

**Town of Seymour ~ Board of Finance
MINUTES
Budget Deliberations
Wednesday, April 22, 2026 at 7:00pm
Norma Drummer Room – Seymour Town Hall**

Members Present: Beverly Kennedy, Andy North, Quinn Levey, Bettyann Peck, Kristyn Haniewicz (735pm), Mary Kruger; Robin Andrews, Tracy Rappa, Alice Levey (alternates).

Members Absent: Richard Demko

Others Present: Jason Vieira, Monica Dimon, Annmarie Drugonis, Kurt Miller, Kristen Harmeling, Kristin Bruno, Sal Bucci, Dr. Susan Compton, Lorrie Matusovich, Joshua Beaupre, Jack Jurkowski, Robert Koskelowski, David Bitso, Lori Pratt, Jennifer Magri, Trisha Danka, Mike Renkewith

Item #1 – Call Meeting to order

Vice Chairman Beverly Kennedy called the meeting to order at 7:03pm.

Item #2 – Pledge of Allegiance

Everyone saluted the Flag and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item #3 – Seating of Alternates

Motion to seat Alice Levey as Alternate

Motion: Quinn Levey

Second: Andy North

Vote: Yes: 5

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Vice Chairwoman Beverly Kennedy read a letter from BOF Chairman Richard Demko:

Greetings,

I just wanted to send along a note to apologize for my absence this evening, as I had a family obligation that was scheduled in advance of this meeting which was non-negotiable. However, I am sure you will all understand considering that throughout my 14-year tenure serving this board, I can count on one hand the number of meetings I have missed.

With that said, I have the full faith and confidence in my colleagues to address the needs and expectations of our town's 17 thousand residents during tonight's deliberations. Like always, I will support whatever decisions the majority of this board makes.

I look forward to seeing everyone at our regular meeting next Tuesday.

Respectfully Yours Always,

Richard L. Demko

Richard Demko

Chairman- Seymour Board of Finance

Item #4 – Public Comment

Jack Jurkowski – 9 Amber Drive – Several weeks ago we were in this room to approve the Budget to send to referendum. Some of your Board members knew that it wouldn't pass. It failed because it was an unrealistic Budget. It's all about the tax increase. That is the only thing that people look at. 60% voted "no" on Board of Education and 55% voted "no" on the Town. A common theme is that we need to bring more businesses into Seymour. We keep raising taxes by more than the rate of inflation and the failed budget yesterday would have raised taxes by 5.5%. The businesses in Seymour will be driven out of Seymour by these continually large tax increases. The bigger problem is that there is a huge imbalance in the budget system. The Board of Education is 60% of our budget, yet the Town services are minimal, and our roads are in very bad shape. We need to find a balance between the Board of Education and Town Budget that will improve some aspect of the budget that will affect ALL the residents. Our First Selectwoman did not take a salary increase this year. This is not only not fair to her, but it is not fair to the position and our ability to attract future candidates. This is the CEO of a \$70million entity and should be treated as such. An inflationary increase every year for this position is necessary so that we do not fall behind in offering a competitive salary for this position.

Kristen Harmeling – 134 Davis Road – We do not have a balance problem in Seymour. It is true that the BOE is 60% of budget. Look at the revenue. From a taxpayer perspective it is much closer to a 50-50 split. \$11 million in revenue comes from the State (for schools). So, a taxpayer dollar is much closer to 50% BOE, 50% Town. Also, all of our Town peers are at the same 60-40 split. The only Towns that do are the cities: Waterbury, New Haven, Hartford, Bridgeport.

Josh Beaupre – 29 Maple Street – What are the explanations and respites given on how teachers performance is measured? We are not totally transparent. I have numbers that show the staff and students 1990 baseline. Except for 2022, we are at the lowest enrollment of students and 2nd highest for overall staff. We have 13% of students not graduating in senior year. We get the same comments year after year from the residents.

