

## Ipswich School Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 27, 2023

6:30 PM

Present: Emily Cannon, Greg Stevens, Dianna Freehan, Pavica Kneedler, Jeff Poirier, Jen Donahue, Kate Eliot, Brian Blake, and Jimmy Bornstein

6:39pm 1. Call to Order - K. Eliot

*Ms. Cannon made a motion to enter into Executive Session to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel, Mr. Stevens seconded, and the roll call vote was unanimous in favor.*

7:14pm 2. Return to open session

3. Reading of the District Mission Statement - J. Bornstein

4. Announcements: Next SC meeting 5/4/2023, Policy Committee 5/2/2023, Traverso-Weatherall Grant Application reviews 5/2/2023 @ 3:30pm

5. Special Acknowledgements - B. Blake: A shout out to the 15 chaperones from the England trip who supervised 162 students. It was a lot of work and a busy week, but a wonderful experience for all.

7:25pm 6. Safety Incident - B. Blake

- Provided an overview of the most recent incident at the Doyon School involving a town resident, who arrived at the cafeteria entrance and identified himself as a visitor, talked about Dr. Cooper and his experience going to school there, and wanted a job in the school. Amy Digby escorted him out, the police were called & they investigated, then met up with the person later in the day downtown. Last week during vacation week, the same person arrived at Central Administration, asking about work permits and jobs, left agitated and later in the day, the same individual arrived at the middle school, asking for Sean Fitzgerald who was not there. After this week's incident at Doyon, Sarah O'Brien sent an email to parents and another this morning, with Dr. Blake sending it to the greater community this afternoon. Protocols for visitors entering buildings including CORIs for all visitors, fingerprinting for anyone who may be left alone with students, staff training, emergency plans posted in each classroom, and SRO student age-appropriate safety training. Dr. Blake did clarify that the work being done to the playground at Doyon and the additional personnel onsite for that project were not the reason why the person was able to enter the side door. Safety drills are done annually: IMS/IHS was in the fall; elementaries are scheduled for May. Dr. Blake is working with Administrators and staff - stating everyone has become complacent. Dr. Blake reported receiving lots of emails from supportive to strong suggestions as to what can/should be done to improve building safety. He understands the desire for a community forum to discuss the issue and is currently working with building principals & the police department to schedule separate forums over the next couple of weeks.
- Discussion regarding who this person is and why he showed up at all of the schools. Jimmy Bornstein asked what time the email was sent to parents, during or after school. It was sent during the school day. The schools have been given pictures of this individual. What was the difference between last week's incidents at Central Administration and IMS and this week? Was it because students were in the building? Dr. Blake responded that yes, because students were in the building, the response was different. Ms. Cannon wants an independent evaluation of all safety policies & procedures and building safety URGENTLY. Further discussion included the need for a policy to be put in place before students & staff return in August and must have a sign

off of such. There needs to be continued vigilance all year long. There needs to be stronger language/protocols/vigilance. Look at "School Guard App" for staff notification. The committee requested clarification of a No Trespass Order: Individual will be arrested if found on school grounds or in buildings.

7:37pm

7. Citizens' Comments - Several citizens expressed their concern and intense anger about the security incidents of last week and this week. Several commented that this is a major concern throughout the community and it is unfortunate that so few showed up to the meeting tonight. A group of parents collected over 80 signatures after an email was sent, insisting on an immediate forum to discuss building safety issues. Another questioned how the trip to England was funded and who pays for the chaperones. The tour company requires chaperones for groups, the cost of which is included as part of the students' payments for the tour.

7:56pm

8. High School Student Representative Report -J. Bornstein

- England trip - students reported enjoying the trip and having the opportunity to travel abroad, expressed gratitude.
- Concerns have been raised by the student body regarding not being informed of incidents, only receiving the information second or third hand, much of which is misinformation.

8:00pm

9. Presentations

A. Overnight Field Trip Request Project Adventure - K. McGinley

- There are 5 excited juniors who have never been hiking at Mt. Chocorua. This is the weekend before exams and the students assured her they would be prepared for their exams the following week. The school nurse gave the all-clear for the students to attend. There are great, experienced chaperones, some of whom have knowledge of first aid.

*Mr. Stevens made a motion to approve the field trip, Ms. Cannon seconded, and the vote was unanimous in favor.*

B. High School Handbook Review: Attendance Policy - J. Mitchell

- Discussion regarding background of the revision. Policy was revamped his 1st year as principal and it worked for 1 year. Earlier this year, a parent complained about the policy regarding their student who participates in non-school related sports/activities who miss school. The school committee gave him a directive to change the attendance policy. He and the school council did a tremendous amount of research when tackling this task including surveying area school districts and our own faculty as well as accounting for the block schedule, where individual classes only meet 3 times per week. 75% of IHS teachers reported the policy was working. Schools are currently allowed to excuse 7 absences per semester. After the research, the **revised** policy allows for 4 allowable absences per quarter (handouts, slide 6), added a way for Q4 failures due to absences to earn back their grade for that quarter IF they achieve a 90% daily attendance rate for the Q1 the following year, exemption from failure due to absences if the principal and students' teachers agree that the student has kept up their grades in spite of their absences, and that the revised policy will be retroactive for this entire school year. The school committee discussed why these are retroactive and some asked why it was changed even though he and the teachers believe it worked Mr. Mitchell again indicated it was revised because the school committee gave him the directive to change it. The school committee thanked him and appreciates the research.

