

TOWN OF IPSWICH
Finance Committee
Meeting of March 10, 2020
Town Hall, 25 Green Street

With a quorum present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 7:37.

Finance Committee members present: Janice Clements-Skelton, Michael Dougherty, Walter Hartford, Michael Schaaf, Joseph Bourque, Timothy Goodrich, Rob White

1. Citizens Queries – Janice Clements-Skelton

- none

2. Acceptance of Finance Committee Minutes – Janice Clements-Skelton

- Motion to approve notes from February 25th made by Michael D., seconded by Joe.

FY21 Ipswich Public Schools Budget Review

3. Capital Plan Review – Dr. Blake & Anthony Marino

Anthony went over the Capital Plan with FinCom, as presented in the budget book. Dr. Blake, Chris Rais, and Tony put this list together for fiscal year 21 which will meet the needs for the next year as well as the next three years. As far as the elementary schools they are planning to keep the water out and keep the schools safe but will need a much larger plan down the road. Tony went over each money allotment line by line. \$20,000 for roofing repairs, they spent \$50,000 last year on the school roofs. \$25,000 to replace front steps in town hall and add a wheelchair lift to make the stage accessible. \$40,000 to repair the library fence. Tony said they put in a new remote emergency call system (panic buttons), there are line items throughout the budget to put the radio box communications for the panic buttons. It also allows us to monitor our own fire alarms without having to hire another company to do so. \$20,000 storm switch at the Linebrook Fire Station, \$5,000 for smoke and CO2 detectors at Haskell House, \$15,000 for remodel of break room and bathroom at DPW. District wide for the schools, \$12,000 for wheel chair bus, \$118,000 for technology needs, \$24,000 for flooring and carpet \$35,183 for roofing repairs. Interior and exterior painting \$15,000. Pane building accessibility study for \$8,400. At the Doyon School exhaust fan replacement for \$12,000 and air handler replacement \$32,000, repaving walkways for \$15,000, and classroom upgrades for \$10,000. \$6,400 for washer and dryer. Walter asked if there were slight updates from the original PDF. Tony said they made minimal changes. At the high school phone and PA clock bell system, \$42,000, HVAC \$46,000, \$20,000 for painting. There are also some line items that will be funded by Green Communities. Locker room upgrades \$80,000. \$30,000 for wiring upgrades. DPW equipment has some remaining lease payments that Tony went over. Cemetery and Parks \$14,000 for a mower and \$5,000 for core aerator for the new fields. Fire Department is still paying two pumpers for two more years. Setting aside \$50,000 for a ladder truck but they will be applying for a grant. Pick-up truck replacement for \$34,500. Police has an admin vehicle for \$40,000. IT has a computer replacement at \$10,000 and network upgrade at \$18,000. Bigger server for \$85,000. Tony then went over the totals. Walter asked about the Green Communities number, Tony said that is the initial numbers.

Michael D. asked how sure we are for future funding. Tony said nothing is ever a guarantee but he is confident we can get the projects approved since we are new and excited about this, and as long as we build a good relationship and write good grants we should be okay. Michael S. asked Tony if they tied the needs from School Dude into this. Tony said they didn't do everything but they did all of the immediate needs. School Dude gives best case scenarios and then we have to prioritize what the town can do. Michael S. asked if there are significant needs from School Dude that were not addressed, Tony said not really. Michael also asked about the panic buttons. Tony said its more than that, it's also emergency response. If there is an alarm that goes off, then it will go directly to the fire and police department instead of going through a dispatcher. It will cut down on response time and will also save money because we won't be paying for a third-party vendor. Michael also asked about the DDC controls. Tony said it allows the system to be balanced better and for Chris to have remote access. Michael D. asked what parameters were discussed for capital improvements for the elementary schools. Dr. Blake said the money in the capital plan is dealing with immediate needs. Air handling, heating and cooling, ventilation at the high school, issues in both elementary schools with heating and cooling. These are immediate needs that aren't going to go away and regardless we will be in these buildings for a number of years. The repairs that are being made are not going to impact our ability to get back into the MSBA pipeline. They are not looking at

use of space or changing complete systems out, just making repairs to what's existing. Michael asked about possible existing health issues like air quality. Dr. Blake said these changes will help those. Mike also asked if we have any new leases in the capital plan, Tony said no, they are just finishing up the leases they already have.