Robert Koskelowski – Pearl Street – Over the last decade, the Town has had out-of-control spending. With the principal & interest payments we are paying over \$450k for 8 roads over the next 20-25 years. There was talk of closing the Transfer Station on Saturday – this would save us only about \$5,500. I presented a 2 page list of suggested cuts last year – none of these were addressed by the Chairman. We need to get the spending under control. I care about our kids – I am concerned about our test scores and our ranking in Connecticut.

Dr. Susan Compton – Superintendent of Schools – 122 Walnut Street – We do have an outstanding school system here in Seymour. We had 2 elementary schools recognized as Schools of Distinction. We have been recognized for AP Scores. We have received grants. There is always room for improvement with regards to graduation rates and chronic absenteeism rates. We have made lots of progress – it's everyone working together. The quality of your schools determines the quality of the Community. I am begging you tonight to not make drastic cuts to our Budget.

Lori Pratt – 7 Peach Drive – Cuts are hard; it is a vicious cycle. We raise taxes to get the revenue. We drive the residents away, drive the businesses away, drive the home prices down because no one is going to buy a \$500,000 house that has \$800/month tax bill. My Mom passed in January and I had a lot of things for her that we didn't need any longer. My neighbor is elderly and ended up taking it all. She just can't afford this tax increase. Some of us can, but she can't. Please keep her in mind when making decisions tonight.

Megan Krushinsky – Seymour Middle School – The Education Budget is always the first place people want to cut. I ask that we pause and consider what this Budget means. It's not just numbers on a page – it's students. A student who needs help in English or Math – a student with a passion for music or athletics. It's the stability our schools offer safe and structured and supportive environments. Supporting a school budget is more than about funding. It's about maintaining a strong partnership between families, the Board of Education, Town leadership, and the Community as a whole. Student success depends on it. This year our district is operating efficiently even though our teachers and staff are constantly doing more with less. Not because it's sustainable, but because they

have a deep commitment to the students and the Community. That commitment, however, has its limits. Budget reductions may provide short-term relief, but they often create long-term consequences that are far more difficult to reverse once they're in place. At some point continued reductions and increased demands will begin to impact the opportunities available to our students. These impacts are not theoretical, they are felt directly by the students in the classrooms every single day. This Budget does not reflect what's ideal, it reflects what is necessary. I urge everyone to stop treating Education as the first place to trim and see it for what it is: the foundation of our Town. I respectfully ask that you continue to support this Budget.

Lisa Cinquino – 29 Moss Avenue – I was inquiring about an Economic Development Officer. I thought that we had hired someone recently, but find that position is not filled. How much of an impact would that be to hire an Economic Development Officer. Is the lack of having this position that the salary is not attractive enough? Do we need to hire a recruiter to get someone? There is so much potential here. What is holding us back?

Item #5 - Discussion and Possible Action on the 2026/2027 Budget

- Andy North thanked everyone for coming. There are not enough people engaged. Our taxes are through the roof. Only 1,500 people come out to vote. We owe it to the Town to get others involved – get them to the Planning & Zoning meetings. In the next 10 years, with all the contractual increases, we are going to have this happen year after year unless we get some new revenue here. We need to make some tough decisions tonight. The Budgets were voted down. I will give you some of my thoughts and hopefully the Board of Education can work with the Town on these. My thought was to take \$500,000 from the Board of Education Budget. Maybe you can look at cutting Custodial Services (at \$1.3 million) or sharing Assistant Principals or cutting the 5th School Nurse. The Town voted this budget down so we need to find cuts somewhere
- First Selectwoman Annmarie Drugonis had the following comments:

Over the past five years, I have consistently submitted conservative, responsible budget proposals to this Board. And for five years, I have heard the same response: "Let's send it to the voters and see where it goes."

At the same time, during those same five years, this Board has made changes to my proposed budgets that resulted in increases— only to then send those higher numbers to the voters and question why they fail.

