

IPSWICH SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
APRIL 9, 2013  
MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL ENSEMBLE ROOM

CALL TO ORDER

Dr. O'Flynn called the special meeting to interview a candidate for Superintendent at 7:16 p.m. with the following School Committee members present: J. Loeb, J. Bauman, S. Gresh, B. Hopping, R. Roesler. Maddie Werner was in music rehearsal but was present at times. Dr. O'Flynn explained the procedure to the audience for three nights with three superintendent candidates. The first, Ann Bradshaw, Superintendent in Mashpee, MA for eight years visited for the day in the district schools, meeting with administrators, and had dinner with the School Committee. Mr. Hopping explained that the meeting is being taped for presentation at a later date to the public and shown in advance of April 25, the night when the School Committee will make its decision. The question/answer format for the evening went as follows:

Gresh question: How do you collaborate with the town government, business or institutions, other school districts, and the majority of households in Ipswich which do not contain school-age children to garner support for the budget process, multi-year planning, program and budget development?

Ann Bradshaw answer: A project called Mashpee Reads brought everyone together to read throughout the community. A goal of 14,000 books was set because there are 14,000 residents in the town. It was very successful because there still remains a bin of books being distributed at the Town Hall. Mashpee Cares came about from parents concerned with substance abuse in children and has worked for a number of years with police, sheriff, and DA's office in collaboration.

Loeb question: What do you see as the role of the School Committee beyond their basic statutory requirements? How do you describe, with some specifics, your preferred working relationship with the School Committee?

AB answer: School Committee hires/fires the Superintendent and a couple of other positions, approves the budget, sets policy and goals for the district. If time allows, works with staff. Superintendent's role is to enact these roles of the School Committee. It is great when the Superintendent and the School Committee work as a team. Communication is very important. I work very hard to keep the School Committee informed. When they work together as a team, it is to the district's advantage.

O'Flynn question: Negotiation with educators' unions both establishes a level of trust and appreciation with your teachers and dictates the level of resources available to support the educational needs of the children in the district. Describe how you have balanced the competing needs of kids and teachers either in negotiations or other educational settings.

AB answer: A successful negotiation starts way before you open up the meeting in building relationships with the people as a team who are all in this together. With a lead-in approach, we respect the teachers' rights and benefits while at the same time respecting the other side. One example was to be an early adopter for the new educator evaluation system. Mashpee asked the DOE and was accepted to take on the evaluation system a year ahead of time. It was a great cooperative venture.

Gresh question: What are the two or three most important ways education is changing as a result of emerging technology innovations? Can you share a specific example with us from your current district?

AB answer: I have seen wonderful use of technology. Skype in the classrooms; we brought a parent in the military to talk in class. Smart Boards. We use Naviance for college admission process early on. Study Island, ISL, Lexia. Classes online at class.com. Alternative education programs for those who cannot go to school or for independent study. Computers are another tool to engage students.

Hopping question: How do you define student success and what specific evidence can you cite in your current district that demonstrates improved student growth and academic achievement during your tenure there?

AB answer: Academic achievement and the social emotional adjustment go together. We have evidence to show the impact that in Mashpee, students weren't getting into highly selective colleges. We had three areas: to improve SAT scores, AP program, and college-going culture in the district. We had professional development for teachers in SAT help. (She referred the School Committee to Slides 5, 4, and 2 of a paper she had provided to them in proving the success of the endeavor.) I work on the premise that many kids can work at high level if we provide the confidence that they need. Opening up the challenge for more kids to take AP courses is an incentive for them to do well.

Roesler question: What strategies might you use to improve a school system such as Ipswich that is already viewed by many as a successful district? How do you balance sensitivity to the preservation of the elements that have made the system successful with the need to change and improve?

AB answer: Data retrieval is important: kids still in college, test results, factors of kids leaving to go to different districts. If we worked on these, would it make a difference? Where will we get the best return on our resources? Develop a strategic plan. Get the current status and come up with objectives. I saw teachers and students today who were hard working and polite students. Many, many strengths here and in the community. It would be important to meet with different groups and hear what they (town officials, anybody who would like to come and talk) would like us to do. A need to share rather than to come in already having decided the needs.

Hopping question: Describe 2 or 3 learning activities you engage in regularly that provide a model of life-long learning for our staff and for the community outside of school. How do you make people aware of your ongoing learning activities and share your experiences?

AB answer: The administrative groups and I study together. Last summer 18 educators attended the new RDT course about data. We modeled learning by participating with teachers. Our principals are very engaged in the workshops. We continue to learn and get better at what we do. This past week I attended two workshops: Gay/straight Alliance in Mass. and School Safety with FBI, sheriff, police. When I come back, I talk about the experience. I am a learner and we all are.

Bauman question: Although we have a full-time Director of Business & Finance, how do you see your role in the overall budget process and what would you identify as the most important school business function you will need to perform? What is your view of and approach to long range budgeting in today's fiscal environment?

AB answer: Starting out, the most important thing for me would be to learn the budget. I always want to keep on top of that payroll. My role would be to help sell the budget—where the money comes from and where it is going. Long-range budgeting is hard, almost living it one year at a time.

