

**Ipswich School Committee**  
MS/HS Ensemble Room  
134 High Street, Ipswich  
Thursday, November 2, 2023  
7:00 PM

**AGENDA**

**1. Call to Order**

KE called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

Present:           K. Eliot (KE)                   D. Freehan (DF)  
                  J. Donahue (JD)           J. Connolly (JC)  
                  S. Sopic (SS)                 J. Poirier (JP)

Also Present:   Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools (BB)  
                  Tom Markham, Director of Finance and Operations (TM)

**2. Reading of the District Mission Statement**

JD read the mission statement.

**3. Announcements**

- The next School Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, November 16th at 7:00 PM in the MS/HS Ensemble Room
- The School Facilities Working Group will meet remotely on Wednesday, November 8th at 6:00 PM.
- The Communications Subcommittee will meet remotely on Thursday, November 9th at 5:00 PM.
- There is a Tri-Board meeting scheduled for Tuesday, November 14th at 7:00 PM in Meeting Room A at Town Hall
- The School Committee will tour Shay Memorial School, in Amesbury, on Friday, November 3rd at 9:00 AM. The School Committee will also be visiting C.T. Douglas Elementary School, in Acton-Boxborough, on Tuesday, November 7th at 1:30 PM. These site visits are not meetings of the School Committee and members of the School Committee will not be deliberating.

**4. Special Acknowledgements**

KE spoke about the National Honors Society Induction Ceremony and acknowledged the varsity volleyball team, as well as Michael Coelho for being a top 25 finalist for Music Educator of the Year.

**5. Remarks from the Chair-**

- KE discussed the school visits the School Committee would be participating in over the next month. The MSBA, in a recent phone call, recommended visiting other schools. The public should know that all school building conversations and all discussions resting to the school visits must be done in public. The school building project process, if Ipswich is invited in by the MSBA, will be done in public. There will be lots of opportunities to be part of the process.

**6. Public Comments<sup>1</sup>**

There were no public comments.

**7. High School Student Representative Report**

JB was not present for this meeting.

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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.

## 8. Presentations

### A. Special Town Meeting Recap

Two articles for the schools were approved at the Special Town Meeting. KE felt it was nice for the School Committee to be able to take positions on other articles. Overall, there was a different feeling with a new moderator. The School Committee process for approving the warrant articles could be improved. There was a request to invite people who have submitted warrant articles to come and present information on their articles ahead of a School Committee vote.

### B. Whittier Tech Building Project Discussion

Last Friday, a meeting took place with JP, TM, Sarah Player, Michael Schaaf, Stephen Crane, Senator Tarr, and Representative Kassner to discuss the Whittier building project, specifically reviewing the potential areas to control cost, the MSBA reimbursement rates, and the regional agreement. State representatives are meeting with cities and towns that are part of the Whittier regional agreement to have similar conversations. JP said that the communication regarding this project has been poor, especially from the Whittier School Committee representative for Ipswich. At the time of the meeting, it was unclear if the January 23rd vote on the project was finalized, however, it sounded like it was. MSBA did increase the reimbursement rate by \$30 million dollars for this project. JP shared that Ipswich is impacted disproportionately compared to other districts that send more students to Whittier. Representatives were going to try and get answers to the group's questions and then report back.

The group reviewed the regional agreement from Whittier and asked the state representatives if there had been any successful push to evaluate the agreement. Any change would take a unanimous vote from all schools included in the regional agreement. At this point, representatives don't feel that would be successful and would not impact this current project.

It was clarified that the school tours Whittier has scheduled are open to the public and that Gary James is the Ipswich representative on the Whittier School Committee. TM shared how capital assessments are funded currently at Whittier, noting that it occurs during the annual budget process. In FY24, Ipswich contributed \$54,000 and that money was approved at Town Meeting.

BB notified the School Committee that as of this afternoon, Whittier had canceled all of their future informational sessions due to an incident that took place at a meeting the night prior.

