

## **Ipswich School Committee**

MS/HS Ensemble Room  
134 High Street, Ipswich  
Thursday, May 5, 2022  
6:30 PM

### **MINUTES**

#### **1. Call to Order**

Mr. Stevens called the meeting to order at 6:38 PM.

Present: Greg Stevens, Kate Eliot, Pavica Kneedler, Chub Whitten, Hugh O’Flynn, Emily Cannon and Jeff Poirier

Also Present: Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools and Cheryl Herrick-Stella, Director of Finance and Operations

#### **2. Executive Session:**

- *Motion to enter into execution session for the following reason: (1) to discuss the complaints brought against a public officer, employee, staff member or individual and (2) to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel was made by Mr. Whitten and seconded by Ms. Cannon.*

#### **Roll Call**

**The motion passed unanimously**

#### **3. Return to Open Session**

The meeting returned to open session at 7:03 PM.

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

The district mission statement was read.

#### **5. Announcements**

- The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 19th
- Town Meeting is Tuesday, May 10th at the Performing Arts Center beginning at 7:00pm
- Town elections will be held on Tuesday, May 17th

#### **6. Special Acknowledgements**

This was Mr. Whitten and Dr. O’Flynn’s last meeting. Members of the committee thanked them for their years of service and wished them well in their future endeavors.

#### **7. Citizens’ Comments**

*Jen Bauman, Turkey Shore Road.*: First thanked Mr. Whitten for his work on the School Committee. She shared her appreciation for the numerous hours spent on the School Committee and for Mr. Whitten’s work on the Winthrop playground. Ms. Bauman then discussed her time on the School Committee with Dr. O’Flynn. She shared her respect and appreciation for his dedication and institutional knowledge.

*Carl Nylan, Brownville Avenue*: Shared his appreciation for Dr. O’Flynn’s constant positivity and his ability to pay attention to the details. He felt that Dr. O’Flynn has been the biggest advocate for the students of Ipswich. He then shared his appreciation for Mr. Whitten. He felt that Mr. Whitten, like Dr. O’Flynn, could find positivity even through difficult times and that he chose to be on the School Committee for all the right reasons.

*Gerry Dolan, Fine Arts Director*: Thanked both Mr. Whitten and Dr. O’Flynn for always making decisions that were in the best interest of the students.

*Irene Josephson, Washington Street*: Asked how the School Committee was going to reach Ipswich residents who do not have children in schools so they are informed about the listening sessions for the school building project.

Dr. Blake then acknowledged the following people/groups:

- Tracy Wagner, Amanda Dias and the STEAM Team Committee for their work on the STEAM Showcase
- Michael Coelho's students for their work with the composer that was brought to the district as part of a Paine Grant. Students recorded one of her pieces to be used as a standard reference.
- Administrative Professionals' Day
- Teach Appreciation Week
- School Nurse Day
- Middle School's Walk for Hunger which raised \$18,000 for Open Door

## **8. High School Student Representative Report**

No report was presented.

## **9. Presentations**

### **A. Overnight Field Trip Request- England**

Mr Dolan presented his overnight field trip request to England. He explained that this trip is organized through the Fine Arts Department and takes place every four years. The trip is planned through the Encore Tour Company and will take place April 13-21, 2023. Mr. Dolan reviewed the itinerary for the trip, explaining that the students are kept busy with 3-4 performances at various locations. Along with chaperones, a school nurse and police officer accompany the students. The estimated cost of this trip is \$3,400. While there are fundraising opportunities, typically scholarships are not offered. It was suggested that Mr. Dolan apply for Feoffees grant funding to assist with scholarships for students who qualify for free or reduced lunch.

- *Motion to support the overnight field trip request to England was made by Ms. Cannon and seconded by Dr. O'Flynn. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

### **B. I.D.E.A. Policy Discussion and Vote**

At the last School Committee meeting, members of the Policy Subcommittee discussed the newly drafted Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Anti-Racism (IDEA) Policy and read the policy in its entirety into the record. It was suggested that this meeting would include time for public hearing on the subject. No public comments were made.

If approved, the policy would be shared with the school community. It was suggested that the policy also be included in an upcoming School Committee newsletter.

- *Motion to support the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Anti-Racism (IDEA) Policy was made by Mr. Whitten and seconded by Ms. Cannon. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

### **C. Superintendent End of Year Evaluation**

Mr. Stevens first discussed the evaluation process for the superintendent and then read Dr. Blake's End-of-Cycle Summative Evaluation:

*Dr. Blake is completing his fifth year as Superintendent of the Ipswich Public Schools. His previous two years were exceptionally challenging due to the onset of COVID-19. The 2021-2022 school year has been a welcomed transition away from the pandemic related restrictions and back to a more traditional school setting for our students and staff. Unfortunately, our schools face significant hurdles to educating our kids as a result of the pandemic. Learning loss attributed to kids not being in the classroom full time along with the increased social emotional needs of our students must be at the forefront of our educational planning going forward.*

