

**IPSWICH SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2020
7:00 PM**

MIDDLE/HIGH ENSEMBLE ROOM

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

Minutes

I. Open Session

Call to Order:

Mr. Whitten, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

Present:

Mr. Whitten, Mr. Nysten, Dr. O'Flynn, Ms. Kneedler, Mr. Stevens, Ms. Cannon and Ms. Eliot

Also Present:

Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools, Bill Frangiamore, Interim Director of Finance and Operations; Tracy Wagner, Director of Teaching and Learning; Dr. Beverly Hegedus, Pupil Personnel Services Director; Keith Borgen, Technology Director; Jonathan Mitchell, High School principal; Jeff Carovillano, High School assistant principal; Kathy McMahon, Middle School principal; Sean Fitzgerald, Middle School assistant principal; Sheila McAdams, Doyon principal; Sheila McAdams, Winthrop principal

Mr. Whitten read the District Mission Statement.

Announcements:

- The School Committee will meet tomorrow, February 4th at 7pm and Thursday, February 25th at 7pm.
- The following working groups and subcommittees will be meeting remotely utilizing Zoom:
 - School Facilities Working Group, Tuesday, February 9th at 5pm
 - Negotiations Subcommittee, Wednesday, February 10th at 3:30pm
 - Policy Subcommittee, Tuesday, February 23rd at 1:30pm
 - Communications Subcommittee, Tuesday, February 23rd at 3:00pm
 - Negotiations Subcommittee, Wednesday, February 24th at 3:30pm
- Schools will be closed Monday, February 15 through Friday, February 19th for school vacation.
- Kindergarten Roundup is now taking place. If you have a child entering kindergarten in the fall, please visit the district website: www.ipsk12.net or call Central Office for more information.
- A School Covid Oversight Committee meeting will be held tomorrow, February 4th.
- The School Committee meeting scheduled for tomorrow, February 4th is tentative.

Citizens' Comments:

There were none at this time.

Special Acknowledgements:

Dr. Blake thanked the leadership team, Bill Frangiamore and all administrative staff who helped to produce the documents for the budget book and presentation.

II. School Committee Presentations

- A. FY22 Budget Presentation

Dr. Blake presented the proposed FY22 School District budget for the first time. He began his presentation discussing the steps taken to prepare the budget which included meeting with the leadership team both as a group and individually. After meeting with the Budget Subcommittee, the leadership team was instructed to build a budget that includes all of the items that they needed in the future to meet the needs of students and reach goals outlined in various District plans. After looking at their initial proposals, Mr. Frangiamore and he met with the team collectively to reduce the budget by \$343,000.

The budget was presented in its entirety to the Committee before Dr. Blake opened up for questions. His presentation went as follows:

- The Vision and Mission Statement, taken from the Ipswich Public Schools Strategy for District Improvement, was shared.
- Three objectives from the Strategy for District Improvement that are interwoven throughout the budget were shared:
 - Meeting the needs of all students
 - Creating innovative learning environments
 - Building a connection to the global community
- The budget also takes into account the Framework for Student Success, which pulls together various documents, studies and improvement plans to create an overall vision for the District. All documents included in the Frameworks documents have been previously vetted and approved by the School Committee
- A “Look into the Ipswich Public Schools” video was shared that highlighted the work being done throughout the schools amid the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Dr. Blake shared that this year brought both challenges and new opportunities to the District.
 - Through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ipswich Public Schools and the Ipswich Educators’ Association, the District was able to open in a hybrid model from the start of school.
 - Both DESE and CDC guidelines are met and significant improvements to the buildings have improved the quality of the school environment, thus allowing students and staff to remain safe and in school.
- Budget considerations included:
 - COVID-19 response in the areas of academics, technology and facilities
 - The budget contains items to support a hybrid learning model and allows the continuation of 1:1 technology for students, as well as the associated software programs that have been in use throughout this current year.
 - Considerations were made for the continuation of sanitizing the buildings and the need for additional PPE.
 - Student supports for academic success
 - There will be work to do in terms of re-acclimating students back into the buildings full time and getting them up to speed academically.
 - The budget priorities supports for Tier II interventions to help identify and fill gaps in student learning
 - Approaching year 7 of the Override while taking a significant draw-down of the Stabilization Fund
 - “Right-sizing” classes district-wide
 - The leadership team looked at class sizes and have begun to develop a plan to make recommendations for reducing sections in future years.
 - It is a negotiating year for all bargaining groups
 - The budget increases in salary lines represent only Step and Lane changes.