O'Flynn question: Proposition 2½ dictates a level of budget restriction that prevents Ipswich from comprehensively meeting educational needs of our students. Describe your experience with either a prop 2.5 override or an equivalent campaign for an increase in resources for your district.

AB answer: I have been a part of two significant overrides, one successful, one not. We painted a picture to show why we needed one; we talked about it with articles in the newspaper. We were very open and very honest. Support from parents was great. #2 came too close to the first one. We didn't have support of the parents. We had small successes with additional Chapter 70 funding. Slide 11 portrayed the years 2010 – 2013 which were difficult years. We managed to keep our class size small; no eliminated programs; we have done things like cut .5 music and library; reduced TA and administrative assistants.

Bauman question: Describe an innovative educational program that took shape in your district and the implementation and results of that initiative.

AB answer: We operated an after-school program with a really limited budget: grades 3 – 6 three days/week with volunteer parents and provided a late bus. A bigger initiative is the math program which we started by providing graduate courses which everyone took. We started two math programs to decide which one we might adopt, comparing evidence of success. We adopted the Everyday math program. We hired a math coach to have a very strong implementation plan.

Roesler question: Can you describe a scenario you have encountered in your professional career which required you to handle a controversial or challenging issue?

Specifically how did your response demonstrate your approach to solving an issue that might have had a negative impact on your school district and how did you respond to those who opposed your decision?

AB answer: Two of our school councils were interested in uniform dress. With research, they believed it would improve decorum. Lots of push from parents eventually meant an open meeting for parents. It was one of the best attended meetings because of the concern of cost and of students unable to express themselves. We didn't do it even though it was implemented in many area schools with success.

Maddie Werner question: What are your general observations of what you saw today?

AB answer: The Middle School had "twins day" and I loved the school spirit! Teachers around the Middle and High School were passionate about what they were doing. Culture of the school was relaxed but purposeful. Elementary students took her around being enthusiastic and knowledgeable.

Maddie: Noticed any weaknesses or challenges so far?

AB answer: Wish that students had more technology.

Loeb question: I would like to hear your role in the budget process.

AB answer: I am very involved in it as a result of turnover in our business office. I have really picked up that ball. I like it very much. I really am a part of each line item.

Roesler question: What is your view of the role of outside funds (e.g. grants, donation, etc.) in a school budget? What should the relationship and use be between outside funds and appropriated funds?

AB answer: Outside funds are soft. Choice is a maybe; Mashpee distributes it out to the buildings. They have made some big choices with Choice; it supports AP by paying half the fee for students. I think it is best if you consider your outside funds for extra enrichment. When you have to rely on those outside funds which could dry up, you might be in trouble. Technology is not in the budget.

Gresh question: SPED is a major part of our budget. We will be measured as a community on how we take care of those with special needs. We are all temporarily able. What do you believe are the top challenges facing special education and what are the most important things a school district should be doing to address these challenges?

AB answer: Mental health issues of the kids now and meeting their needs is not easy. It is important to have a low student to counselor ratio. We are not the best place, but it really does fall to the school to meet the needs of these students.

Bauman question: Do you have experience with accreditation?

AB answer: Next March we do it. When I asked principals if it is worth all this work, she said "yes." It really helps to build consensus.

Loeb follow-up question: accreditation

AB answer: Largely a school-based process.

Hopping question: How do you handle the fact that there are many residents who do not have children?

AB answer: For people who do not have children, we write newspaper articles about the school. We do a great deal of bringing the community into the schools: school career program, intergenerational concerts. High school goes to the Senior Center. We are making a conscious effort to bring people in. We do a lot of community service as well.

Roesler question: Does Mashpee have pending SOIs?

AB answer: Yes, the HVAC system in one of the schools in Mashpee has been submitted by the business manager.

O'Flynn question: What does the town do for you—what do you do for the town?

AB answer: We have a separate IT. Town Accountant and our financial office work together. The police are wonderful and more than willing to help. We do not have a resource officer but will have next year. We have collaboratives to buy paper but not with the town.

Loeb question: What is your personal outreach, and more specifically, how do you use technology to connect with the town's people? The School Committee?

AB answer: I send out emails once a month or more frequently to the staff. I thank them for the work that they do. I share work of all the schools. I email to parents in a similar or same way.

Hopping question: How often do you get into the schools? Is it part of your routine?

AB answer: I go to every administrative meeting. I attend lots of school events and love to go to athletic contests. I am there a lot.

Gresh question: Any questions that you thought should have been asked?

AB answer: About my strengths, self-assessment. Ability to bring people together with a common vision to do wonderful things. I increased student achievement and job satisfaction. We use Mass Health Survey, an anonymous online teaching tool and, in 304 schools, they agreed that my system is a good place to work. The system showed growth. I would say that people are pretty happy. I recognize people and send notes. I have gotten very good at school finances and being able to manage the resources that we have in a very effective way. A weakness: I have such high standards for myself and for others and sometimes I need to back off. I do want the very best for our kids. We have to make those years the very best.

O'Flynn: Those are all of our questions. We look forward to visiting your district. The School Committee will hold open our reserve until all three candidates have been observed and questioned.

AB comment: I want to say how warm and welcoming everyone has been to me.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.