



SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

January 9, 2018
Seymour Middle School – Library Media Center
7:00 p.m.

COPY RECEIVED
DATE: 1/10/18
TIME: 3:30 PM
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

- Jennifer Magri, Chairperson
- Christopher Champagne
- James Garofolo
- Kristen Harmeling
- Jay Hatfield (7:28)
- Edward Hendricks (7:03)
- Peter Kubik
- Fred Stanek
- Ed Strumello

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

- Michael Wilson, Superintendent of Schools
- Rick Belden, Assistant Superintendent - Finance & Operations
- Lee-Ann Dauerty, Board Clerk
- Kris Boyle, Director of Special Services
- Jim Freund, Principal, SHS
- Bernadette Hamad, Principal, SMS
- Mary Sue Feige, Principal, BS
- Lauren Reid, Assistant Principal, BS
- David Olechna, Principal, CLS
- Kevin Flaherty

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Magri called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:00 p.m.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Kevin Flaherty, 29 Emma Street, Seymour – Mr. Flaherty encouraged the schools to put the athletic schedules and happenings in the Voices newspaper. He felt this could raise attendance and bring awareness to the success of our students.

III. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

A. 2018-19 Board of Education Budget Workshop

Ms. Magri asked Mr. Wilson to go through the proposed budget. Mr. Wilson began his presentation by saying this budget was a collaborative effort by the administrative team and Central Office. The Central Office team met with each principal to discuss their budget requests and he was very impressed by how the principals were fiscally responsible. He said this budget does not include any extras. He reviewed the current enrollment which is 2172 students. Mr. Wilson went through the PowerPoint presentation on Special Education enrollment which was 255 in 2012 and is now 319. The average per pupil cost for special education students is \$95,237 which can include direct instruction, paraprofessional support, and related services such as Speech/Language, OT, PT, Counseling, Vocational Training and Behavioral Supports (i.e., BCBA). The per pupil cost includes shared transportation costs. These costs are covered by grants and by district money. Every special education student has a PPT and each one is vetted. He said a lot of thought goes into the education of our special education students. Mr. Wilson said the high school and the middle school are working on new schedules which will be aligned and therefore allows for shared resources which will save money. The high school guidance counselor who is retiring will not be replaced.

