

Ipswich School Committee

Thursday, September 12, 2024

MS/HS Ensemble Room

134 High Street, Ipswich

7:00 PM

Minutes

1. Call to Order

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

Present: Kate Eliot (KE) Haley Rist (HR)
 Sasha Sopic (SS) Dianna Freehan (DF)
 Jen Donahue (JD) Jenny Connolly (JC)

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. Reading of the District Mission Statement

CQ read the district mission statement.

3. Announcements

- The School Committee is holding a workshop on Thursday, September 19th at 7:00 PM in the MS/HS Ensemble Room.
- The next regularly scheduled School Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, October 3rd at 7:00 PM in the MS/HS Ensemble Room.
- The following subcommittees and working groups will be meeting:
 - Feoffees Policy Working Group: September 18th at 6:30 PM in the MS/HS Guidance Conference Room
 - Policy Subcommittee: September 25th at 6:30 PM in the MS/HS Guidance Conference Room
 - Negotiations Subcommittee Executive Session: Wednesday, September 18th at 8:00 AM virtually
 - Negotiations Subcommittee with the IEA Bargaining Unit Executive Session: Tuesday, September 24th at 4:00 PM at the MS/HS

4. Special Acknowledgements

- The custodians across the district were recognized for their work preparing the schools for the start of the school year.
- The High School Golf team is off to a successful start.
- Staff at the Paul F. Doyon Memorial School were recognized for their welcome back video.

5. Public Comments¹

DF read the statement on public comment.

Sam Halen, Seaview Road: Part of a citizens group to promote the adoption of NORESCO plan.

6. High School Student Representative Report

CQ noted that students were settling into the new school year. CQ discussed the cellphone ban and the personal device ban at the high school.

7. Presentations

¹ 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.

A. Presentation on Section 3A Multi-Family Overlay District

Sarah Player, a member of the 3A Task Force in Ipswich, presented information on the Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 8: Amend Zoning Bylaws, Add Section IX.V. Section 3A Multi-family Overlay District. The presentation included information on the following:

- Overview of 3A Mandate
 - The task force has been working for over a year to develop a compliance plan to address the state's 3A mandate, which requires multifamily housing near train stations.
 - The proposal will be presented at the upcoming Special Town Meeting (STM).
- Guiding Principles and Initial Research
 - Reviewed existing zoning, conducted surveys, and held listening sessions.
 - Developed guiding principles for compliance.
 - The new law aims to address the statewide housing crisis by mandating multifamily housing.
 - Ipswich faces a housing shortage, particularly in workforce, affordable, and accessible housing. There is also limited housing diversity.
- Key 3A Requirements
 - 40% of Ipswich's housing units must be located within ½ mile of the train station, totalling 971 theoretical units.
 - Primary location preference is downtown Ipswich
- Considerations and Concerns
 - Concerns about the potential impacts of this mandate include the lack of affordable housing and the focus on the downtown area.
 - The town aims to maximize affordable housing within the compliance plan.
- Zoning and Development Approach
 - Multifamily housing is currently allowed in Ipswich by special permit; under 3A, it will be "by right" with a site plan review process.
 - 3A fits into the town's smart growth planning and community development goals, encouraging development in the town center.
- Companion Design Guidebook
 - A design guidebook has been developed as part of this process and will be voted on separately by the Planning Board.
 - The guiding principles will ensure the development maintains the town's character with restrictions on height and design.
- Overlay District and Subdistricts
 - The zoning plan includes the creation of an overlay district, with four subdistricts mostly aligning with current zoning.
 - A map of these districts was shared, with the conclusion that the town could build more units under current zoning than 3A zoning.
 - Overlay zoning is optional; residents can choose to follow current zoning or opt into the overlay.
- Potential Impacts and Compliance
 - Compliance with 3A is tied to state funding eligibility.
 - A review by the Massachusetts Area Planning Council (MAPC) indicated that multifamily housing has less impact on school populations than single-family homes.
- Infrastructure Considerations
 - Water usage is decreasing despite the population increasing, due to ongoing repairs and improved efficiency in utilities.

Ms. Player shared that the Planning Board, Finance Committee (FinCom), and Select Board all support the 3A proposal.

Comments/Questions:

JC asked if regulations have finished changing. SP confirmed that the regulations are done changing.