We already know where it goes.

The voters have told you— again and again— that the budget is too high. Yet instead of adjusting your approach, you continue to send it back out to referendum—each time at a cost. In fact, last year's referendum alone cost this Town \$15,000.

At some point, that stops being a process and starts being a problem.

There's a well-known definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. That is exactly what this cycle has become—repeating the same actions, increasing the numbers, incurring additional costs, and getting the same outcome.

For a Board entrusted with fiduciary responsibility, this pattern should raise serious concerns. Because while the voters are saying "no," the Town continues to spend money asking the same question—without changing the approach that is causing the rejection.

That responsibility also extends beyond the budget itself. When it comes to union contracts, members of the Board of Finance should be involved in the negotiation process. These agreements directly impact long-term financial obligations, and ultimately, you are the ones who must explain those decisions to the residents.

The Town has not had issues with this level of involvement, and I am aware that Dr. Compton has not had concerns either. State statute allows for Board of Finance representation in certified union negotiations, and at the local level, there is the ability to include Board of Finance members in non-certified discussions as well. However, when a Board of Finance member attempted to attend a recent negotiation, they were asked to leave on the basis that it was a non-certified union discussion. That is a problem. Transparency and accountability in these decisions are not optional—they are part of the responsibility that comes with this role.

To put this in perspective, last year's Town budget represented an increase of less than 1%. This year, the initial request was 2.9%, and with the adjustments presented here, that has been reduced to 2.72%.

Town budgets, on average, typically fall within a 2% to 3% range. This proposal is well within that standard and reflects a measured, responsible approach to maintaining services while controlling costs.

If we are serious about fiscal responsibility, then that responsibility has to start here—with this Board—before the budget ever reaches a referendum.

With that in mind, I am presenting additional adjustments:

- On April 7th, the Town received an updated budget request from the Probate Court. This revised request is \$12,876, representing a decrease of \$2,804 from the original submission.
- The proposed salary increase for the Administrative Assistant in the First Selectwoman's Office has been removed, resulting in a savings of \$1,403.
- On April 21st, the Assistant Assessor resigned from her position. This position may or may not be filled depending on the needs of the department. At this time, this represents a savings of \$32,576.
- The above salary reductions also result in savings in related benefits and taxes of \$8,235.
- Reduce the Pumpkin Festival by \$2,500.
- Reduce Events by \$5,000.
- Reduce Cultural and Arts funding by \$5,000.

In total, these changes represent a decrease to the Town budget of \$57,518.

These are not theoretical adjustments—they are real reductions that reflect exactly what the public has been asking for.

The question now is whether this Board is willing to change its approach, or whether it will continue a pattern that increases costs, ignores feedback, and produces the same rejected result.

Because at this point, it's not the voters who need to change their answer—it's this Board that needs to change its behavior.

- Alice Levey said that there is a lot of misinformation with the public. The public must get involved more. We have tried a lot of things to do this. It's always comes down to the numbers – how much are the taxes going up. We need to look at this with the “fiscal hat” and make some cuts. 17,000 residents and 11,000 voters – 1500 come out to vote.
- Annmarie Drugonis said we will be sending out postcards with next year's schedule. Our Town needs to grow – inflation isn't going to stop – ECS is not funding properly.
- Beverly Kennedy said that she has been on the Board of Finance for 14 years and has not received an invitation to union negotiations. Bettyann Peck said that she has not either. Annmarie Drugonis said that the

DISCUSSION:

- Quinn Levey said that \$250,000 will not pass. It's not enough.
- Andy North suggested \$400,000 reduction.
- Motion was rescinded by Alice Levey and Kristyn Haniewicz.

Motion by Quinn Levey to reduce Board of Education by \$375,000.

Motion: Andy North Second: Quinn Levey

Yes: 6 No: 1 Abstain: 0

This makes Board of Education at 3.39%.