- The budget does contain funding for potential bargaining unit increases, as well as for all non-union employees.
- The total proposed budget for FY22 is \$33,588,052. That total number broken down is:
 - Total Compensation and Benefits: \$27,100,665
 - Total Expenses: \$6,169,362
 - Total Debt: \$318,025
 - Debt includes school renovation costs, the wind turbine, turf field and the feasibility study for the elementary schools.
- Projected Town Contribution vs. Actual
 - The projected Town contribution from the Override Calculator for FY22 was \$32,452,829.
 - The actual Town contribution for FY22 is \$31,949,015.
 - The shortfall due to decreased revenue in town is \$503,814.
- The FY22 budget funding plan and its impact to the Stabilization Fund was shared.
 - With the budget as presented at \$33,588,052 and the Town contribution of \$31,949,015, the District will need to utilize \$1,639,037 from the Stabilization Fund. With the closing of school from March through the end of last school year, the District was able to retain money and move it into the Stabilization Fund. The current balance sits at \$2,910,717.
 - The impact of the draw-down for the FY22 budget will leave the District with approximately \$1,271,680 going into the FY23 budget cycle.
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- The total amount of outside funds used to support the budget was shared.
 - In building the budget, considerations were made for changes to otherwise regular programs that were not able to be offered or were run with limited capacity since last March.
 - The Tiger Tots program did not run this year and is not expected to provide any support to the budget due to its own financial constraints.
 - The EDP program did not run this year and may look different in the upcoming school year. For those reasons, funds for that program will not support the budget financially this year.
 - Funding from the preschool was also not included in the proposed budget.
 - Funding in the amount of \$232,865 will be taken from the Athletic Revolving Account.
 - The Circuit Break account will decrease by \$200,000 based on this coming year's projections.
- Federal and State funding was discussed.
 - Additional grant funding will be provided to the District for use this fiscal year and next year.
 - The Commonwealth is providing the District with approximately \$63,000 to be expended by the end of this fiscal year.
 - The Federal government is providing the District with approximately \$500,000.
 - The leadership team will be working to determine what from the proposed budget can be re-allocated to grant funding.
- School Choice was discussed.
 - The current cash balance in the Choice fund is \$1,308,592.
 - There are currently 45 Choiced-in students.
 - Planned expenditures for this fund include:
 - \$300,000 for health insurance
 - \$60,000 for district-wide hardware

- \$75,000 to be spent at the building level in accordance with the Choice policy, which provides for discretionary expenditure by the building principals.
- Circuit Breaker Funding was discussed.
 - The current cash balance of Circuit Breaker is \$661,373.21.
 - The district anticipates expending \$600,000 for FY22. This amount is based on the expected FY21 reimbursement determined by DESE.
- Health insurance expenses were discussed.
 - There is an anticipated increase to health insurance expenses in the amount of \$211,636. This totals an estimated 7% increase.
- Special Education expenses were discussed.
 - Special Education expenses have significantly increased in the appropriated budget.
 - One of the main drivers for increased expenses is costs associated with out-of-district placements.
 - Some services typically covered by Circuit Breaker funding are now included in the appropriated budget.
- Compensation for all staff was discussed.
 - The total salary cost for all staff is anticipated to be \$21,989,539.
 - There are twelve teachers slated to make a category change at a cost of \$53,366.
 - Within the school budget, salary and compensation lines are only Step and Lane increases. Percentage increases have not been negotiated for the upcoming school year.
- Paul F. Doyon Memorial School goals were shared.
 - The goals closely align with the Strategy for District Improvement document and their school improvement goals.
- Paul F. Doyon Memorial School enrollment statistics were shared.
 - There is an anticipated decrease of five students, dispersed across six grades.
 - The District does acknowledge a decrease in enrollment and has begun to develop a plan for the future about reducing class sections.
- Paul F. Doyon Memorial School budget highlights were discussed.
 - There will be a .3 FTE increase due to multiple shifts in Special Education.
 - The budget contains funding for supplies and materials related to the new Illustrative Math program.
 - There is an increase in use of instructional software for reading including Lexia and Lexia Rapid Assessment.
 - There is an increase in World Language supplies and materials to support a full time program.
- Winthrop School goals were shared.
 - The goals closely align with the Strategy for District Improvement document and their school improvement goals.
- Winthrop School enrollment statistics were shared.
 - The school is anticipating an increase of 20 students spread out across all seven grade levels.
- Winthrop School budget highlights were shared.
 - There are several shifts in positions to meet the changing needs of the students.

