

Mission

Ipswich Public Schools aspires to empower ALL students to be global citizens who are effective communicators, analytical problem solvers and savvy consumers of information. We propose to do this through an emphasis on communication, critical thinking, creativity, self-management, perseverance and collaboration. Students will be active partners in authentic learning, offering voice and choice in demonstrating competency.

IPSWICH SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

THURSDAY, MAY 6, 2021

6:30 PM

MIDDLE/HIGH ENSEMBLE ROOM

(School Committee Members only, public participation through Zoom)

MINUTES

OPEN SESSION

Mr. Whitten called the meeting to order at 6:47 PM

Present: Mr. Whitten, Mr. Stevens, Ms. Kneedler, Ms. Cannon and Ms. Eliot. Dr. O’Flynn and Mr. Nylen joined the meeting while in executive session at 7:09 PM.

Also Present: Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools and Bill Frangiamore, Interim Director of Finance and Operations. Caroline Jepsen, HS Student Representative, joined the meeting when the Committee rejoined in open session.

- *Motion to meet in executive session pursuant to M.G.L. chapter 30A, sec. 21(a) for the following purposes: A. To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel; B. To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body was made by Ms. Cannon and seconded by Ms. Eliot.*

Roll Call

The motion passed unanimously

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

READING OF DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT:

Ms. Jepsen read the District Mission Statement.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- The next School Committee meeting is Thursday, May 20th at 7:00pm.
- The Communications Subcommittee will be meeting on Tuesday, May 11th at 4:00pm.
- The Mutual Concerns Subcommittee will be meeting on Monday, May 17th at 3:30pm.
- Town elections will take place on Tuesday, May 18th.
- The last day of school for all students is Friday, June 18th.
- Spring town meeting held on May 15th at 9am

CITIZENS' COMMENTS:

There were no comments at this time.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Members of the School Committee and public acknowledged Mr. Nylén's last meeting as a School Committee member. Mr. Nylén served a total of nine years on the Committee.

Dr. Blake acknowledged the teachers and nurses for their hard work throughout this year.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT:

Ms. Jepsen reported on the activities and events taking place at the high school, which included:

- The theater department will be performing *Mama Mia!* outside at the high school over the weekend.
- The Orchestra is preparing for StringFest on May 20th.
- The high school football team finished their season undefeated.
- Spring sports continue to run smoothly.
- The STEAM Showcase will be held virtually beginning May 24th.
- Walk, Bike or Roll Day will be held on May 12th.

Ms. Jepsen shared that overall, students are feeling good about the in-person learning model. Students feel this model allows for more interaction and productivity. There is some concern about the crowd size at lunch.

IV. SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENTATIONS

A. SCHOOL REOPENING UPDATE:

Dr. Blake began by reviewing the total COVID-19 case count and positivity rate in Ipswich for the past two weeks, sharing that there was a spike in positive cases last week. He was happy to report there were no positive cases reported at the school this past week and still no sign of in-school transmission.

He then reviewed the number of staff who have received their vaccinations, breaking down totals to include staff who have received one vaccine and those who are now fully vaccinated.

Dr. Blake reported that the return to an in-person model has been successful and both students and teachers are adjusting nicely to new routines at the middle and high school. There are 15 students at the middle school and 15 students at the high school who have remained in the remote model.

The large tent behind the middle/high school cafeteria collapsed over the weekend. It was reported that the tent was too large for the soft ground in that area. The tent will be replaced with a smaller one in a new location.

The Facilities Department has completed the unit ventilator project at the middle/high school. The boiler project has also been completed at Winthrop School.

Teachers are happy to have students back in their classrooms. There have been some discussions at the high school about the lack of prep time for teachers with the current schedule.

The Food Services Department is currently working out the details for the summer food program.

Dr. Blake reported that the Spring sports season is getting underway. There continues to be positive feedback on the video casting of the sporting events. This may be something worth continuing in the year ahead.

Now that schools have returned to an in-person model, they are beginning to re-introduce field trips. Schools are looking at opportunities to be outdoors. While there is grant money to support these trips, the biggest challenge continues to be the availability of transportation.

B. END OF YEAR EVENT UPDATE:

Dr. Blake reviewed end of year events happening throughout the district these next two months. Events may be held with limited capacity due to the current COVID restrictions.