Jamie asked about the radio box program and said it is a big expenditure for something that he wasn't aware was a need. Tony said it is twofold. Being able to add the panic buttons to the town buildings was a part of it and that is a big part of the ALICE training. The second part is that we will be losing the monitoring contracts which can be about \$2,000-\$3,000 per year for each building so within a few years it will pay itself off. It will also make response time quicker. Tony said the police department asked for this. The major equipment which was \$90,000 was paid for through the 9-1-1 grant. Jamie said he doesn't think this is needed when people can use their cell phones. Tony said he disagrees and it was a concern of a lot of the staff members. It is beneficial in an active shooter situation.

4. Central Office, SPED, Birth to Three – Dr. Blake

Barry discussed the goals of the budget which would meet the needs of all of the students and the goals for the future. The leadership team over the past year has developed a strategy for district improvement. As students age and as times change, the needs of the students become different and, in some cases, become much more pronounced. The challenge for the school budget is to stay ahead of those needs. Barry presented the three objectives which are meeting the needs of all students, creating innovative learning environments, and creating connections to the global communities. These objectives are woven all throughout the budget in many ways including changes in Special Education programming, programming to meet social and emotional needs of students, project-based learning opportunities and career pathways at the high school, expansion of world language program. This budget aligns closely to the state objectives. This will be year 6 of the override. This proposed budget begins to significantly draw down on the Stabilization Fund, the Federal Title 1 grant is expected to go down by \$80,000 this year. The social emotional needs and mental health needs of our students are exploding. The Recreation Department funding has dried up so they are looking at ways to address that and provide after school opportunities for the students. This is now funded through the school's budgets. The Facilities budgets are just to maintain. The Payne Grants allow for one language teacher in each elementary school as well as an additional World Language teacher for grades 5-7. The Payne Grant also helps with the BRiTE program which funds a social worker. Barry also noted the working groups that have been put into place this year that deal with a variety of different areas. They are in the process of revising the Feoffee policy. There is also a working group that is looking at school facilities.

Dr. Blake talked about the vision of the 2020 working group. They developed a framework that has all of the individual school improvement plans that feed into the strategy for district improvement. They have a current district education program and they developed a secondary education program this year as well. The plans are all encompassing and have considered various studies, audits, reports, and reviews that have been done on the schools. The school improvement plans are redone every year, and the strategy for district improvements are redone every 3-5 years. The district vision will be reviewed every 5-10 years.

Dr. Blake discussed FTE's. Most of the changes occurred in special support staff or specialist positions. In these cases, it is based on the needs of the students. These changes are based on expected changes for the upcoming years. Decreasing FTE's for teachers and increased FTE's for support staff is not the same thing. Sometimes there are also reallocations of people to different positions, so it's not always a new body. Dr. Blake said they also have some outside funds to help with the budget and he went over those funds.

Dr. Blake said the budget being presented represents a 4.13% increase over the previous year. In calculating the budget, the total is \$32,375,538 with the town contribution of \$31,477,041 and the amount they are looking to take from the stabilization fund is \$898,497. Jamie asked Dr. Blake to clarify the budget and asked if it is the budget for spending from the town funds and not spending from other sources, Dr. Blake said that is correct. Dr. Blake said they are anticipating a significant decrease in Title 1 funding and that is being considered in the budget. Dr. Blake then went over various funds and accounts that will be used to make up the budget. Janice asked for clarification about the circuit breaker account and how the balance will be determined. Dr. Blake said this year there are 33 teachers slated to make category changes. Walter asked if staffing is relatively flat or if they know the overall headcount. When they calculate the compensation for all staff they take step increases into consideration and they also take contractual increases into account too. There is a slight cost increase as grants were reduced. Dr. Blake said there has also been a significant increase in special education this year. The needs of the students are more significant and there are some students whose needs cannot be met by our system therefore there are 29 students outplaced. The cost of the drivers to transport students with special needs has gone up as well. Rates for out of district placements increase by 3% each year. Walter asked if the post high school aged students with special needs show up in the high school costs, Dr. Blake said yes. He said in terms of

disabilities for out of district placements, 25 of the 29 placements are for students with severe social emotional issues or severe autism spectrum disorder. We are not able to provide appropriate programming for these students within the district. When placing students elsewhere, there is a process which includes assessments and referrals and the IEP team makes the decision. The schools are under an obligation to provide all students with a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. Dr. Blake said they usually work amicably with parents but there are times where there is a dispute and they have alternative dispute resolution opportunities with DESSE before legal counsel has to get involved. If legal council has to be involved they have a firm they work with. Last year \$17,000 was spent on legal fees, and that is also for legal questions, not just disputes.

