

SEYMOUR BOARD OF EDUCATION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
September 13, 2021  
Seymour Middle School  
7:30 pm

COPY RECEIVED  
DATE: 9/23/2021  
TIME: 12:02 Pm  
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE

**MASKS ARE REQUIRED**

**BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Kristen Bruno (8:04 pm)  
Christopher Champagne  
James Garofolo  
Kristen Harmeling  
Jay Hatfield  
Peter Kubik  
Beth Nesteriak  
Fred Stanek  
Ed Strumello

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Karyna Weaver, Student Representative  
Dr. Susan Compton, Superintendent of Schools  
Vonda Tencza, Associate Superintendent  
David Fiorillo, Interim Business Manager  
Marie Kashuba, Twin Lakes Consultant  
Lee-Ann Dauerty, Board Clerk  
Kris Boyle, Director of Special Services  
Derrick Martin, Technology  
Ernie DiStasi, Assistant Principal, SHS  
Kathleen Freimuth, Assistant Principal, SMS  
Mary Sue Feige, Principal, BS  
Lauren Reid, Assistant Principal, BS  
David Olechna, Principal, CLS  
Stacey Albertson, Assistant Principal, CLS  
Kevin Pimpinelli  
Rich Kearns  
Steve Gardner, All Star Transportation

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

- A. Pledge of Allegiance  
Mr. Strumello called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at \_\_\_\_ p.m.
- B. Moment of Silence for all victims of the 9/11/2001 terrorist attack on our country.  
Mr. Strumello requested that we change the order of the agenda to do Item III. Recognitions before public comment.

**II. Recognitions**

- A. CAS Distinguished Friend of Education Award  
Dr. Compton introduced Mr. Ed Strumello, who has been a lifelong advocate of education. He has been an educator, administrator, and Board member for many years. Ms. Feige said it was an honor and privilege to present the CAS Distinguished Friend of Education Award to Mr. Strumello. Bungay teachers Ms. Yoxall, Ms. McAuliffe, Ms. Freddino, and Mr. Cummings honored Mr. Strumello with their kind words and memories. Mr. Stanek said in addition to what was discussed Mr. Strumello was the Athletic Director at Seymour High School and Bungay School Principal. He was admired by parents and students, who loved and respected him. Well done, Mr. Strumello! Mr. Strumello said the last years have been the best but all 33 years were enjoyed immensely.

### III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Comment provides the opportunity for the public to make a comment. It is not a dialogue between the Board and the public. Based upon what is heard during Public Comment, the Board may choose to add a topic to the agenda. If questions are posed that the Chairman is able to answer, those questions may be addressed under the Chairman's Comments portion of the agenda. The Board will not discuss personnel matters. Comments should be respectful and no longer than 3 minutes in length so that all who wish to comment may have the opportunity to do so. All public wanting to comment will need to state their name and address for the record prior to addressing the Board.

Ms. Amberjean Hansen, 51 Birchwood Road, Seymour – Said she was here tonight to support the Seymour Board of Education and the Seymour Public Schools. She is thankful for all that the schools have done to help her daughter attend school. Her daughter is immune suppressed and has had a very difficult road to be in school. She is grateful for all that has been done in order to allow her daughter to attend school. Her living liver donor said, "My temporary discomfort is worth the life of another child" She feels we can all learn from her and be grateful and be *Seymour Strong Together*.

At this time, Mr. Strumello asked that the Board introduce themselves.

### IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes
  - 1. Special BOE Meeting Minutes – August 16, 2021
- B. Financial Management Summary – September 13, 2021
- C. Appointment of Beth Nesteriak as the Seymour representative for ACES
- D. Signatory on Checking Accounts
  - To approve the addition of Dr. Susan Compton as a signer on all Liberty Bank accounts
- E. Signatory on ED-099 Agreement
  - To approve the removal of Michael Wilson as a signer on the ED-099 Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs and add as a signer, Dr. Susan Compton, Superintendent of Schools

**MOTION:** (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Hatfield) move to approve the consent agenda as presented

