

IPSWICH SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2020

7:00 PM

MIDDLE/HIGH ENSEMBLE ROOM

(School Committee members only, public participation through Zoom)

MINUTES

I. Open Session

Mr. Whitten called the meeting to order at 7:09 PM.

Present: Mr. Whitten (Chair), Mr. Nylan, Dr. O'Flynn, Ms. Gilliam, Ms. Kneedler, Ms. Cannon and Mr. Stevens.

Also Present: Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools and Caroline Jepsen, High School Student Representative.

Ms. Jepsen read the district mission statement.

Announcements:

- The next School Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, November 19th at 7:00pm. The public is welcome to attend via Zoom.
- The following subcommittees and working groups will be meeting remotely via Zoom:
 - Race, Equity and Social Justice Working Group- Thursday, November 12 at 3:30pm
 - Communications Subcommittee- Tuesday, November 17 at 3:30pm
 - Vision 2030 Working Group- Tuesday, November 17 at 3:30pm
 - Budget Subcommittee- Wednesday, November 18 at 6:00pm
- All schools and district offices will be closed on Wednesday, November 11th in observance of Veteran's Day.

Citizens' Comments:

There were none at this time.

Special Acknowledgements:

Dr. Blake thanked the custodial staff in the district for their ongoing work keeping the buildings clean and sanitized.

A. High School Student Representative Report:

Ms. Jepsen reported on the various events and activities occurring at the high school which included:

- The Chamber Orchestra created their first virtual performance. They are currently in the process of creating performance content for an upcoming fundraiser for Massachusetts General Hospital.
- The theater department is working on several one act plays directed by students which will be performed for families in November. The plays will be recorded and shared with the community at a later date.
- Most school clubs are up and running. Meetings are taking place either outside, socially distanced or over Zoom.
- Spirit Week is now going to be held in the spring, rather than in the fall.
- Class officer elections did take place at the High School.
- The Class of 2021 is hosting a drive-in movie night in the high school parking lot. The movie being shown is still to be determined.

Ms. Jepsen shared that academically, most students surveyed feel that the hybrid model is doable. While the remote portion of learning can be challenging, students like this model and appreciate the time they are in school. She ended the report by sharing that it was nice to see teachers and students working together, problem solving and doing well despite the circumstances.

Superintendent's Administrative Report:

Dr. Blake's report included the following events he had participated in over the course of the past three weeks following the last School Committee meeting:

- Attended a North Shore Superintendents Round Table meeting
- The elementary schools were each able to bring back grade 2 students four days a week
- Attended Town Meeting
- Participated in a class observation as part of his Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) course
- Attended a Strategic Planning Committee meeting for the Town
- Attended the first YMCA swim class offered through a Paine Grant to all kindergarten students
- Held his weekly meetings with the school nursing staff
- Participated in an Educator Evaluation Committee meeting
- Met with Police Chief Nikas, along with members of the Race, Equality and Social Justice Working Group
- Participated in a Tri Board meeting
- Listened in on calls with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Commissioner
- Attended a Northshore Education Consortium (NEC) Board meeting where updates were given on their recent flood
- Filmed an COVID update for the Town on ICAM
- Attended a COVID Oversight Committee meeting
- Had lunch with the Town Manager
- Worked with Joanne Cuff on issues related to the current transportation contract
- Participated in several subcommittee meetings
- Spent time in the schools

II. School Committee Presentations:

B. Feoffees Discussion

Mr. Stevens explained that each fall, the Feoffees Trust gives an estimate of the spring distribution amount. They anticipate they will be able to allocate \$866,000 to the district in grant funding. Mr. Stevens reviewed the document outlining the distribution totals from 2013-2020 and explained that the fund is in a good place. Last year, the policy was changed so that any returned funds would go back to the Trust with the option for the School Committee to request those funds at a later date. In prior years, unspent funds would be returned to the corpus and the School Committee would no longer have access to them. Mr. Stevens explained that should the School Committee want to request additional funding from unspent money, the money would still need to be used as outlined in the Feoffees Distribution Policy.