Dr. Blake mentioned the great things that are happening with the music and arts programs. He put together two slides to share some of the exiting things that are happening in the district that are not tied directly to the classrooms. The world language program is going great and everyone is excited about it. They also successfully consolidated the preschool programs, and expanded the after-school programs. The Art-Link program at Winthrop enables students to send artwork overseas to several countries, and students in those countries send artwork back. They are also running a pilot of a new math program at the Doyon school, and there are proficient learning communities around culture, kindness and caring. They have also expanded extracurricular activities at the middle school. District wide curriculum development in social studies, place based learning continues to grow, high school students are working with the Audubon Society to measure sea rise and make recommendation, steam initiatives and steam showcase, and mindfulness practices being implemented for staff and students.

Dr. Blake then discussed MCAS scores and said we are doing very well. He showed slides with compressed data for scores of students meeting or exceeding expectations. Jamie asked if there has been a trend in scores. Dr. Blake said he is showing a one-year snapshot but he can provide more data for other years. The trends seem to be going up. They are happy with the scores but there is always room for improvement. Janice asked what we are doing that has us doing so well in the science technology grade 10 category. Dr. Blake said it's the focus on Steam. Jonathan Mitchell, Principal of the High School, said teachers are highly qualified and it is a good cycle of teaching and learning. They are teaching to the state's expectations and standards and they continuously monitor student progress and understanding. Tracy Wagner, Director of Teaching and Learning, said that this is a 10th grade test result but to keep in mind that this is a result of a pre-k-10 curriculum that is aligned to state standards that is project based and steam. This represents the growth of students in this mindset. Dr. Blake also went over SAT scores for the last 5 years and scores are trending upward in both math and ELA. Jonathan put together a chart to show AP testing scores and there was a significant increase in the number of test taking this past year. In general, students are performing very well.

5. Elementary Schools – Dr. Blake and Principals

Dr. Blake went over the school budgets. He shared the educational goals for the Doyon elementary schools and also went over expected enrollment. There is a projected decrease of 11 students at Doyon across the grades. During the budget development there was a discussion about possibly reducing a kindergarten class but that didn't happen due to timing. Budget highlights include a total budget increase of 3.88%, a 1.71 FTE increase which is for the World Language teacher and Special Education support. There is also now a Lexia reading program school wide that targets skill gaps and provides teachers with data and student specific recourses. The Illustrative Math Program is being implemented this year as well. The budget also includes 2 fellows from Endicott college. Winthrop has been doing this for several years and Doyon will now do so as well. These fellows provide an extra set of hands and eyes in the classroom and fully immerse themselves into the school community. The fellows work at the schools during the day and take graduate classes at night to earn their master's degree. In the past, fellows have been hired after graduation.

Dr. Blake also went over the goals for Winthrop school and the enrollment numbers. The population is stable for next year with an anticipated increase of 3 students. Budget highlights include a 9.71% increase in the budget, and a 4.99 increase in FTE's. 1 FTE for the world language program which is being funded by a grant. There is also a 1.75 which was picked up for the preschool staff salary due to the instability of the revolving fund, a .1 due to a decrease in Title 1 funding, and a 1.0 TA in kindergarten due to safety and support in the kindergarten classrooms. There are also minor changes based on student need and special education. Supplies/books/ and material lines are up in several areas, and the Elementary Summer Education program is fully in the Winthrop budget this year. The staffing changes are due to reduced grant funding, programmatic needs, and the instability of the revolving fund. The changes in the supplies, books, and materials are to replace worn materials and to provide consumables for the curriculum. There is also a reduction in the Doyon budget due to the Elementary Summer Special Education Program since it is now in the Winthrop budget.

