

**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, SEPTEMBER 9, 2021  
7:00 PM  
MIDDLE/HIGH ENSEMBLE ROOM**

**MINUTES**

**I. OPEN SESSION**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Whitten called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Present: Mr. Whitten, Mr. Stevens, Dr. O’Flynn, Ms. Cannon, Ms. Eliot and Mr. Poirier

Also Present: Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools; Cheryl Herrick-Stella, Director of Finance and Operations; Caroline Jepsen, High School Student Representative

**READING OF DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT**

Ms. Eliot read the mission statement.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The next School Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, September 23, 2021.

**CITIZENS’ COMMENTS**

There were none at this time.

**SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Dr. Blake recognized the 34 new staff members joining this district this school year.

Mr. Whitten held a moment of silence in recognition of the 20th anniversary of 9/11.

**HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT**

Caroline Jepsen reported on the first few days at the high school. All music ensembles have returned to practicing in their normal spaces within the buildings. Fall sports have started practicing and clubs will begin meeting towards the end of September. Overall, students are happy to be back in the buildings and are settling into their routines.

**II. SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENTATIONS**

**NEW BUSINESS\*: OVERNIGHT FIELD TRIP REQUEST (Taken out of order)**

High School teacher, Kristin McGinley, presented a request for an overnight field trip for the Advanced Project Adventure class. Students and chaperones would leave school mid-day on Friday, October 15th and return on Sunday, October 17th. The group plans to camp at the Blackberry Crossing Campground located in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Students and staff plan to hike on Saturday. Meals will be cooked by chaperones at the campground.

- *Motion to support the Advanced Project Adventure overnight field trip request was made by Dr. O'Flynn and seconded by Mr. Stevens.*

### **The motion passed unanimously**

#### **A. SCHOOL OPENING UPDATE**

Dr. Blake reported on the opening of school. At this time, all schools are operating at full capacity, in-person. He noted that enrollment numbers have increased significantly at both elementary schools. During the FY22 budget presentations, there was talk about reducing a section of kindergarten, however, since that time, kindergarten class sizes have increased. Due to the increase, Dr. Blake is working with staff to provide additional classroom support, particularly for Winthrop School where kindergarten enrollment is high.

Dr. Blake reviewed the total number of new staff at each school and agreed to send a list of new staff names and positions to School Committee members. Bus registration has increased since last year and ridership numbers are similar to where they were pre-pandemic. Dr. Blake provided the total participation numbers for each fall sport.

At the time of the meeting, there was one reported positive COVID case at the high school. The State-sponsored "Test and Stay" program was set-up and available for students should they be identified as a close contact while in school.

The Extended Day Program (EDP) is running this year and off to a good start. Some issues with attendance are being worked through.

The two new elementary school principals have had a positive start to the school year. They continue to make their mark on each school while respecting each individual school's culture. Dr. Blake made note of the collaboration taking place between the principals.

Dr. Blake stated that the school nurses were in the process of collecting vaccination data on the students and staff. That information will be reported out at a future meeting. It was suggested by Dr. O'Flynn that the School Committee hold a policy discussion regarding the mask mandate beyond the first month of school.

#### **B. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH IPSWICH EDUCATORS' ASSOCIATION REVIEW/VOTE**

Ms. Cannon, member of the Negotiations Subcommittee, reviewed the newly drafted Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Ipswich Educators' Association (IEA) and the Ipswich School Committee. Highlights of the MOU include:

- This is the streamlined version of the MOU from last year.
- There is no position on masking beyond the October 1st date noted in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) guidelines. Both parties agreed that the discussion on masks was a fluid one and negotiations on that subject remain open.
- There will be continued training for staff on health and safety protocols.

- An outlined process of how staff will be notified should there be a positive case and/or outbreak in school is included.
- Provisions within the MOU were extended to the ESP unit and TA's.
- Because DESE is not currently allowing for a remote option, that discussion was off the table. Both parties would return to discuss should that change.

Overall, Ms. Cannon shared that this was a positive conversation with the IEA. Like the School Committee, their focus is on the health and well-being of students and educators. Issues like masking, remote options, differences in working conditions in each building depending on vaccination status could all be points of negotiation as the year progresses. Both parties recognize that things remain fluid.

- *Motion to support the Memorandum of Understanding with the Ipswich Educators' Association as presented was made by Mr. Stevens and seconded by Ms. Eliot.*

**The motion passed with 5 in support and 1 abstention.**

### **C. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DAY DISCUSSION/VOTE**

Mr. Whitten began this discussion outlining some area towns and cities that have changed the October holiday from Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day. The intention of changing the name of the holiday was not to erase Columbus from history, but to shift the focus of the day away from his "genocidal actions" and move towards inclusion and celebration of the people who were here during that time.

Dr. O'Flynn did point out that Christopher Columbus is not the only explorer during that time period with the same principles. While we may not be celebrating him, students should have an understanding of the process of colonization during that time. While Mr. Whitten agreed there were other people with similar actions, Columbus was the only one with a holiday named after him.

