

IPSWICH TRI BOARDS: SELECT BOARD
Meeting of Wednesday, September 2, 2020
Ipswich Town Hall | 25 Green Street

Pursuant to Open Meeting Law M.G.L. Chapter 30A, §§ 18-25, written notice posted by the Town Clerk and delivered to all Board members, a meeting of the Tri-Boards was held on Tuesday, September 2, 2020 in the gymnasium.

Board Members present: Linda Alexson, Chair; Kerry Mackin (via Zoom); Nishan Mootafian; William Whitmore

Also present: Finance Committee; School Committee; Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools; Anthony Marino, Town Manager; Eileen Page, Recording Secretary

Not present: Dr. Tammy Jones

With a quorum present, Ms. Clements-Skelton (Finance Committee, Chair) called the meeting to order at 6:38 PM.

Citizen Queries

None.

Town Financial Update

Sarah Johnson (Town Finance Director) reported that revenue to date is over budget by \$700,000. There is \$1.1 million in unused budget funds, a result of Mr. Marino asking departments to cut down on spending in response to the pandemic. There is \$965,000 in unused Free Cash due to a reduction in capital spending.

School Reopening Update

Dr. Blake reported that in July, the Schools submitted three reopening plans to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE): an in-person plan, a fully remote plan, and a hybrid plan. It was determined that a fully in-person plan would be unsafe, as special limitations did not allow even 3' of distance between students. Parents were surveyed and asked to choose either a hybrid or fully remote education plan, and cohorts were divided as evenly as possible. The plans have been split as follows:

- Winthrop Elementary School: 68% hybrid; 32% remote
- Doyon Elementary School: 83% hybrid; 17% remote
- Ipswich Middle School: 86% hybrid; 14% remote
- Ipswich High School: 90% hybrid; 10% remote

Transportation plans continue to be revised, as buses can only transport at half capacity, must have assigned seats, load back to front, and must be fully sanitized between runs.

The schools continue to work to fill staff gaps, as several late resignations and retirements were received.

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was reached with the Teacher's Union that addresses health and safety concerns, and expectations surrounding the return to school.

Joanne Cuff (School Finance Director) reported that there is \$920,000 available for the purchase of PPE, programs for distanced learning, filters, and building repairs to address health and safety concerns. She added that there is currently a waiting list for bus transportation.

Keri Macrae (31 Heartbreak Road) submitted a question via Zoom, asking if any grades were asked to voluntarily commit to a fully remote model. Dr. Blake responded that they were not.

Presentation of the Work of the Strategic Planning Subcommittee

The Strategic Planning Subcommittee is staffed by Tony Marino (Town Manager), Sarah Johnson (Town Finance Director), Dr. Brian Blake (Superintendent), Joanne Cuff (School Finance Director), Chris Rais (Facilities Director), Rick Clarke (Director of Public Works), Vicki Halmen (Water & Wastewater Director), Ethan Parsons (Director of Planning & Development), Nishan Mootafian (Select Board), Robert White (Finance Committee), Carl Nysten (School Committee), Adam Gray and Emilie Smith (Citizens).

The goal of the Subcommittee is to develop cost projections and investment models for key infrastructure developments over the next 10-15 years. In their research to date, the Subcommittee considered Public Safety Facilities Building, the elementary school buildings, roads, Open Space, a School Operational Override, a Town Operational Override, and the water and electric utility systems. The Subcommittee also considered property value growth, debt service term, tax rate impact, and investment sequences. The Subcommittee operated on the assumption of a 3% property value growth.

The Subcommittee presented the following investment sequence:

- FY21: Water & Wastewater
- FY22: Public Safety Building (Level Debt Service & Level Principal; Major Road Paving
- FY23: School Operating Override
- FY24: Capital Operating Override; Elementary School Buildings; Major Road Paving; Feasibility Study for School Building; Facilities Override
- FY25: Water & Wastewater
- FY26: Elementary School Buildings; Construct New School Building
- FY27: Major Road Paving
- FY28: No designed projects
- FY29: School Operating Override
- FY30: Major Road Paving

Mr. Marino reviewed the assessed costs of avoiding projects relating to the Public Safety Building, a Facilities Override, Paving Projects, a School Override, building a new elementary school, and water/wastewater infrastructure.

Mr. Whitmore stated that the Subcommittee's findings will be hugely helpful to making residents aware of costs that will be coming down the line.

Ms. Alexson stated that the findings will be very helpful in assessing priority projects.

Ms. Mackin, via Zoom, proposed that the process consider environmental impacts and how to best mitigate them. She added that public funds should not be used for projects that may have adverse effects on the environment.

Public Safety Facility Committee Update

Robert Weatherall, Chair of the Public Safety Facility Committee, presented an update. The proposed site of the Public Safety Facility is 8 acres at the corner of Linebrook and Pineswamp, and is currently owned by Our Lady of Hope Church. The Church has agreed to sell the land with the understanding that it will be used for the facility, and would retain a parcel situated to the west of a stream that runs through the property. The building slides presented to the Boards are schematic and intended to show how the space could be utilized at its maximum. The Committee is currently working with the consulting architect to create 3D renderings of the schematic drawings for presentation at Special Town Meeting. The Police and Fire departments are also creating virtual, narrated tours of the current buildings for public viewing.

Chief Nikas reported that certain aspects of the police facilities such as holding cells and storage must be situated on the ground floor, while office and community spaces will be designated for the second floor. The facilities will house the Police, Fire, Dispatch, Harbors, Shellfish, Animal Control, and Emergency Management. The current proposed building is 29,500 square feet, and Chief Nikas does not recommend scaling down any further. Solar panels are being considered for the south-facing parts of the building, and a goal of the final design is to maintain part of the community gardens that are currently on the property.

Prioritizing Capital & Public Safety Building Articles

Special Town Meeting is scheduled for October 17. Ms. Clements-Skelton suggested the Tri-Boards meet the week of October 19 to begin discussing the prioritization of capital improvement projects, while also considering unanticipated emergency projects that may arise.

Mr. Whitmore added that the Boards should also consider forming plans in case overrides do not pass.

Citizen Petitions

Mr. Marino reported that a dog park will not be coming forward at the October Special Town Meeting. A citizen petition regarding the elimination of Payment in Lieu will be coming forward. Warrant hearings will begin in the next few weeks.

New Business

The Select Board will hear a presentation on the Housing Production Plan at their September 14 meeting.

Other Business

None.

The Tri-Board adjourned at 9:30 PM.

*Respectfully submitted by Eileen G. Page
09.04.2020*