Ms. Cannon then shared information from the recent Traverso-Weatherall Innovation Grant meeting. The deadline to submit applications for the first fall cycle of the Traverso- Weatherall Innovation Grants had just passed. The committee received 10 grant submissions and all will be approved and fully funded.

C. Return to Learn Update

Dr. Blake began the update by reviewing the case numbers in the Town from the previous week. At the time of this meeting, new data had not been released by the State. He also shared:

- The district is continuing with the hybrid model of learning.
- Last week, Ipswich moved from the Green category to Yellow on the State's report.
- He feels that people are beginning to get complacent with the guidelines. Students are doing well following the guidelines in schools, however as soon as they leave the buildings, masks are off.
- At this time, the School has not had any positive cases that originated in the school.
- The Tiger Tots program was closed until November 11th due to a staff member testing positive. All other staff and student tests came back negative.
- Eight students district wide have opted to move from the remote model to hybrid.
- Fall sports are now closing out their seasons.
- The administration is continuing to evaluate models, class sizes and space as the weather gets colder and students will no longer be able to participate in classes outside.
- Food services is continuing to make meals available to all students in the district regardless of their model of instruction.
- The facilities department has been busy. Ionizers have been installed and 80% of all univents and thermostats have been fixed.

- The district is utilizing an agency to provide additional custodial staff for the buildings.
- The district held a successful flu shot clinic.
- Nurses are currently collecting paperwork for all students who had a flu shot. Per Governor Baker, all students must have the flu shot by the end of December.
- The district is working on setting up forums for families and staff to ask the nursing staff and the school physicians questions

Dr. Blake then discussed the possibility of closing schools and moving to a remote only model for the days or weeks following Thanksgiving. While he does not think it is necessary, the idea has been discussed among other area superintendents. He is recommending to the Committee that the district does not move into this model. After some discussion, the School Committee agreed that the district does not need to move into a remote model after Thanksgiving. They will re-evaluate the decision should cases in the schools rise.

D. Review of School Committee Self-Evaluation:

The School Committee participated in a self evaluation consisting of a survey which was broken down into seven sections that included:

1. Governance
2. Operations
3. Member Relations
4. School Committee/Superintendent Relations
5. Strategic Planning/ Fiscal Management
6. Community Relations
7. Conduct of Meetings

The School Committee reviewed the responses of each section and discussed the areas that, based on the responses, were deemed as needing improvement.

Governance: Question 2: The committee has adopted a mission statement.

- Mr. Whitten felt that the mission statement for the School Committee is clear and is the one read at the opening of each meeting.
- Mr. Nylen felt there were inconsistencies in the mission statement, saying that there are different mission statements from different sources and it would be nice to bring them all together. The mission statement was discussed in previous Vision 2030 Working Group meetings.
- Dr. Blake felt that the Vision 2030 Working Group was the best place to review and discuss the mission statement. A recommendation would then be brought forward to the School Committee

Governance: Question 3: The committee regularly evaluates its progress relative to the goals and objectives that have been adopted.

- Mr. Whitten felt that the School Committee does not regularly check in with their goal. This is an area that needs improvement.
- Both Dr. O'Flynn and Dr. Blake felt that the School Committee has been more regularly checking in with their goals in recent years.
- Mr. Nylen shared that last year, the Committee checked in mid-year. Historically, he shared, the Committee only reviews their goals annually. He felt that the Committee has done better about more regularly checking in the subcommittee work. He also felt that a formal evaluation of the goals should occur more frequently.
- Ms. Kneeder suggested that the Committee add the goals review timeline to the annual calendar.
- Dr. Blake felt that a checkpoint of goals would be the subcommittees presenting a thorough review of their work to the full Committee.
- Mr. Stevens was not concerned about the School Committee goals being reviewed. His thought was that the subcommittees were doing the work and were accountable to achieving the goals of the School Committees. The way the goals are drafted, they can't be left by the wayside because they are being dealt with at the subcommittee level. He was open to subcommittees presenting a more formal review of their work to the School Committee at future meetings.

Governance: Question 4: The committee refrains from involvement in the administration of the school system.