Committee members agreed that the time was now to make a change. There was discussion about how the change would be acknowledged and reflected in the schools. Dr. Blake shared that the current standards are not targeted as teaching specifically about Columbus, but are focused on historical events during that time period. The Director of Teaching and Learning will work with teachers around curriculum units and provide the district with additional resources on the topic.

- *Motion to approve the holiday name change from Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day was made by Dr. O'Flynn and seconded by Ms. Cannon.*

**The motion passed unanimously**

### **D. SPECIAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT VOTE/SPEAKER ASSIGNMENTS**

Mr. Whitten reviewed the Special Town Meeting Warrant to determine which articles the School Committee would take a position on. Prior to voting, Mr. Whitten invited Gary Champion, member of the Government Study Committee, to address the School Committee.

Gary Champion, Palomino Way, shared that he has served on the Government Study Committee for five years. He was addressing Article 3 on the Special Town Meeting Warrant which is a proposal by the Select Board to change the status of the Government Study Committee. Despite the committee's success, the Select Board is requesting to put restrictions in place that no other standing committee in Town is subject to. The proposed by-law would make the Government Study Committee an ad-hoc committee that would only convene at the request of the Select Board instead of monthly as it is done

now. Mr. Champion felt that the proposed change is a conflict of separation of powers and will limit the ability of the Government Study Committee to review government procedure in Town. Mr. Champion asked the School Committee to not support this article.

Mr. Champion, in response to Mr. Whitten, talked about the participation rate of the Government Study Committee, stating that there were currently two members.

The School Committee then discussed the Special Town Meeting Warrant.

ARTICLE 1 – Amend Town Budget (State Aid)

No vote taken

ARTICLE 2 – Amend School Budget (State Aid)

- *Motion to support Article 2 was made by Mr. Stevens and seconded by Ms. Cannon.*

**The motion passed unanimously**

Mr. Stevens was assigned as speaker.

ARTICLE 3 – Amend General Bylaws – Chapter 35. Add Government Study Committee

Members expressed concern about the lack of information or understanding of the Select Board rationale for making this proposal. There was also concern about the number of current members on the Government Study Committee and their inability to garner more interest.

- *Motion to RATM Article 3 was made by Dr. O’Flynn and seconded by Mr. Stevens.*

**The motion passed unanimously**

ARTICLE 4 – Open Space Land Taking for Water Supply Protection Purposes – Symes Property

No vote was taken

ARTICLE 5 - Amend Zoning Bylaws – Section VI, Footnote 11, Footnotes to the Table of Density & Dimensional Regulations

No vote was taken

ARTICLE 6 – Amend Zoning Bylaws – Revisions to Section IX.S & Section IX.P - Infill Housing and Accessory Building Conversion

No vote was taken

ARTICLE 7 – Amend Zoning Bylaws – Section V. Table of Use Regulations – Revisions to Affordable Housing Incentives

No vote was taken

ARTICLE 8 – Amend General Bylaws – Chapter 193. Update Stormwater Management Bylaw

No vote was taken

ARTICLE 9 – Public Safety Building Appropriation for Design and Construction Costs

➤ *Motion to support Article 9 was made by Dr. O'Flynn and seconded by Mr. Stevens.*

**The motion passed unanimously**

Mr. Whitten was assigned as speaker.

**E. SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOALS 2021-2022**

Mr. Whitten presented the draft 2021-2022 School Committee goals that were discussed during the retreat in August. Goals included:

1. Support program rebuilding
2. Facilitate a successful operational override
3. Improve communication
4. Implement Vision 2030
5. MSBA process

It was agreed that these goals would be flushed out and updated to include a stronger focus and actionable items. A final draft would be presented at the next School Committee meeting for final approval.

**F. SUPERINTENDENT GOALS 2021-2022**

Dr. Blake presented a draft of his goals for the 2021-2022 school year. His goals included:

**1. Student Learning Goal: Instructional Leadership**

1:A Curriculum

- Continue to monitor and develop the new math program at the elementary and middle school level. (Illustrative Math)

Dr. Blake explained that while the Illustrative Math program was established two years ago, his goal is to continue to monitor the program and ensure collaboration amongst the math specialists at each school.

**2. Professional Practice Goal: Management and Operations**

2-A: Environment

- Ensure successful integration of new elementary administrators into the Ipswich Public Schools.
- Prepare documentation and facilitate the Comprehensive District Accountability Review by the Office of District Reviews and Monitoring/DESE over the Winter in preparation for the site visit in the Spring.

Dr. Blake explained the extensive process of the Comprehensive District Accountability Review. At this time, the timetable is still unclear, but should take most of the year.

Dr. O'Flynn felt that this review will take an enormous amount of time and commitment in a year when Dr. Blake and the administration should be focused on other things.

