

Ipswich School Committee Meeting Minutes

MS/HS Ensemble Room

134 High Street, Ipswich

Wednesday, August 24, 2022

7:00 PM

Present: G. Stevens, E. Cannon, J. Donahue, D. Freehan, B. Blake, J. Poirier (late)

7:02 PM 1. **Call to Order - Greg Stevens, Chair**

Ms. Cannon made a 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 Ipswich Public Schools Custodial Employees, AFSCME Council 93, AFL-CIO Local 2905*

Ms. Donahue seconded, and the vote passed unanimously in favor.

7:10 PM

3. Return to Open Session

4. Reading of the District Mission Statement - Dianna Freehan

5. Announcements - Greg Stevens

- Next SC Meeting Thursday, 9/8/2022
- Opening day for all district staff is Monday, August 29th.
- 1st day for Grade 1-12 students is Wednesday, August 31st.
- All schools will be closed on Friday, September 5th and Monday, September 8th.
- 1st day for Kindergarten students will be Tuesday, September 6th.
- 1st day for Preschool students will be Monday, September 12th.

6. Special Acknowledgements - Dr. Blake

Kudos to the custodial staff who got the buildings in good shape.

Special thanks to Alison Tivnan, MS Adjustment Counselor, for immediately reaching out to the family of the witness of last week's train accident.

7. Citizens' Comments: I. Josephson, 46 Washington St.

What is the difference between a working group (address things that pop up) and subcommittee (ongoing)? Means of Communication to get word out about the project (FB can never be one thing to go to, need a place to go to make other comments. Mr. Stevens agreed, looking for something different that is not as negative.

7:15pm

8. Presentations

A. Pickleball Field Request - Sheila Taylor, COA Director

Explanation of Pickleball. Representing COA, but wants to create multi-generational participation, a great community option. Demand has exceeded indoor capacity, so looking to build outdoor courts. Several area communities have courts. Best area is one of the baseball fields at town hall; requesting SC to transfer the field to the Town. The \$60,000-\$100,000 project will be of NO cost to the school department. Available to all residents. The storage bin in the SE corner (storing football equipment) will remain. They plan to hold fundraisers to include fixing the field near the river and would have a 10 foot high fence around the courts, but never lights because of its proximity to the residential condos. They haven't determined if it will be locked. Question from a SC member as to when they would want to begin building - ASAP, would like to have it up and running within the year. The project is on the next Select Board's meeting agenda. Mr. Stevens made it clear that, because the school committee is in the midst of a new elementary school building project and looking at viable location options, if this is approved, this land is not being taken off the table for the new school project. Ms. Taylor stated that she looked at Bialek as well, but thought it was out of contention because of the school project, plus the land where the former tennis courts were located may be wetlands. She stated she "feels okay in

taking the chance to build it” on the town hall field. F/R will start after approval. Ms. Cannon does not believe Bialek is a viable option for a new school due to legal issues; worried that the pickleball field project is doing it in the reverse order. What if they build the pickleball court, then that land is considered the best choice for the new school site? Mr. Stevens commented that the donors are taking a chance with their money, knowing that it may be chosen as the new school site. Ms. Cannon is not comfortable with voting tonight, asked if legal counsel should be involved with logistics. Dr. Blake said he’d reach out. How much land availability is at the high school? Ms. Taylor has already spoken with Tom Gallagher, Athletics Director regarding use of the tennis courts, but they are not available during school day and after school in the spring. Mr. Stevens said that the school committee is very supportive of the pickleball fields, but their issue is the school project. Mr. Stevens & Ms. Taylor will meet with Mr. Gallagher again and this issue will be put on the agenda for the next school committee meeting. Mr. Poirier also supports the idea and assistance in finding a location, suggesting that Ms. Taylor fundraises without a viable site, which she is not comfortable doing. Clarification of questions for legal counsel. A question from the audience was raised regarding the timeline of school location decision, which was determined to be sometime in the spring. Ms. Donahue asked Ms. Taylor if she (The Council on Aging) had contacted the Bubba Bat or Baseball League in Town regarding the fields being looked at for the proposed courts. Ms. Taylor said she had not contacted them.