*Mr. Poirier made a motion to accept the revised attendance policy retroactive to the beginning of 2022-2023 academic year, Mr. Stevens seconded, and the vote was 6:1 in favor.*

C. Paine Enhancement Grant Update - K. Eliot

There are several empty seats to fill: 1 HS student (Mr. Poirier to reach out to Jimmy Bornstein and school council), 1 Select Board (Ms. Eliot will reach out for volunteer), and 2 Community Business reps (Mr. Stevens to reach out to Rotary & Chamber of Commerce). Ms. Eliot will also reach out to Heather from the Paine Grant Committee for a short description) to send out. These need to be filled ASAP.

D. Feoffees' Disbursement - K. Eliot

Estimate \$966,167 - discussion of disbursement split

*Mr. Stevens made a motion to accept the 75% Paine, 25% Weatherall split. He explained that this would not be affected even if the policy changed. Ms. Cannon seconded, and the vote was unanimous in favor.*

E. Middle School Principal Search Update - B. Blake

The application window is closed. We received 25 applicants, of whom 17 were male and 8 were female and included sitting principals, assistant principals, no experience, and no internal candidate). The next step is to set up a search committee (2 parents, 2 middle school teachers, and 2 school committee members), a paper screening by Dr. Blake, then 1st & 2nd round interviews with the search committee, followed by finalist visits. Ms. Donahue & Mr. Poirier volunteered to be on the search committee. Dr. Blake would like the process to begin within the next two weeks.

F. Vote of Superintendent Contract - K. Eliot

*Ms. Kneidler made a motion to approve the three year extension of the superintendent's contract to include the 2024-2025, 2025-2026, and 2026-2027 school years, Ms. Cannon seconded, and the vote was 5:2 in favor.*

8:38 PM

10. Superintendent's Administrative Report

- Met with community groups (food banks, rotary, & YMCA for opportunities to support each other
- Walk for Hunger raised \$14,000 (total of \$17,000 for food bank this year)
- Met with Tom Gallagher regarding athletics
- Submitted the elementary SOIs
- CREST Collaborative is searching for a new executive director
- Met with Coach Mike Fay who runs a summer camp & theater program who is requesting financial support from the school district for neediest students referred by a counselor who he typically takes "on scholarship". Brian suggested making slots available for HS students in need of community service as an offset for not having to hire staff and still offer scholarships. Mr. Stevens asked if he pays for field use, which he should, similar to the town youth leagues.
- April 13th he flew to England with the IHS concert band; their last concert was in an old London church (amazing acoustics), and a great time was had by all.
- This week, he played catchup, meeting with the Admin Team, responding to emails and calls, and dealing with the safety incidents.
- He met with the Feoffees to discuss its formula and how they disburse funds and asked about other funding opportunities, of which there are none due to the way the Feoffees are set up. It was made clear that their commitment and responsibility ends with writing a check to the school

district, then it is up to the school committee and its policy as to how those funds are allocated within the district.

- Yesterday & today was spent dealing with the Doyon incident and setting up public forums.
- Tomorrow & Saturday, he is attending a 2 day training addressing hate in sports with Tom Gallagher & Jon Mitchell.

11. Subcommittee, Working Group and Liaison Reports

- Policy meets next week.
- Operations to review evaluation - forms sent out, requested Dr. Blake to submit his documents.. Due date is May 10th. Collated evaluation will be presented at the 5/18 school committee meeting. The timing for next year will start earlier with the goal to complete the process prior to new members being sworn in. Onboarding process of new members is under review. Will set up a meeting for end May early June, and assign mentors.
- Communications should have a short meeting before the terms of Ms. Cannon and Ms. Kneedler end. Communication regarding ballot questions will be published (Ms. Freehan).
- STEAM Showcase will be May 18th.

12. New Business\* - none

13. Vouchers and Bills - none

14. Consent Agenda - none

8:54pm

15. Adjournment

*Ms. Kneedler made a motion to adjourn, Ms. Cannon seconded, and the vote was unanimous in favor.*

**Ipswich School Executive Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, April 27, 2023**

**6:30 PM**

Contract ends next year, asking for 3 additional years to 2027. Concerns with extending without summative eval; 4 years instead of 3; there is a strong termination clause; school safety issues & accountability are big factors in contract extension and compensation. SC dropped ball on some things -mid-year evals, follow-through from drills policy, tighter mgmt

Motion to adjourn EC, GS 2nd, vote unanimous