

**IPSWICH SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY, JANUARY 7, 2021
7:00 PM**

MIDDLE/HIGH ENSEMBLE ROOM

(School Committee Members only, public participation through Zoom Video Conferencing)

Minutes

1. Call to Order

Mr. Whitten called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM.

Present: Mr. Whitten, Mr. Nysten, Dr. O'Flynn, Ms. Kneeder, Mr. Stevens, Ms. Cannon and Ms. Eliot.

Also Present: Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools; Bill Frangiamore, Interim Director of Finance and Caroline Jepsen, High School Student Representative.

Ms. Jepsen read the District Mission Statement.

Announcements:

- The next School Committee meeting is Thursday, January 21, 2021 at 7:00pm.
- The Budget Subcommittee will meet on Thursday, January 14th at 6:00pm remotely via Zoom.
- The Communications Subcommittee will meet Tuesday, January 19th at 3:30pm remotely via Zoom.
- The Policy Subcommittee will meet Tuesday, January 19th at 4:00pm remotely via Zoom.

Citizens' Comments:

There were none at this time.

Special Acknowledgements:

Mr. Whitten shared an article from the Ipswich Local News written by Ipswich High School freshmen, Ella Neiderhelam.

Mr. Whitten introduced the newest School Committee member, Kate Eliot, who is filling the vacancy left by former member Ms. Gilliam.

High School Student Representative Report:

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

- The orchestra is working on a piece they will perform for a virtual String Fest in the spring.
- After being postponed a week, winter sports began prior to the winter break.
- The Environmental Club continues to hold meetings outside.
- The Robotics Club is preparing for an upcoming virtual competition.
- The Green Team is still working on their community fridge project.

Ms. Jepsen then shared some feedback from a student survey she administered. She said that some students are feeling uneasy about continuing in-person classes because their peers are not adhering to the COVID guidelines. She also shared that some remote students feel they are not receiving important school information.

II. School Committee Presentations:

A. Elementary School Improvement Plans:

Doyon:

Sheila Halloran, principal of the Paul F. Doyon Memorial School, presented her School Improvement Plan. She began the presentation by first thanking the staff and School Council that helped to create the plan.

The three areas of focus were academics, communication and inclusion/equity. Ms. Halloran explained that some goals included in the plan were new for this year and others are a continuation of work already done. She would first highlight the accomplishments of the 2019-2020 school year and then introduce goals for 2020-2021.

Goal 1: Academics

2019-2020 Accomplishments:

- Doyon piloted the Illustrative Math K-5 program in grades 1-3

2020-2021 Goals:

- Illustrative Math K-5 Beta Pilot
 - Provide conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, and application.
 - Three overarching & interconnected principles—learning, teaching, and equity
 - Participate in Professional Development with IM and Learn Zillion.
- Remote, Hybrid, and In-Person Learning
 - Provide Social-Emotional support to students, staff, and families.
 - Create and adapt lessons and curriculum to new teaching and learning environments.

Goal 2: Communication

2019-2020 Accomplishments:

- Early Childhood Outreach
 - Mini-Grant was written by Doyon Kindergarten teachers to increase partnership and collaboration with Birth to Three & Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE).
- Safety and Caring
 - Planning of an outreach evening was put on hold due to the Pandemic
- FRIES
 - Continue to increase involvement

2020-2021 Goals:

- Safety and Caring
 - The Safety & Caring subcommittee which includes teachers, Council members, our social worker, and IPS school resource officer will finalize the updated plan.
- Explore opportunities for communication among our Doyon families.

Goal 3: Social and Emotional Learning and Connecting with the Global Community

2019-2020 Accomplishments:

- Celebrating the success of Responsive Classroom
- Expanding our Global Connections
- Implementing our new K-2 World Language Program

Goal 4: Inclusion and Equity

2020-2021 Goals:

- Global Community
 - The expansion of the World Language Program.
- Social Justice
 - Deepen our knowledge and understanding of the 4 domains: Diversity, Identity, Justice, and Action of the Social Justice Standards.
 - Explore ways to share with our students and Doyon Community.

Ms. Halloran expanded on the global connections goals, sharing that the school has also participated in global read-alouds and used google glasses. She did explain that some projects had been placed on hold due to COVID closures and restrictions.

Ms. Halloran then discussed the Safety and Caring Subcommittee in further detail.

Winthrop School:

Sheila McAdams, principal of Winthrop School, presented her School Improvement Plan. She shared that presenting the plan allowed her a chance to reflect the work that has been done. She then thanked the many teachers, parents, staff and council members for their contribution to the plan.

Ms. McAdams began by highlighting the goals and accomplishments done within the past year and followed that with the school's new goals.