**SO VOTED**

**AFFIRMATIVE:** Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

**MOTION PASSES: 8-0**

### IV. ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA

None

### V. DISCUSSION and POSSIBLE ACTION

- A. Possible Reinstatement of the Intern Program

Mrs. Tencza talked about the shortage of substitutes available for hire and how we are struggling because of the shortage. She spoke of the intern programs a few years ago and how it had been eliminated due to budget concerns. Interns must have a bachelor's degree and be working toward a master's degree. They will commit to serve for one school year. She feels they are a bargain at \$82 a day, substitutes are paid between \$100-115 a day. Interns will be a less expensive option. She says we have been contacted by a few colleges looking to place interns. This is another way to place certified teachers. Mr. Hatfield said he was an intern in the Fairfield Public Schools and said it was a great program and he received a lot of support. He encouraged the Board to contact Legislators about the requirements that must be met to be a substitute teacher. Currently, freshmen and sophomores are excluded from serving as substitutes. He felt the Board should send a letter. Mrs. Tencza reminded the Board that an intern is committed for the full school year where as our Building Substitutes continue to look for other jobs and therefore, we are constantly replacing them. Mr. Hatfield said the interns may be able to step into the role of coaches also. Mr. Strumello said the intern program is a great way to train teachers. Unlike substitutes, interns are in the building all the time and the kids know them.

**MOTION:** (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Hatfield) to approve the recommendation of Superintendent Dr. Susan Compton and Associate Superintendent Vonda Tencza to hire an intern for each school for the 2021-22 school year

**SO VOTED**

**AFFIRMATIVE:** Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

**MOTION PASSES 8-0**

- B. Authorization to Carry a Firearm on School Grounds  
Mr. Hatfield asked to be reminded as to why we don't have to do this with the School Security Officers. Dr. Compton said it is because the school security officers carry firearms through the nature of the position.

**MOTION:** (Mr. Kubik/sec., Mr. Champagne) to allow the Superintendent in collaboration with the Seymour Chief of Police to authorize Rich Kearns, Director of Security to carry a firearm on school grounds through the end of the 2021-2022 school year. This arrangement will be reviewed and may be reauthorized prior to the beginning of each school year

**SO VOTED**

**AFFIRMATIVE:** Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

**ABSTAIN:** Ms. Bruno

**MOTION PASSES 8-0-1**

- C. Additional Hours for School Nurses

Ms. Harmeling said she totally supports the school nurses and wanted to know if the floating nurse position was filled.

**MOTION:** (Mr. Hatfield/sec., Mr. Stanek) to approve the recommendation of the Superintendent and Associate Superintendent to pay the school nurses an additional three hours of pay per week for the extra time needed to collect the necessary information to comply with the vaccination executive order

**SO VOTED**

**AFFIRMATIVE:** Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

**MOTION PASSES 9-0**

## VI. REPORTS

- A. HS Student Representative Report – Miss Karyna Weaver  
Senior BOE Representative Karyna Weaver said how great it is to see everyone in person. She talked about how good it felt to walk into school for the first day this year. She reported that the link crew was able to hold freshman orientation outside on August 24 and while most of the activities were held outside, the freshmen were able to tour the building. She was thankful that sports are still running this year. The boys soccer team has played two games so far this season and won one of them. The girls soccer team has played in one game this season but unfortunately they did not win their game. The football team has their first home game this Friday at 7:00 against Wilby. Clubs are starting back up and it feels so good to be back in person. She reported that the Junior BOE Representative has not yet been chosen but should be here for our October meeting. Board members had a few questions for Ms. Weaver that she happily answered.
- B. All Star Transportation Bus Update – Mr. Steve Gardner  
Mr. Steve Gardner of All Star Transportation said we are experiencing the worse bus driver shortage ever and it is a nationwide problem. He said currently the company is short 126 drivers. For every step forward, there are three steps backward. He said they are recruiting heavily. They have done ads, radio, and television. Mr. Fiorillo thanked Mr. Gardner for joining the Board and acknowledged that we are not alone with this shortage. He said they have been able to combine a few routes. They have had good conversations on how to address this issues and they feel they have a couple of good options but acknowledged that there is just not enough drivers and therefore not enough buses. They have discussed putting out forms to parents so they can opt out of transportation. This would be helpful. He noted that this would not be a permanent change to the rosters. He said we have a good transportation provider and they are doing everything they can to help solve the problem. Other states are struggling also, Massachusetts pulled in the National Guard to help transport students. We are on top of communication on how routes are running, Pat Boyle is doing a tremendous job. Mr. Strumello asked if there were going to be incentives offered to school bus drivers and if so, would that cost be passed on to the Board of Education. Mr. Fiorillo said at this point we need to consider any and all proposals. Mr. Strumello asked if the request to parents to opt out has been approved by the Department of Education and the Education Commissioner. Mr. Fiorillo said this is a voluntary situation for the parents, not a mandate. We are simply asking parents to let us know if they are not using a bus to transport their child to school.