- Mr. Whitten shared that although he knows the School Committee focus is policy and not operations, he often finds it difficult to step away from the operations side.
- Both Mr. Stevens and Dr. O'Flynn agreed that it can often be hard to separate being a parent vs. School Committee member.
- Dr. Blake felt that overall, the School Committee does a good job at allowing him and his administration to focus on operations. He shared that the fact the Committee can differentiate the two (policy and operations) and openly discuss it with him is a positive thing. He felt that no action other than acknowledging the role of the School Committee was needed.

Governance: Question 5: The committee members take part in educational workshops and conferences to help them make informed decisions.

- Mr. Nylen felt the School Committee did not do enough professional development.
- Ms. Gilliam felt that several members of the Committee have been participating in workshops provided by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC).
- Dr. O'Flynn said that this is a generational issue. When he first started on the School Committee, he participated in a lot of training and workshops. As time went in, he felt he didn't need as much professional development.
- Dr. Blake felt that the School Committee as a whole was taking advantage of MASC offerings. He also invited the Committee to participate in any professional development taking place in the district.
- Mr. Whitten suggested that the all Committee members register with MASC and add themselves to the listserv.

Operations: Question 3: Procedures and protocols for committee operations are published and understood.

- Ms. Kneeder shared that she felt it was confusing as a new member when first elected to the Committee. She suggested creating a mentoring program as a helpful way to bounce ideas off another member, ask questions and gain confidence in the role as School Committee member.
- Ms. Cannon and Mr. Stevens agreed that the intake process for new members can be overwhelming and a mentor program would be beneficial.

Member Relations: Question 1: Members treat each other with courtesy and respect.

- Mr. Whitten said he was thankful for the norms that were created and disheartened to hear that there is someone who disagrees that members are treated with courtesy and respect.
- Mr. Nylen would like to hear of the challenges the Committee member is facing, privately, if they are not comfortable discussing in a full meeting.

Member Relations: Questions 2: All members are encouraged to voice opinions and take positions on issues.

- Mr. Whitten encouraged all Committee members to take a position on a topic and speak their mind.

Member Relations: Question 6: Members understand the role of the individual as part of the whole group.

- Ms. Gilliam shared that there is already an established School Committee policy that discusses the roles of the School Committee.

School Committee/Superintendent Relations: Question 2: The types and frequency of communications are agreed to in advance.

- Mr. Whitten said he is thankful that the Committee is able to review communications that go out to the community from the superintendent.
- Mr. Nylen said that he thought this question addressed communication to and from the School Committee and the superintendent. At this time, there is no policy that dictates how and when to communicate with the superintendent.
- Dr. Blake shared that he has almost daily conversations with the Chair. If there are big issues going on in the district, he first alerts the Chair and then the full School Committee.

School Committee/Superintendent Relations: Question 4: Committee members contact the superintendent when seeking information.

- Mr. Whitten encouraged the School Committee to reach out to Dr. Blake when they have questions.

School Committee/Superintendent Relations: Question 5: The superintendent informs the committee of major personnel decisions.

- Mr. Whitten felt that if a personnel issue came up, it would be discussed in executive session. There have not been many personnel issues in recent times that needed to be addressed.
- Ms. Canaan shared that she answered the question with “I don’t know” because she has not been on the School Committee long enough to know.

Strategic Planning/Fiscal Management: Question 1: A long term, strategic plan exists and is regularly reviewed.

- Mr. Nysten said that a strategic plan does exist, however, it is not finished.

Strategic Planning/Fiscal Management: Question 2: All constituencies of the school district are involved in the strategic planning process.

- Mr. Whitten identified this as a major area for improvement.
- Mr. Nysten added that there is always more the School Committee can do to bring people into the major initiatives the Committee is working on. There is a tendency to reach out to the community once decisions have been made.
- Dr. Blake said that no matter how many people you bring into the conversation, there will always be a group that felt left out. There is always room for improvement.
- Ms. Gilliam added that the School Committee could work on their communication to the community and also the channels in which they share information.

Strategic Planning/Fiscal Management: Question 4: Budgets are developed based on needs, from the "bottom-up".

