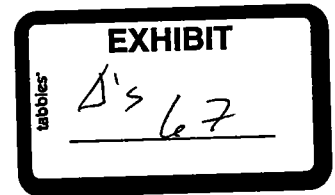


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**IPSWICH SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 8, 2004 7:30 P.M.
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING ROOM
IPSWICH TOWN HALL**



**OPEN SESSION
CALL TO ORDER**

Mrs. J. Arsenault, chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. with the following members present: J. Loeb, H. O'Flynn, D. Ross, N. Sheppard and E. Traverso. Also present were R. Korb, Superintendent of Schools; and G. Zeman, Director of Finance and Operations.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mrs. Arsenault read the following announcements:

January 13: Elementary Schools Budget Meeting 7:00 p.m. in the Board of Selectmen Meeting Room, Town Hall

January 14: Secondary Schools, Central Office and Special Education Budget Meeting 7:00 p.m. in the Board of Selectmen Meeting Room, Town Hall

January 15: School Committee/Administrators Budget Workshop 7:00 p.m. in the Middle/High School Ensemble Room

January 20: Policy/Operations Subcommittee Meeting 7:00 p.m. in the Payne School

January 22: Ipswich School Committee Meeting and FY05 Budget Public Hearing 7:30 p.m. in the Board of Selectmen Meeting Room, Town Hall

January 27: Feoffees of the Grammar School in Ipswich Annual Meeting 5:00 p.m. at the Town Hall

January 27: Communications Subcommittee Meeting 7:00 p.m. in the Payne School

CITIZENS' QUESTIONS

Mr. E. Sklarz questioned the financial aspect of the recently negotiated ITA contract. The 12% salary increase over 3 years will result in 2 increases per year. Increases will be 2% + 1% in year 1, 2% + 2% in year 2, and 2% + 3% in year 3 for a total of 12%. The net cost to the district is approximately 9% over three years. Next year's cost of approximately \$200,000 will be realized through retirements, attrition and minimal reduction of force.

Haley Silverman, student representative, joined the meeting at 7:45 pm

I. SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENTATIONS

A. FEOFFEE'S UPDATE

Answers to questions that were raised at the December 18, 2003 School Committee meeting regarding the proposed revised Feoffees Trust were distributed. Attorney Richard Allen was present to answer any additional questions and concerns. Discussion focused on inclusion of language regarding sale of the property, not recommended by Mr. Allen; the Trust as a municipal trust, to be overseen by the town; an annual audit, consensus by the School Committee that the Feoffees' annual statement be audited; Title V responsibility, usually that of the land owner; and fair rental value, to be established on an individual property basis by the Feoffees.

The School Committee decided to postpone recommendation of the new document draft until the draft is updated to include the latest revisions.

Mr. Allen stated that the process of establishing the new Feoffees' Trust could be completed, if all goes well, by the end of June 2004.

II. SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORT**A. TRANSPORTATION DISCUSSION**

Mr. Korb and Mrs. Zeman distributed and reviewed a transportation fact sheet and a list of surrounding communities that do and do not charge transportation fees. Transportation for the Ipswich Public Schools is a \$350,000 issue, a significant portion of the budget. Ipswich currently provides transportation for K-5 living 1 ½ miles or more from school and for grades 6-12 living 2 miles or more from school, approximately 760 students. The state requires transportation for all students K-6 residing 2 miles or more from school. Fees may not be charged for these students. Transportation fees are allowed for K-6 students residing under 2 miles, and grade 7-12 students regardless of distance.

School Committee members asked what impact changing the transportation policy back to the ¾ miles or more for K-5 riders and 1 ½ miles or more for grade 6-12 riders would have on the number of students eligible to ride on a fee basis. Mrs. Zeman responded that the additional eligible students, riding at a fee, would probably not make up the cost for the additional required transportation.

