

**IPSWICH SELECT BOARD**  
**Meeting of Monday, January 4, 2021**

The Select Board participated in this meeting remotely utilizing Zoom in accordance with the Governor's March 12 Order suspending provisions of Open Meeting Law and to promote public health and social distancing.

Board Members present: Linda Alexson, Chair; Dr. Tammy Jones, Vice Chair; Kerry Mackin; Nishan Mootafian; William Whitmore

Also present: Anthony Marino, Town Manager; Eileen Page, Recording Secretary

With a quorum present, Ms. Alexson called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

**Welcome/Announcements**

The Board extended their condolences to the family of Fr. John Govostes, who served as the priest of the Greek Orthodox Church for over 50 years.

Ipswich remains a red zone for COVID-19. Residents should continue to practice social distancing and wearing masks.

The Planning Board will meet on January 7.

On January 11, the Select Board will hold a special meeting to discuss water concerns related to the Essex Pastures development. Ms. Alexson reminded residents that the Select Board is not the issuing authority for zoning permits, and comments opposing the development are best directed to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). The ZBA will meet on January 21.

The Tri-Boards will meet on January 19.

**Citizen Queries**

None.

**School Committee Candidate Interviews/Appointments**

There is one spot open on the School Committee due to the resignation of Sarah Gilliam. The appointed member will serve until May 2021, and then run for reelection if they wish to continue serving.

**OPENING STATEMENTS**

Lisa Lynch has lived in Ipswich for 29 years, and has two children who graduated from the Ipswich Public Schools. She has been a special education teacher in the Haverhill Public Schools for 30 years, and is planning to retire at the end of the 2020-2021 school year. After her retirement, she would like to remain active in the public school system, and stated that she learned this year how important it is to have current or retired teachers as members of a School Committee.

Kate Elliot has lived in Ipswich for 19 years, and has two children currently in Ipswich Public Schools. She has worked in publishing at EBSCO for 12 years. She previously ran as a write-in candidate for Barry Hopping's vacated seat on the School Committee. She has volunteered in the schools for a number of years, particularly on override committees.

**QUESTION 1: WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO WANT TO BE A SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER?**

Ms. Lynch responded that she has been a teacher for over 30 years, and understands what it is like to be in the trenches of a classroom. She believes it is very important for current or retired teachers to serve on School Committees who will fight for students and fellow teachers.

Ms. Elliot responded that it is not as easy to be involved in the schools with older students as it is with younger students, and serving on the School Committee is a good way to stay active in the schools. She stated she is a good communicator and would be good at building consensus on the Committee.

QUESTION 2: WHAT IS YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER, AND WHAT EXPERIENCES HAVE HELPED YOU TO PREPARE FOR A POSITION ON THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE?

Ms. Elliot responded that primary responsibilities of the School Committee include budget management, the hiring of the Superintendent, and policy development. She stated that she has become familiar with budget management through her involvement with override campaigns, and writing policy is a strong suit as an editor and publisher.

Ms. Lynch responded that the School Committee is responsible for hiring the Superintendent and ensuring that they have the best interests of students and teachers in mind. She also believes that the Superintendent should remain active in classrooms.

QUESTION 3: PLEASE COMMENT ON YOUR ASSESSMENT OF THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE IPSWICH SCHOOLS. HOW COULD/SHOULD WE ENHANCE KEY STRENGTHS AND ADDRESS KEY WEAKNESSES?

Ms. Lynch responded that when her children were in the schools, some decisions made by administrators were not fair to students. She also stated that Ipswich needs to work on overcrowded class sizes.

Ms. Elliot responded that teacher dedication and creativity is a strength of the schools, as well as the passion of the parent community. She stated that the infrastructure of the elementary school buildings is a weakness and need to be addressed.

QUESTION 4: WHAT GOALS SHOULD OUR DISTRICT BE PURSUING IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS?

Ms. Elliot responded that in the short term, the schools need to focus on getting through the school year safely.

Ms. Lynch responded that over the next few months, the district needs to focus on supporting teachers and students through remote learning. She also stated that improving technology should be a focus, and moving to a one-elementary school model.

QUESTION 5: TWO CHALLENGES OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM FACES ARE A PERENNIAL STRUCTURAL BUDGET DEFICIT AND AGING FACILITIES, PARTICULARLY OUR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS. PLEASE SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON HOW YOU WOULD ADDRESS THESE ISSUES.

Ms. Lynch responded that the Committee should consider looking to the state for infrastructure funding. In regards to the budget, Ms. Lynch suggested researching grants and how to shift tax monies around to ensure their best use.

Ms. Elliot responded that the Committee needs to be creative with the budget they are given, and analyze every line item. She noted that there may be a cost savings this year due to COVID, which may allow for more flexibility in FY22. She also stated that a Town-wide plan needs to be enacted for addressing building issues.