**3. District Improvement 1: Family and Community Engagement**

3-A and C Engagement and Communication

- Provide opportunities for unifying the elementary school community around the elementary education plan as well as the Vision 2030 documents.
- Facilitate the submission of a new SOI to the MSBA in Spring, 2022

#### **4. District Improvement 2: Professional Culture**

##### **4-B Cultural Proficiency**

- Continue to focus on ELL population especially in light of the significant staff turnover this year.
- Actively lead the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee established this year within the school district.

Dr. Blake shared that he was working with Tracy Wagner, Director of Teaching and Learning, to establish a mission statement and identify members of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee.

Ms. Cannon first asked for clarification on the first goal regarding the Illustrative Math program and what “continue to monitor and develop” would look like. While the new program was already established, she felt several key questions have not been addressed clearly enough for families, like why the district switched to a new program or what was the measurement of success? She asked that the two elementary math specialists present at a future meeting to discuss the program in detail.

Ms. Cannon then asked Dr. Blake how the newly formed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee at the school level would interact with the Race, Equity and Social Justice Working Group. Dr. Blake felt that the working group would focus on policy and community outreach, while the school group would focus its efforts on curriculum. It was suggested that the School Committee working group receive specific updates regarding the work being done within the district in the area of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Dr. O’Flynn felt that the goals aligned nicely with the standards. He went on to explain that historically, the School Committee goals cascade to the superintendent goals which then cascade to the individual school goals. This year, there is a disconnect between goals that should be corrected. Dr. O’Flynn explained that the cascading of goals helps to determine the direction the district is moving and assists administrators when determining their own goals. He suggested the School Committee work to better align with the superintendent.

Ms. Eliot said that while she liked the “big picture”, Dr. Blake’s goals lacked specifics. Without actionable items, it would be difficult to hold Dr. Blake accountable.

The 2021-2022 superintendent goals will be reviewed at the next meeting.

#### **G. 2022-2023 ACADEMIC CALENDAR REVIEW/VOTE**

Two versions of the 2022-2023 academic calendars were shared with the School Committee.

Highlights from Draft 1:

- August 29th: Opening Day for teachers
- August 31st: First day of school for students
- June 14th: Last day of school with no snow days

Highlights from Draft 2:

- August 31st: Opening Day for teachers
- September 6th: First day of school for students
- June 16th: Last day of school with no snow days

Dr. Blake noted that both the Ipswich Educators’ Association and the administrative team preferred Draft 1.

Mr. Poirier asked if it was possible to have preschool and kindergarten students start on the same day as all other students. He then also asked about moving the start date of school to after Labor Day, questioning the educational benefits of starting earlier.

Dr. O'Flynn felt that most students are eager to get back to school. High school sports have started and kids are in the building ahead of time for a variety of reasons.

Mr. Stevens agreed with Dr. O'Flynn and he felt that it was more beneficial to have students out as early as possible in June. While he understands the concerns, he feels that having students in for a shorter period before Labor Day helps to ease the transition for both students and staff at the beginning of the year.

Mr. Whitten shared that he had always been an advocate for starting after Labor Day, but has since changed his mind after seeing the eagerness of students to return to school.

Mr. Poirier suggested that the School Committee come back to the calendar discussion prior to another vote next year.

- *Motion to support Draft 1 of the 2022-2023 school calendar beginning before Labor Day was made by Dr. O'Flynn and seconded by Mr. Stevens.*

**The motion passed with 4 in favor and 2 opposed.**

#### **H. SUPERINTENDENT'S ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT**

Dr. Blake reported on his work throughout the district in weeks since that last School Committee meeting. His report included:

- Opening Day with all staff
- The first day of school for all students
- The completion of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Ipswich Educators' Association (IEA)
- A meeting with the IEA President, Becky Slawson
- A negotiations meeting with the AFSCME bargaining units
- Participation in a planning meeting for COVID funds
- An administrative team meeting
- A meeting with the Extended Day Program (EDP) Director to review the first days of the program
- Multiple meetings with the school nursing team regarding the collection of vaccination information
- Participation in the Strategic Planning Working Group meeting
- A parent meeting
- Meeting with family re covid concerns for their daughter

Dr. Blake also shared that he has organized a Coffee with the Superintendent event on Friday, September 24th. Information will be shared with the community.

<b>III. SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS</b>	8:40 PM
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**A. VOUCHERS/BILLS:** All were reviewed and signed.

**B. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:** There were no subcommittee meetings to report on.

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

- D. **LIAISON REPORTS:** There were no liaison reports.
- E. **NEW BUSINESS\***

An overnight field trip request was presented at the beginning of the meeting.

Ms. Cannon asked that the Superintendent goals for the 2021-2022 school year include more detail, actionable items and a mid-year progress report.

<b>IV. CONSENT</b>
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**A. CONSENT AGENDA**

- *Motion to approve the Open School Committee meeting minutes from August 26, 2021 was made by Mr. Stevens and seconded by Ms. Cannon.*

**The motion passed with 4 in favor and 2 abstentions.**

<b>V. ADJOURNMENT</b>
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- *Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Ms. Cannon and seconded by Mr. Stevens.*

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**Meeting adjourned at 8:46 PM**

<p><b>*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.</b></p>
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