

Ipswich School Committee

Thursday, November 7, 2024

MS/HS Ensemble Room

134 High Street, Ipswich

7:00 PM

AGENDA

1. Call to Order

DF called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM

Present: Mat Perry (MP) Dianna Freehan (DF)
 Sasha Sopic (SS) Jenny Connolly (JC)
 Jen Donahue (JD) Haley Rist (HR)

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

2. Reading of the District Mission Statement

CQ read the mission statement.

3. Announcements and Special Acknowledgements

- The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for November 21, 2024 at 7:00 PM in the MS/HS Ensemble Room
- The following subcommittees and working groups will be meeting:
 - Policy Subcommittee- Tuesday, November 12th at 6 PM
 - Feoffees Policy Working Group- Tuesday, November 12th at 7:15 PM
 - Budget Subcommittee- Wednesday, November 13th at 5:30 PM
 - Communications Subcommittee- Wednesday, November 13th at 6:00 PM
- A Tri-Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 19th at 7:00 PM.
- Ipswich Education Foundation presented the Softball Boosters with a donation
- High School Spirit Week rankings were shared

4. Public Comments¹

DF read the statement on public comments.

Ann Carroll, 33 Upper River Road: Expressed strong support for small schools and feels deeply passionate about the proposal. Raised concerns about the public process, stating that it appeared some information was not properly vetted or considered. Requested a cost comparison between building one school versus two schools, as well as a comparison to using a model school. Emphasized the importance of carefully evaluating the proposal to ensure community support and thorough consideration of all options.

5. Community Presentations

A. Presentation on Field House and Potential Vote on Extending the Paine Grant

Ken Swenson, member of the Synthetic Turf Advisory Committee-Phase 2 (STAC-2), shared a presentation on the work of the committee and their request to extend the time the committee has to use the Paine Grant awarded to them in the amount of

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.

\$140,000 in Spring 2024. The presentation covered the following:

- a. History of STAC
- b. Project Summary
- c. Project Status
- d. Awarded Paine Grant Summary
- e. Summary of the 2015-2016 Paine Grant Report Summary
- f. Pictures of building site as of October 2024
- g. Plans for new site, place for sewer line through school, blueprint for the inside, front and side of the proposed building
- h. An overview of why to support his project
- i. A request for an extension for the time to spend the Paine Grant awarded in 2024

Mr. Swenson explained that the most recently awarded Paine Grant stipulated that the work outlined in the grant must be completed during FY25, ending by June 30, 2025. The current construction plans are to install sewer lines in the summer of 2025 so as not to interrupt school/sports while in session.

Comments/Questions:

Dr. Hugh O’Flynn, member of the STAC, provided a historical background on the project, delays, and challenges. Dr. O’Flynn talked about improvements made to facilities in surrounding districts. The project was scaled down to a \$950K budget, with \$750K currently funded. The team is exploring additional funding options. He emphasized the need for restrooms and team rooms as part of meeting local facility standards. The committee is requesting an extension to delay funding until the summer to keep the project moving forward.

JD is currently the School Committee liaison to this committee. She expressed support for the project and acknowledged the committee's commitment to breaking ground. JD also felt that an extension is required to avoid disrupting the school schedule.

The discussion continued around the use of Paine Grants that had been applied for previously, future fundraising plans, the projected costs of the sewer line project, and plans for either unspent funds or if the project total comes in higher than the grants was written for.

- Motion to approve the extension of time to spend the approved Paine Grant through the end of the 2025 calendar year was made by SS and seconded by JC. *The motion passed unanimously in favor.*

6. Superintendent’s Administrative Report

Recent activities included participation in a regional Special Education meeting with the Director of Pupil Personnel Services, Special Town Meeting, a Northshore Education Consortium meeting, and training on the use of NARCAN. BB met with the AFSCME Clerical Unit to discuss the vacant position at Central Office. The AFSCME Food Services Unit recently ratified their contract. BB attended various subcommittee meetings, a North Shore Superintendents Roundtable meeting, and two Wellness Committee meetings. BB met with the IEA president, attended a hazard mitigation meeting with the Town, as well as a meeting to plan for the launch of the middle school extended day program. Additional meetings include an Athletic Director update, tech update, DEI meeting, and a facilities update.

BB shared an update on the Winthrop School classroom that has been displaced to do a foul odor. BB believes they have found the problem and are actively working to address it.