QUESTION 6: WHAT DOES A SUCCESSFUL IPSWICH HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

Ms. Elliot responded that a successful Ipswich High School graduate is well-educated and a good citizen ready to contribute to the world. She emphasized the importance of students being strong critical thinkers who have been prepared for their individual paths that lie ahead, whether they continue their education in a two or four-year college, or enter technical school.

Ms. Lynch responded that regardless of whether or not a student goes to college, it is important to ensure they can be employed, live independently, and support themselves. She also stated that graduates should be able to recognize differences in people and culture, and have the opportunity to experience a variety of activities such as sports and music programs.

QUESTION 7: HOW IMPORTANT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT AND TOWN GOVERNMENT? WHAT ISSUES SHOULD THEY BE WORKING ON TOGETHER?

Ms. Lynch responded that her assumption was that the Town was responsible for allocating funding to the Schools, making it important for the Select Board and School Committee to have a good rapport.

Ms. Elliot responded that good communication is essential, and the Town government and School Committee should be collaborating on almost all matters. She noted that even sidewalks and parks affect students. She emphasized the importance of remembering “we are one town,” and that the School buildings are very important to the overall picture of the Town, including water and public safety issues.

#### CLOSING STATEMENTS

Ms. Elliot stated that she believes she could contribute similar strengths as Ms. Gilliam in regards to communication, writing, and creative thinking. She described herself as an even-keeled person who makes thoughtful decisions. She also clarified that despite her involvement in override projects, she does not support overrides “at any cost.” She emphasized the responsibility of the Committee to prioritize working within their regular budget.

Ms. Lynch stated that she had a strong understanding of what matters to teachers and students, and she would be able to contribute to the Committee as an educator. She also stated that the Committee should begin looking at a single elementary school.

- *Vote: Greg Stevens (School Committee) moved to appoint Kate Elliot to the School Committee. Carl Nysten (School Committee) seconded. The motion carried with the necessary seven votes via roll call.*

#### Boards and Committee Appointments

- I. Charlotte Kahn - New Appointment - Associate Member Agricultural Commission

Ms. Khan has lived in Ipswich for about 20 years. She grew up on a farm caring for animals, gardening, and participating in 4H. After her move to Boston, she became interested in urban agriculture, and ran the Boston Urban Gardeners group for over a decade. She became aware of the Agricultural Commission through the Ipswich Garden Club.

- II. Joseph Militello - New Appointment - Associate Member ZBA

Mr. Militello has lived in Ipswich for about 37 years, and has been a realtor for 35. He stated that he would bring a realtor’s perspective to the ZBA, and sees an all-time-high need for housing across Essex County. After discussion, it was decided to postpone until after Mr. Militello’s petition with the ZBA has concluded.

- *Vote: Ms. Mackin moved to appoint Charlotte Kahn to the Agricultural Commission. Mr. Mootafian seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

#### Change of Manager for Annual Liquor License Holders

- I. The Mansion Club at Turner Hill
- II. The Clubhouse at Turner Hill LLC

- *Vote: Mr. Mootafian moved to approve the change of manager. Mr. Whitmore seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

#### Department Updates

##### IT

Jay Wassouf (Director of IT) presented a department update to the Board. Recent department projects included the replacement of outdated hardware throughout Town Hall, based on last year’s security risk assessment. The hardware was donated by the Schools, who recently upgraded their own hardware. WIFI was deployed in the COA, and 25 laptops were purchased to provide department heads with the ability to work remotely. The laptops will be reimbursable through the CARES Act. Employees have also been permitted to work remotely using their own laptops, with anti-virus software provided by the Town. Additionally, the Veterans Department migrated their computers and phones to Town lines, saving about \$400 per month.

### COUNCIL ON AGING/SENIOR CENTER

Sheila Taylor (Director of Council on Aging) presented a department update to the Board. Ms. Taylor reported that all staff members have continued their regular shifts through COVID, and transportation services have run uninterrupted. 110 residents are receiving grab-and-go lunches five days per week. Activities normally held at the Senior Center continue virtually on ICAM, including exercise classes. Robocalls are made weekly to roughly 2,000 senior residents with resources and updates. The COA is currently utilizing about 100 volunteers to run errands, provide technology assistance, and make friendly phone calls to seniors who are quarantining. Additionally, the COA has been able to keep cleaning supplies, toilet paper, and other hard-to-get goods stocked in the office for seniors in need. Ms. Taylor reported a significant number of cases of mental and physical health declines due to the nature of the pandemic, and an additional part-time outreach worker has been hired to assist in the caseload.

Mr. Whitmore asked if the COA is currently involved in discussions surrounding COVID-19 vaccine distribution. Ms. Taylor responded that they are not, but will assist in any way they can if they are asked.

### HUMAN RESOURCES

Mary Gallivan (Human Resources Director) presented a department update to the Board. Over the last year, the HR Department has rewritten a social media policy for employees, a security camera policy, and a compensatory time policy. An annual performance review process has been implemented that was accepted by the majority of the unions, and digital timekeeping was implemented for Town Hall and Utilities employees.

The Payroll and Benefits Department, previously run by two full-time employees, has been reduced to one part-time employee.