There were conversations with the high school and they feel this will work at the current enrollment numbers. However, if enrollment goes up, the Board may be contacted to make changes. The Middle School Language Arts teacher who is leaving at year end will also not be replaced. Mr. Wilson talked about the plan to try and bring back some outplaced special education students to a newly created program. This would be a win-win situation as educating our students in house would be a better situation for the students and most parents would prefer their children be educated in our schools rather than be outplaced. This would be accomplished by hiring a special education teacher and instructional paraprofessional and by having a PPT for the outplaced students to insure the program would be a good fit. Mr. Wilson talked about the Seymour Budget Summit he and Mr. Belden attended before the holiday break. This Summit, hosted by First Selectman Kurt Miller, was attended by many of the town department heads, and our major service vendors (Insurance, Audit, and Actuary). The discussion centered on a myriad of topics including expenses and cost sharing efforts. By working with the Town valuable information was shared so the Board of Education could develop the budget within the Town's guideline of no more than 1.5% increase. After the collaborative efforts of the team, the Superintendent has presented this budget at 1.2%. This is a testament to the hard work to get the budget to this number without sacrificing the education of the children of Seymour. Mr. Kubik asked for a cost analysis of the new special education program. What are the costs of hiring a special education teacher and what are the other costs associated with this? Mr. Wilson said the cost of hiring the special education teacher will be offset by not hiring a replacement for the MS Language Arts Teacher, the HS Mathematics teacher and the HS Guidance Counselor. Mr. Kubik asked if we hire a special education teacher and then find that we cannot bring back the outplaced students, what would we do with the teacher that has been hired. Mr. Wilson said he was confident that we would be able to bring back some of the outplaced students but the hired teacher would be used for the general population of special education students. Ms. Harmeling said she was uncomfortable because we cannot predict how many students can come back. She felt this should not be a promise of the budget since the creation of this program is not a guarantee of savings. Mr. Stanek said he felt as though many people will be expecting a 0% increase. He would not be in favor of additional layoffs. Mr. Wilson said in order to bring the budget down further it would mean additional layoffs. Mr. Belden said the context of the Summit was to put forth a budget that meant a no tax increase for taxpayers. All departments are striving for minimal increases. At 1.2%, we are meeting the goal of the Summit, but we may be able to realize additional savings in the future by bringing back outplaced students. He said 1.2% is a reasonable budget and it is a pretty good number. If we come in any lower, it will impact personnel and programs. Mr. Champagne asked how the determination is made to outplace a student. Mr. Wilson said this is a well thought out process that is done through the PPT. Mr. Wilson said the special education program will have no substantial increase to create the classroom; the space and transportation have been identified. Dr. Hendricks asked if this would need to be approved by NEASC or any other governing bodies. Mr. Wilson said this program would be at the elementary level so NEASC would not be involved. Ms. Harmeling asked if this program would be K-5 and Mr. Wilson confirmed it would. She floated the idea of making our schools K-2 and 3-5, not this year but in the future. She said it would give some flexibility and would address fluctuating class sizes. Mr. Stanek said this has been discussed in the past but the conclusion was for neighborhood schools. Mr. Hatfield asked if there was additional grant funds from the Behavior Analyst position that could be used to hire the Special Education teacher. Mr. Wilson responded that we try to use grant funds whenever possible. But because of the way the grant was written, this would not be possible at this time. Mr. Belden said grant funds are final so if we utilize grant funds something else would need to be eliminated. It all depends on how the grant narrative is written. Mr. Hatfield also asked about the incubator clubs money. Mr. Belden explained that the increase is to cover the contractual obligations each year and that \$2500 is consistent each year. Ms. Harmeling asked about how the line item for the elimination of the clerical paraprofessionals is being presented. Mr. Belden said we had to adjust this line item but he does not get the sense that the Board of Finance will come back to reduce. We have been very clear with our numbers. Mr. Wilson said that Mr. Sawicki was pleased with a 1.5% increase and was very pleased with a 1.2% increase. When asked if he had any questions, Mr. Garofolo said he trusts the Superintendent. Ms. Harmeling asked how changing the schedules at the high school will afford us savings.