- Dr. O’Flynn felt that the School Committee was not communicating the budget widely enough. There needs to be a better way of reviewing and understanding the budget as a group.
- Ms. Kneeder said that she viewed this as a different philosophy. She shared that the process last year of “what do you need, what is the ideal budget” was a good process.
- Dr. Blake reminded the Committee that last year’s budget process was to establish a baseline budget with an override in mind.
- Mr. Nysten suggested that the budget may need to be pulled apart now and then. The only way the Committee can evaluate whether the district’s financial resources are going to the right places is to dive deep into the budget.
- Dr. O’Flynn did say that the School Committee did tear apart the budget one year and it was a long process. At the end, it did not look much different from when they started.

Community Relations: Question 1: The committee has a public relations plan for the school system.

- Based on the survey results, it appeared most Committee members felt the district did not have a public relations plan.
- Ms. Gilliam suggested sending out press releases to the community highlighting success stories about what is happening with students and schools.
- Mr. Whitten said he worried about communication fatigue if the Committee increases their communications.
- Mr. Nysten felt that public relations was more than distributing press releases. He asked how often does the district collect feedback from the community. At this point, the Committee doesn’t have a good way of collecting that data.
- Many committee members agreed that it would be beneficial to collect feedback from the community. Oftentimes, members are getting pieces of information from parents, however, it would be good to find a way/place to aggregate that information.
- Ms. Cannon said that with some big issues for the school coming up like the override and building projects, the district needs to find ways to better solicit information and handle that information in a uniform manner. She said that often, people become too personal. Better communication with the community is the prop you need to build better bridges and create a positive impact in the community. The School Committee needs support for these upcoming projects, but the community needs to first feel supported by the School Committee.
- Dr. O’Flynn agreed that the override is the “gorilla in the room”. The School Committee needs to go after the community and address their concerns or the override will fail.

Community Relations: Question 2: The committee encourages the inclusion of community members in as much decision making as possible.

- Mr. Whitten shared how impressed he was with the past override campaign and how it felt as though the community was asking for the override, rather than just the school. He also felt that there was a lot of community participation in the building project. He also shared that he felt it would be difficult to get the community more involved over Zoom.
- Dr. O'Flynn shared that he felt the committees and board in town have been working well together, creating a real sense of community purpose.

Community Relations: Question 4: The school system regularly reports its own progress and accomplishments.

- Mr. Nysten felt the committee does not do nearly enough to advertise the district outside of Ipswich.

Conduct of Meetings: Question 2: Public input is welcomed, and is done according to an established policy.

- Mr. Whitten shared that he recognizes communication at meetings has been choppy while meetings are remote. He also felt that the School Committee tries to always make an effort to listen to the public.
- Ms. Cannon shared that she does not like how all School Committee members cannot see the Chat feature in Zoom meetings and that often there is no acknowledgement if someone asks a question.
- Mr. Whitten replied, saying that this public comment during Zoom meetings is a work in progress. During regular times, if a person had a question in the middle of an agenda item, they would be allowed to speak, although that is not a requirement. The Chat feature, however, is very distracting especially when it is a larger meeting.

Conduct of Meetings: Question 3: Full and sufficient debate is allowed.

- Mr. Whitten encourages anyone to speak up and keep an open discussion until everyone that wants to be heard.

Conduct of Meetings: Question 5: The physical setting is conducive to productive discussion and decision making.

- It was agreed that both the room and new meeting platform make meetings difficult. It is a work in progress.

It was agreed that subcommittees would review the results of the self evaluation and work on solutions to be reported out at a later meeting.

E. MASC Resolution Discussion and Vote:

On November 7, 2020, School Committee delegates from across the state will be meeting to vote on a series of resolutions brought forward by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC). Ms. Cannon is the delegate representing Ipswich. Prior to the meeting, Mr. Whitten wanted the full Committee to vote on the resolutions.

