



SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

January 7, 2013

Seymour Middle School

7:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Yashu Putorti, Chairman
Jim Garofolo
Saundra Gesek
Kristen Harmeling
Jennifer Magri
Fred Stanek
Ed Strumello
Lee-Ann Dauerty, Board Clerk

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Jay Hatfield
Peter Kubik

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Christine Syriac, Superintendent of Schools
Nancy Snopkowski, Associate Superintendent
Rick Belden, Asst. Superintendent, Finance & Operations
Virginia Bauer, Director of Special Services
Roberta Pratt, Systemwide Technology Coordinator
Glenn Lungarini, Principal, Seymour High School
Jim Freund, Assistant Principal, Seymour High School
Paul Lucke, Assistant Principal, Seymour High School
Mary Sue Feige, Principal, Bungay Elementary School
David Olechna, Principal, Chatfield-LoPresti School
Leslie Sojka, Assistant Principal, Chatfield-LoPresti School
Bernadette Hamad, Principal, Seymour Middle School
Ernie DiStasi, Assistant Principal, Seymour Middle School
Allison Brett
Megan Krushinski
Kurt Miller, First Selectman, Town of Seymour
Trisha Danko, Seymour Finance Board
Tara Petrino
Ethan Fry

Mr. Putorti called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

1. Budget Workshop

Mr. Putorti introduced Mrs. Syriac to review her budget proposal. Mrs. Syriac said she would like to go over some key points of her budget. She said she and her staff were sensitive to the economy and tried very hard to balance the economy with the needs of the district. She said when she approached her administrators for their budgets she asked them to be creative and to try and reallocate funds to meet their needs. Her budget request focuses on: 1. ensuring that we maintain our operational responsibilities to foster a positive and safe learning and working environment. 2. reducing class sizes at the middle school (over a two year period) while maintaining our class sizes and staffing levels in our other three schools 3. finding methods to reallocate existing funds so as to provide necessary resources that we have not been able to support through new budget monies in the past. 4. Providing increased opportunities for student involvement in after school programs. She said she has included her vision for the 2014-15 budget as a reference. First Selectman Kurt Miller made a request of all town departments to keep their budget increases to 2% and Mrs. Syriac and her administration kept that in mind as they went through the process. She noted that when you look at the budget, it appears to favor the middle school but this is because of the enrollment numbers in that school and the cuts to staff at the middle school in 2009-10. In the past, we did not replace four Language/English positions and that created significant hardships at Seymour Middle School. Class size is 28-30 in many classes. The district enrollment is predicted to be approximately 2300 next year, Kindergarten numbers are unknown but a placeholder of 168 kindergarten students was used in the budget. Health Insurance expenses are projected at a 5.9% increase with the number to be finalized in April when additional claim experience is realized. The total proposed increase of \$715,959 (2.4%) is primarily due to:

<u>COST AREA</u>	<u>INCREASED AMOUNT</u>	<u>% OF OVERALL INCREASE</u>
1. Salaries	\$372,216	1.2% (52% of total increase)
2. Employee Benefits	\$ 83,575	.3% (12% of total increase)
3. Other	\$55,802	.2% (8% of total increase)
Total Level Services	\$511,593	1.7% (72% of total increase)
New Requests	\$204,366	.7% (18% of total increase)
2013-14 Request	\$715,959	2.4%

Mrs. Syriac briefly described each of the new requests and the reasoning behind each request. Her new requests are:

- Increased two full-time teaching positions at the middle school - One would be a Grade 7 English Language Arts Teacher and one would be a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)Teacher (additional Unified Arts)
- Appendix E Pilot Clubs – Provide a vehicle for the exploration of new clubs/after school activities for students. Mrs. Syriac thanked Mr. Lucke for suggesting this idea.
- Four part time monitor paraprofessionals – Two for each elementary school to assist in supervision during lunch and recess.
- Cross Country Team at Seymour Middle School – Increase opportunity for middle school students to participate in athletics.
- One additional school bus – Would provide for a late bus at the middle school and high school which would provide additional students with the opportunity to participate in after school activities. In addition, this bus would potentially assist in reduced wait time resulting from out of district bus routes.

