

## **Ipswich School Committee**

Monday, June 24, 2024  
MS/HS Ensemble Room  
134 High Street, Ipswich  
6:00 PM

### **MINUTES**

#### **1. Call to Order**

KE called the meeting to order at 6:08 PM.

Present: Kate Eliot (KE) Mat Perry (MP)  
Haley Rist (HR) Jenny Connolly (JC)  
Jen Donahue (JD) Dianna Freehan (DF)

Not Present: Sasha Sopic (SS)

Also Present: Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools (BB)  
Tom Markham, Director of Finance and Operations (TM)  
Charlie Quimby, High School Student Representative (CQ)

#### **2. Executive Session:**

- *Motion to meet in executive session pursuant to M.G.L. chapter 30A, sec. 21(a) for the following purpose: (3)To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining; and (2)To conduct strategy session in preparation for contract negotiations with the Superintendent of Schools and non-union personnel was made by JC and seconded by JD.*

#### **Roll Call**

**Motion passed unanimously**

#### **3. Return to Open Session**

Returned to open session at 7:14 PM.

#### **4. Reading of the District Mission Statement**

CQ read the mission statement.

#### **5. Announcements**

- The School Committee Retreat is tentatively scheduled for Monday, July 22nd at 5:00 PM.
- The Negotiations Subcommittee will meet on Tuesday, June 25th at 5:00 PM and Wednesday, July 10th at 12:30 PM in Rooms B102 and B103 at the High School.
- The Operations Subcommittee will meet on Thursday, June 27th at 4:00 PM in the MS/HS Guidance Conference Room.

#### **6. Special Acknowledgements**

- Spring Sports Awards were read
- Retirees were acknowledged

#### **7. Remarks from the Chair**

There were no remarks from the Chair.

## 8. Public Comments<sup>1</sup>

KE began by reading the public comment statement located on the meeting agendas.

*Nat Pulsifer, Waldingfield Road:* Suggested the School Committee consider approving an intern to work through the summer to create an end of year reporting system for the Feoffee grants, funded through the Feoffee disbursement. Mr. Pulsifer offered to oversee the work.

*Wendy White, Pineswamp Road:* Discussed the proposed student cell phone and personal device ban at the high school. She questioned the proposed chemical health policy and whether the School Committee could vote on that policy separate from the handbook.

*Toni Moorad, Central Street:* Shared concerns over the proposed chemical health policy and language around students that are found to be “in the presence of” drugs or alcohol.

*Pete Buletza, Argilla Road:* Discussed the proposed chemical health policy and the language around students that are found to be “in the presence of” alcohol or drugs.

*Clara DosSantos, Student:* Talked about the proposed cell phone use policy and the policy around the use of personal devices or laptops at the high school.

*Jonathan Chouvelon, Student:* Suggested solutions to the issues around personal devices and laptops being used at the high schools.

## 9. High School Student Representative Report

CQ discussed the proposed handbook changes at the high school and the reaction of students and community members. Students felt they did not have a voice in the process and that the ban on personal laptops in school was unreasonable. CQ shared reasons why he felt students should be able to continue to use their personal laptops during school hours.

## 10. Presentations

### A. Feoffees Committee Member Appointment

The School Committee is responsible for appointing two members to the Feoffees Committee. Alexander Colby, endorsed by members of the Feoffees Committee, is seeking an appointment to replace outgoing member, Dick Fates.

- *Motion to appoint Alexander Colby to the Feoffees Committee effective July 1, 2024 was made by JD and seconded by DF. The motion passed unanimously in favor.*

### B. Strategic Planning Committee Member Appointment

KE must be reappointed by the School Committee to the newly re-formed Strategic Planning Committee.

- *Move to appoint Kate Eliot as the School Committee member of the Strategic Planning Committee was made by DF and seconded by JD. The motion passed with 5 in favor and 1 abstention.*

### C. Middle School Handbook Review/Approval

Peter Ginolfi, Middle School principal, reviewed the Behavioral Expectations that were added to the Middle School Student Handbook. What was once called the “Code of Conduct”, has been updated to reflect a more progressive discipline policy. This

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<sup>1</sup> Public comment is not a discussion, debate, or dialogue between individuals and the School Committee. It is an individual's opportunity to express an opinion on issues within the School Committee's authority. While the Committee and/or administrators will not typically respond during Public Comment, the Chair, as presiding officer of the meeting, may choose to if s/he seems it expeditious. Further, should the Chair believe that an issue falls outside the purview of the School Committee, s/he may request that citizens direct it to the appropriate person or body so that the matter is given proper consideration. Public comment is limited to three (3) minutes per person and a total of 15 minutes, overall.

discipline policy follows the TIGER acronym and came together through the work and recommendations of the Discipline Committee. The policy adds restorative justice and community service as forms of intervention and includes increased parent communication. Members of the School Committee discussed the policy, some highlighting how transparent and equitable the new policy is for families and students.

- *Motion to approve the Middle School Handbook changes with the suggested edits as discussed was made by DF and seconded by JD. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

#### **D. High School Handbook Review/Approval**

Jonathan Mitchell, High School principal, provided a summary of the High School Student Handbook changes. The proposed changes were vetted by legal counsel. School Committee members first discussed the proposed cell phone policy and the policy around the use of personal laptops in schools. Mr. Mitchell was asked questions about language around allowing students who qualify for Senior Privilege to access their devices during school hours, noting that students use their devices for the college application process or to plan student activities like the prom and fashion show. Mr. Mitchell shared concerns over enforcement of the policy if there are a number of exceptions made. It was noted that this policy was brought forward by an overwhelming number of teachers and that cellphone bans in school are not unique to Ipswich. KE expressed frustration over the rollout of the policy, however, Mr. Mitchell shared that this topic has been on School Council agendas over the years. Mr. Mitchell recognized that students aren't happy with the policy, but he shared that there is no research to say that cell phone use is good for students in school. The handbook is a living document that evolves based on the needs of students and can always be reviewed and updated. JD added that this policy reflects the school doing what is best for students academically.

