

IPSWICH SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 2020
6:30 PM
MINUTES

OPEN SESSION	6:30pm
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CALL TO ORDER - Mr. Whitten, Chair 6:35pm

Dr. O’Flynn made a motion to meet in executive session pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws chapter 30A, section 21(a) to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel and to conduct contract negotiations with nonunion personnel, Mr. Stevens seconded, and the roll call vote was unanimously approved.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

7:18pm

READING OF DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT: Ms.Gilliam

ANNOUNCEMENTS: ZOOM recording per governor’s March order. 300 person limit.

CITIZENS’ COMMENTS: Please hold reopening comments until after presentation.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Everyone working on committees trying to plan what reopening will look like spent lots of time, research, and studying to figure out what is best for Town of Ipswich students.

- A. SUPERINTENDENT’S ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT
Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent
(ON HOLD UNTIL AFTER REOPENING PRESENTATION)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENTATIONS

- B. MOTION AND VOTE ON THE SALARY OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS - Mr. Whitten, Chair 7:19pm

Dr. O’Flynn made a motion to approve the one year extension of the superintendent’s rolling three year contract, a 2.5% salary increase, a \$5K annuity payment, and a 10 day reinstatement of vacation days lost due to COVID 19. Mr. Stevens seconded the motion and the roll call vote passed with 6 in favor, 1 abstention.

- C. PRESENTATION ON EQUITY AND RACIAL JUSTICE IN OUR SCHOOLS 7:26pm
Tracy Wagner, Director of Teaching and Learning

- Ms. Wagner was “proud to bring work forward” to the school committee - representing work with educators & administrators over the last 4 years. Strive for Anti-Racist education in IPS that is continuous, not one-time. 1. Overview of

PLCs at elementary schools. 2. New History & Social Science standards in all grade levels being rolled out, but curriculum is also in STEM/STEAM. 3. Continuing District-wide PD 4. Restorative Justice Circles pilot at IMS. Thank you to Tracy.

D. REQUEST FOR BLACK LIVES MATTER SIGN DISCUSSION 7:43pm

Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools

- In June, we received a letter from four teachers and signed by many other district teachers requesting the district outline the importance of Black Lives Matter, asking permission to allow BLM signs to be posted on school property. Mr. Hopping said the new school committee would take this into consideration with legal opinion.
- Dr. Blake read the committee's response letter that included "The Committee commends and supports its educators in advocating for anti-racism practices and policies in our community and our schools. Unfortunately, the Committee cannot post signs at the request of the educators on Committee property. To do so may create a forum that would result in the Committee being susceptible to other groups coming forward to promote their ideologies on Committee property, which the Committee may or may not support."
- School committee members discussed this issue. Mr. Stevens stated that the schools have done an excellent job of teaching kids with being inclusive, accepting, and tolerance, kids are socially involved. He wants to make sure kids support police as some think that supporting BLM means they shouldn't support the police. There has been a lot of cyberbullying of and nasty comments toward kids whose parents are police officers. He wants to make sure that part of the social justice discussions in schools include enforcing the fact that police are essential to us, are good people, and that the actions of a few bad individuals shouldn't taint what our police officers are doing for us everyday. Ms. Cannon said that the presentation was amazing and wants to know if minority families have been or will be included in these discussions. Ms. Wagner responded that they are looking at ways to address this issue, will speak with PLCs about work going forward, but right now focus is on re-opening.
- Ms. Gilliam asked Mr. Whitten to go through the process for responding to comments, given that there will be a lot of discussion on the re-opening issue. He said he thought it was a good idea to have this discussion and vote in the public forum. The school committee will take the comments under advisement and will revisit at a later date.

E. FALL SCHOOL REOPENING PLANS REVIEW 7:54pm

Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools

- Thank you to over 200 people participating in this meeting.
- This presentation will include a brief history of shut-down, work that has been done to date and by whom, present outline of 3 models, make recommendation to school committee, Mr. Nysten will keep track of comments and we will address some questions at end if they haven't been answered during the presentation..
- DESE was very slow to respond to superintendents' questions regarding guidelines and most were not released until late June and July. IPS began to develop these plans prior to receiving DESE's guidelines & protocols, so those were then incorporated into the plans developed. Full return would not be

possible in Ipswich for the fall given the protocols. There is no one right answer, everyone's needs are different. Several surveys to families, staff, and students were sent out, results on the IPS website under Return to Learn. 20-25% parents & staff and 13% of students would like to continue the remote model.

