

FINANCE COMMITTEE/SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUDGET PRESENTATION
MARCH 18, 2014
M/HS ENSEMBLE ROOM

OPEN SESSION

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Michael Schaaf, Finance Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:39 p.m.

Finance Committee members present: M. Swan, R. White, K. Murphy, M. Feldman, L. Seidler, R. Howard, I. Miles

School Com members present: J. Bauman, R. Roesler, S. Player

Administrators present: Superintendent W. Hart, Finance Director J. Cuff, Interim Director of Pupil Personnel Services D. Minton, and Principals Dalton, Fabrizio, Conley, and McAdams.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

Mrs. Roesler explained that Mr. Hopping would be arriving later after a meeting regarding Chapter 70 funding, that Mr. Nylén is traveling on business, Dr. Gresh is teaching, and Dr. O'Flynn is away.

FY15 SCHOOL BUDGET PRESENTATION: DISTRICT OVERVIEW

Dr. Hart expressed appreciation to the Finance Committee for all the meetings and work done outside of meeting time to bring this to fruition. He entitled his presentation "Ipswich Public Schools Call to Action" and reviewed on Powerpoint the journey ahead in classrooms, curriculum, and connectivity. The skills and habits for this century include Common Core, learning and innovation skills; information, media and technology skills; and life/career skills. He talked about the habits/dispositions of successful people and, in order to achieve this, powerful learning and collaboration with the students will occur as a result of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) established with the faculty. It is important to research best practice, implement it, learn how to assess it, and align the road to go forward. PLC's SMART goals this year are developing 21st Century curriculum and building staff leaders.

The override budget figure is \$27,830,642, estimated available revenue for FY15 is \$25,875,094, necessitating an override request of \$2,750,000. He detailed the classrooms added instruction of PLC stipends for 25 teacher leaders, STEAM technology (1FTE), social/emotional skills program instructor (1FTE), STEM math program and instructor (1FTE), a media specialist (1FTE), a new curriculum specialist (1FTE) and a district-wide IT Director (1FTE).

Dr. Hart explained why additional funding is needed: there are significant, structural budget deficits which have been years in the making. It has been deferred

because of careful fiscal management, the use of reserves and outside funds (e.g. Choice, Circuit Breaker), and significant use of fees for services (athletics and transportation). The per pupil expenditure by the district has made Ipswich's number only one place above the bottom, and well below the peer and State average. He showed several graphing methods to illustrate the deficit in per pupil spending. The override goals create an innovative vision for the district supported by a conservative budget, created budget continuity for five years to allow for the implementation and success of the new curriculum strategy, and address the structural deficit between current revenue and costs.

Mr. Howard suggested an anecdotal explanation to the public of where the schools find themselves now, why there is a crisis, and if the override fails, what will then happen to the school district. Dr. Hart gave the example of the loss of 9 teacher positions and 14 support staff as well as several thousand dollars in supplies, materials, and associated services. Narrowing it down more, at the High School every teacher cut means cutting 5 sections of curriculum.

BUDGET PRESENTATION: CENTRAL OFFICE

Dr. Hart presented his requests for Professional Learning Community teacher leader stipends of \$20,000, Technology teacher leader stipends of \$20,000, and Curriculum teacher leader stipends of \$46,200, a Technology Director (1.0 FTE), Director of Pupil Personnel Services (1.0 FTE), increase in ELL instruction, \$22,094, and increase in special education transportation cost of \$35,000. Operational costs include \$53,570 for retirement, a 4.13% increase in health insurance to \$640,943, and regular education transportation of \$165,825.

The \$336,000 line item is the projection for salary increases in FY15 for staff. Dr. Hart commented that his teachers are asking to collaborate and are thoroughly committed to moving the schools forward. Mr. White, in asking about choosing and allotting stipends, was told by Dr. Hart that teachers are defining the 21st century skills and applying to get into the imbedded requirements of a "special" teacher. Mr. Fay (who had joined the meeting at 7:50 p.m.) asked for amounts of the stipends for the 25 teachers and later, inquiring about the second and third years, was told that every year these will be new applications. Of 171 teachers, there are 75 stipends.

Mr. Schaaf asked if visits could be made or videos reviewed by the public to see the innovations expected. Dr. Hart will let the Finance Committee know about background information for the public to investigate. Mrs. Bauman remarked that STEM and STEAM articles are being written where there is a lack of interest by young employees to enter these areas. Dr. Hart stated that 20 teachers are attending the Cambridge Innovative Center in this regard. Mr. Seidler asked if IHS graduates will be prepared to follow up in these science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics areas. Dr. Hart said that the vision, which will make sure of a

connection with the real world problem-solving, is coming with exciting and dynamic curriculum changes. AP data can currently be collected to measure these changes. Mrs. Roesler personally spoke of her fifth-grader whose music interest has already shown an integration with technology and science curricula. Mrs. Swan gave specific examples of her medically oriented children connected with music as well.

9 p.m. Mr. Fay asked about the school performance audit. Immediately, Barry Hopping, School Committee Chair, having just joined the meeting, announced that Massachusetts is ranked in the top ten in the nation in science and math and then spoke of discussion at the meeting he had just attended about the inequities of Chapter 70 allotments to towns and cities. To Mr. Fay's question, he said while Board of Selectmen has voted to put the audit on the Annual Town Meeting warrant, the School Committee needs to have discussion to speak out in opposition. He commented that, in speaking with the Hamilton/Wenham School Committee Chair, he found that \$80,000 was spent on the audit, over 100 recommendations came forward, but only 4-5 were acted upon. It will be a topic at Town Meeting. Nobody is opposed to an audit per se, only the timing of it.

BUDGET PRESENTATION: SPECIAL EDUCATION

The goal of special education is to maintain students in their original communities and support peer and community relationships while providing quality programming, holding down costs, and being proactive in program development. The sample tuition prices for private schools (and there are 24 students tuitioned out from Ipswich) were provided. In addition, there are collaborative tuition programs around the Ipswich area where tuitions are considerably less (\$31,000 to \$48,000 yearly). The total special education budget including salaries, purchased services, and transportation amounts to \$5.6 million, 20% of the overall budget. Dr. Hart explained that a Director of Pupil Personnel Services position opening has 11 identified applicants who will be cut down to 3-5 for interviewing.

Mr. Hopping explained Response to Intervention (RTI) as a three-tiered process in identifying spot-on struggles by regular education students in the classroom to catch them early and perhaps avoid an expensive special education transition. Circuit Beaker funds (State reimbursements) help with special education costs. More money is being put into professional salary and taking out the teaching assistants, one of the recommendations which came from an Ipswich Special Education study (audit) in recent years. Mr. Howard commented that Ipswich has a tradition of supporting kids in these programs to be productive citizens and being effective at it. Ms. Cuff answered Mr. Feldman's question about a significant reduction in grant funding since FY10-11 because the Federal government provided allotments to the states and towns during the recession.

Finance Committee members asked for figures on how students leaving Ipswich, whether to private schools or to Essex Agricultural or Whittier, affect the Foundation Base and Choice funding. Mr. Schaaf asked for numbers of Ipswich's school-age children versus the number who attend public schools.

ADJOURNMENT Meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.