Seymour Board of Education

COMMUNITY COMMITTEE MINUTES

February 19, 2015
Seymour Middle School
Library Media Room
7:30 p.m.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Kristen Harmeling
Yashu Putorti
Dawn Adams
Richard Belden
Brian Cleveland
Aimee Cronin
Beth Esposito

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Christine Syriac, Superintendent
Rob Dyer, Director of Technology
Pat Boyle, Board Clerk

I. **CALL TO ORDER**

A. Kristen Harmeling called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. **REPORTS AND INFORMATION**

A. Chairman's remarks:
Mrs. Harmeling stated that the biggest need for the committee at this time was to communicate to the public about the budget. The budget has been approved by the Board of Education. Mr. Putorti and Mrs. Harmeling are ready to take the budget out on a "Road Show". They would also like to do a webinar as they did last year with over 120 people viewing it. Mrs. Harmeling would like to have the presentation tonight be a "pre-test" of their presentation. She asks that everyone view the presentation and suggest ways to make it better for the public.

B. 2014-2015 Budget materials

C. New Haven Register article re: Seymour Budget January 15, 2015

D. Budget Presentation:
Mrs. Harmeling stated that items B. and C. were attached for you to read before the meeting for the purposes of background information. Mrs. Harmeling then gave the attached presentation.

III. **OPEN DISCUSSION**

A. Moderated discussion on issues pertaining to Seymour BOE-approved budget and communicating the budget to the Seymour Community
Mrs. Harmeling asked for input at this time on what was important, what was extraneous, what should be changed. The consensus of opinion was that it was a well thought out, informative presentation. People felt that slide 12 should go deeper into where we line up with other towns spending more and less than we do. Also, town names should be listed. It was suggested that we use towns that are in our DRG, District Reference Group, as these towns are in our same socio-economic demographics. Mrs. Harmeling said she thinks it is unfair to only use test scores as a rating system. A number of other factors should be considered such as AP classes taken and passed by our students. The discussion then became how to get people out to vote. Mrs. Harmeling hopes to get both parents in a household to vote. Suggestions ranged from doing these presentations during parent-teacher conferences, at PTA meetings, tying the presentation in with a student related activity or a family fun night event. It was also suggested that the Board of Education should have a Facebook account or Twitter account. This would be an effective way to get the word out to a lot of parents.

It would be a pyramid effect with people sharing the account with each other. There could be a link on these accounts to go to view the webinar. It was also suggested we tie the day of voting to a family or community social event. This is harder for us to do as the voting does not take place in a school. Mrs. Harmeling wanted to know how to get the middle school and high school students more involved. It was suggested that we look into the possibility of having an after school club such as FBLA. Future Business Leaders of America, do a project on the budget process. We should also utilize our students to produce and film the webinar. A reminder was given that Mrs. Syriac could not do a Connect-ED message or use school resources to make flyers. Any calling or distribution of materials has to come from the PTAs. Mr. Miller, Seymour First Selectman, sends a reminder call utilizing the Code Red calling system. It was suggested that he give a second call around 5:00 p.m. the day of voting for those that forgot to go vote. Mrs. Harmeling said we need to get rid of the idea that we overspend.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT (re; Item II B, C and D)

It was suggested that we stress that fact that we spend $2000.00 per pupil less than the median spent by the other towns in the state. A nice addition would be for Mrs. Harmeling to open and close the slide show with our student's achievements. (i.e., clubs, science competitions, geography bee, culinary winner, etc.)

V. CLOSING REMARKS

A. Chairman's remarks

Mrs. Harmeling thanked everyone for coming out and offering suggestions. She will update the presentation.