*Last fall, Dr. Blake capably guided our district back to full in person learning and our district was able to operate without interruption during the school year. Under his leadership, our administrative team and school nurses implemented the necessary protocols to keep our kids safe and in school. Sports and extracurricular activities were reinstated with minimal restrictions. Our kids appreciated the return to a traditional school experience.*

*During this time, Dr. Blake was also tasked with integrating 2 new elementary school principals and a new director of finance. He has shown strong leadership in managing the budget, negotiating contracts with our district's bargaining units and restarting the discussions around a school project. In addition, his strong relationship with our Town Manager and other Town leaders has had a positive impact on our school district.*

***Student Learning Goal: Instructional Leadership***

***Standard 1A: Curriculum***

***Goal:*** *Unpack and develop the ELL Curriculum and program district wide in light of new staffing and increasing populations*

*Dr. Blake chose to focus on the needs of our English Language Learners (ELL) students as his instructional leadership goal this year. An influx of students needing EL support put the achievement of this goal to the test. Taking time to understand the EL needs in our schools and gathering resources to support those needs provided the framework necessary to educate these students.. It became clear that adding additional staff was required when our EL population increased unexpectedly mid-year. Dr. Blake reacted and was able to bring in additional support to meet this need during a very challenging job market for districts searching for EL staff. Dr Blake's Community outreach has been an important part of integrating new families into the school community and determining how the schools can help meet the needs of each family.*

*It will be important to keep the EL needs of our student population in focus going forward and allocate the resources necessary to meet these needs. In light of the rapid increase of EL students in Ipswich, the School Committee would like to hear regular updates on how this new curriculum and program is working.*

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

***Standard 2A: Environment***

***Goal:*** *I. Ensure successful integration of new elementary administrators into the Ipswich Public Schools.  
II. Facilitate the Comprehensive District Accountability Review by the Office of District Reviews and Monitoring/DESE*

*Dr. Blake was faced with the challenge of hiring two new principals and getting them up to speed in a relatively short period of time. To accomplish his goal of a successful integration, Dr. Blake provided them with a seasoned administrator within our district to act as a mentor. By spending time with each principal weekly in their building, Dr. Blake was able to help them transition into their new roles. Attending FRIES and School Council meetings was a good way for Dr. Blake to hear directly from parents and participate in conversations about the happenings in each school. It is important moving forward for Dr. Blake to solicit feedback from stakeholders in each building to gauge how the integration of the new principals is progressing.*

*The second part of this goal was tied to preparing the documentation and site visit required by the Office of District Reviews and Monitoring. Dr. Blake and his staff at the central office provided all the necessary documents and the site visit was completed in early April. The School Committee looks forward to reviewing the District Review when it is available.*

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

***Standard 3A/C: Engagement and Communication***

***Goal:*** *I. Provide opportunities for unifying the elementary school community around the elementary education plan as well as the Vision 2030 documents.*

*II. Facilitate the submission of a new SOI to MSBA in Spring of 2022*

*From the very beginning of the principal selection process, a great deal of focus was put on fostering a cohesive relationship between both elementary schools. The creation of a standard elementary report card and a shared math coaching model are*

*examples of the collaboration between the schools that we were all hoping for. Regular meetings to ensure that curriculum is aligned between schools and that it ties into our elementary education plan will continue to benefit the district.*

*Dr. Blake's Friday updates are well received and have been an effective communication tool during the pandemic. Going forward, Dr. Blake should continue to work with the School Committee to determine how best to reach our school community. Discussions around the location and makeup of our elementary schools will be a major focus of the next year. Dr. Blake should focus on increasing his engagement with parents and others tied into our school community. This will go a long way toward unifying our elementary school families around a plan that will move a school project forward.*

*Reviving the Vision 2030 discussion and distributing that plan to the school community should be a focus for the remainder of 2022. It is encouraging to see that the Vision 2030 subcommittee has taken on the responsibility of planning for the listening sessions. Communicating the larger vision for our school district should be tied into these sessions.*

*The goal of submitting an SOI in the Spring of 2022 was not achieved. This decision was made to push out the SOI submission until 2023 in order to fully explore the viability of Bialek park as a school site, hold listening sessions with the community and conduct an in depth demographic study. Listening sessions will kick off over the summer. The outcome of these sessions, along with the results of the demographic study, will help our district move forward with an SOI.*

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

#### ***Standard 4B: Cultural Proficiency***

***Goal:*** *Actively lead the DEI committee established this year within the school district*

*Dr. Blake chose to include a focus on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as part of his goals this year. To achieve this, he led the newly established DEI committee which consists of representatives from each building along with five high school students each with diverse backgrounds. Giving these students an active voice in the group is a great way to move the work of this committee forward and make it impactful for all students. Dr. Blake took the time to participate in seminars and courses to learn more about how our district can do a better job integrating DEI education into our schools.*

*The School Committee looks forward to hearing about the work of the DEI committee and specifically what this group's goals are for the next school year. It would be helpful for the committee to see specific examples of how the DEI initiative is integrated into district wide learning.*

