

Seymour Board of Education



SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

November 4, 2015
Seymour Middle School
Library Media Center
6:15 p.m.

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DATE: 11/9/15
TIME: 10:25 AM
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JOINT MEETING OF THE SEYMOUR BOARD OF EDUCATION AND THE SEYMOUR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Yashu Putorti, Chairman
Kristen Harmeling
Jay Hatfield
Jennifer Magri
Allison Sobieski
Fred Stanek
Ed Strumello
Daniel Robinson, Student Representative
Cassandra Quintiliano, Student Representative

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Saundra Gesek
Theodora Klarides

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Christine Syriac, Superintendent of Schools
Vonda Tencza, Associate Superintendent
Rick Belden, Assistant Superintendent, Finance & Operations
Lee-Ann Dauerty, Board Clerk
Rob Dyer, System Technology Coordinator
Jim Freund, Principal, SHS
David Willadsen, Teacher/Advisor, HS Student Council
Jake Velleco
Jacob Liedke
Josh Winkel
Connor Laoretti
Alex Steinbrick
Cyrus Gagaza
Daniel Bouzolin
Sukhman Singh
Joshua Magri
Grace Brangwynne
Pauline Karwowski
Gosia Fryc

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Putorti called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance and introductions at 6:22 p.m.

II. INFORMAL DISCUSSION

A. Informal Discussion between the Seymour Board of Education and the Seymour High School Student Council

Mr. Putorti explained that this meeting is meant to be an informal discussion with the high school student council. He said the Board would like to hear how things are going at Seymour High School. Mr. Stanek talked about the history of this meeting and that he and the Board are happy to be bringing this tradition back. He said the Board and the student council has a history of working together and sighted the breakfast program at the high school as one example of where the students came to the Board requesting a breakfast program and the Board was able to implement the program. He said vending machines were another example of where students made a proposal and the Board was able to accommodate their request. He said the Board is always willing to listen to concerns and hopefully be able to come to a conclusion or a compromise. If the students are not happy the Board wants to know why. Mr. Putorti then asked for introductions from the students and asked them to tell their grade and the role they play on the student council. The students discussed a variety of topics including the need for more technology, specifically a course in computer programming, a math team, and a robotics team. They also said they felt they needed more opportunities outside of school such as the Splash Program at Yale and Boston University, internships, and camps available to students. They noted they felt the funding for these things should come from the town or the Board of Education. Mr. Putorti acknowledged that the more we can offer the better prepared the students will be for college and life. Mr. Strumello asked the students to get more involved in the electoral process. He told the students that we typically have a 16% - 18% turnout for voting in Seymour, especially when voting for budgets. He said this is your chance to nag your family. Find out if they vote and if they do not, encourage them to do so. We need every parent to support our budget. Mr. Hatfield reminded students that if they are 18 they should get registered and vote also. Mrs. Harmeling said she has taken a very active role in communicating the budget over the last few years and it is a very hard job. The community is not giving us the money to do more things for the students. She asked the students to make proposals of what they would like to see happen in school. Our history of voting is that the budget does not pass on the first vote and sometimes it has taken three or four votes to get it passed. One student asked if the Board would be open to having students actually present budget information to the community. Ms. Harmeling acknowledged that she would like to involve students earlier in the process. We want to do all we can to improve our reputation in the community. Mrs. Syriac said they were looking for guidance on how to get more people to attend our budget presentations. One student suggested since a large majority of people who vote are older, maybe print advertisement and more information in the newspaper might be better than using technology. Ms. Magri pointed out that we have parents that don't vote or only one parent in the household votes. If all parents voted, we may get the budget passed. Parents need to understand that it comes down to choices because of money. She also asked the students to let the Board know if there are things we are offering now that maybe we shouldn't be. Mr. Robinson said as high school students; they didn't necessarily know what is in the budget. If the students could get a better explanation they might be able to better communicate. He suggested doing a parent survey asking for ideas and provide them with something that gives them the incentive to vote. Alex Steinbrick said some students don't understand why we have a budget. Mr. Freund suggested the Board come into the Personal Finance classes to explain the budget or even have a school wide assembly so the Board could explain the budget to the students. Another student suggested putting something on video and having it out there for students to access. There was also a suggestion to do something in advisory. When the students were asked if there were any policies they would like to discuss, a lively discussion ensued on the order of the math classes that students are required to take; Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II. Another student asked about more class integration and having more hands on work, smaller classes that would allow for small group work. Another student said that in AP courses there is more new material to cover and she found the lectures were very important. Otherwise, she noticed the teacher must go around explaining things over and over again to individual students. Another student suggested offering math courses based on the skill set of the student and also felt that a SAT Prep class should be offered so students can be better prepared in Math and Reading-Writing.

Mr. Putorti said that this meeting has been fun and thanked the students for their participation. He said the Board would attend one of their regularly scheduled meetings in the future.

III. **ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION: (Mr. Strumello/sec., Ms. Magri) to adjourn

SO VOTED

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:14 pm.

Submitted by:
Lee-Ann Dauerty
Board Clerk