Lastly, KE announced that at their October meeting, the MSBA approved significant increases to funding with an annual cap of \$1.2 billion. They also approved a \$100 million supplemental grant to offset current project costs that are substantially over budget. The accelerated repair will restart in January 2024 and be limited to windows and roofs.

### C. Substitute Pay Rate Discussion and Potential Vote

BB is requesting an increase to the substitute paraeducator pay rate. Currently the rate is \$80 per day and the request is to increase that amount to \$100 per day. The rate for an unlicensed teacher is now \$100 per day and a licensed teacher is paid \$110 per day. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find substitutes willing to fill the paraeducator role for the current rate of pay. It was emphasized that there is an ongoing need for substitutes in the district and that this shortage is not unique to this district. This requested change would take effect at the start of the next pay period.

- *Motion to support a \$20 increase to the paraeducator substitute pay rate was made by JD and seconded by JC. The motion passed unanimously in favor.*

### D. Policy Review and Approval

DF presented the following policies that were reviewed and/or updated by the Policy Subcommittee at their most recent meeting:

- BEDH: Public Comment at School Committee
- DJ: Purchasing
- DJA: Purchasing Authority
- DJE: Procurement Requirements
- EFE: Civil Rights Complaint Policy for Child Nutrition Programs
- ILD: Student Submissions to Educations Surveys and Research
- IMG: Animals in Schools
- IMGA: Service Animals in Schools
- JFAB: Acceptance of Children of Nonresident Personnel
- JIC: Student Discipline

- JICK: Harassment of Students
- JJE: Student Fund-Raising Activities
- JJIF: Athletic Concussion Policy
- JK: Student Conduct
- JKAA: Physical Restraint

After committee discussion on policy IMG: Animals in Schools, it was determined that the policy would be tabled until it was reviewed by Animal Control.

- *Motion to approve all policies presented for the November 2, 2023 School Committee meeting with the exception of Policy IMG, with edits, was made by KE and seconded by JC. **The motion was approved unanimously in favor.***

## 9. Superintendent's Administrative Report

BB's report highlighted his schedule for the past two weeks which included:

- A meeting with the athletic director
- Administrative team meetings
- A Comprehensive Health Curriculum Meeting to begin unpacking state standards
- Special Town Meeting
- A Northshore Education Consortium Board of Directors meeting
- A meeting with JD and SS to discuss athletic budgeting concerns
- A PEC meeting to look at health insurance trends
- A meeting with Larry Jordan to discuss the celebrations planned for the anniversary of D-Day
- A threat assessment meeting at the high school
- The National Honors Society induction ceremony
- A meeting with the new Climate Resiliency Manager
- A DEI Committee meeting
- A Rotary meeting
- Several subcommittee meetings

BB presented a list of considerations, aligned/adapted from the MSBA, for the School Committee to review while participating in the school tours. He reminded the School Committee that there should be no deliberation at the site visits, however, members can take their own individual notes. JP added that there was a lot of information that came from the listening sessions that could be taken into consideration by members when touring the schools.

## 10. Subcommittee, Working Group and Liaison Reports

- **Traverso- Weatherall Innovation Grant Committee:** The committee met to discuss and approve all grant applications on November 1st.
- **Feoffees Working Group:** Barry Hopping, Caryl Nysten, Hugh O'Flynn, and Ken Swenson attended the meeting to discuss the history of the Feoffee grants. The group discussed the future of the Feoffee fund and the possibility of revisions to the policy to safeguard the integrity of the grant program.

## 11. New Business

No new business was presented.

## 12. Vouchers and Bills

All were reviewed and signed.

## 13. Consent Agenda

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

## 14. Executive Session:

- *Motion to enter into executive session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair declares and return for the sole purpose of adjourning the meeting was made by KE and seconded by SS.*

#### **Roll Call**

**The motion passed unanimously in favor**

#### **Return to Open Session**

#### **15. Adjournment**

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

**Meeting adjourned at 9:01 PM**