

## **Ipswich School Committee**

MS/HS Ensemble Room  
134 High Street, Ipswich  
Thursday, February 10, 2022  
6:45 PM

### **MINUTES**

#### **Call to Order**

Mr. Stevens called the meeting to order at 6:48 PM.

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

Also Present: Cheryl Herrick-Stella, Director of Finance and Operations

Absent: Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools

#### **Executive Session**

- *Motion to meet in executive session pursuant to M.G.L. chapter 30A, sec. 21(a) for the following purposes: (3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the AFSCME Bargaining Units because an open discussion may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee was made by Mr. Stevens and seconded by Mr. Whitten.*

#### **Roll Call**

**The motion passed unanimously in favor**

The School Committee then entered into executive session pursuant to M.G.L. chapter 30A, sec. 21(a) for the following purposes: (3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the AFSCME Bargaining Units because an open discussion may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee with a plan to return to open session.

#### **Return to Open Session**

The meeting resumed in open session at 7:03 PM.

#### **Reading of the District Mission Statement**

Ms. Jepsen read the mission statement.

#### **Announcements**

- The School Committee will meet on Tuesday, February 15, 2022 at 7:00 PM in the MS/HS Ensemble Room.
- The School Committee will present their FY23 Budget to the Finance Committee on March 8, 9 and 10, 2022.
- Schools will be closed February 21-25, 2022 for February Vacation. District offices will be closed on Monday, February 21, 2022.

#### **Special Acknowledgements**

School Committee members shared their experiences touring the different schools as part of Triboard Tiger Tours organized by the Ipswich Educators' Association.

#### **Citizens' Comments**

There were none at this time.

#### **High School Student Representative Report**

Ms. Jepsen reviewed the current standings of the winter sports teams, as well as updated on the events and extracurricular activities taking place at the high school.

#### **Presentations**

##### **A. PUBLIC HEARING: Proposed FY23 Budget**

- *Motion to open the Public Hearing on the FY23 School Committee Budget was made by Mr. Whitten and seconded by Ms. Cannon. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

Mr. Stevens clarified that the Assistant Principal position was not moving forward at this time. This change would not impact the current budget number because the position was going to be funded through ESSER.

Ms. Cannon talked about the possibility of adding additional trailers at Winthrop school to help address the challenges they face with spacing needs. Ms. Stevens agreed that spacing concerns warranted a larger discussion when Dr. Blake was present.

Ms. Herrick-Stella clarified that there were no additional adjustments to the budget beyond removing the Assistant Principal position.

Dr. O’Flynn talked about the projected increase in enrollment for the upcoming school year. Mr. Whitten felt the NESDEC Demographic study would prove helpful when looking at the potential for increased enrollment.

There was a conversation about the EL numbers at both elementary schools. Currently, there is a larger EL population at Winthrop School.

- *Motion to close the Public Hearing on the FY23 School Committee Budget was made by Mr. Whitten and seconded by Ms. Kneedler. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

## **B. Legislative Update**

State Representative, Jaime Belsito, attended the meeting in an effort to establish a relationship with the school district and to thank the district for their continued perseverance and focus. Representative Belsito then discussed what was happening at the State level with regard to Chapter 70 funding and funding for education as a whole. She then asked the School Committee to discuss what issues the district is currently facing. They discussed the following:

- Increase in the ELL population
- The one-time ESSER funding that the district cannot rely on moving forward
- The need to establish mechanism that are currently not available to support current grant funding positions and program in the appropriated budget
- Addressing the changing educational delivery, especially around social/emotional learning, as a result of the pandemic
- Addressing the structural deficit created when the revenues from the Town fall below the anticipated school budgetary increases each year.
  - Reliance on overrides to support the budget
- Changing educational models to meet the needs of a learning crisis in the schools as a result of the pandemic
- Increased enrollment at the elementary level and the impact on class sizes, space needs and staffing
- Two elementary school building in dire need of repairs or replacement

Representative Belsito added that education is the number one focus of the progressive caucus at the State level. She felt that the wealth of the community is healthy families and healthy schools.

## **C. Request for Sponsorship Banners**

Heather Pillis and the Baseball Booster Club presented a request to allow sponsorship banners to be sold and then displayed at the baseball field on Mile Lane Road. Funds raised through the sale of sponsorship banners would help to support the basic maintenance of the field, support assistant coaching stipends and address other expenses that the athletic budget itself cannot meet. Ms. Pillis explained that there will be a one time fee of approximately \$150 to create the banner and then an annual fee to have the banner displayed at the field. The banner will be taken down at the end of each baseball season.