2018-2020 Goal: Strengthen Instruction through honed, vertical alignment.

Accomplishments:

- Developed a curricular guidance document for reading to be used by staff.
- Created a progression of teaching/learning.
 - Highlights the priorities and focus area at each grade level.
 - End of year benchmarks were created to show what kids should know and be able to do
 - Create a gap-analysis study that identifies areas that need to be addressed between curriculum and standards.
- Developed curricular guidance documents for the staff in the area of mathematics.
 - Similar to the reading documents, these were developed after digging into the state standards and expectations for students in each grade level.
 - Looked at critical elements that should be included in every math lesson to ensure engagement and rigor.
- Updated the standards-based report cards.
- Created an enhanced parent communication tool to show alignment between state standards and what was happening in the classroom, how standards are reported out in report cards and why teachers were presenting material in the way they were.

2018-2020 Goal: Design opportunities with awareness of global impact

Accomplishments:

- Introduced the Portal
 - Provided an opportunity for students to experience and connect to people all over the world.
 - Provided students with an opportunity to understand different world perspectives.
- Created the Social Justice PLC.

- Staff, by amassing their resources and personal exploration, discussed concepts of bias, race and diversity.
- Changed the global map to include and represent all students.
 - The map now includes a QR code that, when scanned, pulls up where each student is from.
- The library was updated to include books for all grade levels to ease conversations about diversity.
- Introduction of the World Language program.

2018-2020 Goal: Educate the Whole Child.

Accomplishments:

- Gardening
 - With the help of local community agencies, the school was able to provide access to fresh produce for families.
- Green Team
 - Increased work and collaboration with the group to provide opportunities for the students.

2018-2020 Goal: Strengthen the connections between and among our learning community

Accomplishments:

- Built connections with various organizations within town to bring unique opportunities to students.

2020-2022 Goal: Social Justice ~ We all have personal work to do.

Action Steps:

- Research models and systems for having discussions on social justice issues.
- Identify foundational readings and articles.
- Facilitate discussion with a variety of groups: Council members, parents, staff, community members.
- Coordinate with local community partners to explore Ipswich's immigration history and enhance history and social studies curriculum.
- Identify actions demonstrating good citizenship.
- Choose discussion models to pilot in the classroom and with staff/peers.
- Establish a set of vocabulary and working definitions (akin to social thinking).
- Display, post in classroom, actively publicized vocabulary.
- Connect parents to the social justice curriculum and provide talking points and guidance for difficult discussion at home.

2020-2022 Goal: Academic Impacts ~ Learning has been impacted by the changes in educational routines.

Action Steps:

- Scheduled data analysis sessions across grade levels in which an in-depth analysis of student performance will be conducted.
- Develop consistent Tier II supports for students identified with needs with clear progress monitoring tools for use.
- Explore structures through which Tier II supports can be implemented (during school, before/after school) Create a budget to support academic interventions.
- Educate parents as to the support resources and process that occurs as students are referred for Tier II and/or Tier III supports.

2020-2020 Goal: Goal 3: Social Emotional Health ~ Ensuring the social and emotional mental health of all.

Action Steps:

- Develop routines and structures that result in continuous communication between teachers and the mental health team to ensure a team approach to addressing needs.
- Provide social/emotional learning opportunities, such as healing interventions, in response to toxic stress or responsive negative behaviors.
- Provide opportunities and social coaching for positive interactions that extend beyond family and close friends.
- Embed the social emotional curriculum in the regular ed curriculum.
- Offer time for self-regulation strategies such as mindfulness, physical exercise, and reflection.
- Encourage open communication regarding needs and available services.
- Support initiatives that address basic needs such as food support, clothing swap, etc.
- Collaborate and coordinate, through FRIES, support for parents.
- Use communication platforms to post resources for parents.
- Explore family programming, such as a winter hike, family yoga, etc., to strengthen bonds.

2020-2022 Goal: Goal 4: Connections ~ Strong social connections are foundational.

Action Steps:

- Establish, broaden and strengthen communication methods and systems for sharing information.
- Explore various platforms that may allow for “one stop” communication (Brightwheel) or can be used as a specific application (pikmykid).
- Brainstorm and plan revised and/or alternative afterschool programming plans such as ACE which meet the safety requirements of today.

Mr. Whitten felt that the new goals presented could be used as a roadmap to navigate the pandemic. He also felt that the social aspects of the goals were important as a way to build strong family connections.

Ms. McAdams finished by stating that history has shown that isolation isn't healthy. The goal is to try to help bridge connections to the greater community in an effort to support all students.

