

Ipswich School Committee Meeting
Thursday, May 7, 2020
7:00 PM
Remote Meeting via Zoom

Meeting Minutes

I. Open Session

Call to Order:

Mr. Hopping called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

Present:

Mr. Hopping, Mr. Whitten, Mr. Nylan, Dr. O'Flynn, Mr. Stevens, Ms. Gilliam and Ms. Kneedler

Also Present:

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

Mr. Gallagher read the District Mission Statement.

Announcements:

- The next School Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, May 21st at 7:00pm. This meeting will be held remotely utilizing Zoom video conferencing.
- The Operations Subcommittee will meet on May 20th at 2:00pm. This meeting will be held utilizing Zoom video conferencing.

Citizens' Comments:

There were none.

Special Acknowledgements:

- In acknowledgement of Teacher Appreciation Week, Dr. Blake thanked the teachers in the district for their continued hard work throughout the year.
- It was Nurse Appreciation Day so Dr. Blake thanked the nurses in the district.
- Dr. Blake acknowledged the students who took the Seal of Biliteracy test.

High School Student Representative Report:

Mr. Gallagher said that remote learning has been continuing. The AP tests will be administered online to students over the next two weeks. Some students participated in the National Spanish exam yesterday. Graduation planning is continuing. At this time, the anticipated date for graduation is June 13th and it will be held in the Crane Beach parking lot.

Superintendent's Administrative Report:

Dr. Blake reported on his schedule from the time of the last School Committee meeting. In his report, he stated the following:

- He has been commuting to Ipswich two times per week and continuing to work remotely
- He filmed another video update with Tony Marino
- He met with Chris Rais to talk about the facilities and work being done while people are not in the building
- He participated in a remote meeting with the principals to discuss the Illustrative Math program
- He met with principals individually
- He held his weekly leadership team meeting remotely
- He participated in the Northshore Education Consortium's monthly board meeting
- He met with Ipswich Aware
- He had a meeting with Wilma Gooby, who is retiring at the end of the school year
- He participated in an Ipswich Education Foundation meeting where new officers were elected
- He met with Tracy Wagner, Jon Mitchell and Kathy McMahon to discuss priority standards
- He participated in a North Shore Superintendent Round Table meeting to talk about guidance from the Governor and DESE Commissioner
- He met with Joanne Cuff to discuss the budget
- He met with George Markos of the Feoffee Trust Committee
- He participated in a conference call with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Commissioner
- He attended various subcommittee meetings

II. School Committee Reports

B. Feoffee Distribution Presentation:

George Markos, Chair of the Feoffee Trust Committee, joined the meeting to present the Feoffee distribution to the School Committee for the upcoming grant season. Before announcing the distribution, Mr. Markos talked briefly about the history of the Trust, along with how the Committee handles the fund and investments. He noted the Feoffee Trust Committee believes they have been and continue to be good stewards of the Trust, growing it from \$22 million to \$30 million.

This year, the total distribution is \$826,054, which includes \$13,000 from the Manning Endowment. This total distribution is larger than last year's distribution by about \$47,000.

On behalf of the School Committee, Mr. Hopping thanked Mr. Marokos for his leadership on the Feoffee Trust Committee, noting that he continues to be impressed with their work ethic and commitment to the schools.

Mr. Markos did note that Seth Ward and himself were terming out of the committee in August. The School Committee should begin talking to Seth Ward about his replacement.

Several other School Committee members thanked Mr. Markos and the Feoffee Trust Committee for their work. Dr. O’Flynn added that as he looks at the work being done in Ipswich compared to what is done at the college level in regard to the tech experience and remote learning, he felt that Ipswich was significantly better. Dr. O’Flynn attributed this success directly to the amount put into professional development, tech tools and training funded by the Payne and Traverso-Weatherall Grants.

Mr. Markos finished by briefly discussing the remaining mortgages left in the portfolio and addressing Mr. Nysten’s question about any additional fundraising efforts the Trust Committee may be taking on.

Prior to the vote to accept the Feoffee distribution, Ms. Cuff reviewed the exact numbers of the distribution. She stated that the total distribution was \$826,054 which included \$812,969 for the Paine and Traverso-Weatherall grants and \$13,085 from the Manning Endowment.

Mr. Nysten moved to accept the Feoffee distribution to the Ipswich Public Schools in the amount of \$826,054 to be broken out to \$826,969 to the Paine Grant allotment and the Manning distribution being \$13,085, seconded by Dr. O’Flynn. The motion passed unanimously in favor by roll call vote 7-0.