Members then addressed the proposed chemical health policy. Mr. Mitchell stated that the goal was to create a policy that prioritized the safety of students and is educational forward. He could not endorse a policy that condones underage drinking. Some members of the School Committee spoke out against the language around students being "in the presence of" alcohol. KE added that the message the School Committee should be sending is that they, as an institution, do not condone underage drinking. KE felt the policy was fine as written and laid out the consequences of drinking or drug use in a more progressive and transparent way. CQ added that the proposed policy made it easier for all students to understand the consequences. The discussion continued over the language around "in the presence of" alcohol and whether it was appropriate for that to be included in the policy.

It was determined that the School Committee would vote on the cell phone policy and the chemical health policy separate from the rest of the proposed handbook revisions.

- *Motion to approve the Ipswich High School Student Handbook changes minus sections on the chemical health policy and cell phone use for the 2024-2025 school year was made by MP and seconded by JD. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***
- *Motion to support the cell phone and personal device ban sections of the Ipswich High School Student Handbook as presented was made by DF and seconded by JC. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***
- *Motion to support the chemical health rule section in the Ipswich High School Student Handbook as presented was made by DF and seconded by HR. **The motion failed with 3 in support and 3 in opposition.***

With the failed vote to support the proposed chemical health policy as presented, the current chemical health policy remains in effect and will be applied to athletes only.

- *Motion to reconsider the previous chemical health policy was made by JD and seconded by JD and seconded by JC. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

The discussion continued around the language “in the presence of” and how removing that would affect the policy.

- *Motion to approve the Chemical Health Rule in the handbook without the section beginning with “Police Verified in the presence of underage drinking and drug use” through the end of the current page 10 as made by JC and seconded by JD. **The motion failed with 3 votes in favor and 3 votes in opposition.***

Concerns were raised about the next steps for the policy. Mr. Mitchell felt the policy, as written, satisfied the central concerns of parents. The policy was transparent, equitable and more educational. Mr. Mitchell said the School Council brought the policy forward with confidence it would pass. At this time, Mr. Mitchell said he would accept the removal of the language in question knowing that he tried to do what was in the best interest of students.

- *Motion to reconsider the chemical health rule in the Ipswich High School Student Handbook was made by KE and seconded by HR. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***
- *Motion to approve the chemical health policy with the removal of the language beginning with “Police Verified” and ending with “for being found in the possession or under the influence of drugs/alcohol” was made by HR and seconded by JC. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

#### **E. Tri-Board Planning Discussion**

There was a discussion of potential Tri-Board meeting topics which included NORESO and the next steps for the public safety building. KE shared a brief overview of the NORESO investment grade audit and the potential projects that may be proposed as a result of their findings. KE also discussed the public safety building and the discussions taking place in town regarding the use of existing acreage at Winthrop to carve out a space for a public safety building at that location. The general consensus of the School Committee was that it was not a feasible option.

#### **F. Summer Retreat Planning Discussion**

The summer retreat will be held on July 22nd. Topics may include:

- Feoffee Policy, reporting on grants
- Field trips, particularly international travel, philosophy on field trips
- SC/Superintendent Goals
- Sustainability policy (DF)
- Community volunteering (JC)
- Listening sessions in general (JC)
  - Survey to community (HR)
- Need to look at subcommittee, working groups, and liaisons. Email interest to Kate.
- Long term planning for the School project
- Balance out school experience with arts/athletics

#### **G. Financial Update**

TM reviewed the Year-to-Date budget document, noting that the closing of the fiscal year is going as planned. TM then reviewed the monthly revolving accounts which remained in good standing.

#### **H. Policy Update**

DF reviewed policies DBG, FA, FCB, FF, FFA, DBJ, DD, DGA, DH, DI, DIE, DJC, DK, DKC, DN, DEC, HA, HB, and HF.

- *Motion to approve the policies as presented was made by KE and seconded by JD. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

DF discussed the draft sustainability policy. It was decided that the Policy Subcommittee will review the policy before it comes before the full School Committee for approval.

#### **I. Approval of Subcommittee Meeting Minutes**

- *Motion to approve the Feoffees Working Group meeting minutes from May 7, 2024 was made by DF and seconded by MP. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***
- *Motion to approve the Policy Subcommittee meeting minutes from June 4, 2024 with suggested edits was made by DF and seconded by MP. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***
- *Motion to approve the School Facilities Working Group meeting minutes from April 3, 2024 was made by DF and seconded by JD. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

#### **J. Administrator Contracts**

- *Motion to support the FY25 administrator salaries as discussed in executive session was made by KE and seconded by JD. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***
- *Motion to support the Superintendent's FY25 salary and compensation as discussed in executive session was made by KE and seconded by JD. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

#### **11. Superintendent's Administrative Report**

BB shared the meetings and scheduled events he participated in in the time between meetings. BB then shared an update regarding the status of the Facilities Director vacancy.

#### **12. Subcommittee, Working Group and Liaison Reports**

Members from the following subcommittees, working groups, and/or liaisons discussed their last meeting:

- Operations Subcommittee
- Communications
- Turf Field

#### **13. New Business\***

No new business was presented.

#### **14. Vouchers and Bills**

All were reviewed and signed.

#### **15. Consent Agenda**

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

#### **16. Adjournment**

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

**Meeting adjourned at 10:45 PM**