- B. Overnight Field Trip Request: 2022 VolleyHall Classic Tournament - Staci Sonke, Varsity Coach
The varsity & jr. varsity coaches and a volunteer coach will be chaperoning 14-66 players. This is an Invite Only elite tournament with teams from MA and other states to be held on October 9-10, 2022. Most of the teams are higher level than Ipswich, so it was an honor to be invited to participate. This tournament does not count toward the MIAA game limit. The Athletics department will fund the bus. They will arrive and take a free tour of the International Volleyball Hall of Fame in Holyoke after which they will travel to American International College in Springfield and play 6 hours of volleyball. Ms. Sonke is requesting that you approve their overnight stay at the hotel (paid for by the tournament host) in order to rest up, have a free breakfast, then return the next morning. This will be a great team bonding experience and will make connections outside of their own community. Ipswich Volleyball Funds will be paying for meals.

➤ *Ms. Cannon made a motion to approve the overnight trip, Ms. Donahue seconded, and the vote passed unanimously in favor.*

Ms. Ivanov, JV coach, commented that this is an accomplishment for a 6 year old program and they have also added a JV team this year.

- C. School Committee Retreat Recap - Greg Stevens

- D. Building Inspection Review - School Committee Members

Ms. Cannon said that Winthrop is “busting at the seams” and looks great. The music room is now a 1st grade classroom and music moved to the white house. She spoke with Amy Sullivan who said that TA applications are off the charts regarding quality, is excited about new teacher hires, and would like the crosswalks repainted. (Dr. Blake indicated he would speak with Chris Rais to get that done.) Enrollments for incoming kindergarten classes are much smaller. Mr. Poirier is scheduled to visit the middle/high school building on Thursday and Ms Kneedler is scheduled to visit Doyon on Thursday at 11am.

- E. School Opening Plans - Dr. Blake

We are ready and the buildings look good despite staff shortages. There are a few small things left to complete. New spaces are being finished up. Staff hiring is still ongoing. Safety & Security walkthroughs with chiefs of police & fire occurred on Tuesday, with some minor things to fix. All fire shifts will be going through buildings for layouts, etc. Staff are returning on Monday. Students start on Wednesday. 39 new staff attended orientation on Tuesday and it was

great to have our new HR Director, Caroline Estabrook, who greeted all staff and collected paperwork still owed. There were 139 participants in summer PD, with 14 different facilitators (see BB's report for specifics). There were 240 registrants for high school athletics and two 8th grade waivers were approved (football, cheering). Tryouts are done and scrimmages start next week. The district will follow DESE & CDC COVID guidance. Masks remain optional except in nursing rooms and we will encourage vaccines and boosters. We will not be testing. Reminder that the TWIG committee needs to vote on a new chair (Jen LaCava??). Staffing: There were a couple of new positions and a number of staff who retired & resigned including 2 administrative assistants, 1 SLP, 3 Long-term subs, 1 RBT, 11 TAs, 3 Custodians, 3 coaches, 6 EDP staff (high schoolers), and 22 professionals.

F. FY23 School Committee Goals Discussion - Greg Stevens

Briefly covered goals. 1. Working toward the elementary building project, reinstated the working group) 2. Budget (our job is to keep on budget of the override projections); 3. Vision 2030 plan was put on back burner due to COVID and override support, will pick up again but waiting on SOI comprehensive review & audit done earlier in year; 4. Communications: Continue with newsletters, educating the community about projects, community outreach, overcommunicating all info. 5. Paine Grants expansion (Feoffees working group to address issues brought up in retreat) - put on next agenda.

G. FY23 Superintendent Goals Discussion (see BB's notes)

Standard 1C, Assessment: Re-establish high expectations for students & staff post-pandemic; establish new MCAS & local assessment baselines & share with parent community; work with high school administration to build on career & college pathway programs. (Mr. Poirier suggested he set up benchmarks.)

Standard 2A, Environment: Review & develop plan response to state district review, which still has not been received, and share with the Admin team to develop improvement strategy, then share both with the school committee. School safety & security: Revise plans, update maps for first responders, review safety protocols with police, and ensure all staff complete ALICE training by 10/1.