***Dr. Blake received an overall summative performance score of proficient from all committee members.***

*Dr. Blake and his team deserve a great deal of credit for getting our kids through yet another unusual school year as they work through the day to day challenges of managing our school district through uncertain times.*

*The Ipswich School Committee is appreciative of Dr. Blake's sound and capable leadership and we look forward to working with him to continue moving our district forward.*

*Dr. O'Flynn felt that Dr. Blake did an amazing job as a superintendent. He said Dr. Blake's goals were challenging and oftentimes challenging goals cannot be fully achieved in one year, but still have impact on the district. Dr. O'Flynn felt that the time was right for the goal that Dr. Blake set.*

*Mr. Poirier agreed with Dr. O'Flynn. He thought the School Committee would see a continuation of these goals into the next school year.*

*Mr. Whitten talked about the SOI process and how the school building project was put aside to focus on the override.*

Dr. Blake appreciated the summary and said he would take time to review and reflect on the individual evaluations. He acknowledged that there was more to work on in terms of his goals.

Ms. Eliot acknowledged that the integration of the two new principals was tough and there was more work to be done.

#### **D. Feoffees' Disbursement Amount/ Vote**

Mr. Stevens began by reading a letter from the Chair of the Feoffees of the Grammar School regarding the disbursement amount for 2022. The letter stated: *"Based on the average market value of the Trust for the trailing 12 quarters ending March 31, 2022, the Feoffees distribution to the schools will be \$942,242. This is comprised of \$14,925 from the Manning portion of the Fund and the remaining portion, \$927,317 is the Paine Distribution."*

A discussion regarding the use of the funds took place amongst members. It was suggested that the School Committee revisit the rubric on how Feoffees money could be spent at their upcoming summer retreat.

- *Motion to approve the Feoffees' disbursement amount totaling \$942,242 with \$14,925 going towards the Manning Fund; and 75% of the remaining balance of \$927,317 used for the William Paine Enhancement Grants and 25% of the remaining balance used for the Traverso-Weatherall Innovation Grants was made by Dr. O'Flynn and seconded by Ms. Cannon. **The motion passed unanimously in favor.***

#### **E. End of Year Update**

Dr. Blake reviewed the end of year events taking place at the High School. He will present a full list of all end of year events in the district at the next meeting. School Committee members will then discuss which events to attend.

#### **F. Override Discussion**

Ms. Eliot shared that the Override Steering Committee continues to meet weekly. Lawn signs are out in the community and flyers were distributed with the mail. The committee is arranging speakers for Town Meeting.

Mr. Stevens shared there were errors on the original Town Meeting warrant. The override must receive a simple majority at Town meeting, not a 2/3 majority as was previously stated. There was then discussion on who from the School Committee would speak to the override.

Dr. Blake said that babysitting had been arranged for the night of Town Meeting. Families were welcome to use that service.

### **10. Superintendent's Administrative Report**

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

- An update on the current COVID positivity rate in the district
- A personal vacation the week after April Vacation week
- Details regarding the DESE District Review On-Site visits
- Individual meetings with the Technology Director, Facilities Director and Athletic Director
- The handling of several personnel issues
- A meeting with Feoffee Committee representatives to discuss grant funding outside of the Paine or Traverso-Weatherall grants
- A review of the geothermal study done at the MS/HS
- Attendance at the STEAM Showcase

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

- **Communications Subcommittee:** The final newsletter will be sent in June.
- **Negotiations Subcommittee:** Negotiations are ongoing.
- **Operations:** The group will need to schedule a meeting to onboard the new members.
- **Policy:** A meeting should be scheduled to review the last of the policies.
- **Facilities Working Group:** This group needs to meet to discuss plans for the listening sessions related to the school building project. There is also a need to discuss concerns raised about the elementary school roofs.
- **Vision 2030 Working Group:** This group met to district the Strategy for Student Success document. In light of COVID, there is a lot that needs to be changed in the document. Dr. Blake laid out thoughtful goals for the upcoming year to help move the district in a positive direction. The group also discussed the listening sessions. It was suggested that once dates are finalized, a graphic with dates, times and locations of these meetings can be shared with the community.

- **Ipswich Education Foundation Liaison:** The group is finalizing their marketing. Mr. Stevens shared that the IEF continues to be a huge asset to the district in terms of funding grants.

There was a brief discussion about the reorganization process for subcommittees. Members were encouraged to share their interest for particular subcommittees or working groups with the Chair.

#### **12. New Business\***

No new business was presented.

#### **13. Vouchers and Bills**

All were reviewed and signed.

#### **14. Consent Agenda**

- *Motion to approve the consent agenda for May 5, 2022 as presented was made by Ms. Kneedler and seconded by Ms. Cannon. **The motion passed unanimously.***

#### **15. Adjournment**

- *Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Dr. O'Flynn and seconded by Mr. Whitten. **The motion passed unanimously.***

**The meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM.**