RESOLUTION 1: MCAS AND HIGH STAKES TESTING

WHEREAS the MASC Membership and MASC Board of Directors have previously and repeatedly taken the position of opposing high stakes testing including the MCAS; and

WHEREAS the COVID-19 Remote Learning Model has negatively and disproportionately affected students with learning disabilities, students of lower socioeconomic status, ELL students and students who identify as minorities; and

WHEREAS the social and emotional trauma both individually and collectively has yet to be truly realized in the students who have experienced the shutdown of their local school buildings and separations from their peers and supportive adults; and

WHEREAS the students of the Commonwealth have already missed valuable face to face instructional opportunities with their teachers and would benefit from focusing on those important instructional opportunities and social emotional supports;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC rejects the calls for the students of 2022 who missed their tenth grade MCAS testing to be required to make it up during the 2020-2021 school year or ever. We demand those students be held

harmless for not taking the MCAS and that their graduation requirements shall be determined by locally controlled voices of the School Committee and School Administration within the remaining graduation requirements of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Additionally, we reiterate our call for a moratorium on all high stakes testing for the 2020-2021 school year so all students can benefit from their time being focused on direct instruction and we urge the legislature to enact a moratorium on high stakes testing of three years.

Mr. Nysten moved not to support Resolution 1: MCAS and High Stakes testing, seconded by Dr. O'Flynn. This motion passed 5 in favor, 2 opposed, by roll call vote.

RESOLUTION 2: COVID-19 STATE FUNDING

WHEREAS if schools are to re-open this fall in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is the responsibility of each school district to do so safely and responsibly; and

WHEREAS it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that each school district is able to pay for the enormous additional staffing, transportation and material expenses required to do this; and

WHEREAS the state cannot expect mandatory COVID-19 safety guidelines to be followed without also ensuring that each school district has the funds required to implement these guidelines;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the state must guarantee every school district full reimbursement for whatever COVID-19 expenses are required to follow state mandates. We must ensure a statewide school re-opening that is safe, responsible and equitable. There can be no unfunded mandates for COVID-19.

This resolution was discussed and supported at an earlier meeting.

RESOLUTION 3: SCHOOL COMMITTEE ANTI-RACISM RESOLUTION

WHEREAS as schools have the responsibility to equip students with their civil right of obtaining a free and appropriate public education, it is the responsibility of each school to ensure we create a welcoming community for ALL students; and

WHEREAS it is the responsibility that every district provide to all district staff, including School Committee members, annual professional development on diversity, equity and inclusion; and

WHEREAS every district will commit to recruiting and retaining a diverse and culturally responsive teaching workforce; and

WHEREAS every district will examine their policies for institutional and systemic racialized practices and implement change with sustainable policies that are evidence based; and

WHEREAS every district will incorporate into their curriculum the history of racial oppression and works by black authors and works from diverse perspectives; and

WHEREAS we as school district leaders can no longer remain silent to the issues of racism and hate that continue to plague our public and private institutions;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that all the school districts in the Commonwealth should guarantee that racist practices are eradicated, and diversity, equity and inclusion is embedded and practiced for our students, families, faculty and staff.

School Committee members should ensure our that school culture and that of every district in the Commonwealth is anti-racist, and that acknowledges that all lives cannot matter until black lives matter.

This resolution was discussed and supported at an earlier meeting.

RESOLUTION 4: LOWERING THE VOTING AGE FOR MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

WHEREAS the right to vote is elemental to democracy and that right should be protected and guaranteed to all qualified citizen; and

WHEREAS sixteen and seventeen-year-olds possess the same critical analytic intelligence as eighteen-year-olds; and

WHEREAS in Massachusetts, sixteen-year-olds have been deemed able to consent to sexual intercourse, obtain a learner's permit and driver's license, get married with parental consent, work a full-time job and pay taxes, and be tried as an adult in a court of law; and

WHEREAS the 2018 Act to Promote Civics Engagement mandated an increased emphasis on civics education in Massachusetts Public Schools; and

WHEREAS studies conducted in places with a voting age of 16 have demonstrated that, when partnered with a strong civics education, a lowered voting age results in higher overall civic engagement and voter turnout and higher propensity to develop a lifelong voting habit; and

WHEREAS early voter engagement increases civic participation later in life, which is vital to a democracy; and

WHEREAS turnout among all voters in the United States is decreasing, and a push to vote is much needed for younger citizens; and

WHEREAS 16-year-olds may now pre-register to vote in Massachusetts, which may provide a logistical framework for their local participation; and

WHEREAS the rules of local voting should be a local issue; and

WHEREAS Representative Andy Vargas and Senator Harriet Chandler have introduced the EMPOWER Act (H.720/S.389), which would give municipalities the ability to lower their municipal voting age on local authority;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the sponsors call upon the Massachusetts Legislature to pass the EMPOWER Act and take other means necessary to allow cities and towns to establish a minimum voting age of sixteen years for all municipal elections.

