

Ipswich School Committee

Thursday, September 19, 2024

MS/HS Ensemble Room

134 High Street, Ipswich

7:00 PM

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

DF called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM

Present: Kate Eliot (KE) Mat Perry (MP)
 Sasha Sopic (SS) Dianna Freehan (DF)
 Jenny Connolly (JC) Haley Rist (HR)

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

2. Public Comments¹

DF read the public comment statement included on the School Committee meeting agendas.

Pete Buletza (Argilla Road):

- Advocated for inclusivity of all community members in the elementary school building project.
- Emphasized the importance of diverse representation in school decisions.
- Urged caution in excluding individuals with differing perspectives.

Carl Gardner (9 Woods Lane):

- Expressed concerns about the approach to the elementary schools.
- Suggested starting fresh with a new process and considering the changing community dynamics.
- Proposed considering the Doyon site for a model school and encouraged spreading out projects.

Alicia Thomas (Ipswich Educators' Association Vice President):

- Expressed IEA's support for the need for new elementary school buildings and offered assistance.

Jen Donahue (School Committee Member):

- Read a statement regarding her ability to deliberate due to potential conflicts of interest and chose to recuse herself from further discussions.

3. Discussion on the future of an elementary school building project

DF outlined the intention of the discussion and emphasized that no specific votes would be held. The goal of the workshop is to prepare for acceptance into the MSBA program, and inform the Strategic Planning Committee that the School Committee intends to develop a robust plan that will inform the future elementary school building project.

Planning will be guided by three primary factor:

- Educational Planning: ensure the new building(s) meet the educational needs of students and teachers
- Comparative project cost and timing: ensure a fiscally responsible approach to minimize impact to taxpayers

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.

- Town engagement: develop an approach and design best suited for Ipswich and supported by the majority of residents

Discussion on SOI Process:

- Reviewed the School Committee's efforts to address the needs of both elementary schools.
- The Paul F. Doyon Memorial School was submitted as the priority school.
- The School Committee checked off the box on the SOI applications that stated Ipswich would consider a consolidation of the two elementary schools

Educational Planning:

- BB reviewed the elementary education plan, highlighting the co-teaching model, inclusion, and maintaining class sizes. Discussed the potential consolidation of schools and how the building's layout could support current and future educational needs.
- Highlighted the importance of flexibility in a new building's design to adapt to future needs.
- Safety and security will be improved in any new building design.

Cost and Timing:

- SS presented the cost estimates for three different school building project scenarios for different student capacities and the potential impact of a consolidated school utilizing information shared by the MSBA on previously completed projects throughout Massachusetts
- Discussed concerns about the timeline for building two schools versus one
- It was noted that the School Committee will be investigating the model school program.
- Discussed how the strategic plan and town tax implications fit into the decision-making process.

Town Engagement:

- Discussed categories for gathering and providing information to the community.
- Provided an overview of the listening sessions held and community input.
- Reviewed the need for the School Committee to lead community engagement.

Wrap-Up Discussion:

- SS summarized the educational plan, cost/timing data, and town engagement discussions.
- DF asked committee members if they were ready to take a position on the project, at a later meeting.
- It was agreed that the School Committee would take a position at the October 17th meeting, considering strategic planning needs.

The Elementary Building Project Working Group will meet ahead of the October 17th School Committee meeting to review the workshop information and plan for the discussion/vote on the position of a future project(s).

4. Adjournment

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:57 PM