B. Zero Carbon Resolution Presentation:

Mike Johnson, Chair of the Ipswich Climate Resiliency Committee (CRC) began his presentation by sharing background information on the committee and their goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Ipswich. Specifically, Mr. Johnson came seeking School Committee approval of a CRC resolution to achieve 100% of Ipswich's energy from non-carbon sources by 2040 with interim goals of 25% by 2025, 50% by 2030 and 75% by 2035.

The resolution is being introduced for many reasons including:

- Climate change: The CRC knows that climate change has already and will continue to negatively impact Ipswich.
- The resolution would put Ipswich in line with the Massachusetts Global Warming Solution Act and will be consistent with Biden's climate goals.

It was explained that the resolution is a vision for climate resiliency and energy use by the municipal government with short and long term goals for meeting the objective. It is now an implementation plan for how the goals will be achieved.

Mr. Johnson, along with John Blair, discussed the various ways in which the resolution goals are achievable including:

- Replacing the heating and cooling systems in the Middle/High School
- Continue to transition to electric power
- Improve/upgrade power systems
- The price of solar and wind have dropped significantly and is now cost competitive with fossil fuels. It is projected that wind and solar will be the cheapest energy source by 2025. Technology for solar, wind and hybrid options is also increasing.

Mr. Whitten added that to achieve these aggressive goals, the elementary schools will need to be replaced, as well as the Middle/High School HVAC system. Mr. Nysten also added that transportation will need to be addressed and the district should begin to look at the use of electric buses.

Dr. O'Flynn asked if there would be funding for the school to support these goals. He shared that the focus of the School Committee is to support the students and money can't be taken out of the school budget to fund these large scale projects. He is happy to support the resolution if there is funding.

Mr. Blair went on to explain how the town could go about achieving zero carbon emission through strategic investments in infrastructure changes and partnerships between the light department and businesses. While some changes may be on a smaller scale and others may take more significant time, all would contribute to meeting the goal of zero carbon emissions by 2040.

➤ *Ms. Kneedler moved to support the Ipswich Climate Resiliency Committee resolution, seconded by Mr. Nysten. The motion passed unanimously in favor by roll call vote, 7-YES, 0-NO.*

C. Superintendent's Administrative Report:

Dr. Blake shared his schedule over the weeks between tonight's meeting and the last. Winter break fell within that time frame, therefore there was less to report on.

Items included:

- Meetings with each administrator and Mr. Frangiamore to discuss their individual budgets

Dr. Blake addressed the events that occurred at the Capital the night prior to this meeting and read an email he sent to staff in the aftermath of the event. He also shared how teachers did an outstanding job handling the situation and introducing a good dialogue for the students.

Dr. Blake discussed the Remote Learning Handbook that was created by the Nimble Systems Committee. The handbook was vetted by the leadership team and the School COVID Oversight Committee. It will be distributed to the district and used in the event schools need to transition to a fully remote model. The handbook provides resources and lists expectations for both families and staff in a remote model.

D. School COVID Oversight Update:

Dr. Blake began his update by outlining the most recent COVID statistics and case numbers for Ipswich. Positive cases are on the rise and the schools and Town are bracing for the post-holiday surge. At this time, there has been one confirmed case from school transmission. He shared that while the district is doing everything to stay in school, teachers are prepared to change models quickly if need be.

Dr. Blake clarified what metrics are used to change from one model to another. At first, the district would move models should the Town data show them in the "red" for three consecutive weeks. At this point, Ipswich has not been in that designation for three weeks straight. The district is looking at several factors

that may contribute to switching models including an uptick in school transmission, a cluster or overall spike in cases. While none of those have happened yet, the District is prepared to make a switch if needed. Dr. Blake also reassured the Committee that there was a team of people, including the Town Manager, Health Department and school nurses, who are monitoring case counts and evaluating the situation constantly.

There was a discussion about the continued precautionary measures such as air purifiers, accessible hand sanitizer, mask wearing and consistent deep cleaning that are in place and working to manage school transmissions. As Dr. O'Flynn stated, students and staff have formed habits within the school that are self-reinforcing.

There is concern about what happens outside of school, however, there is little the district can do to enforce guidelines other than send reminders to students and families. Guidance will be issued to the school community around out of state travel and how it applies to skiing and other winter activities.

At the moment, staffing in the district is okay and better than it had been in previous reports.

Dr. Blake reported that all schools seem to be doing well. There are families that have moved to the remote model due to holiday travel or over concerns of a potential rise in cases post-holiday.

Painting and several repairs were made throughout the facilities over the winter break. It was also noted that continued work on the HVAC system at the middle/high school has begun.

The teacher's union conducted a poll and most teachers reported the new HVAC systems were working and they were thankful for the improvements. Most felt that their administrators were keeping them safe, but most also wished the district went remote for the week following winter break.