C. COVID-19 Update:

Dr. Blake updated the School Committee on information that he has received regarding COVID-19 and the continuing school closures in the state, along with what is happening within the district. He reported:

- As of today, school buildings remain closed. Principals are working on schedules for staff to clean out their classrooms and pack up student belongings. Principals will be in touch with families soon to begin the process of collecting student materials still at school.
- Custodians will begin their summer cleaning once classrooms have been cleared.
- While buildings are closed, custodians have been tackling maintenance projects.
- The Commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) sent districts a list of Priority Standards. This list was created with the idea that if students could master these before school ends, they would be in good shape for the upcoming year. At this time, Ipswich is in a good place and is already addressing these standards.
- The Commissioner spoke about data collections that typically take place around this time. Information will still be collected, however additional guidance will be provided around the coding of the information.
- The Commissioner addressed the CARES Act. The state is going to issue guidance on how to apply for that funding. Funding will be based on the Title 1 formula. Grants issued would total 80% of what the district typically received in Title 1 funding which was \$140,000 this year. Funding issued would be available to cover COVID-19 related charges dating back to March 13, 2020.
- At this time, there is no additional guidance around the FY21 budget.
- The state has developed a working group to address the reopening of schools in the fall.

Dr. Blake then addressed questions from the School Committee around the budget and CARES Act funding. He said that although he has been working with Joanne and the schools about possible reductions in the budget, he was not ready to discuss the details at this time. He also said that while the district needs

to consider the funds they will receive from the CARES Act, there will also be additional funding from sources like FEMA and reimbursements for school lunches. Of the money spent so far on COVID-19 related expenses, some expenditures could fall under FEMA. Currently, all expenses are being documented at the school level and in the business office.

D. School Choice Discussion/Vote:

Prior to voting, Dr. Blake reviewed information that was gathered at the request of School Committee members regarding current School Choice trends. He explained that at the time of the first study in 2015, there was a significant interest in the Choice program, but that has since changed. Numbers continue to dwindle and students aren't necessarily coming for the sports and music programs like they used to.

Mr. Hopping reviewed the number of students enrolled in Choice as of this year, the number of applicants this past year and the number who enrolled from the pool of applicants.

Dr. Blake did say that if the number of recommended Choice openings were to fill for this upcoming school year, the number of incoming students would not impact teaching. Ms. Gilliam followed by saying that her biggest concern was budgetary and she wondered if the district could afford not to have Choice students.

Dr. Blake said that the leadership team has suggested a deadline for enrollment for School Choice to be August 1st, allowing enough time for scheduling and class assignments prior to the start of school.

Mr. Whitten moved to accept School Choice students for the 2020-2021 school year, seconded by Mr. Nylen. The vote was taken by roll call vote and passed 6 yes, 1 no.

Mr. Nylen moved to open School Choice slots in the grades 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12, seconded by Mr. Stevens. The vote was taken by roll call vote and passed 6 yes, 1 abstention.

Ms. Gilliam moved to establish a deadline for School Choice consideration to be August 1, 2020, seconded by Mr. Stevens. The vote was taken by roll call vote and passed 4 yes, 2 no, 1 abstention.

Ms. Gilliam moved to open two School Choice slots in grade 1 at Winthrop School, seconded by Mr. Whitten. The vote was taken by roll call vote and passed 6 yes, 1 abstention.

Mr. Nylen moved to open four School Choice slots in grade 2 at Winthrop School, seconded by Ms. Gilliam. The vote was taken by roll call vote and passed 6 yes, 1 abstention.

Mr. Nylen moved to open six School Choice slots in grade 6, seconded by Mr. Stevens. The vote was taken by roll call vote and passed 6 yes, 1 abstention.

Mr. Nylen moved to open eight School Choice slots in grade 7, seconded by Ms. Gilliam. The vote was taken by roll call vote and passed 6 yes, 1 abstention.

Mr. Nylen moved to open six School Choice slots in grade 8 , seconded by Ms. Kneedler. The vote was taken by roll call vote and passed 6 yes, 1 abstention.

Mr. Nylen moved to open five School Choice slots in grade 9, seconded by Mr. Stevens. The vote was taken by roll call vote and passed 6 yes, 1 abstention.

Ms. Gilliam moved to open five School Choice slots in grade 10, seconded by Mr. Nylen. The vote was taken by roll call vote and passed 6 yes, 1 abstention.