Dr. O'Flynn moved to support Resolution 4: Lowering the Voting Age for Municipal Elections, seconded by Mr. Nysten. The motion failed with 3 in favor, 4 opposed, by roll call vote.

RESOLUTION 5: SUPPORTING INCREASED FEDERAL SUPPORT AND STIMULUS FUNDING FOR PUBLIC K-12 EDUCATION

WHEREAS the COVID-19 pandemic is a monumental and unprecedented challenge, emerging quickly and demanding an immediate overhaul of the instructional plans and strategies of school systems across the country; and

WHEREAS the nation's public schools remain committed to delivering high-quality instruction while ensuring the health and safety of our students and staff; and

WHEREAS to date, the employees of the Massachusetts Public Schools have worked around the clock to continue to provide our students and families with access to educational needs such as Chromebooks; and

WHEREAS the Massachusetts Public Schools has maintained payroll for full and part-time district employees, providing stability to our community during economic uncertainty; and

WHEREAS Massachusetts Public Schools have continued to provide daily lunches to students despite a projected shortfall of revenue from the Federal Meals Program; and

WHEREAS these challenges will persist and likely grow as COVID-19 affects our economy and destabilizes funding for public school; and

WHEREAS revenue shortfalls may result in budget cuts and personnel reductions; and

WHEREAS federal legislation has been approved to provide urgently needed funding to underwrite the recovery of the American economy and to support critical public programs, including public education with such examples as American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, additional funding for the Education Jobs Fund to help school districts retain existing employees, recall former employees, and hire new ones, and the recent Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) and other measures to stabilize public education and other public programs; and

WHEREAS public education is one of the largest employment bases of any field or industry; and

WHEREAS research has repeatedly found a strong causal relationship between levels of schooling and wages that individuals earn over a lifetime; and

WHEREAS for public schools to thrive and for our students to realize a bright and productive future, the federal government needs to make a substantial new investment in our well-being; and

WHEREAS it is likely that further emergency legislation will be required to underwrite the cost of public safety supplies, technology, and personnel to maintain the status of public schools; and

WHEREAS this level of funding is the minimum needed by the nation's public schools to sustain and accelerate their academic achievement trends over the past decade, including gains in reading and math achievement that outpace the national average; and

WHEREAS the governor and General Court may be able to access additional state revenues through use of accumulated reserves or through the implementation of progressive tax legislation;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC align with state superintendents of schools and urge the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation and state legislators to advocate for and approve additional education funding for our nation's public schools through the enactment of progressive tax legislation.

Mr. Nysten moved to support Resolution 5: Supporting Increased Federal Support and Stimulus for Public K-12, seconded by Ms. Cannon. The motion passed, 7 in favor, 0 opposed, by roll call vote.

RESOLUTION 6: RETENTION OF MEDICAID REVENUE

WHEREAS the Affordable Care Act expanded access for health care to millions of Americans, including thousands of Massachusetts families who have been without health insurance; and

WHEREAS through the expansion of the Medicaid program, more families in economic distress gained access to health insurance and, subsequently, affordable health care; and

WHEREAS the Medicaid program reimburses public school districts for certain clinical services provided to students who may be clients of special education or who experience disabilities, and this revenue provides critical support to the districts and municipalities where they are based; and

WHEREAS the restriction of Medicaid eligibility and reduction of funding would require the Commonwealth to choose between extraordinary state budget increases to fill the gap or absorb the cost of caring for families who could lose health insurance;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC urges the General Court to require that 100% of Medicaid reimbursements to cities and towns be provided in full amount to the public schools of each municipality, through a school district revolving account, to underwrite the cost of providing an adequate education.

Dr. O'Flynn moved to support Resolution 6: Retention of Medicaid Revenue, seconded by Ms. Kneedler. The motion passed, 7 in favor, 0 opposed, by roll call vote.

