seeks to lower the voting age to 16 in municipal government elections. This petition, if passed at Town Meeting, would then go before the state legislature and if approved there, would need the Governor's final approval. The student, speaking on behalf of the petitioners, shared reasons why young citizens were eager to vote. While questions have been raised on whether young people are responsible enough to make political decisions,

the student shared that there is research to show otherwise. The student cited other communities across the country where this change was successfully implemented. It was noted that no city or town in Massachusetts has had this petition approved by the state legislature, although many towns or cities have had this pass at Town Meeting.

JP asked about the downstream effects this article may have. JP said that currently, a requirement to serve on a Town committee or board is to be a registered voter. It was clarified that Article 12 would not allow young people to serve in government positions. The article is just to allow young people the opportunity to vote in Town elections.

The student shared that they had always been involved in politics and hoped that this petition could expand the pool of people interested in politics.

Some members expressed concern about having young people vote on things like the town or school budget without having to pay the tax ramifications. With the power and privilege to vote comes the consequences to live with your vote, said KE. The student responded that a small portion of the town would fall under this petition. Out of the eligible group of new young voters, a smaller group may be motivated to attend Town Meeting or vote at the ballot. Some members ran through a list of citizens that may now have the opportunity to vote who are not paying taxes in town. KE finished by saying that she would like to find a way for young people to be involved and harness their passion.

KE then opened the floor for any other people speaking on behalf of their citizens' petition. Gary Champion, Palomino Way, spoke on behalf of Article 23- Town Government Study Committee Report to Town Meeting. Mr. Champion discussed the two sections of the article, one was for Town Meeting to hear a report from the Town Government Study Committee and the other was in regard to hearing recommendations for the Town Government Study Committee to research. A brief background on the work of the Town Government Study Committee was provided, along with examples of what the group has accomplished. Mr. Champion said he was seeking School Committee support to help the Government Study Committee participate in a collaborative process with town government for years to come.

Mr. Champion clarified for a member that Article 1 of the Town Meeting Warrant was to hear financial reports and that the Town Government Study Committee report was not included. JP stated that there was already an amendment in Article 1 to add the Town Government Study Committee report to the consent calendar and therefore if that passed, part of Article 23 could already be decided on.

Mr. Champion, at the request of a member, gave examples of how topics for the Town Government Study Committee were raised and prioritized. KE felt that the issue was not necessarily the value of the work or the issues discussed, but rather a process question.

C. Discussion and Vote of Town Warrant Articles/Speaking Assignments

Article #	Article Title	Motion	First	Second	Vote	Speaker Assignment
1	Consent Calendar	Support	GS	PK	6-0	
2	Amend FY23 Municipal Operating Budget	No position				
3	Finance Committee Election	RATM				
4	FY 2024 Municipal Budget	Support	GS	EC	6-0	
5	FY 2024 School Budget	Support	GS	PK	6-0	Kate Eliot
6	FY 2024 Whittier Regional High School Budget	Support	EC	GS	6-0	Pavica Kneeder
7	FY 2024 Essex County Technical Institute Budget	Support	EC	GS	6-0	Pavica Kneeder
8	Transfer of FY23 Appropriated Budget Funds to Educational Stabilization Fund	Support	EC	GS	6-0	Greg Stevens
9	Stabilization Funding	Support	GS	EC	6-0	
Article #	Article Title	Motion	First	Second	Vote	Speaker Assignment
10	Other Post-Employment Benefits Funding	Support	GS	EC	6-0	

11	Annual Capital Plan	Support	EC	GS	6-0	Kate Eliot
12	The Empower Act	RATM				
13	Resolution in Support of Changing the State Flag & Seal of Massachusetts	RATM				
14	Ipswich River Ecological Restoration Permitting	No position				
15	Grant of Easements to 69 South High Street	No position				
16	Acquisition of Hammatt Street Parcel	No position				
17	Authorize Select Board as Water Commissioners to Enter into Lease of Farm Field at 16 Mile Lane	No position				
18	Middle/High School Roof	Support	GS	EC	6-0	Greg Stevens/Emily Cannon
19	Doyon and Winthrop School Roofs	Support	EC	KE	6-0	Greg Stevens/Emily Cannon
20	Water Department Infrastructure Improvements	No position				
21	Waste Water Department Infrastructure Improvements	No position				
22	Authorize Select Board as Electric Commissioners to Borrow \$5 Million From USDA	No position				
23	Town Government Study Committee Report to Town Meeting	RATM				
24	New Construction Moratorium	No position				
25	Amendment to the Noise Control Bylaw	No position				

D. Statement of Interest Submission Update

BB, ahead of the meeting, shared the completed Statement of Interest (SOI) for each of the elementary schools with the committee. BB reviewed the process of writing the SOIs which included a collaborative effort by DF and JD. The SOIs were now complete and ready to be uploaded into the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) system.

