

**TRI-BOARD MEETING
FINANCE COMMITTEE, BOARD OF SELECTMEN, SCHOOL COMMITTEE
IPSWICH TOWN HALL, ROOM A
25 Green Street
TUESDAY, Sept. 20, 2016, 7:00 PM
Accepted 12/13/16 by FinCOM**

FinCom Members in Attendance: Rob White, Chairman, Jamie Fay, Mitch Feldman, Janice Clements Skelton, Tammy Howe, and Kevin Murphy arrived at 7:11 pm. Michael Schaaf, Walt Hartford, and Mike Dougherty were absent.

BOS Attending: Ed Rauscher, Bill Craft, Judy Field, and Charlie Surpitski (by phone). Nishan Mootafian arrived at 8:00 pm.

School Committee Members in Attendance: Carl Nysten, Chub Whitten, Barry Hopping, Feruza Krason, and Sarah Player. Hugh O'Flynn arrived at 7:20 pm and Jen Bauman was absent.

R. White called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm with 15 (fifteen) members present. ICAM was recording the meeting, and Cindy Quinn was the Minutes Secretary.

Other Officials in Attendance: Town Manager Robin Crosbie

Abbreviations used: FINCOM Finance Committee, BOS Board of Selectmen, TM Town Manager, SC School Committee, ATM Annual Town Meeting, MSBA Massachusetts School Building Authority, SBC School Building Committee, and STM Special Town Meeting

Documents used:

- Agenda 09/20/16
- PowerPoint from C. Nysten on Purpose and Goals
- Handout on School Program Considerations, School Committee

OTHER BUSINESS

Ed Rauscher announced that Charlie Surpitski had applied to participate remotely by phone, and votes will be by roll call.

Ed recused himself from the school building discussions because he is an abutter to the Winthrop School. When Barry inquired about the status of Ed's previous votes, he responded he was the wrong person to ask. There was some concern about the BOS vote on Bialek Park and a possible tie vote. Going forward, the School Committee would need to obtain more clarification on the decision and a possible split decision.

Robin Crosbie, Town Manager, notified the group that she is also an abutter but not an elected official. Because property values could change, the school decision could apply to abutters. Charlie had filed with Town Counsel about being an abutter on Kimball Ave. Kevin arrived. With other votes on the 775 configuration, Carl wants a determination from Town Counsel.

Rob went over the agenda and asked the audience to focus on subjects not on the agenda for Citizen's Queries.

CITIZEN'S QUERIES

Pepper White of Marshview Rd. wrote to the Ipswich Chronicle with a number of questions about equity, energy retrofit, converting to a heat pump system, a solar array, the age of the school buildings, making the courtyard at Doyon into greenspace, and turning Doyon into a firehouse while make the fire station into makerspace for the school.

DISCUSSION ON SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECT

Ed was not sitting at the table when Carl began his presentation on the purposes and goals for this meeting. While building consensus, he would like some support for the SC, schools, and SBC. He is attempting to get a sense of the BOS and FinCom on the different proposals for the elementary schools and re-engage the SBC.

This is to be an open discussion where there is no rush to judgment or a vote. Two things to consider are both schools need to be replaced and how to maximize State funds while keeping the cost to Ipswich taxpayers to a minimum. Some of the choices are 775 students at Winthrop, 775 at Doyon, and splitting students between the two schools—K-3 at Winthrop and 4-5 at Doyon.

There was some dialogue on polling the various boards to try for consensus with the goal of settling this prior to STM. Another topic was the retrofit and rebuild options for the Doyon School. Using the MSBA program, Kevin went over what would be involved with an upgrade, which options are not viable, and the difficulty rebuilding with students there. Costs were outlined during the May 2016 Tri-Board meeting.

The focus turned to whether the schools both needed replacement, and Carl believes in maximizing the State contributions to the project. Jamie spoke about maximum funding for the project the Town of Ipswich wants to do. One consideration is whether the taxpayers can afford the \$34 million debt, and Chub pointed out that the difference between the two scenarios—one school of 775 and two schools—is about \$500,000 for Ipswich's share. Judy disagreed with Carl on the two-school replacement and the amount from the State.

He described some of the many School Committee meetings on this project, the BOS vote on Bialek Park, and the communications with MSBA. After the OPM put together a new timeline, Kevin noted that an ATM vote in the spring 2017 is impossible and would now go to STM 2017 and ATM in 2018. This would be past the six-month maximum extension, and MSBA would have to reauthorize the project.

Other implications would be the additional cost for the feasibility study. With the School Program Considerations handout, Carl recapped some of the K-5 factors as well as Winthrop K-3 and Doyon 4-5 scenarios. Even though the Winthrop proposal is downtown and on one site, there are traffic issues, limitations on parking and outdoor space, and difficult construction problems. All of these take more time to solve and cost more. There was some dialogue on parking solutions and adding buses.

If there are two schools, there could be additional buses, and it would cost more to operate two schools. Another choice is to keep two K-5 schools, rebuild Winthrop, and renovate Doyon according to Sarah McLean of Woods Lane. Richard Howard, Lakeman's Lane, asked about doing an upgrade, and Carl mentioned that would be later on the agenda.

