

Ipswich School Committee Meeting
Thursday, January 23, 2020
7:00 PM
MS/HS Ensemble Room

Minutes

I. Open Session

Call to Order:

Mr. Hopping, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:06 PM

Present:

Ms. Gilliam, Ms. Kneedler, Mr. Nysten, Mr. Stevens and Dr. O'Flynn (7:12 PM)

Also present:

Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools; Joanne Cuff, Director of Finance and Operations; and George Gallagher, High School Student Representative

Mr. Gallagher read the District Mission Statement

Announcements:

- The School Committee will meet on Wednesday, February 5th and Thursday, February 6th for budget presentations beginning at 7:00pm in the MS/HS Ensemble Room.
- The Feoffee Policy Working Group and the Policy Subcommittee will hold a joint meeting on Tuesday, January 28th at 6:00pm in the MS/HS Guidance Conference Room
- The Policy Subcommittee will meet on January 28th at 7:30pm in the MS/HS Guidance Conference Room
- The Budget Subcommittee will meet on January 29th at 5:30pm in the MS/HS Guidance Conference Room
- The School Facilities Working Group will meet on Thursday, January 30th at 6:00pm in the MS/HS Guidance Conference Room
- The Doyon STEAM event will take place on Thursday, January 30th from 6-7:30 PM at the Doyon school

Citizens' Comments:

There were no citizen comments.

Special Acknowledgements:

Mr. Hopping acknowledged the newly formed Kindness Club at the middle school. He explained that both students and teachers have stepped up to help other schools, students and teachers in light of recent tragedies at schools like Rockport and Newburyport. He continued by reading

an email from principal Kathy McMahon, which explained the club and its efforts in detail. The goal of the club is to proactively spread kindness throughout the schools and community.

High School Student Representative Report

Mr. Gallagher reported that the end of this week marks the end of the first semester at the high school and report cards will be available soon on Aspen. Beginning next week, some students will be switching their semester classes. Show rehearsals for the upcoming student performance of "Murder" are currently taking place. Mr. Gallagher reminded students that they should be vigilant in washing hands and wiping down surfaces due to an increase in cases of the flu at school. He finished with a report on the successes of several winter sports teams.

II. School Committee Presentations

A. Proposal for Electric Vehicle Charging Station

High school senior, Mei Bradford, presented a proposal to install two electric vehicle charging stations in the middle/high school parking lot. The ideal location of this installation would be in the high school lot, closer to the electrical rooms. Wiring for the charging stations would need to be placed from the school, under cement and to the charging stations. Mei also explained that installing these two stations would have an average increase to the current electric bill of .5%. Lastly, she hoped that the funding for charging stations would come from local businesses or federal grants.

Mei then answered several questions from the School Committee. She explained that she believes there are currently about 45 electric cars in the MS/HS parking lots which is an increase from one or two in years past. If the stations were installed, students and faculty would have priority to use them during the school day and they would be open to the public during weekends and when school is not in session. At this time, she is still working with the administration to discuss ways to monitor use of the charging stations during the school day to ensure that only students and faculty are using them.

While the School Committee commended Mei for her efforts, they have asked her to return at a later date to present the costs associated with the project and a timeline before they make any decisions to fully support the project.

B. Town Straw Ban Proposal

High school senior, Margot Kelly, presented a proposal for a town-wide single use straw, stirrer and hot toppler ban. After reading several statistics on single use plastics, Margot then shared the proposed by-law. She is proposing a ban on all single use plastic straw, stirrer and hot stopper in Ipswich. According to the by-law:

- Business would be able to offer reusable straws, stoppers and stirrers to customers
- Business would also have the option of not offering any straw, stirrer or hot stopper at all
- All stirrers, straws and hot stoppers specifically packaged for retail sale would be excluded

- The ban would take place six months after approval by the Attorney General

Businesses in town are currently being surveyed about the proposed ban and the effect it would have on their business. So far, as Margot explained, she has received positive feedback.

She currently has the support of the Town Manager, Board of Health, the Waste Reduction Committee and is endorsed by the Select Board. She is presenting tonight in hopes of gaining School Committee approval.