- Nimble Systems Committee (research & analyze hybrid & remote learning models) met in July and have met at least weekly since then. Made recommendations to Oversight Committee (formerly School Facilities Working Group) this week, which recommended HYBRID model.
- Current Ipswich COVID-19 data (7 cases since June). Exact 1st date of school will be determined next week - discussion with IEA.
- **Hybrid model** is preferred model. 2 co-horts: Cohort A (Monday, Tuesday in person) Wednesday all remote (asynchronous learning), Cohort B (Thursday, Friday in person). Discussion regarding specialists - possibly could be done remotely, don't have capability (per social distancing guidelines) to do in-person. We have technology necessary for both hybrid & remote learning models.
- Reviewed Safety Guidelines (PPE, social distancing, students in cohorts, symptom checks at home, hand hygiene, COVID-19 related isolation space in each building, cleaning & sanitizing buildings plan (Wednesdays & Saturdays full sanitization in all buildings) for both full & hybrid models. Installing HEPA filters where possible, limiting visitors in the buildings. Developing a Commitment to Care document for parents & students.
- DESE and teachers union negotiated a 10-day delay of school.
- **Full Remote Learning model.** Need to be ready for this if a spike occurs again. Will be different than in the spring. There is 1:1 tech throughout system, purchased hot spots, staff technology needs have been met, and there are common expectations by grade level and across schools. Learned a lot from surveys sent to parents & staff regarding tech issues and needs. KUDOS to Tech team for all their work. Fine-tuned and standardized digital teaching tools for the district. New and newly revised curriculum units are now incorporating remote learning. State now mandates attendance, accountability measures in place for both faculty & students, student assessments, earning grades - much more robust than during spring when everything was unknown.
- We can be ready. PPE/supplies have been ordered, some in stock, paper towel dispensers have been installed in all bathrooms that currently have hand dryers, hand sanitizing in each room, isolation spaces have been determined and outfitted.
- HOMESCHOOLING is different from Remote Learning. Homeschooled students are withdrawn from school and the parents are responsible for both curriculum and teaching.
- Thanks to all who participated in surveys, sent emails, and everyone who has participated in the any of the committees. There is no right answer, no easy answer.
- Dr. Blake's recommendation is for the School Committee to adopt hybrid model to start, parents have the option for remote learning if they so choose. Once a model is chose, details will be developed over the next 2 weeks.
- Open to School Committee for discussion/reaction. Mr. Whitten thanked Dr. Blake.

- Mr. Nysten said that lots of good questions have come in on chat; suggests one round with the school committee, then get to public questions if the school committee has not answered them.
- Ms. Gilliam acknowledged that it is not a situation that we don't want to be in, make a choice out of all bad choices, empathize with parents & staff. Will be a reality for quite a long time, need to mitigate and make decisions based on data that we have. Doing best to make informed decisions.
- Mr. Stevens wants Dr. Blake to report on ventilation systems in the buildings, specifically the older ones. Dr. Blake said that the elementaries have been an ongoing concern, HVAC guy been in and out all summer making repairs & improvements, HEPA filters at elementary schools, air circulation issues at MS/HS are squared away.
- Mr. Stephens asked what a typical day/week looks like for elementary, middle, and high school students. Dr. Blake said these will be worked out next week, there have been conversations as to what each school will look like.
- Ms. Kneedler commended that relatively speaking, this will be short-term and she hopes all can work together as a community, give their best, be thoughtful, responsive, and understanding where possible. Cannot predict what will happen in the future, but we need to remember that everyone in the country is going through this. Things will go back to normal eventually.
- Dr. O'Flynn gave an overview of recent local statistics. As a physician, he believes the best possible education is in-person with educators, but would support hybrid if all of the committees deemed it was not feasible at this time. PPE and good hand hygiene works and should be followed.
- Mr. Whitten commented that he is proud of the way the Ipswich community and teaching administrators & teachers have reacted over the last few months. New words/phrases: Flexibility, Pivot, Shift, Modify, and Adapt. He expects the best and prepares for the worst. Getting kids back into schools is important for normalcy and social/emotional needs. Students & staff who are not comfortable with hybrid system have the opportunity to choose the remote learning platform. We need to serve the entire community. Very appreciative of everyone's comments.
- Ms. Cannon asked what remote instruction means. Dr. Blake responded that it must be much more robust than in the spring, setting better parameters, and include both synchronous and asynchronous learning.
- Ms. Cannon also asked what is being done for kids whose parents work, who may not have supervision. Kids have to have somewhere to go or don't have supervision, how will they get their work done? Dr. Blake said he does not have an answer - will be up to individual families to figure it out. We are exploring "centers" set up around town to get some help around their assignments, but certainly we are not thinking of a full-time childcare situation. It is more about how will we ensure some equity of access to those students. Mr. Nysten summarized what Ms. Cannon was trying to ask: How do we reassure parents of equity between in-class and remote learning? Dr. Blake 2 pieces - those learning remotely (depending on model set up), teachers who don't want to come into bldgs, become remote teachers, collaborating with other in-school teachers to ensure continuity of curriculum. Technology tools are available to all students regardless of where they are.