Dr. Blake then went over the Middle School goals, budget and enrollment. There is an expected decrease in enrollment by almost 30 students. There will be a decrease in the staffing patterns and FTE's. Janice asked if the decrease

is natural attrition or if students are choosing out. Dr. Blake said the 8th grade group is a larger group that is leaving and the incoming 6th grade class is smaller. The budget is up 4.64%. The FTE reduction of 7.52% and in that reduction is an ELA teacher, a Social Studies teacher, and 1.5 TA Nurse an LNA position that will be switched to the high school, a special educator, a behavior therapist, and one TA. Stipends are being reduced by 16% to reflect actual hours. There is also a \$12,000 reduction in the Special Education Summer Programming. There is a significant increase in Special Education out of district placement which is \$350,000.

Dr. Blake went over the High School budget. He went over the educational goals which are supporting students social and emotional learning, improving the career pathways program, and improving student achievement through an enhanced learning environment. The population numbers remain stable with an anticipated 561 students next year. There will only be a drop of 9 students. Budget highlights include an increase is 15.16%, and an increase of 5.29 FTE's. Dr. Blake went over the changes in FTE's and Jamie asked about the full-time nurses. Dr. Blake said there will be one nurse in the High School and one in the Middle School. Dr. Blake said it is the same person that is in a part time LNA position and will now be moved to a full time RN position. There is also an increase in stipends due to an increase in the community service coordinator position, which used to be grant funded and no longer is.

There is also an increase in district wide building operations 10.43%. There is a 2.2 FTE increase which is for an additional custodian and for additional secretarial support. There has been an increase in supplies, materials, and equipment throughout the district, and increases in electrical, water, and gas rates. These increases don't include what's in the Capital Plan or Green Communities. District wide and in the Central office there is a significant decrease of 23.89%. There are some FTE increases for payroll, secretary, and student support. The budget has decreased because bargaining contracts have been settled. Technology/ professional development has increased for 3 staff members but the technology budget is down overall. Curriculum and development lines are also down due to grants the town was able to acquire. Special Education Transportation has been decreased by \$70,000 and unemployment compensation has also been decreased. The Middle School/High School debt will also come off. Lastly, Dr. Blake went over the Feoffee distribution. The money is used to supplement the budget. Highlights include the BRiTE Program and Transdisciplinary Program, the One Book program, the Elementary World Language Program, and virtual reality in the classrooms for virtual field trips.

Janice asked if they could get the MCAS presentation by tomorrow so they can ask questions on Thursday. Janice also asked for more of an explanation on the BRiTE Program. The BRiTE program is for student's social emotional learning and is designed for students who are transitioning back to school from long term absences. This year they serviced 24 students. The idea is to re-engage students who may be at risk for continued long-term absences and to help them get reconnected and catch up. Joe asked about the Middle School increase and asked for clarification on the Special Education tuition costs. Dr. Blake said they are up. Joe also asked what World Language is. Dr. Blake said it is what they used to call foreign language and it is a pilot program this year. The class meets a few times a week to learn Mandarin. Walter asked about the decrease in transportation. Dr. Blake said they have to pay to transport students that are placed out of district. He said the cost has been reduced because Heidi Kent looked at different vendors and they tried to piggyback on buses that were already going to the same places. Walter also asked what contracted services are for. It is for the contracted services like speech and language. Walter also asked about inclusion and Dr. Blake said it is based on individual students and what each student needs. They try to provide services in house when possible and they will group students if possible, but the law requires the town to provide students services in the least restricted environment. Tim asked about the enrollment and noted that district wide the K and 1st grade numbers seem low. He asked about what impact that will have and if there is an opportunity to reduce class size. Dr. Blake said they keep a close eye on that. Right now, at Doyon there are three teachers for each grade level. Tim said he was wondering about reducing class size but keeping the same number of teachers. Dr. Blake said it would depend on the situation they are faced with and what comes out of necessity. There is a limit to how small a class size should be. Tim asked if teachers are happy with class sizes as they are now. Sheila Howard, Doyon Principal, said the numbers across the district as pretty consistent. Ideally each class is 18-20 students and they are at that now. At the lower grades it's more important to have smaller class sizes. Jamie asked about the middle school decrease in student population and the reduction in FTE's. He asked about what that means for the school and if they are still able to offer enough classes. Cathy McMann, Middle School Principal, said the reduction in FTE's is a combination of shrinking enrollment size and also using a humanities model which is an integrated model and allows the school to carry on with rigorous curriculum with fewer teachers. Cathy also said some of the losses in FTE's are due to students with significant needs moving on to the High School.