Dr. O’Flynn moved to support the Town Straw Ban proposal, seconded by Ms. Kneedler. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Interact Club Project Proposal

High school student Kayla Ladden, along with fellow Interact Club Board Members, presented a proposal for an overnight leadership experience. The Interact Club is the youth branch of Rotary, an international club that focuses on giving back for the public good and encouraging community involvement from all its members. The goal of the overnight leadership experience is to encourage membership from students who are not currently in the club, stimulate participation from club members in events, provide opportunities for club members to take on leadership opportunities, and to allow time for the club to brainstorm and work on its current international project. The overnight would utilize the high school pods, lower gym and performing arts center and would take place on a Friday night through Saturday morning. The club anticipates 50 students to participate in the event and will provide one chaperone per 10 students. All chaperones would be fingerprinted and CORI’d prior to the event.

Dr. o’Flynn moved to approve the overnight experience, seconded by Mr. Nysten. The motion passed unanimously.

D. History and Social Studies Standards Presentation

Tracy Wagner, Director of Teaching and Learning, presented a slideshow explaining the newest Massachusetts history and social sciences (HSS) standards. She first discussed the vision, directly from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), that states- *“All Massachusetts students will be educated in the histories of the Commonwealth, the United States, and the world. They will be prepared to make informed civic choices and assume their responsibility for strengthening equality, justice, and liberty in and beyond the United States.”*

She went on to talk about how the standards are broken into several quadrants that address areas like content and guiding principles and how each standard is aligned with the 2017 English/ Language Arts and Literacy standards. Ms. Wagner shared the Ipswich Public Schools Curriculum Review Cycle, which explains when and how the new standards will be unpacked and reviewed, along with when the new curriculum will be developed and implemented. She discussed the importance of the Compass group which is comprised of a group of teacher

leaders from all schools who help to unpack, review and implement the standards through the district.

Ms. Wagner broke down the “Scope and Sequence” of the pre-K through grade 5 history and social sciences courses:

- Pre-K: Building a foundation for living, learning, and working together
- Kindergarten: Many roles in living, learning, and working together
- Grade 1: Leadership, cooperation, unity, and diversity
- Grade 2: Global Geography- places and peoples, cultures and resources
- Grade 3: Massachusetts, home to many different people
- Grade 4: North American geography and peoples
- Grade 5: United States history to the Civil War and the modern Civil Rights Movement

Ms. Wagner then shared a comparison of the old HSS standards from 2003 to the new 2018 standards. She explained that the new standards are far more detailed and exact with little room from interpretation.

Ms. Wagner then moved on to the “Scope and Sequence” of the middle school courses:

- Grade 6: Humanities 6 aligned with World Geography and ELA
- Grade 7: Social Studies 7 aligned with Ancient Civilizations I and II; side-by-side with ELA 7
- Grade 8: Civics 8 United States and Massachusetts government and civic life

She then shared a comparison of the old HSS standards from 2003 for the middle school to the new 2018 standards. Once again, the new standards proved to be far more detailed.

Lastly, Ms. Wagner discussed the “Scope and Sequence” of the high school courses, first stating that the new sequence starts with the current grade 9 class. Current grade 10-12 students are finishing up the older sequence which includes American Survey (10), Global Studies (11), and American Government (12). The new sequence will include:

- Grade 9: World History
- Grade 10: American History with a required Civics project
- Grade 11: America in the Modern World
- Grade 12: American Government (semester) and an elective (semester)

Once again, Ms. Wagner shared a comparison of the old HSS standards from 2003 for the high school to the new 2018 standards and reviewed the timeline for which the new standards will be rolled out.

Next steps were then discussed which included:

- Developing common language and understandings for teachers
- Identifying resources
- Modeling lessons at the elementary level

- Building norms

Ms. Wagner concluded her presentation by thanking the committee and opened up the discussion to questions and comments. Committee members had a positive reaction to the presentation.

E. Superintendent Mid-Year Review

This mid-year review is used as a tool to share the status and progress of the Superintendent's goals for the year. In his presentation, Dr. Blake first highlighted the standard he was reviewing and then read his assessment.