Food Services continues to provide meals to students on a weekly basis. They have made accommodations for some families that aren't able to access the designated pickup locations.

Winter sports have begun and will end no later than February 21st. There were some concerns from Committee members about the indoor sports. Those concerns were addressed by the Athletic Director. He confirmed that the Cape Ann League is taking all precautions, even above and beyond what is required, to ensure the safety of the players. The league and players are aware the season could come to an abrupt end at any point.

Dr. Blake clarified that at any point the School Committee had the authority to cancel the District's participation in sports. At the ground level, typically athletic directors and coaches could determine to cancel a game or more depending on the circumstances. Dr. Blake shared that he was impressed with the overall communication and vigilance of the league, thus far.

It was shared that the parent representative on the Oversight Committee did feel that parents were being honest about family travel and if there were feelings of concern, parents were choosing to move to the remote model.

It was also shared that some teachers felt there was an inequity because they are unable to choose a remote model should they travel or have concerns. Ms. Cannon shared her concern about the overall mental health of the teachers. Her concern is also that mental health and feelings of anxiety from teachers could trickle down and affect kids' learning environment.

E. Bus Stop Letter Discussion:

Mr. Whitten drafted and then shared a letter addressed to Robert Gambale, Chair of the Ipswich Zoning Board of Appeals, regarding a concern that a bus pickup and drop off spot has not been made available at the proposed Essex Pastures, LLC housing project on Essex Road in Ipswich. As stated in the letter, a review of the plans implies that the present intention would be that the pickup/drop off area would be directly on State Highway Route 133. In writing the letter, the Committee is asking that the development applicant provide land to the town of Ipswich so that the school buses can pick up and drop off students on a dedicated turnoff. The current bus contracts do not allow buses to pick up or drop off on private property and there is concern that due to the size of the proposed housing development, there would be a large number of students accessing the bus on the side of a highway.

There was discussion amongst Committee members about the logistics of accessing the property and the limitations of private property access outlined in the transportation contract. There was concern that this type of request or accommodation has not been made for any other development in town and would set a precedent for future developments.

There was also a discussion about changing some of the language in paragraph three so the issue was just presented to the developer and allowed for the developer, not the Committee, to offer a solution to the problem.

- *Mr. Stevens made a motion to support the letter as presented with an amendment, also made by Mr. Stevens, to include "with Mr. Whitten's edits", seconded by Ms. Cannon. The motion passed unanimously in favor by roll call vote, 7-YES, 0-NO.*

F. Subcommittee Assignments:

Mr. Whitten reviewed the several vacancies on subcommittees, working groups and as liaisons that were created when a former Committee member resigned. Prior to reassigning roles, Mr. Whitten reviewed the different subcommittees, working groups and liaisons for the newest member, Ms. Eliot. Those positions were filled and the spreadsheet listing all positions was updated. The newly updated spreadsheet will be posted on the District website.

G. Public Comment

Ipswich Local News reporter, Dan MacAlpine, asked for clarification on how the bus company could access private property if their contract states they cannot.

Mr. Whitten then answered that was the reason for the letter. The bus company cannot access private property.

III. School Committee Reports:

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

B. Subcommittee Reports:

- a. **Athletics:** Group has not met
- b. **Budget:** Next meeting is January 20th with the administrative team
- c. **Operations:** Group has not met
- d. **Policy:** Next meeting is January 19th
- e. **Communications:** The next meeting is January 19th. The next installment of the newsletter will be released on January 22nd.
- f. **Mutual Concerns:** Group has not met

- g. **Negotiations:** Group has not met
- C. **Working Groups:** No working groups met.
- D. **Liaison Reports:**
 - a. **Community Development Plan:** The Community Development Plan has been drafted, reviewed and is now in its final form. There was a large discussion around the enforcement of the plan and how to make the plan impactful.
 - b. **Strategic Planning Committee:** The final Strategic Plan was presented to the Select Board and approved unanimously at their meeting.
- E. **New Business:** The Whittier Tech School Committee member's term is ending in March and the Ipswich School Committee needs to vote to reappoint the member, Gary James. He will be invited to a future meeting.

IV. Consent

- *Mr. Whitten moved to accept a \$3,000.00 donation from the Institute for Savings for the Robotics Team to be deposited into the High School Gift Account, seconded by Mr. Nysten. The motion passed unanimously in favor by roll call vote, 7-YES, 0-NO.*
- *Mr. Whitten moved to accept the School Committee Open Session meeting minutes from December 17, 2020, seconded by Mr. Nysten. The motion passed unanimously in favor by roll call vote, 7-YES, 0-NO.*

V. Adjournment

- *Mr. Nysten moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Cannon. The motion passed unanimously in favor by roll call vote, 7-YES, 0-NO.*