C. SUPERINTENDENT'S ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT:

Dr. Blake shared his schedule in the weeks leading up to tonight's meeting. Events included:

- Working with administrators to look at year-end events and plan for this summer and fall
- A meeting with consultants regarding upgrading the science labs at the middle and high schools. This project will come forward in a Paine Grant submission. The need for improvements to the science labs is in direct response to the most recent NEASC visit, as well as an initiative by forward-thinking administrators looking to modernize opportunities for students.
- Ongoing negotiations with the Ipswich Educators' Association (IEA)
- Interviews with the Director of Finance and Operations finalists
- The launch of the Elementary Principal Search Committee
 - Dr. Blake then reviewed the tentative timeline for the principal search. Information will be updated and posted to the district website.
- Various subcommittee meetings
- A meeting with Ipswich Aware
- A School Reopening Oversight Committee meeting

Dr. Blacked shared that he will be conducting Extended Day Program Director interviews next week. Program registration will also begin in the upcoming week.

He then gave an overview of the current kindergarten enrollment numbers. At this time, the enrollment has surpassed the projected number presented with the FY22 budget. He anticipates that number to continue to climb through the summer.

D. FINANCE DIRECTOR SEARCH UPDATE:

Mr. Nylen, a member of the Search Committee, gave an overview of the Director of Finance and Operations search process. There were a total of 11 applicants for the position. Search Committee members met to review each application and complete a scoring rubric for each person. From there, the candidate pool was narrowed down to five candidates to interview. Once the interview process was complete, the Search Committee determined two finalists to move forward for the "Meet and Greet" stage. Each candidate was invited to the district to meet with administrators, Central Office staff and Town employees. Meet and Greet participants were asked to complete a feedback form that was reviewed by the Search Committee. While each candidate presented strongly, the committee felt there was one that would fit better with the district.

Dr. O'Flynn, also on the Search Committee, added that the scoring of each candidate was close. There was consensus on the Search Committee that one finalist, Cheryl Herrick-Stella, was the best fit for the position. He then reviewed Cheryl's background and past experience, sharing that he and the Committee felt confident she would do a good job.

Dr. Blake checked Ms. Herrick-Stella's three references that morning and said each gave a glowing recommendation of support.

The School Committee is the hiring agent for this position. Mr. Nylén clarified that they would be offering Ms. Herrick-Stella a three year contract.

- *Motion to support the nomination of Cheryl Herrick-Stella as the Director of Finance and Operations for the Ipswich Public Schools was made by Mr. Stevens and seconded by Ms. Cannon.*

Roll Call

The motion passed unanimously

E. SCHOOL BUILDING WORKSHOP REVIEW

Mr. Nylén reviewed, with the Committee, the School Facilities Workshop which took place at the last meeting. He first asked for members' takeaways from the night.

Mr. Stevens liked the format of the meeting and thought it was beneficial to have a facilitator lead the discussion. He felt the next discussion should also be facilitated by the Logue Group.

Ms. Cannon was in favor of identifying realistic options for the location of the building and then looking at design. She stressed the importance of presenting a clear project with unanimous consensus. She felt the facilitated meeting worked well and was a valuable tool. While some members thought the School Facilities Working Group could work through some initial building discussions, MS. Cannon felt that was unnecessary. The building project should be worked on by the whole School Committee.

Mr. Whitten felt that the facilitator was a good addition to the meeting and suggested he be used for future discussions. He felt that the School Facilities Working Group should review location options and go out to other Town boards to discuss the possible options. Mr. Whitten stressed the importance of listening to the community and thought the facilitator could help with that. He found it important to present a Statement of Interest (SOI) to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) with three things- a location, community support and educational goals.

Dr. O'Flynn was surprised to see the consensus of the Committee for one building in a downtown location. Mr. Nylén agreed, but felt that the Committee was "dancing around" the idea at the workshop and would not make a commitment. Knowing this is the consensus of the Committee, it was asked if the Committee should then approach the Town to see what locations could be available and design a plan around that.

Mr. Nylén went on to remind the Committee that the location may not be the most important factor of this project. The priority, he shared, should be the best way to educate the children of Ipswich. When the site location is emphasized as most important, a domino effect is set in place if the "right" location is not attainable. He stressed the need for a better anchor for the project this time around.

Ms. Cannon urged the Committee to take into consideration the financial aspect of any project this size and its impact on the community. There needs to be a balance between creating a space that best serves our students and the financial impact.

Dr. Blake reminded the Committee of the cost of a two school build versus one building. He then talked about the process of starting over. There was significant work done to create the Elementary Educational Plan. That should remain despite any location or space configuration changes.

