

**IPSWICH SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2020**  
**7:00 PM**  
**MIDDLE/HIGH ENSEMBLE ROOM**  
(School Committee members only, public participation through Zoom)

**MINUTES**

**1. Call to Order**

Mr. Whitten called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

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

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, December 17th at 7:00pm.
- The following Subcommittees/Working Groups will meet remotely via Zoom:
  - Race, Equity and Social Justice Working Group- Wednesday, December 9th at 3:30pm
  - Communications Subcommittee- Monday, December 14th at 3:30pm
  - Policy Subcommittee- Monday, December 14th at 4:00pm
  - The Budget Subcommittee will meet with the administrative team on Wednesday, December 16th.
- The Race, Equity and Social Justice Working Group is holding a remote listening session on Tuesday, December 15, 2020 at 4:00 pm open to all members of the district. The goal of this session is to hear from those who wish to share about their families' experience within the school district as it relates to race, equity and social justice.

Mr. Whitten also shared that Ms. Gilliam will be resigning from the School Committee. The December 17, 2020 meeting will be her last.

**Citizens' Comments:**

There were not at this time.

**Special Acknowledgements:**

Dr. Blake acknowledged the principals of the four schools for their work during these unprecedented times, sharing that they do an incredible job keeping up with staffing, covering classes and doing what needs to be done to keep the students engaged and in school.

Mr. Whitten acknowledged Mr. Coelho and the Chamber Orchestra who recorded a performance for a recent fundraising gala for Massachusetts General Hospital.

**High School Student Representative:**

Ms. Jepsen shared an update on activities and events happening throughout the high school which included:

- The Orchestra received approval to combine the two cohorts for a performance.
- The one act student-directed plays were a success.
- It has yet to be decided if Winter sports will begin.
- Clubs are meeting monthly in either a socially distanced way in-person or online.
- The InterACT Club is hosting a drive-thru Jingle Bell Walk on Saturday, December 12th.

Ms. Jepsen sent out a survey to students at the high school requesting feedback on how school has been going for them. She shared a sample of student responses with the Committee.

### **A. Superintendent's Administrative Report (taken out of order):**

Dr. Blake shared a detailed report of his schedule over the weeks between tonight's meeting and December 17, 2020. His report included the following:

- A Merrimack College Dean Advisory meeting
- A meeting with Bill Frangiamore, Interim Director of Finance and Operation, to discuss his contract and upcoming start date
- A meeting with the Athletic Director to discuss the winter sports season
- The completion of an English Language Learner (ELL) endorsement course
- A Nimble Systems meeting
- The Ipswich Rotary Thanksgiving breakfast
- A meeting with the Paine Grant Committee Chair to review the timeline for the upcoming grant cycle
- An Educator Evaluation Committee meeting
- A meeting with the Director of Technology
- A meeting with the Facilities Director to review Capital projects happening this year
- A meeting with the Northshore Education Consortium Board of Directors
- A webinar reviewing transportation and air flow on buses hosted by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)
- A webinar with the National Weather Service
- A meeting with the Negotiations team to plan potential dates moving forward for negotiations with the Ipswich Educators' Association

Dr. Blake followed his report by answering questions from the Committee. When asked what will happen with the open windows in both classrooms and buses in the winter months, he shared that windows can be closed in classrooms and still have adequate air flow. Windows will remain cracked on the buses, however children will be wearing jackets and appropriate outerwear.

Dr. Blake also shared that snow days will be called at the discretion of the superintendent this year. Snow days or remote learning days will be called after considering a number of factors including how widespread the impact of the storm may be and whether the district loses power.

A draft copy of the Remote Learning Plan created by the Nimble Committee will be shared with the Oversight Committee and School Committee for feedback prior to publication.

Finally, Dr. Blake shared that at this time, about half of the students in the district have submitted documentation for their flu shot this year. Nurses are working to collect paperwork from all families prior to the December 31st deadline set by the state.

## **II. School Committee Reports**

### **B. Fall Sports Awards**

Tom Gallagher, Athletic Director, recognized the students that participated in fall sports this year. Athletes played in a seven week season that included over 80 games. The Cape Ann League was able to complete their season, name league champions and award student athletes for their accomplishments.

Mr. Gallagher then thanked a number of people throughout the district, including students and families, for their work to make the fall sports season a success during unprecedented times.