Ms. Gilliam moved to open five School Choice slots in grade 11, seconded by Ms. Kneedler. The vote was taken by roll call vote and passed 6 yes, 1 abstention.

Mr. Nylen moved to open five School Choice slots in grade 12, seconded by Ms. Gilliam. The vote was taken by roll call vote and passed 6 yes, 1 abstention.

E. Budget Update: Override Calculator Discussion:

Dr. O’Flynn started the conversation stating that the Budget Subcommittee had been working on the budget calculator for some time and was now ready to present those numbers to the full School Committee. While there are projected numbers built into the calculator, some editing may need to occur based on potential changes to the FY21 budget.

Mr. Nylen then presented the budget calculator spreadsheet, walking through the numbers and the two potential scenarios for what an override would occur. In the first scenario, the School Committee would be asking for an override at the Annual Town Meeting in 2021 and in the second scenario, the School Committee would be asking for an override at the Annual Town Meeting in 2022.

Based on work done by the Town Strategic Planning Working Group, Mr. Hopping asked if there was an idea what projects the district would be up against. Mr. Nylen responded that while the group has a list of projects that need to be done, they have not been sequenced yet. Mr. Nylen also felt that the school would take precedent.

Mr. Nylen continued by saying that the thought of the Budget Subcommittee was that there are a couple of factors that need to be watched over time- the rate at which enrollment is declining and how the proposed new housing developments in town will impact enrollment. Dr. O’Flynn added that the School Committee will need to continue to address community questions around per pupil expenditures.

Prior to taking the vote, Committee members were asked to share their thoughts about an override.

Ms. Gilliam said she would like to wait until the spring of 2022, knowing that waiting would mean a dire need for an override at that time. She felt that under the current circumstances, it would put the town at ease to push it back.

Mr. Stevens felt that it would be hard to go to the town and ask for more money while there was still money in the bank and also while coming off of an economic drop. While he would like to push the override to 2022, he does fear what would happen should it not pass.

Mr. Hopping agreed with Mr. Stevens. He felt that serious consideration needed to go into the timing and wanted to be sure that the district had enough information should they go for an override in 2021.

Committee members did address the potential for a community override, however most felt that going to the town with a bigger number would not be in the district's best interest.

At this time, Mr. Hopping tabled the discussion and asked that the Committee be ready to vote on the subject at the May 21st meeting.

III. School Committee Reports

A. Vouchers and Bills- Completed

B. School Committee Reports

1. **Athletic Subcommittee**-This committee has not met.
2. **Budget Subcommittee**-The subcommittee presented their information earlier in the meeting.
3. **Grant Subcommittee**
 - a. **Paine Grant Committee**- A meeting is scheduled for the end of the month.
 - b. **Traverso-Weatherall Grant Committee**- An informational meeting was held and well attended.
4. **Operations Subcommittee**- The subcommittee met on May 6th. Between now and May 21st, Dr. Blake will pull together a folder of evidence that includes his current goals and a report on the status of those goals. From May 21-June 11, Mr. Hopping is asking that the School Committee reviews the folder and sends a final report to him no later than June 11th. On June 18th, Mr. Hopping will then draft an executive summary and read it into the record at the June 18th meeting.
5. **Policy Subcommittee**- This group met on May 5th and have approved Policy BCA to move forward for School Committee approval.

Ms. Gilliam moved to approve Policy BCA as presented, seconded by Dr. O'Flynn. The motion passed unanimously in favor by roll call vote 7-0.

6. **Communications Subcommittee**- The next meeting is scheduled for May 26th.
7. **SEPAC**-This group has suspended meetings through the end of the school year.
8. **Birth to Three**-This group has suspended meetings through the end of the school year.
9. **Working Groups**
 - a. **School Facilities**-This group is looking to schedule a meeting soon.
 - b. **Town Strategic Planning**- There is a meeting scheduled for next Thursday.
10. **New Business**

Ms. Gilliam discussed a resolution that was signed by the Boston School Committee in support of stimulus funding. She asked if this is something that the Committee would be interested in. The

Committee agreed that it was something to move forward and asked that Ms. Gilliam draft a copy and share it with the group.

IV. Consent Agenda

Mr. Hopping moved the Ipswich School Committee to accept a donation of \$2,500 from the Institution for Savings to support the Robotics Team to be deposited into the High School Gift Account, second by Ms. Gilliam. The motion passed unanimously in favor by roll call vote 7-0.

V. Adjournment

Mr. Gilliam moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 PM, seconded by Dr. O'Flynn. The motion passed unanimously in favor by roll call vote 7-0.