If the choice is Winthrop for 775 students, Jamie wondered why it has not moved forward, and the SC wanted to look at other considerations before moving forward. There are 50-70 less parking spaces than needed, and the traffic study has not been done. That cost is about \$55,000, and Hugh suggested waiting until school started. Another factor the SC considered is which location would be chosen before proceeding.

Town Manager Robin Crosbie went on to say what some of the traffic issues would be at the Winthrop and how it would impact the downtown area. Another concern is the effect at the Hammett St. lot where the SC suggested staff would park. Parking, construction phasing, and additional costs are now on the list of concerns. Even though the Winthrop location is good for walkability, Tammy went on to say that it might not work with one big building at that site, and there were many other issues. She and Mitch agreed and wanted the SC to think of alternatives. With the fire station nearby, Jamie pointed out that danger and the current traffic standstills, which hurt local business.

Carl said that the SC plans to reintroduce Doyon as a possible site. There is more room for construction, less traffic problems, and parking, but the challenges are the location and community support.

Rachel MacLean spoke of students being downtown to gain independence, use money, make plans, and visit historic places. Parents move to town to be downtown. Town Manager Robin Crosbie stated that walking to school has some fitness benefits and offsets climate changes. However, Hugh pointed out that 135 people drive to the Winthrop whereas most take a bus to Doyon, which uses less gas. At the Doyon, the vernal pools provide a green outdoor experience for students.

If the split is K-3 and 4-5, Mitch added there could be more traffic, but it would be buses. Erika Turner, 121 High St., said that Doyon has access to the pools for collecting fish eggs for all the second graders in town, and students would like to bike to school. Where many parts of town are not close to a school, Sarah questioned the value of walkability and believes it is more important to know what is offered at a school. In bad weather, not many walk to school.

Some ideas included upgrading existing walkways, keeping smaller schools, needing more land for a big school, improving economic development, and building a public safety complex. Attracting young families to town, keeping walkable schools, having educational quality, and passing the article at the ballot box were some other items mentioned.

Nishan believed this is a SC decision. If there are two schools, every child would benefit from going to both schools, but he asked them to consider what is best for the short-term and long-term. By phone, Charlie argued that equity would not be the issue if there were two schools, one in the downtown area.

Bill was in favor of good schools, but had some concerns about getting this passed by the voters. Richard Howard, Woods Lane, was in favor of two schools and rebuilding the Winthrop, and he saw there might be political challenges with the tax rate and the recent override. Going over some of the drawbacks for two schools, Carl mentioned that it would not be K-5, the transition problems, and parental reactions. There is no guarantee the second school is fixed.

In favor of redoing the Winthrop, Chub wants to look at Bialek again and recognizes that the boards must come to agreement to benefit the students. The Doyon has future flexibility with the

land and growth potential. Winthrop has better playgrounds, while Doyon has better fields according to Tammy, and Janice supports a SC decision and compromise. Parking is an issue.

Rob talked about transitioning, controlling class size, increased busing costs, and having a two-story school. However, other concerns are fixing the Doyon and the long-term debt. While Jamie raised some questions about grade configuration, Carl claimed that some of this is based on the number of students in each grade. Kevin gave some history of what occurred when the SBC talked with the MSBA and not all the options worked. Kindergarten classroom spaces are now larger.

Various members spoke about a 775 school at Doyon, 490 at Winthrop, both schools, and a school downtown. Will Whitman spoke about how big changes not always work in this town and a school for 775 is a big change. People did not support a Bialek school for 775, but they might back two schools K-3 and 4-5.

Gary Champion of Palamino Way mentioned the article from the 2014 STM for one school and the debate then. Ed's vote on Bialek Park may be questioned, and there has not been a debate on Bialek Park. Gary urged a revote on Bialek. Gina Rennick, Washington St., cautioned against taking Bialek Park away as it is open space and a playground for the community. Elizabeth Dorman, County Rd., claimed the new proposal for Winthrop for 100 more students would make that area more congested. The majority does not walk to school now, and the SC should consider keeping two smaller schools. Other concerns are parking, constructions, and making a complication decision.

There was a conversation about other issues such as the split configuration, the amount of money to put into the second school, when the work would be complete, what to do about the second school if there is only one school, and financial challenges. In the next few weeks, Carl noted that there are several SC meetings and the decision.

CHANGE TO ARTICLE 18 SCHOOL FEASIBILITY APPROPRIATIONS

With contracts for the OPM and the architect, Kevin indicated that there was money left in the account, but there are additional expenditures such as the traffic, soil, and environmental studies. If the SC goes with a new site, there could be other costs. Expenses could double if the SC does not meet the MSBA dates, and other alterations to the plan would add to the cost. Mitch requested an accounting of the monies spent to date.

Right now, the Town Manager has the article on the warrant, and numbers can be added later. The Town Moderator can withdraw the article also. The FinCom report goes to the printer after the meeting on Oct. 4th.

STM CASH ARTICLES

A number of articles on the warrant are cash articles. B. Craft left the meeting. Robin briefly went over most of those, and then there are some zoning articles.

NEW BUSINESS—there was no new business.

It was moved to adjourn at 10:36 pm. It was seconded, and the vote was unanimous for the FinCom, SC, and BOS.

Respectfully submitted by

Cynthia D. Quinn, Minutes Secretary