- A Teaching Assistant has been added in the area of reading to support tiered intervention in light of COVID.
- A reduction of Circuit Breaker funds forces more costs for OT/PT and Vision/Hearing services in the allocated budget.
- There is an increase in field trip support for families.
- Middle School goals were shared.
 - The goals closely align with the Strategy for District Improvement document and their school improvement goals.
- Middle School enrollment statistics were shared.
 - There is an anticipated decrease of 15 students across the three grade levels.
- Middle School budget highlights were discussed.
 - There will be a reduction of 1.0 FTE in the math department to bring the grade level teams into alignment.
 - There is an .4 FTE increase for the World Language program.
 - There will be an additional 1.0 FTE Teaching Assistant based on anticipated student need.
 - There is an increase in materials and supplies to support the Illustrative Math program.
 - There is funding for new science equipment.
 - There is now funding for two Fellows positions.
- High School goals were shared.
 - The goals closely align with the Strategy for District Improvement document and their school improvement goals.
- High School enrollment statistics were shared.
 - There is an anticipated decrease of 22 students across the four grade levels.
- High School budget highlights were discussed.
 - The school will add a .4 FTE in the guidance department based on need.
 - There is increased support for online subscription services.
 - There will be an increase in professional development opportunities.
 - There are various line adjustments in both Guidance and Special Education based on staffing and student needs.
 - There will be increased graduation expenses.
- District-wide building operations budget highlights were discussed.
 - Most of the increases to the budget are due to COVID related costs such as overtime for sanitization of the buildings, additional PPE and increased expenses associated with heating and ventilation of the buildings.
 - The District is anticipating an increase to the water and sewer rate which is reflected in the budget.
 - The District and Town is creating a new position- a combination of the Facilities Department clerical assistant and the Town purchasing authority.
 - In the coming weeks, Dr. Blake and Mr. Frangiamore plan to review the ESSR II funding and identify what expenses can be funded by that grant.
- District-wide and Central Office budget highlights were discussed.

- There will be an increase to the reserve funding for potential negotiated increases and non-union increases.
- There will be increases in integrated technology to support hybrid learning.
- There are increased legal expenses associated with negotiations.
- There is an increase in fixed costs, including insurances, workers' compensation and retirement benefits.
- The Teaching and Learning budget will be decreasing, utilizing more grant funds to support curriculum development and professional development work.

Dr. Blake finished his presentation by stating that the proposed budget continues to set the stage as the base budget for the next override and the District's anticipated needs for the future. While there is not much fanfare or excitement in this budget, it will continue to move the District forward.