There was a discussion about the consolidation of routes noting that in some cases bus stops are taken away and in other cases, the drivers drive two routes one after the other. Ms. Harmeling said we offer transportation to kids who are close to the school and asked if there were any plans to take away those stops. She said doing so would be very disruptive. Dr. Compton said this would be a last resort. Dr. Compton asked the administrators to describe their bus situations. Mr. DiStasi said arrivals at school between buses and private vehicles has been tough but they now have a plan in place to keep the traffic moving. Ms. Roden said there have been issues with buses not being on time but they are quick to send emails letting parents know what is happening. Ms. Harmeling asked what the experience is like for those elementary students who are still at school at 4:00. Mr. Olechna said the kids line up outside so they can take their masks off. He admitted it is tricky as things are constantly changing. Ms. Feige also described their experiences with late buses. Mr. Hatfield asked if any of the apps available would be helpful to the parents. Mr. Gardner said they are not very helpful and would require a person to manage the information for the app. There was further discussion about why buses are late. Ms. Harmeling asked if there was a need to make a motion regarding parents opting out. Dr. Compton said it is ok to have a motion but she would request Mr. Fiorillo share some additional motions from other districts. Mr. Stanek said he has seen guidance from the Department of Education and opting out is not permitted. Mr. Fiorillo said if a parent contacts us and says they are not using a using a seat on the bus it would free up a seat for someone else. Ms. Harmeling suggested we get guidance from the attorney and from the State. Ms. Bruno wondered if we can cross reference those students who have a parking pass at the high school with the seating on the buses. Mr. Strumello asked about busing our athletes. Dr. Compton complimented all of those who were involved with the discussion on middle school sports. Mr. DiStasi acknowledged a bus issue this year and noted that we have two bus times, 1:30 and 4:30. Traditional game times are adjusted if needed. Mr. Strumello said hats off to All Star since we have not had to remove any games from the schedule due to busing issues. Mr. Strumello was concerned about educational loss. Mr. DiStasi said we are mindful of those students who are losing educational time. Cross Country athletes will be leaving early but will not be missing the same classes all of the time. Mr. DiStasi said last year we reached out to other bus companies for assistance but they could not accommodate us. Mr. Strumello asked if we can rent vans, Mr. DiStasi said there are in excess of 30 athletes. Ms. Harmeling asked if parents can take kids to the games and Mr. Gardner said we have given them the option. Ms. Harmeling said we need to check the policy on this.

C. Special Education Enrollment Report - Dr. Kris Boyle

Dr. Boyle reviewed the Special Education Enrollment Report noting the out of district enrollments are slightly lower than expected. Ms. Bruno asked if there had been any discussion to reallocate staff and Dr. Boyle said not at this time.

D. Updates

1. Business Manager Vacancy – Dr. Susan Compton

Dr. Compton reminded the Board that the Business Manager posting will close on September 20. All applicants will be contacted to remind them that any missing application materials must be uploaded. The plan is to conduct interviews on September 20 or September 23 with the hope being to bring forth one or two candidates to the full Board on October 4 in executive session. She told the Board she has sent a copy of the posting and job description to them and reminded them to let the process work. She said candidates will be given a performance assessment.

E. Summer Hiring Report

Ms. Tencza said this report includes all employees that were hired and it is a lengthy report. She noted that Lee-Ann Dauerty worked very hard on the report. Some items are very important to Central Office but not important to the Board. She noted that we still have open positions so hiring is ongoing but will now be approved by the Board of Education at meetings. She said we continue to try and understand why people are leaving because we want them to stay in the parking lot! Mr. Strumello said he was fortunate to attend the new teachers' orientation and gave them a little pep talk to "Go and get 'em!"

- F. Board of Education Report
1. Chairman's Comments  
Mr. Strumello said he was honored and humbled by the CAS award this evening. He was happy his family could attend and noted his granddaughter was a little antsy. He said it was very nice to be recognized.
  2. Board Member Comments  
Mr. Hatfield thanked Dr. Compton for her many communications and her willingness to ride the school bus. He said thank you for all that you do. Dr. Compton replied we have a great team in Seymour and was happy to share the first day of school with Mr. Strumello. Ms. Harmeling asked who is responsible and who owns the action to contact the Board attorney. Dr. Compton confirmed that she would be contacting the Board attorney.
  3. CAFE Summer Leadership Conference – Mr. Ed Strumello  
Mr. Strumello deferred on this item simply saying that he, Mr. Hatfield, and Ms. Tencza attended and he for one was somewhat disappointed.

