



SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

January 8, 2013

Seymour Middle School – Library Media Center Classroom

7:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Yashu Putorti, Chairman
Saundra Gesek
Kristen Harmeling
Jay Hatfield (7:02 p.m.)
Theodora Klarides (7:25 p.m.)
Jennifer Magri
Allison Sobieski-McAndrew
Fred Stanek
Ed Strumello
Lee-Ann Dauerty, Board Clerk

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Christine Syriac, Superintendent of Schools
Nancy Snopkowski, Associate Superintendent
Rick Belden, Asst. Superintendent, Finance & Operations
Ginny Tagliatela, Director of Special Services
Glenn Lungarini, Principal, SHS
Jim Freund, Assistant Principal, SHS
Paul Lucke, Assistant Principal, SHS
Bernadette Hamad, Principal, SMS
Mary Sue Feige, Principal, BS
Kristopher Boyle, Assistant Principal, BS
David Olechna, Principal, CLS
Leslie Sojka, Assistant Principal, CLS
Allison Brett
Elizabeth White
Thomas Bennett
Kathleen Pelletier
Agatha Parlak

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Putorti called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:02 p.m.

II. INFORMATION

A. 2014-15 Board of Education Budget Workshop – Christine Syriac

Mrs. Syriac began her presentation by thanking her staff for working collaboratively and creatively to find ways to reallocate funds within the existing budget. The proposed budget of \$32,034,884 represents a 3.5% increase. The majority of this increase is due to the level services budget. During the last budget we enjoyed a significant savings due to the changes in healthcare but that was a one time situation. Mrs. Syriac indicated in order to keep all services the same as this year the increase to the budget would be 2.9%. The additional proposed increase of .6% will cover retiree benefit pay outs and strategies for lowering class sizes at the middle school and offering opportunities such as clubs and after school activities.

The projected enrollment for the 2014-15 school year is approximately 2300 students. The requests for this budget include the addition of two middle school teachers (a STEM teacher and a language arts teacher), a Fine Arts teacher at the high school, a .5 special education teacher at Bungay School, four instructional paraprofessionals to be used in kindergarten classes, a 6-12 area content coordinator in English, increasing the current high school part time physical education teacher to full time, two appendix e sports positions at the high school (Assistant Wrestling Coach and Assistant Boys Swim Coach), two appendix e non sports positions at the high school (Alternative Energy Club, Drama Club Assistant Advisor) and two appendix e non sports positions at the middle school (Audubon Club and Small Steps Club). Mrs. Syriac asked the Board to commit to the STEM teacher position and not eliminate it if the budget needs to be cut. The reason is each year this program gets cut and it will never get off the ground if we continue to eliminate it and it requires advanced preparation. When Mrs. Syriac concluded her presentation, Mr. Putorti said five and half new positions for \$91,000 is very good, very creative solutions. Mr. Hatfield asked why the science teacher has no benefits listed and Mrs. Syriac explained the retiring science teacher took benefits so the numbers are already included in the budget for the replacement teacher. The other two retiring teachers did not take benefits so those numbers had to be added in to the budget. Mr. Hatfield said he felt this may be confusing for the public to understand. Mr. Hatfield also asked why the science teacher allocation was not shown when the other retiring teachers' allocations were. Mr. Belden explained this is because the science teacher allocation was going to savings. Mr. Belden agreed to think about a way to make this more understandable. Mr. Strumello voiced a concern about the way the salaries look in the budget; he fears the public will think teachers make over \$100,000 if we include the cost of health insurance. Mrs. Syriac also reminded the Board that the 2015-16 budget will include a Capstone Coordinator which is a result of secondary education reform. She also shared her vision of in the future offering a World Language program to K-5. In addition, she informed the Board that the Special Education offices will be moving back to Chatfield-LoPresti since this is the school where the PreK-PreS program is located as well as the extended school year program in the summer. Mr. Putorti said he felt a 3.5% increase might be difficult for the town to take given the history of not being able to get budget referendums passed. Mr. Stanek thanked Mrs. Syriac for the presentation and the work that went into it. Mrs. Harmeling said she was taking a new approach this year and not thinking of the numbers but rather thinking of the elements. She said she is very comfortable with this budget. Mr. Hatfield indicated he was impressed that many of the increases were teaching positions. He said he thought the additional two high school sports appendix e positions should be added in, and he asked if there were any incubator programs at the elementary level. Mrs. Syriac responded that there were no incubator programs at the elementary level and there was not a currently a need for them since our wonderful PTAs often provide for these types of programs. With regard to the two additional sports stipends at the high school, Mrs. Syriac explained she did not move them forward based on the lower number of participants in those sports. Mr. Strumello asked if the content coordinator position would ruffle the union's feathers. Mrs. Syriac said this is in the teachers' contract and she would have conversations with the union to ensure everyone is on the same page. Mr. Strumello felt the content coordinator position for 6-12 was a wonderful idea. Mrs. Syriac said there is a great deal of potential to be very successful. Ms. Magri said she thought the budget was very thoughtful and she appreciated all the work that went into it. She said participation in the middle school cross country team was really high and wondered if there is a need for an assistant coach. Mrs. Syriac and Mrs. Hamad discussed this and at this time the current head coach is very comfortable and sees no need for an assistant coach. Ms. Magri asked about the addition of two teachers at the middle school and wondered if a move from grade 7 to grade 8 could be made. Mrs. Syriac said because of the scheduling, this would not be possible; the large class size issue would simply switch to the other grade. Mr. Hatfield asked about additional costs associated with the STEM program and Mrs. Syriac said most of the associated costs are already built into the budget. There is a need for training (\$2700) and possibly some additional computers, text books, and supplies but these can come out of the current budget. Mr. Hatfield also asked about the matching funds grants and Mr. Belden explained that is in this year's budget. Ms. Gesek asked Mrs. Syriac if we are technology ready for testing in the spring and Mrs. Syriac said our technology group is working very hard on this project and while we need to purchase additional computers for the middle school, we will be ready for the first round of testing. Ms. Gesek also asked about the costs associated with the Common Core State Standards implementation. Mrs. Syriac said she would bring this information as well as the cost associated with the Teacher Evaluation to a future BOE meeting. Mr. Strumello indicated he was thinking out of the box and wondered if we could possible do something with neighboring towns to save on costs associated with Special Education.