Michael Schaff asked about the new FTE's that are funded through grants and asked if they are employees of the schools and what the duration of the grants are. Dr. Blake said they are employees and the grants are for the current year. Michael said he is concerned the total budget will increase once the grants are done. He said he is concerned they are building a budget that is much more substantial and he is concerned about the towns ability to support it next year. He

asked Dr. Blake if he thinks it is sustainable going forward. Dr. Blake said that is the challenge they face every year. He said you also have to keep in mind that the positions occur as the needs of the children present themselves. They feel confident they will be able to continue to meet the needs of the students. The challenge is that every time they add something, something else has to come out. This year there was a dramatic reduction in FTE's at the middle school. This is not something they would have seen coming 2 years ago. The model changes every year so it's difficult to predict. Bottom line, Dr. Blake said he feels confident in their ability to meet the needs of the students. Jamie asked what they will use the Payne Grants for this coming year. Dr. Blake said those proposals haven't come in yet but for the first time the allocation was more than \$800,000. They are having meetings soon with the Payne Grant Committee. They are looking for ways to enhance curriculum but the needs will present themselves over time. Jamie asked if they are planning to add new positions with the Payne Grant that will then be added to the budget the following year. Rob said the Payne Grant Committee doesn't know what the initiatives are that are going to be suggested to the school. Janice said it's sounding like anything that goes into the Payne Grant is a feeder for the actual budget. Dr. Blake said that every proposal that goes through the Payne Grant doesn't necessarily feed into the operating budget. Janice asked how we get some sort of visibility into what is going into the Payne Grant so they have some idea of what will be added to the operating budget. Because whatever is added to the budget from the Payne Grant is adding to the previous year's budget. Up until 3 years ago they never used the Payne Grant to fund positions, but they felt that the World Language position was wise to fund through the Payne Grant because it is something they had been wanting to add.

Michael S. asked about the SPED budget increase and asked what the trends are in the number of children in Special Education. Dr. Blake said this year they have 17% of the student population in Special Education and that is in keeping with the national average. He also reminded everyone that students in Special Education remain the responsibility of the school until they are 22 or until they graduate. Beverly, Special Ed Director, said they are required by law to make individual decisions on each student. It's a fluid process because students are constantly entering and exiting the program. The student need drives the services. Rob asked what happened to the summer program. Dr. Blake said it changes based on the needs of the students. There is a decrease in the Special Education Summer budget because of the lack of student need. The program was added 6 or 7 years ago to account for it separately. The budget for the program now is in the Winthrop School Budget, whereas it used to be at Doyon. Rob asked what percentage of the budget is Special Ed. That will be provided Thursday. Michael D. asked about bussing and if there has been any progress made on the bussing challenges that we face. Dr. Blake said General Education transportation is under contract, they have one more year of a 3-year contract and they will then go out to bid. Historically most districts in this area only get one bid. Dr. Blake said he has spoken with some of the national companies and is hoping they will want to come to our area. In terms of Special Education Transportation, Heidi works with the transportation providers but they are limited in the numbers of providers and the routes available. They do the best they can but not much has changed. Rob asked about funding from the rec department and asked if the services that were given 2 years ago from the rec department are still being funded (bus to the y, tiger club, homework club). Dr. Blake said yes. Rob asked if enrollment will be steady for the next few years at the middle school, Dr. Blake said yes.

Janice also asked if anyone had anyone else had any questions.

6. New/ Other Business – Janice Clements-Skelton

- none

7. Adjournment – Janice Clements-Skelton

- Motion to adjourn made by Rob and seconded by Mike D.
→Vote: Motion passed unanimously, 7-0

Respectfully Submitted By
Alyson von der Esch
4-10-20