RESOLUTION 7: ATTEMPTS BY US DOE TO DIRECT FUNDING TO PRIVATE SCHOOLS

WHEREAS a recent “advisory” issued by the United States Secretary of Education has inappropriately interpreted language in the recently enacted COVID-19 relief legislation to benefit private schools disproportionately in the distribution of federal funding for economically disadvantaged students; and

WHEREAS in recognition of this executive branch attempt to overreach in the interpretation of a federal statute in devising a formula for the distribution of funds under Title I and other provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as revised and reauthorized; and

WHEREAS the commissioner of Education in Connecticut, in citing the Secretary for such a misrepresentation of the law, has advised officials of that state to follow the language of the law rather than the interpretation issued in the “advisory,” and thus save thousands of dollars for economically disadvantaged students in the public schools of that state

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC petition the Attorney General of Massachusetts to review and recommend to the Executive Office of Education and the MA Department of Elementary Education to review the formal language of such statutes that determine the distribution of federal funds to benefit economically disadvantaged students and, further that the Attorney General provide legal guidance to state agencies in Massachusetts to implement such formulas based on the actual language and legislative intent of the statute should that be in variance with any “advisory” issued by the United States Secretary of Education.

Mr. Nylén moved to support Resolution 7: Attempts by US DOE to Direct Funding to Private Schools, seconded by Dr. O’Flynn. The motion passed, 7 in favor, 0 opposed, by roll call vote.

RESOLUTION 8: MEMBERSHIP OF A SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER ON THE BOARD OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

WHEREAS the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) is established to oversee and implement policy related to public education; and

WHEREAS most boards and commissions in Massachusetts appropriately include representatives of constituent groups subject to the jurisdiction of those boards and commission; and

WHEREAS a glaring omission among members of the BESE is a representative of the people elected to oversee public policy making among the many city, town and regional school district school committees;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC submit to the General Court proposed legislation that MGL Chapter 15, Section 1E be revised as follows:Section 1E. There shall be in the department a board of elementary and secondary education, in this chapter called the board, which shall consist of the chairman of the student advisory council established under this section, the secretary of education, in this chapter called the secretary, or her designee, and 9 members appointed by the governor. The 9 members appointed by the governor shall consist of 1 representative of a labor organization selected by the governor from a list of 3 nominees provided by the Massachusetts State Labor Council, AFL-CIO; 1 representative of business or industry selected by the governor with a demonstrated commitment to education; 1 representative of parents of school children selected by the governor from a list of 3 nominees provided by the Massachusetts Parent Teachers Association; 1 representative from a school committee from a list of three nominees provided by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees and 5 additional members.

Ms. Kneidler moved to support Resolution 8: Membership of a School Committee Member on the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, seconded by Ms. Stevens. The motion passed, 7 in favor, 0 opposed, by roll call vote.

RESOLUTION 9: PROVIDING EQUITY FOR SEXUAL ORIENTATION - LGBTQ+ STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND STAFF

WHEREAS gender identity is not listed as a protected class in federal laws; and

WHEREAS LGBTQ+ students, teachers and staff are victims of discrimination, harassment, and at-risk behaviors at rates alarmingly higher than non-LGBTQ+ persons;

WHEREAS the social and emotional wellness of our students has a direct relationship with their academic and future success and that schools have the moral and ethical responsibility to address the whole child so that they may experience success in school and in society; and

WHEREAS school districts that respect and support their teachers and staff by providing an inclusive culture where all can thrive, irrespective of gender identity, are more successful and in turn, are supporting a thriving school climate; and

WHEREAS the Commonwealth of Massachusetts currently recognizes in state law LGBTQ+ as a protected class;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC file legislation and petition our federal legislative delegation to also file legislation which would have the effect of adding sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of protected classes in order to provide equity and support to our LGBTQ+ students, teachers and staff and petition our legislative delegation.

Dr. O'Flynn moved to support Resolution 9: Providing Equity for Sexual Orientation, LGBTQ+ Students, Teachers and Staff, seconded by Ms. Kneedler. The motion passed, 7 in favor, 0 opposed, by roll call vote.