Ms. Harmeling said the consolidation of services has been discussed and there was no reason why we couldn't discuss this with other towns. Mr. Hatfield said he thinks we need to take a harder look at consolidating services within the town before we consolidate with other towns. First Selectman Kurt Miller said there is a meeting next week to discuss the consolidation of technology and grounds maintenance. Mr. Stanek agreed that consolidation of grounds services should be discussed since that line item is \$50,000. First Selectman Miller indicated there were a lot of things that needed to be worked out such as when the work can be performed. Mr. Putorti agreed saying there are lots of details to work out. Ms. Gesek asked about the remediation at the middle school and Mrs. Syriac said Mr. Belden and Mr. Natzel are getting additional proposals and when available it will be brought back to the Board. Mr. Hatfield asked if pages were missing in the document and Mrs. Syriac confirmed the pages with unions who are in contract negotiations had been removed. Mrs. Syriac reiterated the need for the STEM teacher and asked the Board to support this position so the Middle School can begin to prepare for this position.

III. **POSSIBLE ACTION**

A. 2014-15 Board of Education Budget

MOTION: (Mr. Strumello/sec., Ms. Harmeling) to approve the Superintendent's Education Budget for the 2014-15 School year in the amount of \$32,024,884 and move it forward to the Town of Seymour

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Gesek, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Klarides, Ms. Magri, Mr. Putorti, Ms. Sobieski-McAndrew, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

Mr. Stanek asked about additional money for the police officer budget. We will stand beside the Board of Police Commissioners on this and we need to be prepared to support their budget request. We need to attend the Board of Police Commissioners Budget Presentation to show support. We need everyone to remember this is in response to the tragedy in Newtown. Mr. Miller agreed 100% saying they already have the officer on staff and it would not be an addition to the police budget. However, there are lots of increases on their budget and having the Board of Education show their support would be great.

IV. **REPORTS**

A. Chairman's Report
None

V. **ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION: (Mr. Hatfield/sec., Mr. Strumello) to adjourn the meeting

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Gesek, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Klarides, Ms. Magri, Mr. Putorti, Ms. Sobieski-McAndrew, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Submitted by:
Lee-Ann Dauerty
Board Clerk