He then asked for any questions or comments from Committee members. It was decided at that time that the Committee members would ask questions in the order the slides were presented. The discussion went as follows:

- There was clarification on what was included in the "Total Compensation". That includes all expenses including retirement and health insurance.
- The final health care costs should be available by April. It was shared that due to the pandemic, there may not be as significant of an increase to health insurance as planned for.
- Dr. O'Flynn discussed what revenue is used to determine the Town's contribution. He also shared statistics regarding the total growth of the Town contribution each year vs. the total growth for the school district. He shared that everything outside of the Step and Lane increases has to be raised in an override based on the growth of the budget each year.
- Mr. Whitten was hopeful that some of the expenses in the budget could be re-allocated to the new federal funding in an effort to decrease the \$1.6 million drawn-down of the Stabilization Fund.
- Mr. Whitten asked if there would be new programming established with the ESSR II funds. The District should be thoughtful with its use of the money and mindful that the money will go away. The goal is to identify the best usage for the funds and put it towards that.
- Mr. Nylen talked about the impact of the use of the Stabilization Fund and the ability and/or inability to extend the override much further. He explained that if the District is able to slow the withdrawals, the life of the Stabilization Fund extends.
- Mr. Frangiamore clarified that by May the District will know how much it can contribute to the Stabilization Fund this year.
- Dr. O'Flynn talked about the need for an override going forward. The greater increase to the budget, the faster the District gets to the "cliff" and the bigger the impact to the District when they get there.
- There was a discussion about why the EDP funds were not being used. Historically, the program has carried a healthy balance. While the program isn't running this year and nothing is being added to it, there is a surplus that could be expended for other uses. Because of the uncertainty of the program going forward and the possible re-design of the program, it was best to keep those funds available. Additionally, should the District approach the fiscal "cliff", it could use those surplus funds to help support the budget.

- Mr. Nylan asked that the account balances for all outside funds listed on the slide be included in the next presentation.
- There was some discussion about the decrease of Choice students in the upcoming year and the future of the program. There was also discussion about the healthy balance in the Choice Fund and similarly to the EDP account, it was agreed that the surplus funds should not be spent at this time.
- There were no questions on the Circuit Breaker slide.
- Mr. Whitten noted the significant increase in the retirement lines.
- As previously stated, the cost of health insurance may be lower than anticipated.
- Dr. Hegedus, Director of Pupil Services, was asked to speak about the significant increase in Special Education funding. She shared that the biggest budget driver is out-of-district placements. While many of the placements aren't new, the tuition increases significantly each year. There are also increased costs to in-district supports as needs increase. She explained what should happen if an outplacement is needed once the budget is set, which can include a draw-down from the Special Education Stabilization Fund or a recalibration of other funding needs.
- The current balance of the Special Education Stabilization Fund is \$300,000.
- Dr. Hegedus also shared that student placements fare based on individual needs and do not necessarily reflect a weakness in supports within the District.
- The compensation for all staff includes Step and Lane increases, as well as the undistributed Central Office lines for all union and non-union staff.
- There was a large discussion regarding enrollment at the elementary level and the concern that enrollment is decreasing. While changes to class sizes don't necessarily make sense in the upcoming school year, there has been discussion about the potential to right-size and drop sections in the future. The lower enrollment numbers for this past year are a reflection of the pandemic. Some families chose not to enroll their children in kindergarten, some homeschooled their children or went to private schools.
- There was a discussion around the potential for diminished learning or gaps in learning from the pandemic and what supports would be needed to address those challenges at the elementary school level. Ms. McAdams explained that there has been an influx of parent concerns and requests for evaluations. What the schools need to determine is whether there is a true disability or loss of learning. The schools are looking to build a strong Tier-II remedial program to identify needs and address them while not putting a larger burden on the Special Education department. Ms. McAdams went on to explain that while enrollment is decreasing, this upcoming year was not the year to increase class sizes by dropping a section. The schools need to recover from the potential loss in learning and identify any increase to Special Education supports first.
- Ms. McAdams talked about the length of time it could take to "catch-up". She stated that the vulnerable populations are most affected, but the school knows that and that won't change in a year. What the schools can focus on is identifying the students who wouldn't normally be classified in a vulnerable group. They want to ensure that they aren't overlooking any students.
- Schools stated that there is money in their budgets to address similar needs as McAdams discussed.