Mrs. Syriac also described the potential reallocation of funds:

- STEM Program at Seymour Middle School – materials to support the program will be purchase through current monies allotted to technology, supplies, textbooks, and Title I grant professional development and supply funds.
- PT (.5) school counselor at Chatfield-LoPresti School – The caseload of the current school counselor at Chatfield-LoPresti indicates a need for additional support. Through reallocations/rewriting of the Title I grant a part time (.5) school counselor will be hired for Chatfield-LoPresti. The board would need to approve the addition of this position.
- Full-time Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) – Due to a rise in the students being service under the primary label of Autism in recent years, a need for a full time Board Certified Behavior Analyst is indicated. In one year, there was a rise of 9 students who receive services. Currently 40 students are serviced in Seymour. State legislation requires all students with a primary disability of Autism require access to a BCBA to oversee their program. Currently Seymour contracts with ACES Outreach for our BCBA services. Over the past three years the costs have risen by \$11,922 since 2010-11. The current contract provides for 12 hours per week (2 full days) at a cost of \$62,482. As more students are identified and/or move into our district, this price will rise. Contracting with ACES does not allow us to have a BCBA in district every day to help with the more difficult cases. The BCBA will need to assist with the development of DTI (Discrete Trial Intervention) Program by provide support in data collection, program writing, training of staff, and behavioral supports. The position would be a non-certified employee so they would not be part of the teachers bargaining unit and would be a 12 month position which would allow for support in summer school. The typical salary range would run from \$70,000-\$80,000 plus benefits. This request was made for a few years and has been cut due to failed referendums. Given the change in the Autistic population ad overall behavioral support needs, funds would be reallocated from IDEA grant to add this position.

Mrs. Syriac also indicated that the new art teacher at Seymour High School would be charged with adding new programs in addition to the traditional art programs. She said the Math program needs something similar to what we had for our Literacy program such as Math coaches and Math SRBI teachers in grades K-5. She also noted that we will continue to see positive things in the future due to the addition of full day kindergarten.

Mr. Putorti thanked Mrs. Syriac for her presentation and commended her and her team for doing their best to stay within the 2% guideline put forth by Mr. Miller. He then asked if any Board members would like to ask questions or discuss anything.

Mrs. Harmeling asked Mrs. Syriac to hypothesize how the new teachers' evaluation program would impact our district. Mrs. Syriac said: 1. Intensive professional development will be necessary but the current budget should support it. 2. The impact on Administration remains unknown and how much time will be needed is unknown. Thus some tasks currently done by administration may be impacted. She said she felt she should be able to share this in a year. 3. Procedural. Procedures must be followed. Mrs. Harmeling asked about technology and if the district is ready to take standardized tests on computers. Mrs. Syriac said we will be ready. The district is currently looking at how to refresh computers based on their age. The state is also looking at the age of computers.

Mr. Garofolo stated that he felt the age of the computers was not relevant saying it is only a piece of equipment that provides a service based on the software available. He questioned the "faster is better" society. The question is can the student perform the tasks necessary.

Mrs. Magri said we are not asking to upgrade all computers within the district and that what is proposed is an ongoing cycle of maintenance. She said no one is saying we need all new computers. She said she felt we do need the best and respectfully disagreed with Mr. Garofolo.

Ms. Gesek asked if the new bus would be a big or small bus. Mr. Belden said it would be a regular sized bus. She also asked if we can share a Behaviorist with a neighboring town. Mr. Putorti reminded her that we are not adding to the budget because they are reallocating grant funds for this position. Ms. Bauer said they were able to add this position without any cost increase. The behaviorist would assist in all four schools and would be able to train our staff in the district which would save funds. They would be able to do on-site training and could provide services to students not on the spectrum. They would also be able to provide services in the summer as this would be a 12 month position.

Mr. Strumello asked if we would be able to set the hours of the Behaviorist. Currently, we contract based on IEP needs. If we did not use all the hours could the district charge another district to use our behaviorist. Ms. Bauer said we could possibly offer training to other districts. Mr. Strumello also voiced his support for additional monitor paraprofessionals and felt the need is there based on bullying and recent events concerning security. Mr. Strumello suggested that it might be time to take a look at our sports programs to ensure our coach to student ratio is correct and to also look at the number of advisors for clubs. Mr. Putorti reminded him that coaching positions are part of the teachers' contract. Mr. Putorti asked Mrs. Syriac if an analysis of this can be done. Mr. Strumello also agreed with the additional teaching positions at the middle school.

Mr. Stanek said he was pleased with the Pilot Clubs proposal and that he is glad we are going down that path. He said he felt these activities are important. He asked how much money we are allocating for security. Mr. Putorti said if there are changes needed; it would be on a separate budget. Mr. Belden noted that future federal and state grant opportunities would become available to the district. Mr. Putorti stated that security is a town issue. Mr. Stanek asked about the savings from hiring this year. Mrs. Syriac said she would bring that information to the next meeting. Mr. Stanek asked if we can encumber the hiring savings in a contingency fund. Mr. Stanek also voiced his disappointment that again no Fine Arts teacher was included in the budget. He feels this is an issue we need to move on because we are missing the mark. He feels we have lost our Fine Arts departments and that we should be offering more than just a digital option. We shouldn't be concentrating only on sports in Seymour. We need to expand our music and our art programs. When he compares Seymour to Oxford, he feels Oxford does a much better job at producing plays and having a marching band. Mrs. Harmeling said she felt if we take a commitment like this on, then it will need to start at the elementary school level.

Ms. Gesek asked about capital projects; specifically replacement of windows and the roof at Bungay Elementary School. Mr. Belden explained that is part of the rolling capital projects plan and would be looked at by the School Needs committee and would not be part of our budget but would be done through a referendum.

Mr. Putorti asked if there were any other comments or questions and noted that he felt the budget was a thoughtful one and he felt that a 2.4% increase was possible. He said he hoped the town would accept the budget but noted the problem is our audience is a small one and we will need to get the accurate information out to the public.

Mrs. Danka said she supported the budget. Mr. Stanek said he felt it was a very responsible budget and that we may have asked for too much in the last two years. He asked about adding a Fine Arts position at the high school. Mrs. Syriac said she felt the student participation is not there yet but would like to see it grow for the future. Mr. Stanek said he would like to show that we are trying to move in that direction. Mr. Lungarini said he felt we are moving in that direction by offering the guitar class and doing a show in March, he said before we can add a teacher we need to have the students to participate. He said it took three years in Oxford to get the program off the ground. He said we should continue to build on this and not add a class yet. Mr. Stanek reminded Mr. Lungarini of the challenge to produce a play at the high school. Mr. Lungarini spoke about the expenses involved in producing a play. We have a variety of avenues but they depend on student participation, he suggested we do things to make the interest grow. Mr. Stanek asked if he meant allocate funds. Mr. Lungarini noted that Oxford fundraised \$15,000 for last year's show.

There was a brief discussion on the history of Seymour and Oxford.

Mr. Garofolo said it was important that we answer the questions of the taxpayers of Seymour. Mr. Putorti said public opinion is how we vote. Mr. Garofolo said it is an ongoing battle. Mr. Putorti noted the Board of Education is working hard to change the perception. Mrs. Magri noted the Citizens Academy is a perfect example of this.

Mrs. Hamad talked about the ongoing collaboration with Mr. Lungarini regarding Fine Arts and they are looking to include the elementary schools also. She said she felt we needed one more year to grow the programs. Mr. Freund noted that there is a graduation requirement in 2015 for Fine Arts and they are working with the middle school regarding the music program transition.

2. Review and possible action on the 2013-14 Education Budget

MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Strumello) to approve the Superintendent's Education Budget for the 2013-14 School year in the amount of \$31,113,985 and move it forward to the Town of Seymour

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Gesek, Ms. Harmeling, Ms. Magri, Mr. Putorti, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

3. Chairman's Report

None

4. Superintendent's Report

Mrs. Syriac thanked the Board for their support of the budget.

MOTION: (Mr. Garofolo/sec., Ms. Harmeling): to adjourn the meeting

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Gesek, Ms. Harmeling, Ms. Magri, Mr. Putorti, Mr. Stanek,
Mr. Strumello

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Submitted by:
Lee-Ann Dauerty
Board Clerk