- G. Superintendent Report
- Dr. Susan Compton reported the vaccination percentage for the overall district was 80%. She complimented Head Nurse Becky Bennett and school nurses on doing a good job collecting vaccination data. She said she is very pleased with support Griffin Hospital is giving us and how they have worked with us to test our staff. In the next two weeks the Seymour Public School Communication Advisory committee will be coming together and if anyone would like to participate, please get in touch with the Superintendent or any Board member. Thank you to Board members for meeting individually with the Superintendent. She also mentioned we would be doing MAP testing in all schools. In the coming weeks we will be working on goal setting for the superintendent, administrators, setting district goals, and even students' goals. We are working on the Fall Retreat for Board of Education members. Dr. Compton wanted to personally thank First Selectwoman Ann Marie Drugonis for her assistance on Thursday during the power outage. She came to our rescue. We had no internet and no power and were unable to communicate. She was able to get the word out on the status of schools through the Code Red system. She said it was good for her to meet with Dr. Compton and Ms. Tencza and for attending the convocation. Dr. Compton recognized our administrators saying she was happy to get to know the team and along with Ms. Tencza, they did a tremendous job during the summer. You did everything that was needed and did skip a beat. Dr. Compton recognized Ms. Tencza as interim superintendent. Ms. Tencza was willing and devoted hours on end. She was so excited for Dr. Co to begin. She presented a beautiful water bottle to Ms. Tencza and Ms. Dauerty for the work they have done. Mr. Strumello presented roses to Ms. Tencza to recognize her hard work as Interim Superintendent this summer. She said this is great team and we have a very talented staff and students. She is proud to be a wildcat! Ms. Tencza talked about the "gratitude" project for this year. Every administrator, every school, first selectwoman, BOE members, Central Office, received a box of gratitude cards and a journal to encourage the sharing of gratitude this year and spread it across the district. A very special thank you to Rob Dyer for putting together this set up for an improved YouTube experience.

## VII. INFORMATION

- A. Resignations – Certified
1. Mastrianna, Steven
    - Permanent Building Substitute
    - Seymour Middle School
    - Effective September 3, 2021
  2. Ouellette, Olethea
    - School Counselor
    - Bungay Elementary School
    - Effective September 30, 2021

- B. Resignations – Non-Certified
1. Heslin, Sarah
    - Instructional Paraprofessional
    - Seymour Middle School
    - Effective August 26, 2021
  2. LaLave, Dawn
    - Instructional Paraprofessional
    - Bungay Elementary School
    - Effective August 18, 2021
  3. Levy Sainfleur, Shasalee
    - Instructional Paraprofessional
    - Bungay Elementary School
    - Effective August 19, 2021
  4. Maloney, Laurie
    - Nutritional Services
    - Seymour High School
    - Effective August 18, 2021
  5. Royal, Alyse
    - Secretary
    - Central Office
    - Effective September 10, 2021
- C. Resignations – Appendix E
1. Royal, Alyse
    - Head Coach, Cheerleading
    - Seymour High School
    - Effective August 27, 2021

**VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Public Comment provides the opportunity for the public to make a comment. It is not a dialogue between the Board and the public. Based upon what is heard during Public Comment, the Board may choose to add a topic to the agenda. If questions are posed that the Chairman is able to answer, those questions may be addressed under the Chairman's Comments portion of the agenda. The Board will not discuss personnel matters. Comments should be respectful and no longer than 3 minutes in length so that all who wish to comment may have the opportunity to do so. All public wanting to comment will need to state their name and address for the record prior to addressing the Board.

None

**IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION: 9:27 pm

ENTER INTO REGULAR SESSION: 10:19 pm

1. Personnel Matter  
**MOTION:** (Mr. Hatfield/sec., Ms. Harmeling) move that the Board enter into Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter involving the contract of the Associate Superintendent. The Board invites Dr. Susan Compton and Ms. Vonda Tencza into the Executive Session

**SO VOTED**

**AFFIRMATIVE:** Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

**MOTION PASSES 8-0**

**X. POSSIBLE MOTIONS AFTER EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**MOTION:** (Mr. Hatfield/sec., Ms. Harmeling) to approve a 2% increase for the Associate Superintendent for the 2021-22 School year

**SO VOTED**

**AFFIRMATIVE:** Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

**MOTION PASSES 9-0**

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

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

**SO VOTED**

**AFFIRMATIVE:** Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

**MOTION PASSES 9-0**

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 pm

**NOTE:** The next scheduled Regular Board of Education meeting is on Monday, October 4, 2021 at 7:30 pm at Seymour Middle School.

YouTube Link

[https://youtu.be/Mlr1\\_dmTUtU](https://youtu.be/Mlr1_dmTUtU)

Submitted by:  
Lee-Ann Dauerty  
Board Clerk