All award recipients were named. Mr. Gallagher applauded their efforts to keep themselves and their teammates safe this season. He shared "the best time of the year is seeing you on our fields".

### **C. School Covid Oversight Update**

Dr. Blake invited Colleen Fermon, the Public Health Director of Ipswich and Tom Gallagher, Athletic Director, to provide updates to the Committee.

Mr. Gallagher shared that a portion of winter sports were given approval to proceed, with modifications in place for safety, by the state and Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA). Schools were then tasked with deciding individually if they were going to run a season. The Cape Ann League (CAL) was still watching Covid numbers and had not made a final decision on when to begin. Registration for winter sports is open, however, numbers are lower than in past years. Ipswich plans to begin practice on Monday, December 14th. Competition will not begin until January. Overall, each sport will participate in roughly 10 competitions which equates to half of a regular season. Ipswich is planning to move forward with the season until they hear otherwise.

Ms. Fermon updated the Committee with the most recent Covid numbers in Ipswich, sharing that numbers are trending in a negative direction. She shared that while there are positive cases among school-age children, there is not evidence of school transmission. Transmission is being seen through families and community connections. The state, she shared, is utilizing a new interview tool to hone in on how the infection is spreading.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issued new guidelines for quarantining and isolation periods, Ms. Fermon shared. She clarified that Ipswich currently follows guidelines in place from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and not directly from the CDC.

Ms. Fermon anticipates the Town will see an uptick in cases from the Thanksgiving holiday reflected in the next report from the state.

Dr. Blake went on to share that the principals are seeing an uptick in students requesting to work remotely stemming from both holiday travel and parent concerns over increased positive cases.

As the district continues to monitor cases, changes are being made to the Return to Learn document should a switch to the Remote Learning Model be implemented. Specific criteria and expectations for teachers, students and families for remote learning are being developed.

The next School Covide Oversight Committee is expected to meet Monday.

#### **D. Financial Update**

Dr. Blake shared that the administrators were working on their FY22 budgets and are scheduled to meet with the Budget Subcommittee on December 16th. He explained that in a normal year, the district would have a lot more base information such as revenue and expectations from the state to help develop the budget. This year, that information is not readily available. In the interest of getting the budget development process started, the administrators were asked to develop a budget with as close to a 1% increase as possible.

The current FY21 budget is in good shape. As of this meeting, 84% of the budget had been encumbered, right in line with past years.

### **III. School Committee Reports**

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

#### **B. Subcommittee Reports**

- 1. Athletics:** This group has not met. The next meeting is scheduled for December 21, 2020.
- 2. Budget:** This group has not met. The next meeting is scheduled for December 16, 2020.
- 3. Operations:** This group has not met.
- 4. Policy:** This group has not met. The next meeting is scheduled for December 14, 2020
- 5. Communications:** This group has not met. The next meet is scheduled for December 14, 2020.
- 6. Mutual Concerns:** This group has not met.
- 7. Negotiations:** The group met on December 2, 2020 to review potential dates for upcoming negotiations.

### C. Working Groups

Mr. Whitten discussed the Select Board meeting held on November 23, 2020 where the Town Strategic Plan was shared with the community. He was happy with the attendance and community participation.

The Health and Safety Advisory Group met. Ms. Kneedler reported that staff are happy with the state of the univents, airflow and thermostats in the buildings. A list of mental health resources was emailed to all staff and distributed in their mailboxes.

### D. Liaison Reports

1. **Ipswich Education Foundation (IEF):** The group is continuing to work on strengthening their financial policies and procedures.
2. **Climate Resiliency Committee:** This group drafted a resolution for the Town to be carbon neutral by 2040. The resolution includes all municipal buildings and vehicles. Mr. Nylén shared details on the planned logistics of bringing the Town to zero carbon emissions.
3. **Community Development Plan:** This group met on November 24, 2020. A new draft of the Community Development Plan has been distributed. The group is looking to present the plan to Boards and Committees throughout Town in the next couple of months.

### E. New Business

There was no new business presented at this meeting.

## IV. Consent

- *Motion to approve the School Committee Open Session meeting minutes from November 5, 2020 was made by Ms. Gilliam and seconded by Ms. Kneedler . The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.*
- *Motion to approve the School Committee Open Session meeting minutes from November 19, 2020 was made by Mr. Nylén and seconded by Ms. Gilliam . The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.*

## V. Adjournment

- *Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Nylén and seconded by Ms. Gilliam. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.*