- 1. Evaluation:** *The goal is to oversee the Educator Evaluation implementation and conduct walk-throughs with administrators. At this time, I have participated in three calibration exercises with the administrative team and a fourth is being scheduled for our meeting in February. I have begun walk-through observations with the administrators, completing two to date including follow up discussions. Additional walk through observations are being scheduled. The Educator Evaluation Committee met in October and again on January 15th. New forms have been in testing mode for several months and have now been officially rolled out for staff to use. The committee will meet again in the spring to review their work to date and review any issues that have been raised.*
- 2. Fiscal Systems:** *This goal is to develop a budget aligned with the district's vision, mission, and goals in conjunction with the Strategy for District Improvement document and the Vision 2030 work. To date, I have attended several professional development workshops on school finance and the Chapter 70 program, net school spending and federal grants programs. I have worked with the Budget Subcommittee and the administrative team to develop a realistic budget based on current and future needs that will be presented next month.*
- 3. Engagement:** *The goal here is to provide the community with opportunities for input and engagement around the Vision 2030 documents and process. At this time, the Vision 2030 framework has been completed. During the last School Committee meeting, we began the next phase of the visioning process with committee members. I will then move the discussion to the administrative team, staff and eventually the community.*
- 4. Cultural Proficiency:** *The goal is to complete an internal review of the English Language Learners (ELL) program currently being offered in the district and make recommendations for future staffing and programmatic needs. I have completed the "Transforming Schools for English Language Learners" book, which will provide the foundation for my interviews with staff members. At this time, I have also completed the mandatory training for administrators in EL and SEI. I have completed one of the three interviews with the current ELL staff and the other two interviews are scheduled for next Monday and Tuesday.*

Dr. Blake was thanked for his review and asked to also provide a “state of the schools” report. Dr. Blake explained that the curriculum is currently in great shape. A lot of work is being done with involvement from teacher leaders from across the district and Tracy Wagner, the Director of Teaching and Learning. He then discussed the facilities department, stating there were still significant issues that the department was working through including the HVAC system at the middle/high school and the lingering problems at the elementary schools. Dr. Blake talked about the great job the Facilities Director, Chris Rais, has done coming up to speed and understanding the needs in each building. Changes to Human Resources and Payroll are still working themselves out in terms of communication and evaluation. Dr. Blake finished by talking about the great work the both the School Committee and the subcommittees are doing.

Mr. Hopping finished by explaining that this year, the School Committee would not be doing an end of year summative evaluation of the Superintendent.

F. Financial Update

Ms Cuff, the Director of Finance and Operations, stated this past month has been busy with an emphasis on developing the FY21 budget. She, along with Dr. Blake, met with each administrator and department head to review their budget. She said she was looking forward to furthering the discussion with the Budget Subcommittee at their upcoming meeting.

Ms. Cuff shared good news with the committee, explaining that the district was able to receive insurance money back from an incident last year when a fire panel went out. That money can be spent in this fiscal year and will go towards facilities projects that were unable to be completed last year.

She then shared some bad news regarding the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Title 1 Grant. This year, they are anticipating a \$81,000 decrease in funding. Ms. Cuff explained that this decrease is due to current census information on the poverty levels in Massachusetts which are down 9%. Due to this decrease in funding, Winthrop has shifted one FTE from a grant line to the appropriated budget in FY21.

Warrant article notifications are to be sent to Town Hall by February 21st. As of this meeting, the Year-to Date financial report is in good shape and all outside funds have positive cash balances.

G. Budget Subcommittee Update

The Budget Subcommittee did not meet prior to this meeting. They have received the proposed FY21 budget electronically and look forward to discussing it at their upcoming meeting.

H. Superintendent’s Administrative Report

Dr. Blake reported on his work over the past two weeks. He has continued with his monthly meetings with both the Athletic Director and the Facilities Director. He participated in a Triboard conference call and budget meetings with the administrative team and department heads. Dr.

Blake attended several subcommittee meetings, went to an Educator Evaluation meeting and attended both the Middle and High School Art Shows. He presented at a Rotary Club meeting, met with Lisa Nysten to discuss the ELL program in the district, attended a North Shore Superintendent's Round Table legislative breakfast, as well as the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents' Mid-Winter Meeting. Dr. Blake participated in the recent Triboard meeting, had dinner with the administrative team and talked with legal counsel regarding some personnel issues.