Dr. O’Flynn asked why this type of request had not come forward sooner. He said banners and sponsorships should be universal so that all booster groups can benefit and share funds. He asked if this should also be allowed in the gym and suggested the sponsorship program be looked at from a policy level. He also suggested the committee consider the ramifications of “selling real estate” within the school buildings.

Mr. Whitten felt there may be inequity by displaying a banner for roughly \$500 when another institution received naming rights through a \$600,000 donation.

Mr. Stevens felt there was a difference between the naming rights to a field and sponsorship banners that help support the needs of the student athletes.

- *Motion to support sponsorship banners at Mile Lane baseball field was made by Dr. O'Flynn and seconded by Ms. Cannon. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

#### **D. Overnight Field Trip Request: Ecology School (Taken out of order)**

Ms. McMahon, principal of the middle school, presented a request for 6th grade students to participate in an overnight field trip to the Ecology School in Maine. This trip has not taken place in person since before the pandemic began. A survey was distributed to parents regarding their comfort level for the trip and over 80% responded that they would send their children. The school will offer scholarships and work with parents who need financial assistance to attend. Students who do not attend the trip will be offered day trips that mirror the experiences the students will have on the trip.

- *Motion to support the Middle School's Ecology School overnight field trip was made by Mr. Whitten and seconded by Ms. Cannon. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

#### **E. Discussion and Vote on FY23 School Budget**

A discussion regarding the budget took place during the public hearing. The only additional question was from Mr. Poirier who asked Ms. Herrick-Stella to provide the committee with information on the total debt being carried forward.

- *Motion to approve the FY23 School District budget in the amount of \$34,930,486 was made by Mr. Whitten and seconded by Ms. Eliot. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

#### **F. Finance Update**

Ms. Herrick-Stella shared that the Facilities Director is experiencing budget overages due to emergency repairs in several of the buildings. The bid for landscaping also came back higher than anticipated. She said that while there are increases to Special Education transportation, those expenses can be covered with Circuit Breaker funding and would not impact the allocated budget.

It was suggested that Ms. Herrick-Stella establish a budget dashboard so that reporting can be more easily understood by the community.

There was a discussion about when the geothermal study would be completed. The schools are taking longer to review due to poor record keeping.

#### **G. Override Discussion**

Ms. Eliot shared that the Override steering committee has been formed and was meeting weekly. They have created a website and are focused on the messaging going out to the community. The plan is to go public with the override campaign in the next 2-3 weeks.

Ms. Stevens reminded everyone that the Finance Committee would like to discuss the override at their meeting on March 10th.

Ms. Eliot also shared that the override group will be presenting to all the school councils in the coming weeks.

#### **Superintendent's Administrative Report**

Dr. Blake was not in attendance at this meeting to provide his administrative report.

#### **Subcommittee, Working Group and Liaison Reports**

- **Athletic Subcommittee-** The group met last week to discuss the waiver process. Moving forward, it was agreed that the Athletic Director would apply for waivers in advance for teams that will be unable to compete due to participation. Ms. Cannon then asked about the Athletic Director building relationships with the youth sports organizations in town. Ms. Stevens said there is more that can be done, but now it is left to the coaches. There was some conversation around a Middle School sports fair for students. Mr. Stevens shared that the problem with sports at the middle school level is that there are limited opportunities to play against similar programs in other districts. The athletic fees also limit participation in sports activities.
- **Budget Subcommittee-** This group will work to schedule a meeting ahead of the presentations to the Finance Committee

### **New Business\***

Ms. Cannon asked if the elementary principals would be able to utilize help in Central Office to offset some of their workload rather than add in the Assistant Principal position. Ms. Eliot was also thinking about that.

Dr. Flynn expressed concern over potentially losing promising administrators to stressors. Others shared that they recognize the need for assistance, but also acknowledge that now is not the time to bring on an additional administrator.

### *AFSCME Collective Bargaining Contract Approval*

- *Motion to support the AFSCME Collective Bargaining agreements for the Clerical unit and Food Services unit was made by Mr. Whitten and seconded by Ms. Cannon. **The motion passed with 6 in favor and 1 abstention.***

### **Vouchers and Bills**

All were reviewed and signed.

### **Consent Agenda**

There was no consent agenda for this meeting.

### **Adjournment**

- *Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Dr. O'Flynn and seconded by Ms. Cannon. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

**Meeting adjourned at 8:42 PM**