- Jason Vieira reminded us of the reductions that the First Selectwoman had suggested for the Town Budget. Significant time and effort were expended over the past few days to come up with these numbers.
 - On April 7th, the Town received an updated budget request from the Probate Court. This revised request is \$12,876, representing a decrease of \$2,804 from the original submission.
 - The proposed salary increase for the Administrative Assistant in the First Selectwoman's Office has been removed, resulting in a savings of \$1,403.
 - On April 21st, the Assistant Assessor resigned from her position. This position may or may not be filled depending on the needs of the department. At this time, this represents a savings of \$32,576.
 - The above salary reductions also result in savings in related benefits and taxes of \$8,235.
 - Reduce the Pumpkin Festival by \$2,500.
 - Reduce Events by \$5,000.
 - Reduce Cultural and Arts funding by \$5,000.

In total, these changes represent a decrease to the Town budget of \$57,518.

- Motion by Bettyann Peck to reduce the Town Budget by the First Selectwoman's recommendations of \$57,518.

Motion: Bettyann Peck Second: Kristyn Haniewicz

Yes: 3 No: 4 Abstain: 0

Motion fails.

- Quinn Levey said he would like to make additional reductions of \$125,000 in the Town Budget.
- **We will go line by line to find this money:**
- Town Meetings – do we need the \$4,000 for Town Meetings? Annmarie Drugonis said a law coming out will not require us to post in newspaper – can we use AI to take the minutes? Jason said we would need to ask Town Counsel. Leave it for now – could save \$13,000.
- Quinn Levey asked if the Administrative Assistant really needed. YES.
- The floater goes between Assessor's Office, Tax Collector, and Town Clerk. We need this person. We may get a grievance if we eliminate this person and try to distribute that work to someone else.
- Tax Collector – can we cut supplies? Jason said NO. Postage went up already and there will be a further increase.
- Assessor's – education is needed for our Assessor. Assistant line was cut in half.
- **Printing & Legal Ads** – we can take this out and if the law doesn't pass and we need it, we can use Fund **Balance. \$13,500.** Annmarie said to take out.
- PCRC - \$2,000 – won't make a difference to eliminate. Board would like to keep it.
- Police Department was already reduced; they have a lot of unfunded mandates in there. Quinn Levey asked if we need two K9s. One of our dogs is on the way out so we will leave as is. Andy North asked if we need the two SRO's. We were understaffed and need both of them. Quinn Levey asked if we need all the police officers we have. There is no State mandate. We have the right amount for our per capita. Robert Koskelowski said there is a 5-officer minimum per shift. Bob said we could reduce by \$50,000 Uniformed Police line. Jason Vieira said we already did reduce Uniformed Police by \$50,000. David Bitso said that cutting part-timers won't help.

- **Emergency Management** -Tracy Rappa discussed the study that was done. **The Board consensus was to reduce the EMD stipend by \$5,000.**
- **Town Operations - \$5,000 Special Events – take this out.**
- TOTAL CUTS are \$81,018 for the Town and \$375,000 for the Board of Education = \$456,018.
- **Add \$20,000 to Interest Income**
- Quinn Levey asked if we could reduce the union employees by offering a “golden handshake”. Kurt Miller said that you could, but you would need to offer to the whole bargaining unit and you may get unintended consequences. Also, because the Town is so lean, you will need to replace these people. You may not get the savings you are hoping to because you will need to provide incentive for them to leave.