RESOLUTION 10: RELATIVE TO THE MONITORING OF ATTENDANCE OF STUDENTS DURING THE PANDEMIC

WHEREAS districts are required to have special but comprehensive plans for educating students during the pandemic crisis; and

WHEREAS student attendance is an important element of a district plan for returning-to-school, and school committees apply local policies for student attendance; and

WHEREAS the emergency nature of the pandemic requires that students may need to be educated in such venues as schools, home, institutions or other remote locations; and

WHEREAS circumstances may require that students be absent from school for reasons that may include extended illness, exposure to illness including COVID-19, or the judgment of parents or guardians determining that it is not safe for their children to return to a school building or other learning venue;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC advocate for legislation and regulation that protect the rights of parents to withhold their children from school for reasons of their health status or health risk and, further,

- That MASC advocate for regulations that hold districts accountable for the attendance of students provide appropriate exemptions for students who experience or require extended absences from school due to health-related issues or concerns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and further,
- That MASC petition the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to waive all accountability requirements regarding attendance for the 2020-2021 school year, and
- That such regulations exempt districts from sanction status on the basis of attendance when such absences are related to a public health crisis, including COVID-19.

Dr. O'Flynn moved to support Resolution 10: Relative to the Monitoring of Attendance of Students During the Pandemic, seconded by Ms. Gilliam. The motion failed, 0 in favor, 7 opposed, by roll call vote.

F. Tri Board Recap:

This agenda item was deferred to the November 19, 2020 School Committee meeting.

G. Public Comment:

There were no comments at this time.

III. School Committee Reports

A. Vouchers and Bills: All were reviewed and signed.

B. Subcommittee Reports:

1. **Athletics:** Have not met

2. **Budget:** The next meeting is scheduled for November 18, 2020.
3. **Operations:** Have not met
4. **Policy:** This item has been deferred to the next meeting.
5. **Communications:** The group met on October 20th. They are planning for the November newsletter. The next meeting is November 17, 2020.
6. **Mutual Concerns:** Have not met

C. Working Group Reports:

1. **Vision 2030:** The group has reviewed the draft Secondary Education Plan. The Secondary Education Plan will be presented to the Committee on November 19, 2020. Once completed, it will be added to the Vision Framework.
2. **Negotiations:** There was a meeting on October 28, 2020.
3. **Race, Equity and Social Justice:** The group is setting up a Zoom meeting for teachers in the Social Justice Compass group as part of ongoing discussions in the district.
4. **Health and Safety Advisory Committee:** There was some concern about the burnout rate of teachers in this current model. It was also noted that there were updates to the univents in the distirist.

D. Liaison Reports:

1. **Ipswich Education Foundation (IEF):** The group met and is focused on continuing to strengthen their policies and procedures.
2. **STEAM Team:** The focus of this year will be to create an online STEAM Showcase. The group consists of community members and students and led by Tracy Wagner, Director of Teaching and Learning.
3. **Birth to Three:** This group has been focused on outdoor and virtual events. They are evaluating programming during winter months when there is no longer tent access.
4. **High School Council:** There was a discussion about opening the campus for seniors in good standing. They will be presenting to the Committee at a later date. There was also discussion around the School Improvement Plan.

E. New Business:

- Dr. Blake shared that the most recent NESDEC Enrollment report was included in the School Committee folder for review.
- Dr. Blake shared that Joanne Cuff, Director of Finance and Operations, will be out on an extended leave through June 2021. He was asking for School Committee permission to post the job for Interim Finance Director. Mr. Whitten, Mr. Nylen and Mr. Stevens volunteered to be on the interview committee.

Dr. O'Flynn moved to support Dr. Blake going forward with posting the position for Interim Director of Finance and Operations, seconded by Ms. Cannon. The motion passed, 7 in favor, 0 opposed, by roll call vote.

IV. Consent

Mr. Whitten moved the Ipswich School Committee to accept the School Committee Open Session meeting minutes from October 15, 2020, seconded by Ms. Gilliam. The motion passed, 7 in favor, 0 opposed, by roll call vote.

V. Adjournment

Mr. Nylen moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:17 PM, seconded by Dr. O'Flynn. The motion passed, 7 in favor, 0 opposed, by roll call vote.