BB said that a question had been raised about how it was determined that Winthrop School was designated as the “priority school”. BB referred to a memo the Facilities Director submitted to the School Committee that highlighted the repairs and current issues and problems for the foreseeable future at Winthrop, as well as Doyon. BB said that there are systems in place at Winthrop School that are outdated and parts are no longer available for them. BB said that while Doyon is also in disrepair, the school has not had a catastrophic issue like the loss of a boiler. There is, however, the potential for significant issues should the underground fuel storage fail. Weighing one school against the other and acknowledging that both schools are in rough shape, it was decided that Winthrop School was the more compelling of the two options and more likely to be accepted.

Basing his comment off a call with the MSBA, GS felt that the feasibility study would ultimately determine what the priority is. BB added that during the last process, the plan was different from what was originally submitted.

KE said that the Facilities Director’s memo highlighted repairs and issues that had occurred since the Dude Solutions report was done in 2019. KE felt that while a lot of things overlapped in the two SOIs, the issues at Winthrop created a more compelling argument. DF added that this is not intended to pin one Ipswich school against the other, but rather identify the SOI that is more compelling than all other schools in the application pool.

JP expressed concern about Winthrop being marked as the priority school. Yes, Winthrop is closer to the end of life on more systems, but the Facilities Director said that those issues were being addressed. Making repairs to the broken systems does not create a compelling argument. Anything fixed would lower the chances of getting accepted. JP worried that the Dude Solutions report was being used as a primary source to justify a need for new schools, however, now the latest memo from the Facilities Director seems to also be used to justify the priority school. JP felt the information in the memo is not consistent with what is stated in the Dude Solutions report. DF added that the Dude Solutions report was a supporting document, not used solely to justify

the decision for a priority school. BB felt that the memo from the Facilities Director highlighted that the district was trying to address issues and manage the issues outlined in the Dude Solutions report.

The discussion continued around the Town's Strategic Plan which included a school at Doyon first. There was concern from some members that the Town Strategic Plan was another document that contradicts the decision to place Winthrop School as the priority. BB felt that if nothing else, the supporting documents will show the MSBA what work Ipswich has done since the last failed vote.

KE stressed the importance of being prepared for a readiness call should either SOI be accepted. That requires providing a good argument as to why Ipswich is now ready to move forward with a building project and what has been done. It will be important to have a list of things that are different now than in 2014 when the original SOI was submitted.

JD questioned BB as to why he may have originally felt strongly that Doyon should be the priority school. BB replied, stating that the last failed project divided the town in many ways. BB expressed concern that one project would be passed and then the community would lose interest in supporting an additional project. JD shared what BB had discussed previously about the priority schools during their meeting to review the SOI.

JP asked for clarification on the ballot questions and whether all four options would still apply if Winthrop was chosen as the priority school. BB said that if/when the MSBA accepted Ipswich into the program, they would help guide the conversation about what can be done. JP continued with questions on whether option 4 could still be a consideration. Option 4 is a scenario with a new school downtown and a new school at Doyon. To accomplish that, a new school would have to be built at Doyon first. If Winthrop is selected as the priority, is option 4 being eliminated? Some members felt those details were "getting into the weeds".

KE stressed the importance of getting the projects moving along. It was also important to keep an eye on conditions of the buildings and which SOI generates a more compelling argument, not how it will affect the vote. BB added that the ballot questions are non-binding. They are intended to ask the community "what do you think?". No options were being taken off the table by making Winthrop the priority school.

EC felt the message to the community should be that just because there is a box checked for one school or another does not guarantee any certain project.

E. End of Year Events

Members reviewed a list of end of year events where School Committee members are typically present and/or participate.

8. Superintendent's Administrative Report

BB reported on his work which included:

- Finalizing the SOI for submission
- A meeting with the Feoffees Policy Working Group
- A negotiations meeting
- Participation in a DEI course sponsored by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents
- A CREST Collaborative Board of Directors meeting
- Addressing staff member concerns
- A Northshore Education Consortium meeting
- A North Shore Superintendents Roundtable meeting
- A DEI Committee meeting

9. Subcommittee, Working Group and Liaison Reports

- **Mutual Concerns:** discussed report cards, professional development feedback, substitutes, preschool, 403B offerings at the last meeting
- **Negotiations Subcommittee:** met last week to discuss two positions
- **Operations Subcommittee:** need to meet to discuss the superintendent evaluation and on-boarding of new members
- **Policy Subcommittee:** will have policies to present at an upcoming meeting
- **Feoffees Policy Working Group:** looking to rework the distribution policy like earmarking some of the distribution for costs that parents pay annually like athletic fees, as well as expanding the definition of enrichment and enhancement
- **High School Council:** will meet on Monday to review the attendance policy

10. New Business*

No new business was presented.

11. Vouchers and Bills

All were reviewed and signed.

12. Consent Agenda

- *Motion to approve the consent agenda as presented was made by EC and seconded by GS. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

13. Executive Session for the following reasons:

- *(4) To discuss the deployment of security personnel or devices, or strategies with respect thereto;*
- *(2) to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel*
- *Motion to enter into executive session for the following reasons: (4) To discuss the deployment of security personnel or devices, or strategies with respect thereto; (2) to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel was made by GS and seconded by EC.*

Roll Call

Motion passed unanimously

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

14. Adjournment

- *Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by PK and seconded by JD. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

Meeting adjourned at 10:09 PM