Standard 3A & C, Engagement & Communications: Continue working on spring submission of SOI, participate in listening sessions and work with the facilitator in completion of the process; provider leadership with regard to moving forward in the building project that will include community messaging, videos, interviews, and social media posts; and write/revise SOI with the school committee. Ms. Donahue said she spoke with several teachers who would like to engage/communicate with Dr. Blake via Google Classroom, Google Doc, Coffee with Staff, etc. so they have a clearer path to communicate with him on a regular basis to "be heard" & give feedback. Mr. Stevens agrees with the concept, but does not want teachers coming to him (Dr. Blake) because they are not getting what they want from their school administrators. Ms. Donahue said that many other districts are trying to set up something similar.

Standard 4B, Cultural Proficiency: Continue to lead diversity/equity/inclusion work in the district; participate in monthly Districtwide DEI group, reporting back to the school committee; oversee the introduction and implementation of "No Place for Hate" in each of the schools; incorporate the work of MASS REDI at round-table meetings and in professional development.

H. Elementary Building Project Working Group Update - Dianna Freehan

Ms. Freehan is the chair, members include Ms. Freehan, Ms. Cannon, Ms. Elliot, and Dr. Blake. The long-term goal is to present to the MSBA in the spring. The Immediate goal is info gathering using data/analysis from the last project and linking docs to a website. It will be good to hear results of listening sessions & analyze data that separate from survey data. The first meeting was last week, and they would like the community to attend. The next meeting is scheduled for August 31 at 5pm on Zoom. They are starting to prepare for the TriBoard meeting. There was a question as to whether the data is being compiled, quantitative or qualitative? Ms. Cannon suggested that school committee members not be the ones to take notes at these sessions. Facilitators should be doing it. Dr. Blake explained that two of the facilitators were absent for the

first sessions due to COVID. Dr. Blake and Bill are putting together questions in a survey geared toward staff. Ms. Cannon suggested reaching out to all of the town boards to send representatives to the listening sessions.

- I. Tri-Board Meeting Planning/Update - Greg Stevens
9/15 scheduled. Chairs were called last Friday for agenda items. Looking for where SC is in process.
- J. Discussion & Vote on the IPS Custodial Employees collective bargaining agreement: Greg Stevens

➤ *Ms. Cannon made a motion to approve the IPS Custodial Employees Collective Bargaining Agreement, Ms. Donahue seconded, and the vote was unanimous in favor.*

8:15 pm **9. Subcommittee, Working Group and Liaison Reports**

None

8:16pm **10. New Business***

- Mr. Stevens: The school committee needs to designate someone (SC member or community member) to the Town Government Subcommittee. It would be beneficial if the school community were represented. If interested, please send an email to Greg Stevens to discuss.
- Ms. Cannon - Bus route scheduling issues. Dr. Blake explained that Salter instituted a new software program, Central Administration received the bus routes, posted them, there were a number of issues, and parents were concerned about pick-up times. The program works by backing up from school start time to determine pick up time. 6:20am was the original first pick-up time - too early. Salter is currently redoing the routes manually, so it is taking a lot of time. (We are not the only district). Ms. Donahue said that parents question the bus stop locations. Dr. Blake reiterated that Salter determines them, we do not have door-to-door service, and Salter has worked with us in the past regarding safety issues. Some SC members think parents should call Central Administration when they have questions or issues with the bus transportation; others believe they should speak with Salter directly. Ms. Donahue believes that some at Central Administration should have the information and respond to parents, not tell them there is nothing we can do and to call Salter directly. Either way, the messaging should be clear when speaking with parents on transportation issues.
- Ipswich Aware: Youth Substance Use Prevention Introduction - Dr. Blake
Since Mr. Barrett was not in attendance to present this evening, Dr. Blake stated that IPS and Ipswich Aware have entered into a Substance Use Prevention partnership. Part of his weekly messaging will include substance use prevention.

8:44pm **11. Consent Agenda**

➤ *Mr. Poirier made a motion to approve the School Committee Open Session Meeting Minutes from August 11, 2022, which were seconded by Ms. Cannon, and the vote passed unanimously in favor.*

8:45pm **12. Adjournment**

➤ *Ms. Cannon made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Poirier seconded, and the vote passed unanimously in favor.*