7. Subcommittee, Working Group and Liaison Reports

- **Budget Subcommittee:** The calendar from last year was reviewed, and updates are pending based on dates from the town. Discussions are focused on making budget talks more productive, with a focus on the override calculator and stabilization fund. A meeting is scheduled to discuss recommendations for the administration team in planning the FY26 budget.
- **Ipswich Education Foundation:** Met on Monday. The group is continuing to work on fundraising efforts.
- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board:** A meeting is set for next Thursday. Any suggestions regarding dangerous intersections near schools or walking routes should be sent to JC.

8. High School Student Representative Report

CQ discussed the High School Spirit Week and shared that Seniors were anxious for Senior privileges to start. CQ also discussed the DECA club and their recent visit to the State House.

9. Finance Report

TM reviewed the FY25 Year-to-Date budget report, highlighting the utilities offsets that were made by charging the Extended Day Program and Food Services. TM also discussed \$231,809 in supplemental funding provided by additional Chapter 70 state aid for FY25 and approved at Fall Town Meeting thus increasing the FY25 school appropriated budget to \$39,848,212. TM called attention to how the revised FY25 budget amount was represented on the YTD finance report. The Revolving, Stabilization, and Gift Accounts were also reviewed with the monthly report presented. TM requested School Committee authorization to use current year's budget funds to pay prior years' outstanding invoices that were discovered as part of the FY24 close. He shared a memo with this list of unpaid bills from prior fiscal years. This memo was previously shared with the Budget Subcommittee and totals \$9,711.67. A motion in support of this request was included in the consent agenda.

10. Presentations

A. Town Meeting Recap

Committee member's provided the Town Moderator with feedback on the Special Town Meeting which included:

- Ensuring seats are reserved for the School Committee
- Timers needed for speakers
- Recommendation to reiterate throughout the meeting the time limit for speakers
- The need for a pre-meeting of boards ahead of Town Meeting created more confusion than it helped
- Need to do better job to make sure there are seats reserved for School Committee
- The possibility of moving the meeting to a Saturday morning
- Keep the time a vote is open for consistent throughout the meeting
- Rethink the use of the "overflow" room and who sits there
- Board members should receive their electronic voting tools ahead of their pre-meeting

The Town Moderator will take the feedback under advisement.

B. Review of School Committee Norms

DF reviewed the School Committee Norms. A brief discussion continued about how they were originally created and a process/timeline for reviewing them each year.

C. School Committee Goals Review and Potential Vote to Approve

HR reviewed the draft 2024-2025 School Committee goals. In creating the goals, the Operations Subcommittee worked to articulate School Committee responsibilities vs. those of the Superintendent and/or the Director of Finance. Committee members were asked to review the goals and provide feedback to the Operations Subcommittee/HR ahead of the next meeting. Goals will be reviewed again and approved at the next meeting.

D. Superintendent Goals Review and Potential Vote to Approve

BB reviewed the first draft of his 2024-2025 Superintendent Goals. These goals are based around the School Committee goals and are directly tied to different DESE standards and objectives. Committee members were asked to review the goals and send feedback to BB ahead of the next School Committee meeting. Goals will be approved at the next meeting.

E. Elementary School Building Project Next Steps and Tri-Board Prep

SS provided an update from the most recent Elementary Building Project Working Group which included:

- A discussion on visiting an additional school, preferably in Swampscott, in December. It was recommended to include a member of the Finance Committee and a member of the Select Board.
- The Select Board, at their recent meeting, voted to draft a letter of support echoing the School Committee letter to be sent to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA).

- As a reminder, the School Committee/Superintendent will hear back from the MSBA in December regarding their decision to accept Ipswich into the MSBA pipeline.
- A discussion about ongoing town engagement and what information should be shared and how.

The Elementary Building Project will be an agenda item at the upcoming Tri-Board Meeting. In preparation for the meeting, SS shared the draft presentation. The presentation gave an overview of the School Committee discussions in recent months, shared Model School information, and included next steps for the School Committee/project. SS stressed that the information included in the presentation was from the MSBA. There was a discussion on the slide order, as well as including the 2024 cost equivalent for the listed projects. Some members felt that the inclusion of that information could be misleading. The final slideshow will be shared with the Tri-Board ahead of the meeting on November 19th.

SS then shared that the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) was looking for guidance on what numbers to include in their plan as a placeholder for the school building project. The Elementary School Building Project Working Group felt comfortable with the numbers the SPC had prepared originally. The number the SPC came up with is within the costs of recent projects around a similar size. DF noted that this was the same strategy that was used in the last Strategic Plan. Information in the SPC will be updated as more information becomes available.

11. New Business*

No new business was presented.

12. Consent Agenda

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

13. Adjournment

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

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM