

Ipswich School Committee

MS/HS Ensemble Room

134 High Street, Ipswich

Thursday, April 7, 2022

7:00 PM

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Ms. Eliot called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

Present: Ms. Eliot, Mr. Whitten, Mr. Poirier, Ms. Kneeder, Ms. Cannon, Dr. O'Flynn (7:37 PM arrival)

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

Absent: Mr. Stevens

2. Reading of the District Mission Statement

Ms. Jepsen read the district mission statement.

3. Announcements

- The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will be onsite performing their District Review Monday, April 11 through Thursday, April 14th.
- Schools will be closed April 18th through April 22nd for vacation week.
- District offices will be closed on Monday, April 18th for Patriot's Day.
- The Mutual Concerns Subcommittee will meet on April 12th at 3:30pm.
- The Communications Subcommittee will meet on May 3rd at 5:00pm.
- The Vision 2030 Working Group will meet remotely on May 3rd at 6:00pm.

4. Special Acknowledgements

Dr. Blake had a number of acknowledgements which included:

- Director of Fine Arts, Gerry Dolan, received a lifetime achievement award from the Massachusetts Association of Jazz Ensembles
- The HS Jazz Ensemble received a number of awards
- There were multiple awards presented to Ipswich musicians at the MICCA Festival
- Ipswich students did an excellent job on StringFest
- The Destination Imagination team won the state competition and are headed to nationals in Kansas City in May

5. Citizens' Comments

Irene Josephson, Washington Street: Confirmed the School Committee was in violation of the Open Meeting Law based on a letter she received in response to her formal complaint. She asked what, if any, were the consequences as a result of the findings?

Mr. Whitten responded that a letter of apology was sent to Ms. Josephson and committee members were reminded to be more detailed when creating future agendas.

6. High School Student Representative Report

Ms. Jepsen reported on happenings throughout the High School. Her report included:

- A successful StringFest
- The Environmental Club is putting on an Earth Day festival
- As part of the Green Team's No Idling campaign, they installed two signs at the entrances of the middle and high school to encourage people not to idle.

7. Presentations

A. Acknowledgement and Approval of Donation by Steve King

Ipswich community member, Steven King, was acknowledged for his \$50,000 donation to the strings program at Ipswich High School through the Ipswich Education Foundation. This donation allows for the purchase of four professional level instruments. These instruments will be assigned to a student for the year and will be passed down to musicians within the Ipswich Public Schools annually. The remaining funds will be earmarked for scholarships for the music program. The instruments would be added to the district's insurance.

- *Motion to accept four heritage instruments through a \$50,000 donation to the Ipswich Education Foundation was made by Mr. Whitten and seconded by Ms. Kneedler. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

B. Winter Sports Awards

High School Athletic Director, Tom Gallagher, first shared that Ipswich received the MIAA Sportsmanship Award. He then recognized the students that participated in winter sports this year and their accomplishments throughout the season.

C. Overnight Field Trip Request: Middle School

Ms. McMahon, Middle School principal, presented an overnight field trip request for the current 8th grade class to Madison, NH. This would be a one night experience in lieu of their annual trip to Washington, D.C.. Students and chaperones would stay at a retreat center and participate in a hike, camp fire and general camp activities. The group would stop at a Chucksters Family Fun Center on their way back to Ipswich. The trip will take place June 14-15, 2022. The cost of the trip per student will be no more than \$125 and scholarships will be available.

- *Motion to approve the overnight field trip to Madison, NH was made by Ms. Kneedler and seconded by Mr. Whitten. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

D. Social/Emotional Presentation

Speaking on behalf of the counseling department district wide, Justine May and Christine Ryan gave a presentation outlining the social/emotional programs in place and current needs of the district. They began their presentation by stating "the kids are not okay". Their presentation outlined the following:

- Breakdown of counseling staff at each school
 - Psychologists do testing re: iep, 504 and additional needs, works closely with the Special Education department
 - A highlight of which staff were added as a result of ESSER funding
 - BRYT program
- IPS Counseling Services
 - Offering individual and small group counseling
 - Weekly student support meetings
 - Consultations with teachers
 - Conflict resolution
 - Multi-tiered systems of support
 - Adoption of Common sense Media for Digital Citizenship for K-12
 - Increase in mental health staffing
 - Referrals to outside services
 - Community collaboration
 - Mandated reporting
- Paul F. Doyon Memorial School focus areas
 - Community building in K-2
 - Social Thinking curriculum
 - Project adventure
 - Responsive classrooms
 - Zones of regulation
- Winthrop School focus areas

- Girls' Inc. programming
- Project Adventure
- Responsive classroom
- Social Thinking curriculum
- Middle School focus areas
 - Transition and Growth (TAG) program in grade 6
 - Grade 6 Advisory
 - Tiger Workshops (as needed)
 - SBIRT screenings in grade 7
 - Restorative Justice practices
 - HeartMath pilot program through grant funding
 - Digital Citizenship lessons from Common Sense media
 - Youth Risk Behavior Survey every two years
- High School focus areas
 - Grade specific classroom seminars
 - Project Adventure
 - SBIRT screenings in grade 10
 - College and career counseling
 - BRYT program
 - Youth Risk Behavior Survey every two years
- Student Mental Health areas of concern
 - Increased mental health screenings and hospitalizations
 - Waitlists for partial programs and outside mental health services
 - School counselors providing more intensive mental health services
 - Increased student break passes to guidance/library/nurse
 - Increased school avoidance and absenteeism
 - Heightened levels of anxiety and depression
 - Negative impact of social media on learning
 - Increased referrals to 504 and special education eligibility processes
 - Less availability to Early Intervention services due to the pandemic creating an increased need for preschool students
- Mobile Crisis Referrals
 - What is Mobile Crisis?
 - An outside clinician, screening for safety
 - What happens after being screened?
 - Recommendations may be made for:
 - Therapist
 - Partial hospitalization program
 - Intensive outpatient
 - Inpatient psychiatric hospitalization
 - There are extreme waitlists for most programs at this time
- Additional Reading
 - Resources were provided regarding the pandemic's impact on school-aged children
- Impact of social media on students
 - Research shared on the number of hours spent on social media as it correlates to an increased risk of depression
- Upcoming Speaker
 - Katie Greeg- National Internet Safety Expert
 - Professional Development Day keynote speaker
 - Parent presentations

■ Student presentations

- Recommendations
 - Maintain current staffing once emergency funding has expired
 - Explore adding staff and options for additional space
 - Increased parent resources
 - Continue to roll out digital citizenship program

The presentation finished with a thank you to the parents, students, teachers and nurses.

Dr. O'Flynn commented that it was amazing to see the transformation of the guidance department over the years and how much more challenging the caseloads have become.

Ms. May responded that counselors at every level are so involved with the students. While there are still some stigmas around mental health issues, they are seeing more students acknowledging that they are struggling.

There was conversation regarding a parent liaison position that will be added to the district using Chapter 70 funding.

Ms. Cannon noticed, as a mom of two boys, there were no men on staff in the guidance department. She stressed the importance of role modeling and asked how the district would try to remedy that. Ms. May said there just have not been male applicants to the open positions.

Ms. May talked about the district's collaboration with the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce and connecting counseling directors with community resources.

Mr. Poirier stressed the importance of increased parental awareness around social/emotional health and learning. He said it was important for the School Committee to hear recommendations about staffing and programming. He asked if the district was ready to address these needs once ESSER funding is gone.

Ms. Ryan addressed questions about summer programs. Due to the length of waitlists, it was important to reach out now and get on lists. At this time, there are not a lot of summer resources available.

Mr. Poirier said it was a profound statement to come before the School Committee and share that the students and teachers are not okay.

There was additional discussion about the needs of students once COVID funding is gone. The needs will still be there. While the pandemic brought an increased need for social/emotional supports, other influencers like social media will remain present once COVID is gone.

E. NESDEC Demographic Study Presentation (REMOTE)

At an earlier meeting, the School Committee voted to approve the commission of an in-depth demographic study performed by NESDEC. As part of this study, the NESDEC team analyzed district and municipal records, the Warren Group, HUD, local realtors and the partial Decennial Census data released by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The report begins with information pertaining to populations generally, and school enrollment in particular. Presentation slides included:

- U.S. births and economic cycles
- New England's PreK-12 enrollments
- Ipswich, MA population data
- Ipswich, MA median age of population

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Ipswich had a population of 13,785 in April 202. School-aged children comprise 16.8% of the Ipswich population. The 2019 U.S. Census American Community Survey estimated breakouts are as follows:

- Ages 5 and under: 3.8%
- Ages 18 and under: 20.6%

- Ages 18 years and over: 79.4%
- Ages 65 and older: 22.4%

The next slides shared were:

- Ipswich, MA K-12 students per household
- Ipswich, MA births from 2005-2020

The average annual births in Ipswich have stabilized over the past ten years, which could lead to a stable kindergarten enrollment going forward.

As part of the report, NESDEC shared that school enrollments are influenced by the number of real estate sales as new families move into the district. They then shared residential sales and real estate information from 2001 through 2022. Based on information gained through the Ipswich Building Department, the projected impact to enrollment over the next 3-5 years from approved projects in Ipswich current under construction is as follows:

- Grades K-5: 30-40 students
- Grades 6-8: 10-15 students
- Grades 9-12: 2-3 students

Based on approved projects in Ipswich not currently under constructions, the impact to enrollment over the next 3-5 years is as follows:

- Grades K-5: 15-20 students
- Grades 6-8: 5-7 students
- Grades 9-12: minimal impact

The NESDEC representative then discussed the enrollment forecast methodology which is based on several factors:

- Student migration into or out of schools, including district reported movement to/from private schools; and school choice enrollments
- Review of the stability of grades 1-8, in or out migration of students
- Births as they relate to kindergarten enrollments
- Housing and Urban Development single family or multi-unit residential building permits, as reported by Ipswich

It was explained that the “student yield” is calculated by considering the potential number of school-aged children who might occupy and housing under construction. “Student yield” is assigned to grade levels without certainty of the actual age of the potential students.

The NESDEC representative shared that any decision on school size should be based on projections, but is ultimately a district decision. MSBA has school size guidelines to follow as well.

Mr. Whitten said the report shows flat growth moving forward, but also includes 80-90 additional students with the new construction projects in town. He asked where the current students were “falling off” to account for the additional projected students. NESDEC responded that the projections only account for the current projects and those projections are spread out over 3-5 years.

There was concern the larger projects like the proposed Essex Pastures project were not included in the projections. It was explained that those projects were not approved yet.

The report will be posted to the district website and circulated to other boards. It was agreed that the information will be helpful when moving forward with any school projects.

F. Warrant Article Discussion: Article 17-Open Space Bond Authorization List

At the last meeting, a vote on Article 17 of the Town Meeting warrant was deferred until some clarifying questions could be answered. Mr. Poirier spoke with Ethan Parsons for clarification on the effect of adding the Mile Lane parcel to the Open Space Bond Authorization List. It was explained that there would not be any permanent restrictions for the use of that land should it be added to the list. Based on his findings, Mr. Poirier would support the warrant article.

- *Motion to support Article 17 of the Town Meeting Warrant was made by Mr. Whitten and seconded by Ms. Cannon. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

G. Override Discussion

Ms. Eliot shared that both the Select Board and Finance Committee voted had majority votes in favor of the override. The override campaign is progressing with letters to the editor, social media posts and community outreach. She stressed the importance of School Committee support. Ms. Eliot said she wanted the community to know that the School Committee had followed through on promises of fiduciary responsibility which allowed the last override to extend beyond the initial five years.

Mr. Whitten suggested using information from the social/emotional health presentation they just had in a letter to the editor. Dr. Blake reminded the Committee that anyone writing letters of support needs to make it clear that they are writing as an independent citizen of Ipswich.

Ms. Eliot stressed the importance of community outreach to the early elementary school parents, saying most in this group have not lived through a failed override.

Dr. Blake agreed to look into childcare arrangements for Town Meeting.

Dr. O'Flynn shared that most commentary from the other boards was not in opposition to the override, but the timing of it.

8. Superintendent's Administrative Report

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

- A meeting with the Town Manager and YMCA to discuss summer programming
- A meeting with Marcia Gray and Willie Whitmore to discuss past overrides
- Continued discussion with the EL team
- Attendance at a Human Rights Commission meeting
- Attendance at a CREST Collaborative Board of Directors meeting
- Attendance at a Northshore Education Consortium Board of Directors meeting
- Prep work for the DESE District Review onsite visit
- A meeting with the two elementary principals and the Director of Pupil Services to discuss preschool
- Participation at several subcommittee meetings

Dr. Blake then discussed the updates to the preschool program. Due to the increase in enrollment, it was decided that an additional preschool classroom would be established at Doyon. There are no additional expenditures outside the proposed budget for this change. There is an additional staff person budgeted and specialists will work between the two schools. Information will be available to families in the coming week.

Dr. Blake also shared that the Extended Day Program(EDP) registration for current families will begin the week following April vacation.

Mr. Blake then reviewed the current COVID positivity rate within the school.

9. Subcommittee, Working Group and Liaison Reports

- **Race and Equity Working Group:** There was discussion that this group will end this year. They were able to get through the policy. The group talked about shifting to a liaison position on the DEI Committee
- **Policy Subcommittee:** The group has finished their work for the year and will present the last of section I. They also discussed the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Anti-Racism policy they have worked on. The idea is to read through the policy at tonight's meeting and then invite the public to share feedback and ask questions at the next meeting. The policy was then read into the record:

The Ipswich School District is committed to embedding Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-racism in all aspects of education and learning for our students, faculty, staff and community. This should be done in adherence to [Policy IB](#), on "Academic Freedom."

There are three complementary components necessary to achieve these goals: Curriculum, Experiences, and Professional Development. It is important that each of these occur annually.

A. Curriculum:

The District's curriculum and activities must holistically represent the world's many perspectives and voices, including the work, lives

and contributions of various marginalized identities such as BIPOC*, LGBTQ+*, women, diversely abled, etc. in various fields such as STEM*, business, government, arts, literature, music, sports, activism and more; and must be informed by pedagogy experts in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-racism, and include the history of oppression, injustice, resistance and counter-resistance, education, activism and legislation, as well as current systems of privilege and power.

B. Experiences

The District must provide our school community with the experiences necessary to be aware, thoughtful and active global citizens who are prepared to recognize and promote diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism. The District must ensure that these experiences foster an understanding of the repercussions of discrimination, oppression and bias, respect and celebrate differences, and strive towards the creation of equitable and just systems.

C. Professional Development

The District must provide professional development, discussions, and self directed learning on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-racism, and other difficult conversation training to all faculty, staff, administration, and the Committee.

- **Operations Subcommittee:** An email was sent to each member with the End of Year Summative Evaluation document for Dr. Blake. Members were asked to complete the document and share it with Mr. Stevens no later than April 28th. A final evaluation will be presented by Mr. Stevens at the May 5, 2022 School Committee meeting. A folder of evidence will be created and shared with members to help with the evaluation process. There was discussion about the evaluation process and the inability to evaluate beyond just the goals presented. There was talk amongst members about looking at alternative ways to evaluate moving forward.

10. New Business*

No new business was presented.

11. Vouchers and Bills

All were reviewed and signed.

12. Consent Agenda

No consent agenda was presented.

13. Adjournment

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

Meeting adjourned at 9:28 PM.