Mr. Wilson said because the schedules at the middle school and high school will be aligned, there is the possibility for shared services and the possibility of new programs at the middle school level. A music teacher will be shared by the middle school and the high school. Ms. Harmeling wanted to confirm that this was not being done at the elementary level and Mr. Wilson confirmed it was not. The elimination of a position is done based on seniority of that certification. Mr. Wilson confirmed that we can leave the Unified Arts teacher and Guidance Counselor in the budget but this will affect the 1.2% increase. He said we can do this if the Board so desires. Mr. Hatfield questioned the use of the term "reassignment" and Mr. Belden confirmed that it should read "reduction in force". Ms. Harmeling said she is not ready to support a reduction in force. Mr. Wilson said he understood and respects what she is saying. He agrees it would be nice to have but it may not be needed based on the current enrollment. While he doesn't want to minimize Ms. Harmeling's thoughts on the matter, he said it would affect the 1.2% number. Mr. Garofolo asked about the quality of the services that would be provided by Guidance if their caseloads were increased. He asked if we would be seeing a degradation of service. If so, he would be in favor of putting it back into the budget. Mr. Wilson said it is all about the education of the children of Seymour. What he presented is what we can do without sacrificing the education of our students. If the Board of Education wants to put back into the budget, the number will go up. Anything under 1.2% and there will be significant impact to personnel and programs. Mr. Hatfield asked about the ground maintenance line item being reduced to zero. Mr. Belden confirmed that the Town is picking up as part of their department and this takes the burden off the Board of Education. Mr. Kubik asked if this includes special landscaping and Mr. Belden confirmed it does. The only thing the Board of Education will continue to maintain is the special mulch used in the playgrounds. Mr. Hatfield asked if there were any projects such as the stage curtain that could be deferred. Mr. Belden said as we have done in the past we will evaluate what projects are necessary and what can be pushed off another year. Mr. Hatfield asked about the college intern program. Mr. Wilson said this partnership is important to attract new candidates and these are the first people to be called upon when substitutes are needed. Mr. Hatfield asked how many interns have been hired within our district and Mr. Wilson said he could get this information. Mr. Belden said if this program was eliminated, he would need to add back into the substitutes line item and we would have to make some adjustments. Mr. Belden confirmed there is one intern at each school. Dr. Hendricks said the interns are in the program to gain valuable experience in the classroom not to file and staple. This program benefits both the school and the interns. This program is invaluable for students and schools. Mr. Strumello said he likes the fact that when a substitute is needed, the kids get a familiar face. Mr. Strumello asked about the programming at ACES and CES and each provides a different type of service. Dr. Boyle confirmed this saying CES provides services to kids with emotional needs and ACES provides services for kids with behavioral issues. Mr. Strumello asked if there is a cap for Nonnewaug. Mr. Belden said Nonnewaug is considered a vocational agricultural education program and by state statute we cannot place a cap on enrollment. ECA can be capped and it has been. Mr. Strumello said he meant no disrespect when asking these questions. Ms. Harmeling said there has been no information on insurance as we have had in the past. Mr. Belden said this information is not available at this time and all Town and BOE insurance are aligned which makes it easier to market and negotiation. Ms. Harmeling asked about whether this proposed budget will allow for Capstone to begin. Mr. Wilson said Capstone will happen with the incoming freshman class. Mr. Wilson reminded the Board that his job is to advocate for the children. Ms. Harmeling said she does not want to present a 1.5% increase but she also does not want to eliminate positions. She is uncomfortable with adding 75 students to the caseload of the high school guidance counselors. Mr. Stanek said we can approve the motion and then make an amendment to the motion. Mr. Hatfield asked if there had been any feedback about the elimination of the clerical paraprofessionals. Mr. Wilson said the work of the clerical paraprofessionals has been divided and the work is getting done despite the reduction. He has had no parent complaints as of now. I know the elimination of the clerical paraprofessionals left a hole and it may not be the same person many were used to but the work is getting done.

MOTION: (Mr. Garofolo/sec., Dr. Hendricks) to approve the 2018-19 Board of Education Budget as presented
AMENDED MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Strumello and Mr. Stanek) to approve the 2018-19 Board of Education Budget as presented with putting back the Unified Arts teacher and adding in a part time High School Guidance Counselor and reduce line 563 by the amount equal to line 112 and 123 on roadmap

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Champagne, Ms. Harmeling, Dr. Hendricks, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Magri, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

OPPOSED: Mr. Garofolo, Mr. Hatfield

AMENDED MOTION: (Mr. Stanek/sec., Ms. Harmeling) to approve the 2018-19 Board of Education Budget as amended with putting back the Unified Arts teacher and adding in a part time High School Guidance Counselor and reducing line 563 by the amount equal to line 112 and 123 on roadmap

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Champagne, Ms. Harmeling, Dr. Hendricks, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Magri, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

OPPOSED: Mr. Garofolo, Mr. Hatfield

The motion carries: 7-2

V. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

VI. **ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION: (Mr. Kubik/sec., Mr. Champagne) to adjourn

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Dr. Hendricks, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Magri, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

The meeting adjourned at 8:52 pm

Submitted by:
Lee-Ann Dauerty
Board Clerk

After the meeting adjourned, Ms. Magri spoke to the Board about possibly changing the date of our next meeting since January 22, 2018 conflicted with the Bungay School winter concert and she knew there were parents who wanted to attend the Board meeting. The Board members agreed to check their calendars and email her with some available dates. She said it may be a situation where we cannot change the date and she would get back to the Board members after she hears from them.