JC inquired about student enrollment in relation to housing developments, specifically the implications of unlimited bedrooms and occupants per unit. SP clarified that the law does not allow for setting limits on the number of bedrooms, but it also doesn't require that all units be three-bedroom. JC expressed concerns that if contractors build more units, it could impact student enrollment. SP noted that enrollment in multi-family developments tends to have a limited impact on student populations, as these areas are already built up. Additionally, student population has been declining annually.

JC requested clarification on the "payment in lieu" process, where contractors pay out to avoid having to build affordable housing. SP explained that the payment in lieu process under the 3A law is the same as current practices.

JD asked about the potential for 971 units under the 3A zoning. SP stated that the number of units is not necessarily a 1:1 correlation and clarified that there is no pressure to fill those units; the 3A law simply makes it easier to build housing. The intent is to offer the opportunity for zoning to meet these parameters.

JC expressed concern that the 3A law only requires 10% affordable housing, meaning 90% of the units will be market-priced. SP responded that multi-family housing, by design, is generally more affordable than single-family homes, and these will primarily be rental units.

B. Special Town Meeting Warrant Article Vote and Speaker

Article #	Article	Motion	First	Second	Vote	Speaker
1	Amend Municipal Budget (State Aid)	Support	SS	JD	Unanimous 6-0	DF
2	Amend School Budget (State Aid)	Support	SS	HR	Unanimous 6-0	SS
3	Appropriation to Essex Tech	Support	SS	JD	Unanimous 6-0	JD
4	Hero Act	No Vote				
5	Increase Income Limit for Clause 41A, Senior Tax Deferral Program	No Vote				
6	Open Space Bond Parcel List Addition, 56 Fellows Rd	No Vote				
7	Debt Exclusion for Energy Efficiency Improvements - NORESCO	Support	HR	SS	Unanimous 6-0	KE
8	Amend Zoning Bylaws, Add Section IX.V. Section 3A Multi-family Overlay District	Support	SS	KE	5-1	SS

C. Finance Update

TM reviewed the Year-to Date report on the FY25 budget, noting that approximately 24% of the budget has been spent. Revolving, gift, and stabilization accounts remain healthy. TM answered questions regarding Chapter 70 Funding and the high school student parking fees. It was suggested the Budget Subcommittee plan for their first meeting.

8. Superintendent's Administrative Report

BB shared the meetings and scheduled events he participated in the time between meetings. The report included an update on the opening of schools, mention of the various meetings BB attended, dates for upcoming flu clinics hosted throughout the district, and information about the mandatory training/safety training that staff are participating in. BB also discussed the expansion of the Extended Day Program to accommodate middle school students. BB shared the positive feedback he's received regarding the

paving at Winthrop School and also noted that he is working with high school administrators and the tech team for a solution to feedback on the ban of personal devices at the high school.

9. Subcommittee, Working Group and Liaison Reports

- **Communications Subcommittee:** Drafted the September newsletter, to be sent out at the end of the month. It was suggested that the newsletter include information on the protocol for entering school buildings, as well as a link to the bullying reporting form.
- **Operations Subcommittee:** Discussed School Committee and superintendent goals, to be presented at a future meeting.
- **Elementary School Building Project Working Group:** Planned for the workshop on September 19th
- **Traverso-Weatherall Innovation Grant Committee:** JC reviewed the list of approved Spring cycle grants.
- **Strategic Planning Committee:** Met last week and is waiting on a scenario/dollar amount for the elementary building project, as well the MSBA reimbursement percentage. The group also hopes to get a number for a feasibility study for the elementary building project, as well as information from Whittier on any planned project they may have.

10. New Business*

CQ shared information on the school-owned Arthur Dow paintings.

11. Vouchers and Bills

All reviewed and signed.

12. Consent Agenda

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

13. Executive Session:

- Motion and Vote 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 non-union personnel was made by SS and seconded by JD.

Roll Call

Motion passed unanimously.

14. Return to Open Session (10:32 PM)

- Motion to approve the Clerical Collective Bargaining Agreement as discussed in executive session was made by JD and seconded by HR. *The motion passed unanimously in favor.*
- Motion to approve the Custodian Collective Bargaining Agreement as discussed in executive session was made by JC and seconded by JD. *The motion passed unanimously in favor.*

15. Adjournment

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

Meeting adjourned at 10:33 PM