I. Policy Update

Mr. Nysten presented a slideshow to the committee regarding proposed changes to the current Feoffee Policy. He first shared the mission statement of the Feoffee grants and then a timeline of actions. He explained that the Feoffee Policy Working Group and the Policy Subcommittee have held several joint meetings to discuss the current policy and make recommendations for the policy going forward. It is their hope that the full set of recommendations will go before the School Committee by the end of the year. The target topics for recommendations are purpose, process and communication. Two of those topics- process and communication come directly from the results of a survey that was administered to faculty and staff last year.

Recommendations for purpose include clarifying language around the definition of enrichment and enhancement. Because both words are not clearly defined in the current policy, the group recommends adding clarifying language. The group also suggests looking at staff positions and how they can be used and funded.

Recommendations for the process were to simplify the application process and offer an optional preliminary submission step so that your application can be reviewed ahead of time with the Director of Teaching and Learning. It was also suggested that the mini grant process extend to two rounds, one in the fall and one in the spring. Also, the mid-year review for all mini-grants will be eliminated. Both the working group and the subcommittee recommend increasing the mini-grant cap to \$7,500 from \$5,000, as the grant amount has not been increased in eight years. The group is also proposing that only current IPS faculty and staff be eligible for grant funding and they would like to clarify the roles of building administrators in vetting the applications. Lastly, they would like to consider funding support staff from the trust funds- one part time grant administrator and one administrative support staff.

Recommendation for communication included better outreach to new staff through a presentation at New Teacher Orientation or beginning of year staff meetings, a year-end presentation from the Feoffees Committee to the School Committee and improve the information on district website.

The intent of the presentation, as Mr. Nysten explained, was to get the approval of the School Committee to move forward with the proposed recommendations. At this time, Dr. O'Flynn expressed his concern with creating a new position to maintain the funds and to find new funding with money from the grants.

Mr. Stevens moved to accept the purpose and process recommendations as is with the understanding that funding staff positions under process will be an ongoing consideration, seconded by Dr. O'Flynn. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Kneedler moved to support the communications recommendations as is, seconded by Mr. Stevens. The motion passed unanimously.

III. School Committee Reports

- A. Vouchers and Bills:** Complete
- B. Athletic Subcommittee:** Have not met
- C. Grant Subcommittee:**
 - a. Payne:** Has not met
 - b. Mini-Grant:** They will meet at the end of the month
- D. Operations Subcommittee:** Have not met
- E. Policy Subcommittee:** Meeting on January 29th
- F. Turf Field Subcommittee:** Have not met
- G. Communications:** Met on January 14th. The Meet and Greet with Rotary took place this morning and was well received. The Council on Aging Meet and Greet will take place in May. The next meeting is scheduled for February 11th.
- H. SEPAC:** Have not met
- I. Birth to Three:** Next meeting is February 15th
- J. STEAM:** Met on January 14th. There is a professional development day scheduled for February at New England BioLabs
- K. Working Groups:** Discussed earlier in the meeting
- L. New Business:**

Nat Pulsifer of the Feoffee Trust would like to have the Feoffees Trust be more of a presence at the School Committee meetings to create a better connection between the Trust and the School Committee. Mr. Stevens said he would be happy to volunteer to work with the Feoffees group. He would also like to make a larger deal out of the check presentation. Committee members agreed that this would be a good idea.

IV. Consent Agenda

Mr. Hopping moved the Ipswich School Committee to

- *Accept the Open Session meeting minutes from January 9, 2020.*
- *Accept a check from Geskus Studios on behalf of Winthrop Schools in the amount of \$1,001.00 to be deposited into the Winthrop Student Activities Account*
- *Accept a check in the amount of \$4,785.00 from the Institution for Savings Charitable Foundation to be used for the Early Education Program, deposited in the Winthrop Gift Account*
- *Accept a check from Geskus Studios on behalf of Doyon School in the amount of \$880.00 to be deposited into the Doyon Student Activities Account.*

Seconded by Mr. Nylén. The motion passed unanimously.

V. Adjournment

Mr. Nylén moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:56 PM, seconded by Dr. O'Flynn. The motion passed unanimously.