- Ms. Cannon asked for some clarification on what “right-sizing” means. Dr. O’Flynn explained that when you drop a section, you add more kids to other classes and that can have a big impact. The principals are working on a plan and it will be presented to the School Committee at a later date.
- There were no comments or questions about the Doyon goals or budget highlights.
- There was a brief discussion about the status of EDP. A Paine Grant was approved to evaluate the program and plan for its future. A committee will be formed to look at the program and hope to have it approved and ready for the fall.
- In previous years, a Paine Grant was approved to provide field trip support for families. Ms. Cannon asked if the funding for field trips in the Winthrop budget was in addition to the grant money or to replace the grant. Ms. McAdams shared that she is unsure about the vision for the field trip grant moving forward and that should the district not have it, she wanted something in the budget to offset costs to families. There is always a chance that the Grant Committee would choose not to fund a grant.
- Ms. McMahon discussed her enrollment numbers. She shared that in order for the number of students in cohorts to remain low enough to be in the building, staffing had to change. For example, reading specialists were working as Humanities teachers. The budget in FY21 did not plan for cohorts and lower class sizes.
- Dr. O’Flynn stated that over the past few years, the Middle School has made the most dramatic shift in their model and programming to address declining enrollment. That effort should be recognized and the current model is drastically different than that of the elementary school and high school. Other Committee members thanked Ms. McMahon for the time and attention she has spent on this topic.
- Ms. McMahon was asked to talk about the expansion of the World Language program. The program is designed to bridge the gap between the new elementary school program and the established program at the high school. The school is looking to offer a trimester length program that would explore languages in 6th and 7th grade and then offer Spanish to 8th grade students.
- There was some discussion about whether the need for new science equipment could be funded through a Paine or Traverso-Weatherall Grant. Ms. McMahon felt that microscopes are basic teaching equipment that are not innovative enough for either grant.
- Ms. McMahon talked about the trends the middle school is seeing from the Lexia program. She explained that they are seeing what they expected. Students who are putting in the time and using Lexia are doing well and those students who have been struggling to do the work, continue to struggle. The school is looking at how to use the information for interventions and address learning gaps.
- Ms. McMahon explained the movement in the Special Education budget for the middle school and how it related to programmatic need. She said the movement is in response to students coming to 6th grade. She hopes to support these students while not adding additional staffing.
- Mr. Mitchell discussed how the career pathways program is reflected in the budget. Historically, he explained, the pathways program was looked at retroactively-what classes did a student take and what pathway do those classes fit in. With the help of a coordinator, there would be a proactive approach to scheduling.

- The .4 FTE in guidance will complete the .6 FTE. The .6 FTE position was difficult to fill. The ideal candidate to fill this position would be someone with video editing knowledge who can work as a teaching assistant, but also help develop a program to cover school events and produce a student news program.
- Both Mr. Mitchell and Dr. Hegedus addressed the significant numbers in the tuitioned-out lines. The high school has a responsibility to certain kids until the age of 22 and for that reason, the budget numbers are always larger.
- There was discussion about what building and operations costs could be covered by the new federal funding the District received.
- Dr. Blake talked about the building improvements that were made throughout this past year in response to COVID.
- There were some questions about the difference in electricity usage between the elementary schools and the middle/high school. Dr. Blake was going to discuss the numbers with the Director of Facilities and address those questions at the next meeting.
- There was some clarification on why transportation could be found in two areas of the budget. One line covers regular education buses and the other covers Special Education transportation.
- Mr. Nysten asked the administrative team to think about what good, if any, has come out of this pandemic and if there were any things they thought could be included in the budget moving forward.
- Mr. Whitten thanked everyone for their work in putting the budget together.
- Dr. Blake said he would meet with his team prior to the next meeting to target areas in the budget that could be offset with the additional grant funding that just came in.
- It was decided that the Committee was not ready to take the budget under advisement.

III. School Committee Reports

- A. Vouchers and bills were reviewed and signed.
- B. School Committee Reports
 - a. The Healthy and Safety Working Group met. The IEA put out a survey to ask teachers how they felt about Pool Testing. There was also a discussion about what would be the determining factor to switch model and get more kids back in school.
- C. There was no new business.

IV. Consent

- A. There was no consent agenda presented.

V. Adjournment

Dr. O'Flynn moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:06 PM, seconded by Mr. Nysten. The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands.