



SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

January 7, 2016

Seymour Middle School – Library Media Center

7:00 p.m.

COPY RECEIVED
DATE: 1/13/16
TIME: 2:30 PM
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Yashu Putorti, Chairman
James Garofolo
Kristen Harmeling
Jay Hatfield
Jennifer Magri
Fred Stanek
Ed Strumello

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Theodora Klarides
Allison Sobieski

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Christine Syriac, Superintendent of Schools
Vonda Tencza, Associate Superintendent
Rick Belden, Assistant Superintendent - Finance & Operations
Lee-Ann Dauerty, Board Clerk
Ginny Tagliatela, Director of Special Services
Jim Freund, Principal, SHS
Bernadette Hamad, Principal, SMS
Ernie DiStasi, Assistant Principal, SMS
Mary Sue Feige, Principal, BS
Kristopher Boyle, Assistant Principal, BS
David Olechna, Principal, CLS
Roxanne Melaragno, Assistant Principal, CLS
Allison Acquavella
Cynthia Dion

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

Mr. Putorti explained that in the past the Superintendent presents the budget at this meeting, however, this year it was presented three days ago in order to give Board members time to review the content.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

III.

DISCUSSION

A. 2016-17 Board of Education Budget Workshop

Mr. Putorti asked the Board members if they had any changes or items they wished to discuss. Mrs. Syriac distributed a paper copy of the updated level service budget and roadmap. Ms. Harmeling said she is leery of a budget that assumes we will have no additional out placed students and feels we should have a least enough money to place one or two additional students just in case. Mrs. Syriac reminded the Board that when the budget was discussed last year, the Board of Finance repeatedly questioned the numbers of students that were out placed as being a true count. If we end up having an additional student that need to be out placed, she feels confident that the costs can be covered by the health insurance benefits line item which is presented as the worst case scenario. She reminded the Board that we have four special education students graduating but there are no guarantees to definite numbers since at any point in time, a family with special needs students could move into town and we will provide them with the necessary services. Ms. Harmeling said that we are early in the budget process and we could always change the line item back if the students in question are not out placed. Ms. Magri expressed her concern in trying to explain this to the Board of Finance. Mr. Garofolo asked Mrs. Syriac about increased support for curriculum. Mrs. Syriac said she spoke of the loss of the curriculum director and how it affects the support for administration in professional development when new curriculum is implemented. Mr. Garofolo also talked about the Connecticut Post article regarding Special Needs students. He is curious if we are good with identifying special needs students. He said he knows we provide what the law requires but do we have students who should not be in Special Education. Is there anything that we should consider regarding the budget? Mrs. Syriac said she felt we do a good job with not over identifying students. We were able to add a .5 teacher last year. What she is looking for at this point is an assistant director of special services but at this time does not feel comfortable adding an administrator. She said she will work with the union to develop a job classification for an Assistant Director of Special Services. She said the process will probably start when administrator negotiations start in June. Mr. Strumello said he was uncomfortable with some of the coaching inequities among different sports and pointed out several examples of the number of coaches verses the number of students. His concerns are for the inequities between boys and girls sports. Mrs. Syriac explained that Ms. Yusko is still assessing the program and at some point may be coming back to the Board with changes. They will need to look at freshman sports because participation is low in some sports. Baseball and Softball are equal but in softball the stipend for the assistant coach position is being split by two coaches. Ms. Yusko will continue to look at this. Long range it may become very difficult to maintain the size of our athletic program based on enrollment. We may need to look at consortium teams if enrollment continues to drop. Mr. Strumello questioned the 529 line item Athletic Insurance rate increase of almost 40%. Mr. Belden explained that the underwriter for this insurance changed and put through a substantial rate increase. In February or March, he plans to go out for bids. Mr. Strumello asked how athletic trainers are paid and Mr. Belden said they submit time cards and have a set rate to be paid. Ms. Harmeling asked if they work only during competitions or are they available during practice or during the school day. Mr. Belden said he believes they are available to students before the game and during games. Mr. Freund said the trainer also services other athletes who may need assistance during games. Ms. Harmeling asked about our flexibility with regard to eliminating an Appendix E position. Mrs. Syriac said we can eliminate a position as long as the season as not yet started. Mr. Hatfield asked if golf was co-ed and wondered if other sports could be co-ed. Mr. Hatfield wondered how golf was chosen as a sport to add to the budget and how many students are interested in playing on the golf team. Mrs. Syriac explained that she did not remember the number of students interested in golf however, a student who won an award and parents have indicated interest. Mr. Strumello said he liked the idea of consortium teams. Mr. Hatfield suggested the Athletic Committee could take a look and set check points. He noted the wrestling parents worked hard to keep wrestling at Seymour High School. Ms. Harmeling asked about showing what is encumbered and is interested in a way to reflect the dollars that were not used for technology due to other expenses. Mr. Belden said there is another column in the actual budget that shows what is actually spent. Ms. Harmeling asked about when formal transfers are made. Mr. Belden said we don't have that information during the budget process. Ms. Harmeling said it might be useful to have a column for the 2014-15 dollars spent. She also spoke of her fear that the arrangement with the Town for Workers Compensation will come back to bite us.

Mr. Garofolo pointed out that there is a conundrum with regard to budgets. People will look at budget and find situation where the money was spent and use the information against us. This is an issue for us and I don't know what the answer is he stated. We can only do the right thing with regard to the budget. Mrs. Syriac said she liked the idea of adding the 2014-15 original budgeted amounts. Mr. Hatfield asked about incubator clubs and Mrs. Syriac explained there is \$2500 for the middle school and \$2500 for the high school and each proposed club receives a \$500 stipend. There is not a time limit on when they become Appendix E positions; it is based on the impact of the club, the participation rate, and the recommendation of the Administrator. It is a wonderful way to get new clubs started. Mr. Hatfield asked why Appendix E positions don't start at step one. Mrs. Syriac said they start that the level of the advisor's previous experience. Mr. Hatfield asked if there is a current position where there is no longer interest can those funds be used for a different activity. Mrs. Syriac said yes and that is what they are looking into with the Audubon Club at the middle school. The advisor position has been posted several times inside and outside and no one has applied. We are looking to maybe using these funds for the Glee Club. Mr. Stanek said he was disappointed that the Audubon club may no longer be available to students and wondered if a parent or grandparent could do it. Mrs. Syriac said it was posted externally but we did not have any response. She said we could post it one more time. Mr. Hatfield asked what would happen to team leaders if the team model was changed to a department model at the middle school. Mrs. Syriac said this is something that would need to be looked at in the future noting the Board has talked about having content coordinators. Ms. Magri asked about the amount that was set aside for the internal services account for Workers Compensation. Is this number the agreed upon number with the town? Mr. Belden explained that this was a place holder and in February, a meeting with PMA to review cases could cause that number to change. She asked if we can only use the amount of funds that we deposit into the account. Mr. Belden said we will look at reserves each year and determine a number to contribute. All the money in this account will be pooled together and claims will be paid. Mr. Stanek asked about the deficit from last year and Mr. Belden said it has been absorbed by the town. Ms. Harmeling asked when the PMA and Auditors meeting would take place noting that she feels we should be involved. It is important that all departments are treated the same way. Mr. Stanek said it could be an adverse experience if we have to share the burden. Mr. Belden said there is a methodology and it is the first year we have done this. Mr. Hatfield said he would like to see the written guidelines on this process. Mr. Strumello asked where we stood with the consolidation of Mr. Natzel's position. Mrs. Syriac said Mr. Miller would like to continue discussion on this. The Director of Facilities would oversee all town buildings but the town would still hire a public works director. Mr. Hatfield said possibly some Board members could reach out to Mr. Miller again. Mr. Hatfield asked if Mr. Miller and Mr. Sawicki were invited to tonight's meeting and Mrs. Syriac confirmed both were invited and declined. Mr. Putorti asked if there were any other issues on the 2016-17 budget or if anyone had a change they would like to make to the Superintendent's budget. Ms. Harmeling said she would like to add an amount to the Special Education line item but was unsure how to arrive at a figure. She suggested \$28,000. Mr. Belden said he felt this was too low. Ms. Magri suggested the lowest amount of an outplacement in the detail was \$52,480. Mr. Garofolo asked Mrs. Syriac if she is satisfied with this budget noting that she is the expert. Mrs. Syriac said she felt they were chasing a number and reminded them that the Town wants the budget to mirror the number of students.

MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Strumello) to increase the line item #953 by \$52,483. Mr. Stanek said the proper procedure would be to vote on the budget and then entertain an amendment. After a brief discussion, Ms. Harmeling rescinded her motion and seconded by Mr. Strumello. Mr. Stanek offered a suggestion to go to the Board of Finance asking for this amount but promising to return it should it not be used by the students. Several Board members were not in favor of this. After a lengthy discussion, Mrs. Syriac said she was feeling uncomfortable about talking about the potential outplacements sighting confidentiality concerns. Mr. Putorti polled the members of the Board: Who is in favor of keeping the budget the same? Mr. Putorti, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Magri. Who is in favor of adding \$60,000? Mr. Strumello, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Harmeling.

MOTION: (Mr. Hatfield/sec., Ms. Harmeling) to adopt the superintendent's budget with the addition of \$60,000 to line item 953 making the total budget for the 2016-17 school year in the amount of \$32,914,408 (1.02% increase) and move it forward to the Town of Seymour

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Strumello, Mr. Stanek

OPPOSED: Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Magri, Mr. Putorti

The motion passes.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

Cindy Dion, 18 Carriage Drive, Seymour – She comes to the meetings to learn about the budget so she can help get the budget passed. She is now Pop Warner president and she would like to propose some Pop Warner nights in the schools. People can learn about the Pop Warner program and about the School budget. In the valley sports speak louder so why not use it to your advantage. She said she does not have a game plan yet but wanted to throw the idea out there.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

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

SO VOTED

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:48 pm

Submitted by:
Lee-Ann Dauerty
Board Clerk