Districts that charge fees generally experienced a decrease in ridership of about 10-15%. Fees range between \$100-\$400 per rider per year. The average fee was \$250 per rider with a family cap of \$400. Students who receive free/reduced lunch were generally not charged, although reduced lunch students may be charged at a reduced fee. Fees generally recoup between 30-50% of the total transportation cost. Geography impacts the proportion of transportation costs that may be offset by fees. Districts that charge fees generally have employed a part-time person to handle that responsibility at an approximate cost of \$10,000-\$15,000.

The district is currently working with Salter Transportation to assess how many current riders (K-6) live outside the 2-mile range, as well as determining which riders receive free/reduced lunch. Three major issues need to be resolved: should fees be charged; if so, how much and to whom; and should the current transportation limits, as set by policy, be returned to the previous limits if fees are charged. Mr. Korb recommended the development of bid specs for three possible scenarios: for existing routes and estimated ridership per current policy, 1 ½ miles or more for K-5 and 2 miles or more for grades 6-12; for previous routes, prior to the most recent change in distances, ¾ miles or more for K-5 and 1 ½ miles or more for grades 6-12; and for K-6, 2 miles or more only.

School Committee members suggested the possibility of bid specs by routes and the possibility of the transportation company collecting the fees. A community survey regarding transportation was recommended. The Communications Subcommittee will develop a survey.

Mr. Loeb moved, seconded by Dr. O'Flynn, to go forward with the bid specs for three possible scenarios. UNANIMOUS

B. FY04 BUDGET UPDATE

Mrs. Zeman reviewed the School Committee Financial Report dated January 5, 2004. In a word, the FY04 Budget is "grim." Without any additional unanticipated expenses, the district has approximately \$79,000 remaining in the appropriated budget for routine supplies and expenses for the next six months. Some relief at Spring Town Meeting is expected in the appropriation of approximately \$70,000 in Medicaid funds and reimbursement of approximately \$50,000 of Choice Out funding. Mr. Korb added that the budget situation is due to unanticipated, unexpected costs.

Notification was received that Ipswich will not receive any "Pothole" funding. The district had requested \$170,000 in "Pothole" relief for unanticipated SPED costs. Mr. Korb will continue to lobby the DOE, DOR, Governor and Lt. Governor, hoping that the district may still have a chance for the small amount of "Pothole" money that is held in reserve.

B. FY04 BUDGET UPDATE (continued)

The use of revolving accounts and the Feoffees account in FY04 and FY05 was discussed. A financial statement of the accounts will be distributed at the next meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

A. SUPERINTENDENT'S ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Mr. Korb reviewed the major "fixed costs" increases from the '04 budget to the '05 budget: Special Education \$396,666; Insurances \$170,000; Operations/Maintenance \$112,109; Collective Bargaining \$273,000; and Debt \$76,000 for a total of \$1,027,775. With an increase in BASE Revenue of \$375,000, the FY05 budget has a beginning deficit to be addressed of \$652,775. The district's administrators have begun to address the issue, and have reduced the amount by almost half. The remaining deficit of approximately \$350,000 will be included in the budgets to be presented next week. School Committee input and feedback will be requested for addressing the remaining deficit. Affecting the deficit amount is the Town Manager's calculation of a 10% reduction Chapter 70, a 20% reduction in town revenue (state aid) for FY05, and the real estate assessment of Turner Hill and Biolabs.

IV. CONSENT

A. CONSENT AGENDA

Move the Ipswich School Committee accept the minutes of the December 17, 2003 Executive Session Meeting

Move the Ipswich School Committee accept the minutes of the December 17, 2003 Open Session Meeting

Move the Ipswich School Committee accept the minutes of the December 18, 2003 Open Session Meeting

Mr. Sheppard moved, seconded by Mrs. Ross, to accept the consent agenda as presented.
UNANIMOUS

V. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Loeb moved, seconded by Dr. O'Flynn, to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 p.m.
UNANIMOUS