- Ms. Cannon asked about IEP services provision? Dr. Blake said that a reduction in service delivery was due to the crisis situation we were in and we had to adhere to the guidelines set forth by the state. Guidelines now state that SpecEd students would be in school more often in order to get required service delivery.
- Ms. Cannon asked what protocols look like regarding contact tracing, exposure, testing, etc? Currently, we have limited guidance on this; Ms. Furman was in a conference with the state yesterday. Availability of tests for general population is there, but turnaround time is between 7 and 14 days. Initial cost of testing everyone (staff & students) when we open the doors is \$40,000-\$50,000. Dr. O'Flynn said that testing is not enough if not in a closed environment. He again stated that PPE should protect us - masks should be worn, hands should be washed.
- Support at home is in the works for how to help their children at home - especially in regard to technology.
- Ms. Gilliam asked about Ms. Furman setting up more testing in Ipswich; there was not answer from the state. Community transmission rate needs to remain low - made a general plea that, in order for our students to go back to school, the entire community be vigilant in wearing masks and practicing good hygiene.
- Mr. Nylen has been trying his best to gather comments in groupings.
 - Clarify distance spacing criteria in hybrid model. State says 3' is acceptable but ours will maintain 6 feet (classroom pictures show 6' distance, which is where he wants to keep it.)
 - How transportation will be handled: Depending on the outcome tonight, a survey will be sent out to EVERYONE to get a better idea of transportation needs. Once those numbers are received, Ms. Cuff will have to contact the bus company to develop bus routes. Under DESE guidance, full size bus will only hold 25 students rather than 45. Should be able to fit since initial survey showed many parents decided to drive themselves. Buses will be cleaned & sanitized after each run, masks are mandatory, may have to hire monitors to ensure social distancing & enforce mask wearing.
- Mr. Whitten thanked all of the parents for responding to all of the surveys.
- Full Remote clarified that some students will still receive in-person services, based on state & federal guidelines.
- Can they switch from remote model to in-person? Guidelines will be established to switch from one model to another (Administration will determine).
- How will sanitization/cleaning be handled with current custodial staff and how will it work on Wednesdays while some students are in school? More staff hired (in proposed budget that was passed), full-time custodian in district Tuesday-Saturday. Director of Facilities established new protocols for daily, weekly cleaning/sanitizing, new equipment and sanitizer purchased.
- How would emergency pick ups be handled? Anticipate that parents will be allowed in building with masks on, and separate isolation for students with COVID-19 symptoms.
- Will teachers be teaching in classrooms & remotely at same time? If it is managed and set up so that students are on a video feed into a classroom, the teacher is teaching directly is one option; another option is to have remote only teachers - team teaching. This is to be negotiated with teachers' bargaining unit

as they are changes in working conditions. Some classrooms may be recorded, but it is all dependent upon bargaining unit negotiations.