Additionally, the department was awarded a \$10,000 grant from MIIA that was used to install a gym in Town Hall, available to current employees and retirees. Ipswich was also given an Excellence in Wellness Award, which will be presented at the 2021 MMA Conference.

Community outreach efforts included a partnership with HAWC to host the second annual Giving Tree, collecting school supplies for the Open Door Food Pantry, running a food drive at Thanksgiving, gathering for a springtime yard cleanup for elderly residents, and hosting regular blood drives in collaboration with Red Cross.

Goals for FY22 include expanding the hiring process to be more inclusive of diverse candidates, and supporting employees in professional development.

### Open Space and Recreation Plan Update Presentation

Andrew Brengel (Open Space Committee, Co-Chair) reported that the Open Space Plan has been conditionally approved by the Commonwealth, and will make the Town eligible for a variety of grants through December 2027.

Goals of the plan include protecting land for open space and recreation, protecting and managing natural resources, preserving the historical, agricultural, and scenic character of Ipswich, enhancing recreation opportunities, and promoting education on the value of open space. The Committee will also work with the Planning Board to revise current open space guidelines.

Of the 475 residents surveyed, protection of open space and natural resources, as well as the maintenance of recreational resources and access to recreational areas were found to be the top priorities.

Ms. Alexson asked how the survey was circulated. Mr. Brengel responded that it was sent via email, and by word of mouth.

Ms. Mackin noted that participation in the Community Preservation Act would help to protect both open space and historical properties.

### Discuss/Vote Strategic Planning Working Group Presentation

Ms. Alexson stated that the plan presented at prior meetings is long overdue, and believes that it works well as a roadmap of projects and priorities. She noted that it should be used as a working document, and revised as needs change and emergency projects arise.

Dr. Jones expressed support for the plan.

Ms. Mackin requested that a subcommittee be assigned to analyze the environmental impact of projects on the priority list, and investigate how to minimize adverse effects on the environment. Ms. Alexson agreed, but also noted that part of the standard operating procedure of each project would include an analysis of environmental impact.

Mr. Whitmore suggested that the Town consider addressing projects via an ad hoc committee as they arise to ensure that they are still a priority.

Mr. Mootafian expressed support for the plan as a working document.

- *Vote: Mr. Mootafian moved to support the plan. Dr. Jones seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

#### **Memorial Bench Request**

Alice Stebbings requested to purchase a new memorial bench to be placed in front of Zumi's in memory of her son, Benjamin Stebbings.

- *Vote: Dr. Jones moved to approve the request. Mr. Whitmore seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

#### **Annual License Renewals, Automatic Amusement, Common Victualler, Weekday Entertainment, Sunday Entertainment**

- *Vote: Mr. Whitmore moved to approve the list, including a Common Victualler renewal for East End Bagels. Mr. Mootafian seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

#### **Open Warrant for 2021 Annual Town Meeting**

The warrant for Annual Town Meeting will close on February 19, 2021.

- *Vote: Mr. Mootafian moved to open the 2021 Annual Town Meeting warrant. Dr. Jones seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

#### **Approval of Minutes**

- I. December 21, 2020

Ms. Mackin stated that she wrote a more detailed description of the water presentation she gave at the December 21 meeting, but that she would wait to include it in the minutes after the January 11 water forum.

- *Vote: Dr. Jones moved to approved the minutes as they appeared in the meeting packet. Mr. Whitmore seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

#### **Town Manager Report**

##### **COVID-19**

Ipswich is currently monitoring 65 active cases of COVID-19, and has had about 300 cases since March 2020. Residents are advised to continue wearing masks and remain vigilant in social distancing. Ipswich Police and Fire personnel are scheduled to receive vaccinations next week.

##### **POLICE/FIRE DISPATCH**

Mr. Marino and Police Chief Paul Nikas visited the regional 911 call center in Middleton, and are exploring the feasibility of regionalizing dispatch for Ipswich.

### LOCAL ELECTIONS

The Town Clerk has informed Mr. Marino that papers are available to be pulled for the upcoming local elections. Open seats will be posted on the Town website.

### New Business

None.

### Old Business

#### JANUARY 11 WATER FORUM

Dr. Jones suggested keeping the January 11 water forum focused on water issues related to the Essex Pastures development.

Ms. Mackin suggested inviting Wayne Castonguay (Ipswich River Watershed Association) to give a presentation on the net-zero water report completed by IRWA. Ms. Alexson stated that the January 11 meeting would focus on Essex Pastures, but a broader water forum could be scheduled for the springtime.

Jim Engel (Linebrook Road) stated that he believes the public would like to focus the discussion on the Essex Pastures project. He encouraged that Board to take a definitive public stance on whether or not existing water infrastructure could support the development as it is currently planned, and make their stance clear to the ZBA.

### Miscellaneous and Correspondence

None.

- *Vote: Mr. Mootafian moved to adjourn. Mr. Whitmore seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

The Select Board adjourned at 9:57 PM.

*Respectfully submitted by Eileen G. Page  
01.09.2021*