Mr. Nylén agreed with Dr. Blake, but stressed the importance of sharing the Elementary Education Plan with the community. He felt the School Committee did not do that before.

The discussion then turned to the location of the school. Dr. Blake asked if the Committee was in agreement with one school in a downtown location. All were in agreement that a downtown location would be ideal, but that it needed to be confirmed and a plan B should be discussed.

While she agreed that one school in a downtown location would be good, Ms. Cannon felt that the Committee needed to first reach out to the community and listen to what they would like. Those community meetings should be scheduled before any further decisions are made.

Mr. Nylén then asked what feedback the Committee was seeking from the community. In Amherst, the School Committee established a framework for the project and then presented it to the community. Listening sessions were scheduled and the plans were adjusted based on the feedback Amherst received.

The discussion continued regarding what the next steps in the process would be. It was determined that the School Facilities Working Group would meet with Bill Logue to discuss a community survey and how best to execute future listening sessions.

Lastly, the Committee discussed the timeline to submit an SOI to MSBA by Spring 2022. It was important to be mindful of the override request at the 2022 Town Meeting and the other projects included in the Town's Strategic Plan.

F. STAFF RECOGNITION DISCUSSION

This agenda item was deferred to the next meeting.

G. SCHOOL CHOICE DISCUSSION

Each year, the School Committee is required to determine if they will open the School Choice program for the upcoming school year and if so, how many open slots will be available per grade. This information must be reported to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) by June 1st. Building principals recommended opening the Choice program this year with a set deadline of August 1, 2021 to apply.

There was concern from Mr. Nylén that the Choice recommendations at the elementary level were a deliberate attempt to not cut a section in future years. He felt that accepting more students at that level was not a good look if the district was having discussions regarding right-sizing. Mr. Whitten was in agreement with Mr. Nylén.

Mr. Nylén asked the Committee to consider the cost to the district to maintain a section at the elementary level versus what the district would be receiving from Choice payments should they accept students into all the open slots. Is that comparable? He stressed that you would be unable to cut a section if only a few slots were filled.

Some members thought it would be better to vote on the secondary Choice openings at this meeting and then invite the elementary principals to a future meeting to discuss their recommendations. Others felt

that was unnecessary. It was already decided that sections would not be cut from any grade level next school year.

- Motion to support the School Choice program for the 2021-2022 school year was made by Mr. Stevens and seconded by Ms. Cannon.

Roll Call

The motion passed unanimously

- *Motion to open 8 Choice slots in Grade 1 at Winthrop School and 9 Choice slots in Grade 1 at the Paul F. Doyon Memorial School was made by Dr. O'Flynn and seconded by Mr. Stevens.*

Roll Call

The motion passed with 6 in favor and 1 against

- *Motion to open 6 Choice slots in Grade 2 at Winthrop School and 9 Choice slots in Grade 2 at the Paul F. Doyon Memorial School was made by Mr. Stevens and seconded by Dr. O'Flynn.*

Roll Call

The motion passed with 6 in favor and 1 against

- *Motion to open 9 Choice slots in Grade 3 at Winthrop School was made by Mr. Stevens and seconded by Dr. O'Flynn.*

Roll Call

The motion passed with 6 in favor and 1 against

- *Motion to open 4 Choice slots in Grade 6 was made by Mr. Stevens and seconded by Ms. Kneedler.*

Roll Call

The motion passed unanimously

- *Motion to open 4 Choice slots in Grade 7 was made by Mr. Stevens and seconded by Ms. Cannon.*

Roll Call

The motion passed unanimously

- *Motion to open 4 Choice slots in Grade 8 was made by Ms. Kneedler and seconded by Ms. Cannon.*

Roll Call

The motion passed unanimously

- *Motion to open 10 Choice slots in Grade 9 was made by Ms. Cannon and seconded by Mr. Stevens.*

Roll Call

The motion passed with 6 in favor and 1 against

- *Motion to open 10 Choice slots in Grade 10 was made by Ms. Cannon and seconded by Mr. Stevens.*

Roll Call

The motion passed with 6 in favor and 1 against

- *Motion to open 10 Choice slots in Grade 11 was made by Mr. Stevens and seconded by Ms. Cannon.*

Roll Call

The motion passed with 6 in favor and 1 against

- *Motion to open 10 Choice slots in Grade 12 was made by Ms. Cannon and seconded by Mr. Stevens.*

Roll Call

The motion passed with 6 in favor and 1 against

- *Motion to set the deadline to apply to the School Choice program as August 1, 2021 was made by Ms. Kneidler and seconded by Ms. Cannon.*

Roll Call

The motion passed unanimously

H. SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION UPDATE

Mr. Whitten reviewed the DESE Superintendent Evaluation document with the Committee. All evaluations should be completed and returned to Mr. Whitten by May 13th. A summative evaluation will be read into the record at the May 20, 2021 meeting.