B. Committee member remarks

None

VI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: (Ms. Adams/sec., Ms. Cronin) to adjourn the meeting

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Mrs. Harmeling, Mr. Putorti, Mr. Belden, Ms. Adams, Ms. Cronin, Mr. Cleveland, Ms. Esposito

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Submitted by:
Pat Boyle

SEYMOUR BOARD OF EDUCATION

2015-2016 Community Budget Presentation

SHARED WITH THE COMMUNITY
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Feb 19, 2015

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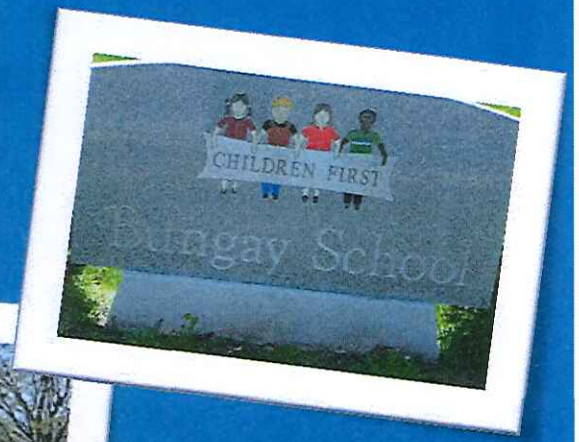

THE TOWN OF SEYMOUR BUDGET PROCESS

1. Superintendent presents budget recommendations to BOE, which adopts the budget, in January
2. The BOE (and all departmental budgets) submitted to town and Board of Finance (BOF) in January
3. BOF holds budget workshops in February and March
4. The 7 BOF members can reduce BOE (and any departmental budgets) before the town votes on the budget
5. BOF submits budget and Annual Town Hearing is held – typically in April
6. Annual Town Meeting typically held in April/May, and town meeting is "adjourned" to a Budget Referendum
7. Budget Referendum occurs until budget passes – with BOF adjustments after each failed referendum

Registered voters and non-registered voters who own $1,000 or more in taxable property can vote!!!

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HOW THE BOE BUDGET IS DEVELOPED:

The budget is developed under the direction of Superintendent Syriac with school and administrative input before being presented to the Board of Education.

Under Superintendent Syriac's direction, each administrator is charged to present a budget for their respective department/building to the Office of the Superintendent that:

- requires minimal additional funds,
- may involve reallocation of funds, and
- Includes a vision of what they would like to plan for in future years.

"This final budget recommendation reflects my best judgment as to what the district needs at a minimum to meet the needs of our students while enabling the district to operate reasonably and safely and continue to make progress at addressing areas for student growth and enhancement."

-Superintendent Syriac, BOE Budget Workshop, January 8th, 2015

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2015-2016 BUDGET REQUESTS FOCUS ON:

- Ensuring that we maintain our operational responsibilities to foster a positive and safe learning and working environment
- Increasing staffing levels in the special services department to effectively meet the needs of our students
- 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
- Providing additional opportunities for student involvement in after school programs.

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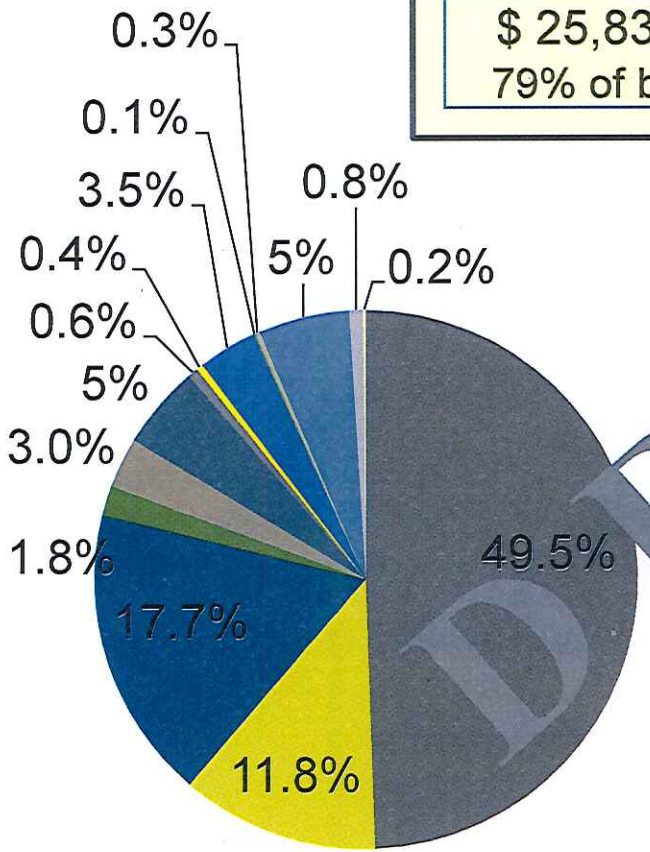
2015-2016 BOE BUDGET REQUEST



$ 25,836,775
79% of budget

$16,197,174	Certified Staff
$ 3,848,979	Non-Certified Staff
$ 5,790,622	Employee Benefits
$ 589,000	Professional Services
$ 6,980	Infrastructure Services
$ 1,630,455	Transportation
202,521	Property/Liability/Athletic Insurance
$ 129,770	Communications
$ 1,156,228	Tuition
$ 30,150	Travel
$ 87,851	Adult Education Services
$ 1,777,785	All Supplies*
$ 261,900	Equipment (technology)
$ 57,750	Dues/Fees & Conferences/Seminars
$32,747,165	

Up 3.2%, or $1,016,718

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* Supplies in all categories: instructional, office, utilities, gas, etc.

DECREASES:

- Elimination of two teacher positions $(162,122)
  - *HS teacher retiring and not being replaced*
  - *Vacancy for Library Media Specialist not being filled*
- Retiring elementary school teacher replaced with returning teacher, who is at a lower step than retiring teacher $(42,[illegible]79)
- Part time athletic director position eliminated (duties to be performed by HS Asst. Principal) $(34,455)
- Small savings in Associate Superintendent replacement salary $(5,000)
- Elimination of HS French [illegible] $(2,484)
- Heating fuel $(16,080)
- Bus fuel $(28,6[illegible]5)
- Technical Services & Technology Contract Services $(9,620)

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Nearly half (34 of 73) of all line items have a 0% increase or a decrease, totaling just over $300,000 in reductions.

COST SAVING INITIATIVES:

- Join consortiums and buying groups for fuel; including, in 2014, obtaining electricity generation rate 21% lower than standard
- Invest in cost-saving systems like Chatfield-LoPresti geo-thermal system, changing SMS and SHS to gas from oil, software to turn off district computers, sensor light systems in buildings, energy lighting retrofit program
- Move health insurance to two plans (teachers in FY13 and administrators in FY14) and successfully moved more-than-expected amount of employees to lower-cost (for district) HMA plan.
- Aggressively pursue grants to enhance instruction and provide opportunities for students: State grants for chromebooks and laptops; school security, Perkins grants for vocational-technical education

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NOT ENOUGH TO PAY FOR OBLIGATIONS AND GROWING NEEDS

- Contractual commitments for salary increases. No bargaining unit is receiving more than 2.99% salary increase; even small increases make a big impact since salaries is our biggest expense
- No organization is immune from rising health care costs. 4.2% is lower than the industry norm
- Savings in fuel and gas are eaten by increases in electricity
- One time cost of $25,000 in professional services due to NEASC accreditation process
- Increase in worker's compensation insurance
- Increase in retirement benefits payments due
- Increase in transportation costs
- Increase in number of children with special needs; increase in cost of providing services to those children

Contractual obligations and known cost adjustments drive nearly all changes to the Board of Education budget.

The work to hold down contractual obligations is handled by the Liaison Committee of the BOE along with administration, who work multiple evenings and hours with our union reps.

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COMPARISON OF CATEGORY SUBTOTALS – 13/14 TO 14/15

	14-15 Budget	15-16 Budget	Requested $ Inc (Dec) vs FY14	Requested % Inc (Dec) vs FY14
Certified Staff	$15,853,894	$16,197,174	$ 343,280	2.2%
Non-Certified Staff	$ 3,654,018	$ 3,848,979	$ 194,961	5.3%
Employee Benefits	$ 5,554,651	$ 5,790,622	$ 235,971	4.2%
Professional Services	$ 546,400	$ 589,000	$ 42,600	7.8%
Infrastructure Services	$ 992,510	$ 986,980	$ (5,530)	-0.6%
Transportation	$ 1,594,760	$ 1,630,455	$ 35,695	2.2%
Property/Liability/Athletic Insurance	$ 192,873	$ 202,521	$ 9,648	5.0%
Communications	$ 125,595	$ 129,770	$ 4,175	3.3%
Tuition	$ 1,015,515	$ 1,156,228	$ 140,713	13.9%
Travel	$ 30,150	$ 30,150	$ -	0.0%
Adult Education Services	$ 86,501	$ 87,851	$ 1,350	1.6%
All Supplies	$ 1,763,930	$ 1,777,785	$ 13,855	0.8%
Equipment (technology)	$ 261,900	$ 261,900	$ -	0.0%
Dues/Fees/Conferences/Seminars	$ 57,750	$ 57,750	$ -	0.0%
TOTAL	$ 31,730,447	$32,747,165	$ 1,016,718	3.2%

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ADJUSTMENTS AND ADDITIONS TO SERVE SEYMOUR STUDENTS:

Special Education Services: In house staff needs

- $29,597 - Increase Bungay special education from part- to full-time
- $29,597 - Add .5 special education teacher to HS
- $30,982 - Add an instructional paraprofessional to each elementary school
- $ 7,529 - Increase part-time social worker at HS to a .5 position

$97,705

Special Education Services: Outplaced student tuition + Transportation — **$130,893**

Other Adjustments/Expenses for students

- Reallocation of a grade 5 teacher at Bungay to provide for a full-time Math SRBI teacher so that we can have one at each elementary school
- Add stipend for Lion Crew Advisor (club helps 9th graders make the transition to HS)
- Add stipend for Performing Arts Club Advisor

$4,968

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SEYMOUR SCHOOLS: CONTRIBUTING TO THE VITALITY OF THE TOWN OF SEYMOUR

- Whenever possible, we use local businesses for fundraisers, school events, etc.
- Staff and students support multiple charity ventures: The Valley United Way - $12,000 in the past two years, Seymour Pink, American Cancer Society, RSD Association, ALS, Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, Diabetes Association, contributions to families struggling with loss and hardship: loss due to fire, loss due to death, hardship due to illness, etc
- Students collect and donate over 300 turkeys each year plus the non-perishable food items that go with the turkeys
- At the middle school alone this year, gifts and monetary donations were made to provide 65 families with gifts for the holidays
- Students volunteer their time at Shady Knoll, participating in parades, performing for various groups, volunteering at the Pumpkin Festival, for Seymour Pink, etc.
- Employees, nearly 130 of them, frequent local businesses for their coffee, for lunch, for grocery shopping, for gasoline, for dry cleaning, for health supplies, etc.
- Seymour gets a great return on its investment in education!

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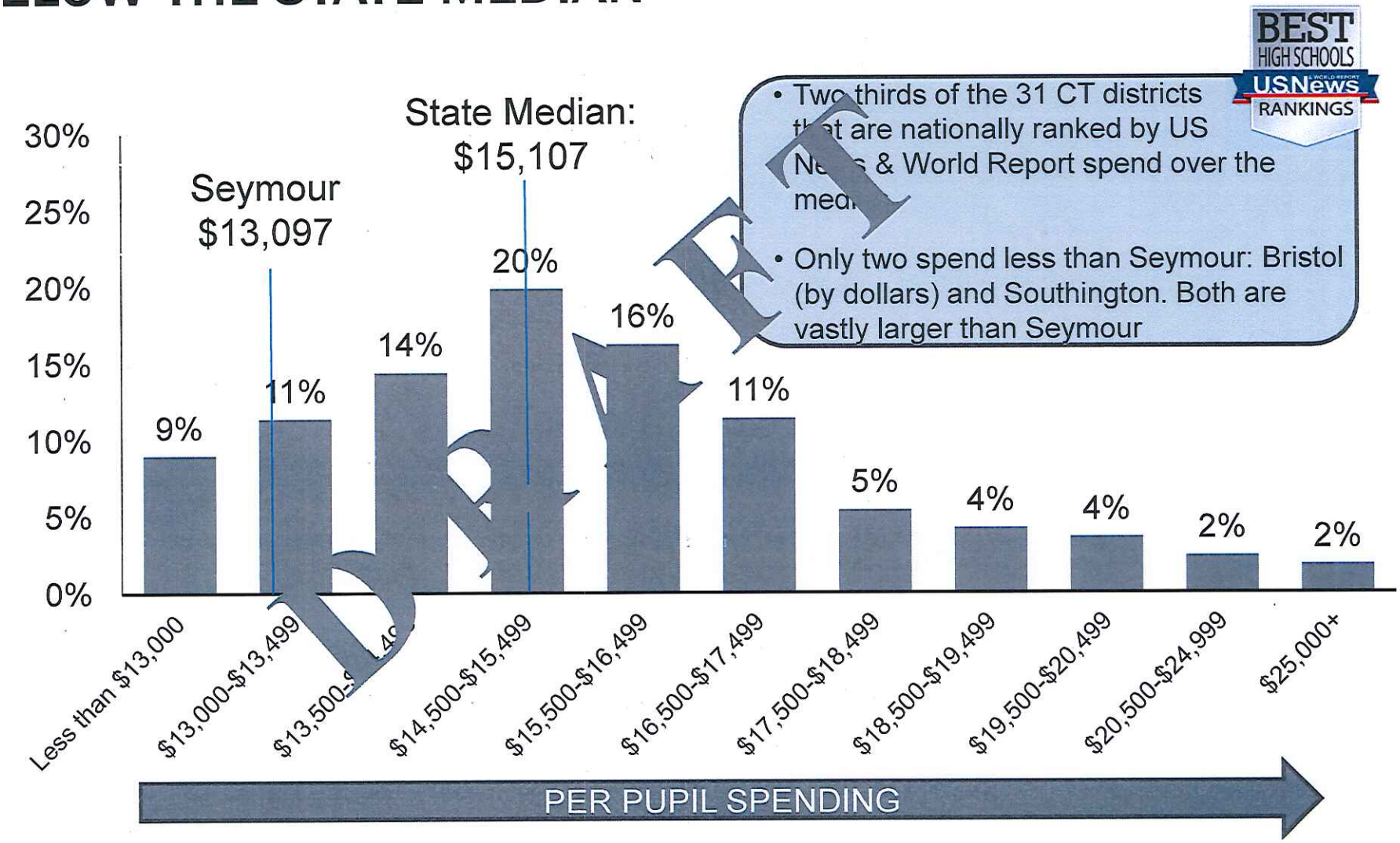
PER PUPIL SPENDING: SEYMOUR SIGNIFICANTLY BELOW THE STATE MEDIAN



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NEVER MIND AN ADDITIONAL $2,000 PER STUDENT... HERE'S WHAT WE'D DO WITH AN ADDITIONAL $200 PER STUDENT:

$460,000 could go towards things like…

- Intervention for students – more SRBI teachers and tutors
- Expanded summer programs for at-risk students and those at risk of falling behind
- World language program in elementary schools – language labs in middle and high schools
- K-8 and 9-12 curriculum support through content/curriculum coordinator – lead curriculum revisions, coach teachers on pedagogy and instructional strategy, conduct PD, assist in instructional rounds, classroom observations and more
- Leadership and mentoring opportunities for teachers
- Additional physical education classes for elementary school students
- Data analysis assistance for state reporting and to help with data-driven instructional plans
- Instruments and additional teachers for band and orchestra in elementary schools
- An even stronger fine-arts program in middle and high schools

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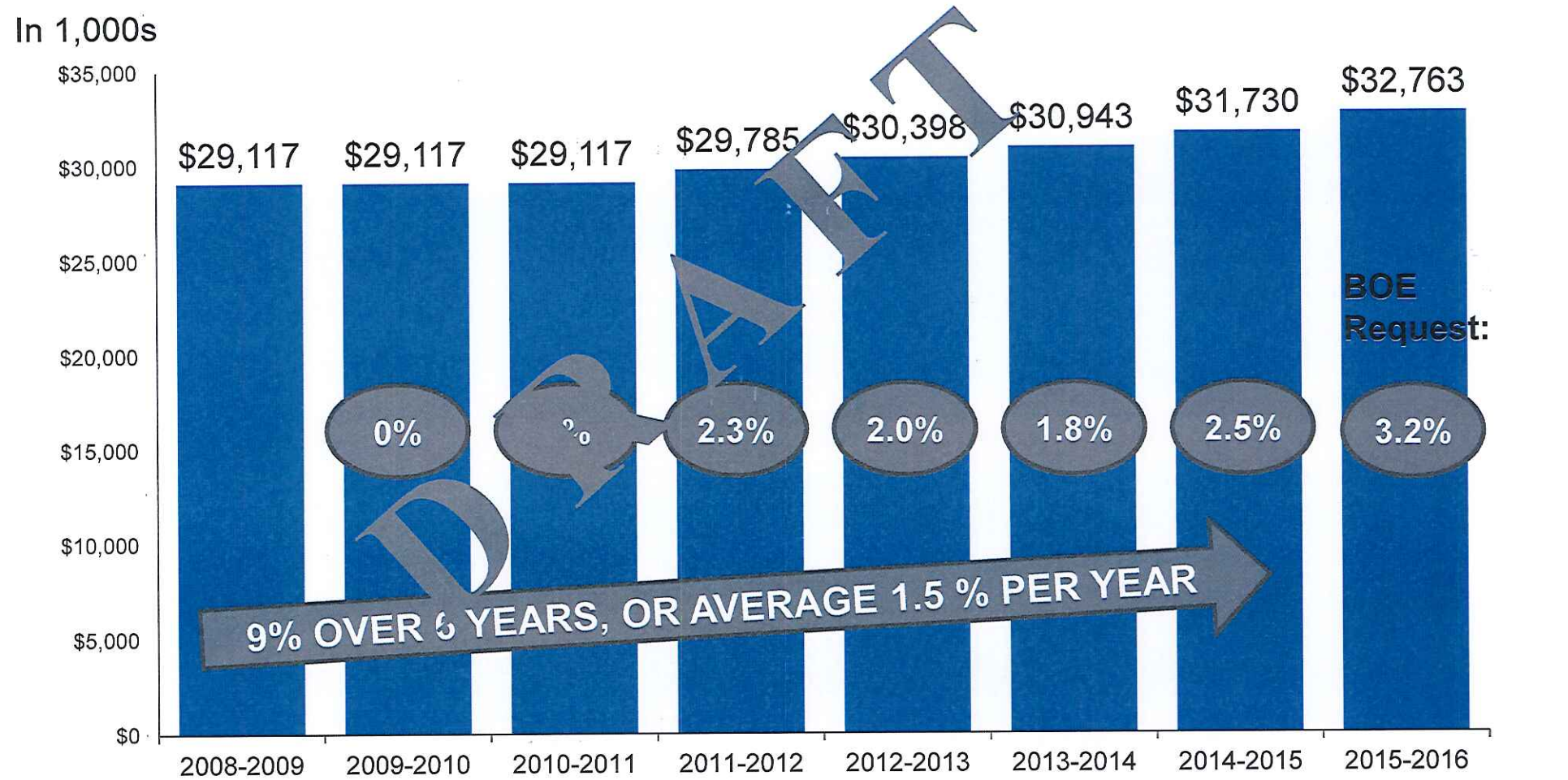
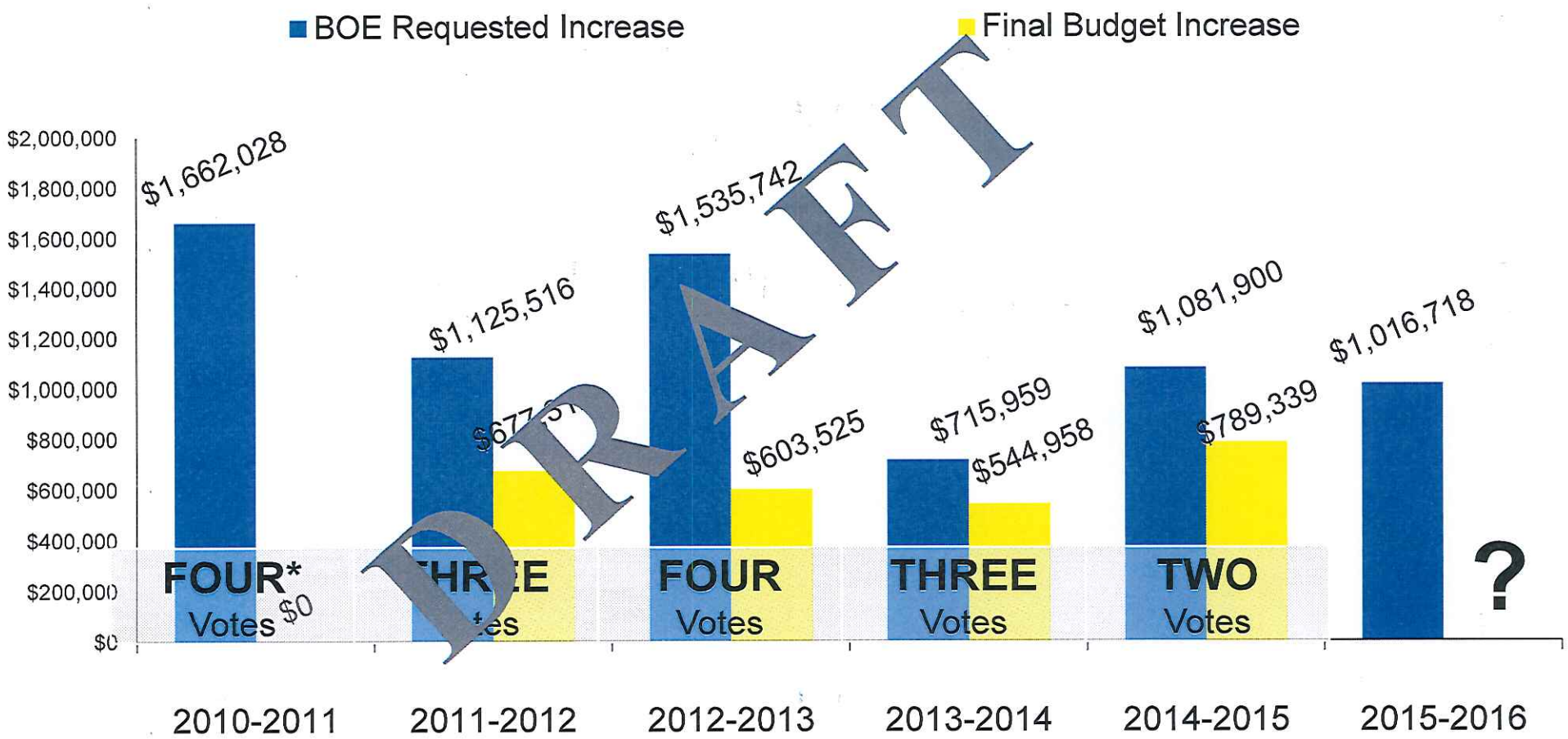
SEYMOUR SCHOOLS: BUDGET HISTORY



3.8 -0.4 1.6 3.2 2.1 1.5 1.6

Average inflation rate for the year. Average 1.9% each year since the end of 2008

BUDGET HISTORY & NUMBER OF REFERENDUMS



* Includes failing a 0% increase on the third referendum.

OUR GOAL FOR THIS YEAR:

TWO PEOPLE FROM EVERY VOTING HOUSEHOLD

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A YES VOTE IS A VOTE FOR:

- ✓ Seymour's kids
- ✓ Seymour's teachers
- ✓ Our property values
- ✓ Our community

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"I am in this position to move the district forward, I cannot advocate for standing still or for moving backward."

-Superintendent Syriac, BOE Budget Workshop, January 8th, 2015

Comments or questions?

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Next up: Annual Town Hearing, Thursday, the Middle School Auditorium

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