- What could be done to maintain cohorts in the building when not in the buildings? Not sure what can be done except possibly set up outside areas for them to be.
- Thursdays will be full day since Wednesdays are meetings, etc., again another negotiating piece. May shift early release to Wednesdays.
- Training for staff & faculty? Once model in place, will further develop the protocols and spend time working with staff to help understand them social distancing/appropriate PPE/equipment requirements,
- Next steps timeline-wise? If the school committee votes hybrid, then transportation & follow-up surveys will be sent out, there will be policy issues for school committee to address, work closely with Nimble Systems & Administration, look at start of school year for 9/14-16. Flood of info coming out once model is approved. State gave extension to next Friday for final plan submission.
- Do we have a sense of goal deadline so families can begin to make those plans? It is all dependent upon negotiations, etc., but I expect to have it within the next 2 weeks to a month.
- If there is a need to transition from Hybrid to Remote, how quickly could it happen and how? Looking at how fast we were able to do it last time, we could turn the entire system around within 2 days or so - depending on how or when it happens. We were in a much better position than in the spring.
- Communication will continue throughout the next 2 weeks as detailed plans are developed. Remember that any detailed plans will be dependent upon negotiations with the teachers bargaining unit.
- Nimble Systems group has not discussed a phased in approach nor has the Oversight Committee.
- Dr. Blake recommends the HYBRID model.

Dr. O'Flynn made a motion to support that Ipswich Public Schools start the 2020-2021 school year with a hybrid model, Mr. Stevens seconded the motion, and the roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

F. TRANSPORTATION FEES 9:45pm

Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools

- With the uncertainty of school reopening, Joanne Cuff drafted a memo to Dr. Blake asking the school committee to waive school bus transportation fees for the 2020-2021 school year. The current transportation fund has enough to support this waiver. It is not known if there were any refunds to families who prepaid transportation fees last year.

Mr. Stevens made a motion to approve the suspension of bus fee collection for the 2020-2021 school year, Ms. Gilliam seconded the motion, and the roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

G. APPROVAL OF REVISED SCHOOL CALENDAR 9:49pm

Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools

- Not ready yet. Dependent upon IEA negotiations. Could utilize 10 days from state now, put hold on 2 days currently on our calendar for a future pivot to

remote model. Mr. Whitten said the school committee will revisit this at 8/13/2020 retreat meeting.

H. REVIEW OF SUBCOMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

9:51pm

Chub Whitten, Chair

- Working groups will be discussed at the retreat on 8/13/2020. Has everyone reviewed the sub-committee assignments? Would anyone like to move? Dr. O'Flynn thanked Mr. Whitten for compiling this list.

Mr. Nylen made a motion to accept the subcommittee assignments in its entirety, Ms. Gilliam seconded the motion, and the roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

Mr. Nylen made a motion to accept the assigned liaisons for the 2020-2021 school year, Ms. Gilliam seconded the motion, and the roll call vote was unanimous in favor.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

9:56pm

A. VOUCHERS/BILLS Uploaded, Ms. Gilliam will be signing tomorrow

B. SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. ATHLETIC SUBCOMMITTEE - sports on hold until Governor Baker decides - told there will be an answer by next week (low risk may be able to start mid-September)
2. BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE - none
3. GRANT SUBCOMMITTEES - none
 - a. William Paine Enhancement Grant Subcommittee
 - b. Traverso-Weatherall Innovation Grant Subcommittee - Ms. Cannon is the new member.
4. OPERATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE - Ms. Kneedler, Mr. Nylen, Mr. Whitten meeting with Ms. Cannon on 8/11/2020 at 6pm for onboarding and to elect a chair
5. POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE - will have work cut out - NASC provided templates for policy changes (masks, Title IX) due 8/14/2020. Compiling list of policies to be addressed and revised
6. COMMUNICATIONS - Will be doing best to ensure that communication is regular and consistent
7. SEPAC - none
8. BIRTH TO THREE - none
9. WORKING GROUPS - Thanks to Dr. Blake and the Administrative Team for their work on School Facilities Working Group and the shift to the Oversight Committee
Community Development Plan - New draft of plan goals & vision must be approved, accessible on town's website
Climate Resiliency - working to put forward a resolution for goals of town to achieve, should meet again within the next 3 weeks.
10. NEW BUSINESS* - none

CONSENT AGENDA

10:05pm

Ms. Gilliam made a motion to approve the School Committee Open Session meeting minutes from July 16, 2020 and accept a donation in the amount of \$10,000 from the Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation for the Birth to Three program to be used for COVID-19 related expenditures, which was seconded by Ms. Kneedler. The hand vote passed unanimously in favor.

- Many thanks to the Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation for this substantial donation. Dr. Blake was asked to get more information on this donation to report at the 8/13/2020 retreat.

ADJOURNMENT

10:10pm

Mr. Nylan made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Dr. O'Flynn, and the hand vote was unanimous in favor.