I. FEOFFEES DISBURSEMENT AMOUNT

Feoffees Committee member Nat Pulsifer has been assigned as a liaison to the School Committee. He shared that he plans to attend future School Committee meetings and take any questions back to the Feoffees Committee as needed.

Mr. Stevens read a letter from Ellen Rose, Chair of the Feoffees Committee-

The Trust Administration Order of the PROBATE & FAMILY COURT (“the TAO”) instructs the Feoffees “to report to the Appointing Authorities by April 30 the amount that the Feoffees will distribute to the public schools in the forthcoming distribution”.

The “Measurement Date” upon which the distribution is calculated includes the most recent quarter ending March 31st.

The distribution will be made on or before June 30, 2021.

Based on the average market value of the Trust for the trailing 12 quarters ending March 31, 2021, the Feoffees distribution to the schools will be \$889,360. This is comprised of \$14,087 from the Manning portion of the Fund and the remaining portion, \$875,273 is the Paine Distribution.

Mr. Stevens shared his appreciation to the Feoffees Committee for their continued support and the great work on behalf of their investment managers.

Historically, this disbursement is split so that 75% goes to the William Paine Enhancement Grants and 25% would go towards the Traverso-Weatherall Innovation Grants. If that is the case, \$656,454.75 would be allocated to the William Paine Enhancement Grants and \$218,818.25 would be allocated to the Traverso-Weatherall Innovation Grants.

Mr. Stevens informed the Committee that there is roughly \$300,000 of unspent funds from FY21 that could be used this coming grant cycle. Mr. Whitten wanted to wait until both grant committees met to review the final grant proposals before allocating any additional funds.

- *Motion to accept the Feoffee distribution to the schools in the amount of \$889,360 to be broken out in the amount of \$14,087 for the Manning Fund and \$875,273 for the Paine Distribution was made by Dr. O'Flynn and seconded by Mr. Nysten.*

Roll Call

The motion passed unanimously

Dr. Blake talked more in depth about the return of funds from this past grant cycle. Due to the hybrid model the school was in and the COVID guidelines and restrictions, several grants went unspent.

Mr. Pulsifer said the Feoffees Committee would like to discuss the carry forward balance.

- *Motion to tentatively divide the Feoffee disbursement amount of \$875,273 with 75% of funds allocated to the William Paine Enhancement Grants and 25% of funds allocated to the Traverso-Weatherall Innovation Grants was made by Dr. O'Flynn and seconded by Mr. Stevens.*

Roll Call

The motion passed unanimously

J. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments at this time.

V. SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. VOUCHERS/BILLS: All were reviewed and signed.

B. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- 1. ATHLETICS:** This subcommittee has not met.
- 2. BUDGET:** This subcommittee met to discuss the Spring 2022 override request.
- 3. OPERATIONS:** This subcommittee has not met.
- 4. POLICY:** This subcommittee has not met.
- 5. COMMUNICATIONS - newsletter will go out mid may.**
- 6. MUTUAL CONCERNS:** There is a meeting on May 17th.
- 7. NEGOTIATIONS:** Negotiations are ongoing with the Ipswich Educators' Association.

C. WORKING GROUP REPORTS: There were no meetings to report on.

D. LIAISON REPORTS

1. **HS SCHOOL COUNCIL:** At this time, 79 seniors have taken advantage of the new Open Campus privilege. Students are requesting the possibility of an excused absence for potential vaccine reactions.

E. **NEW BUSINESS*:** Mr. Nysten addressed the need to schedule exit interviews with each administrator leaving.

VI. CONSENT

A. CONSENT AGENDA

- *Motion to accept the Open Session meeting minutes from April 15, 2021 and to accept a donation in the amount of \$500 for the High School Racing Team to be deposited into the High School Gift Account was made by Mr. Whitten and seconded by Dr. O'Flynn.*

Roll Call

The motion passed unanimously

VII. ADJOURNMENT

- *Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Stevens and seconded by Ms. Kneeder.*

Roll Call

The motion passed unanimously

***All business not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of the meeting.
Agenda items may be taken out of order to fill time gaps and/or to accommodate presenters
when necessary. All times are approximate.**