Motion to add \$20,000 to Interest Income (Revenues) for 2026/2027 Budget

Motion: Kristyn Haniewicz **Second:** Bettyann Peck
Yes: 7 **No:** 0 **Abstain:**0

Motion to reduce \$81,018 from Expenses as follows:

- Reduce \$2,804 from Probate Court
- Reduce Salary for Administrative Assistant (First Selectwoman’s Office) by \$1,403
- Reduce Salary for the Assistant Assessor by \$32,576 (Assessor’s Office)
- Reduce Employee Benefits & Related Payroll Taxes by \$8,235 for these positions.
- Reduce the Pumpkin Festival Funding by \$2,500
- Reduce the Seymour Events Budget by \$5,000
- Reduce the Culture & Arts Budget by \$5,000
- Reduce the Printing & Advertising line by \$13,500
- Reduce the stipend for Emergency Management Director by \$5,000
- Reduce the Special Events line in Town Operations by \$5,000

Motion: Kristyn Haniewicz **Second:** Mary Kruger

Motion to set Total Revenues at \$70,291,505 for the 2026/2027 Budget and send to Town Referendum on 05/05/26

Motion: Bettyann Peck **Second:** Kristyn Haniewicz
Vote: Yes: 7 **No:** 0 **Abstain:** 0

Motion to set Total Expenses for Town at \$27,548,740 and the Total Expenses for the Board of Education at \$42,742,765 making the Total Expenditures \$70,291,505 for the 2026/2027 Budget and send to Town Referendum on 05/05/26

Motion: Kristyn Haniewicz **Second:** Alice Levey
Vote: Yes: 7 **No:** 0 **Abstain:** 0

Motion to set the Mill Rate at 28.99 for the 2026/2027 Budget and send to Town Referendum on 05/05/26

Motion: Alice Levey **Second:** Mary Kruger
Vote: Yes: 7 **No:** 0 **Abstain:** 0

Item #5 – Public Comment

Resident Public Comment - It is sad that out of 11,000 voters only 1,538 came out to vote. We have an apathy problem. Where are the other voters? We have seniors that are working until 70. The average monthly social security check is \$1693 to \$2114. Many people on social media. Where are these people. Should we go door to door – maybe not. People may not be receptive. Maybe warn them ahead of time. What does it take to get people here. Thank you for all your efforts.

Kristen Harmeling – 134 Davis Road – the Town Budget is about 2/3 the size of the Board of Education Budget. Tonight the Board of Education budget was cut by \$375,000. The Town should have been cut by 2/3 of that (\$20,000). Instead it was cut by 20%. Our cost increases are for the same reasons as the Town. I would love to be able to transfer some money from Fund Balance. If the ECS Grant increases, can we have some of that money back that was taken from us. I find that to be fair.

Megan Krushinsky – Seymour Middle School - thank you to all of you for your work. With the Board of Education cut of \$375,000, some union positions will need to be cut. Why can union positions be cut for the Board of Education but not for the Town. Annmarie Drugonis said that salaries can't be cut, but positions can. However, grievances can be filed if other people do their jobs.

Kristin Bruno – 10 MacConnie Court – thank you for all your work tonight – you were responding to the voters. When you run this lean year after year, a small increase results in an increase in the mill rate. The Board of Education will have much harder work next week to try and find reductions. We will have reductions in force. I hope folks will come out and support this budget. Our Education budget is less than our neighboring towns. If we don't want to spend money on anything – parades are getting cut. Kids are losing stuff.

Annmarie Drugonis – First Selectwoman – we are all residents. Every time we cut, we set ourselves back five years. Businesses are not going to want to come here with this poor attitude. We have to work together. Increases are going to happen. Once again, for a zero dollar/% increase we would need to cut \$3.5 million which could not happen.

Mike Renkewith – 28 Woodside Avenue – this Board did a great job; you challenged everything. Some people didn't like it, but you carried on. Town budget was rejected by 170 votes. Board of Education was rejected by 310. I support the schools and the Board of EducaSon. It is all about the dollars. All about perception. I'm more upset about the Town not fighting for what they really want. The Board of Education is fighting for what they need (it's just a little bit high). We need to find a happy medium. Maybe the Town was rejected because of the total #. I appreciate your time.

Item #6 – Adjournment

Beverly Kennedy adjourned the meeting at 10:28pm

Respectfully Submitted by:

Monica Dimon
Recording Secretary