

MINUTES

Ordinance Committee
Tuesday, January 6, 2026 – 6:00PM
Norma Drummer Room – Seymour Town Hall

Members Present: Annmarie Drugonis, Phil Wilhelmy and Trisha Danka

Others Present: Town Counsel, Richard Buturla; Members of Citizen's Engine and Great Hill Hose

ITEM #1: Call meeting to order

First Selectwoman, Annmarie Drugonis, called the meeting to order at 6:01 P.M.

ITEM #2: Pledge of Allegiance

Everyone saluted the flag and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ITEM #3: Public Comment

Paul Wetowitz, 56 Davis Road, spoke about the proposed Fire Department Ordinance, noting that he has had conversations with both Fire Department members and Chief Edwards. He expressed that he would have liked to see more discussion surrounding the proposal and acknowledged that he is unsure whether the changes will ultimately prove beneficial. However, he emphasized that the only way to know is to move forward and give it a try. Paul also reflected on the beginning of his career in the Fire Department and his experience as a firefighter.

Chris Edwards, 63 Heritage Drive, Fire Chief of the Seymour Fire Department, spoke in support of the proposed ordinance changes. He emphasized that the changes are not intended to harm either Citizens Engine Company or Great Hill Hose Company and would not directly affect their operations. Each company would continue to function under its own bylaws, while the Seymour Fire Department would operate as a unified department. He explained that managing the department under three separate sets of rules creates significant challenges, and the proposed changes are meant to streamline governance and create greater consistency.

Chief Edwards noted that under the current system, the Fire Chief must reapply and be interviewed every year, making it nearly impossible to achieve meaningful long-term goals within such a short term. Historically, Seymour operated with two-year terms, and in more recent years, extended appointments—one lasting five years and his current four-year term—have resulted in greater progress than at any other time in recent history. For this reason, one of the proposed changes would establish a minimum three-year term for the Fire Chief.

He also spoke about the broader challenges facing volunteer fire departments in Seymour, throughout Connecticut, and nationwide, and shared his goals for strengthening the department. Chief Edwards concluded by expressing his support for the proposed ordinance as a way to provide stability, improve operations, and better serve the community.

Patrick Keough, 11 Deer Run Drive, a current Fire Commissioner for Great Hill Hose Company, stated that the proposed ordinance would bypass the Fire Commissioners. He expressed the need for broader involvement in the process and urged that more stakeholders be included so that a better, more thoughtful ordinance can be developed.

Ron Grega, 5 Edwards Road, spoke about the Senior Citizen Tax Incentive and shared his ideas for providing property tax relief. He distributed copies of his proposed suggestions and referenced related

discussions that took place at a Board of Selectpersons meeting several months ago. He asked that the Town consider further reviewing and exploring these ideas.

ITEM #4: Discussion and possible action

- a) Senior Citizen Tax Incentive
- b) Noise
- c) Disabled Veterans Exemption
- d) Vehicle Booting
- e) Firefighters:
- f) Non Resident Landlords

Senior Citizen Tax Incentive:

Town Counsel Richard Buturla explained that the Town can only implement tax relief programs that are authorized under Connecticut state law. He noted that the former "Circuit Breaker" program is no longer funded and that another senior tax-freeze program—where a lien is placed on the property and taxes are recovered when it is sold—also no longer applies. At this time, he has not found a statute that allows the Town to adopt the specific program being proposed. However, he is reviewing other state statutes that are not limited to seniors and may allow for a similar approach, and he may seek guidance from the state.

He highlighted General Statute 12-8100, the Limited Homestead Exemption, which allows municipalities to reduce the assessed value of a principal residence (single-family homes or condominiums) by 5% to 35%. New Milford is currently the only town using this newly enacted statute.

Annmarie added that she has been in contact with state representatives, who plan to review the matter and potentially bring it before the legislature. The Town will continue meeting with state officials and providing updates as they explore possible tax relief options. Mr. Grega also expressed interest in participating in discussions with legislators.

Annmarie read Mr. Grega's letter as follows:

Thanks for seeing me today. I just wanted to make my input clear – in an ideal situation – you are and remain a Seymour resident, you achieve 65 years of age, and you attain 20 years of Seymour house tax payments. In that year you are eligible for a 2% house reduction. In the following year, you reach 66 years of age, and you paid 21 years of house taxes and year eligible for 4% house reduction. 67 – 22 years of payments - 6%. 68 – 23 years of payments – 8%. 69 – 24 years of payments – 8%. 70 – 25 years of payments – 10%. And each subsequent year until you cease house tax payments due to death or other causes. Tax relief applies only to the premises that you reside. No rental property or absent landlord are eligible. For seniors like me who have long ago satisfied the requirements, 10 % being the first year of the ordinance passing.

Ronald Grega
January 2, 2026

Annmarie stated this will be discussed at the February meeting.

Firefighters:

Annmarie stated that the ordinance would not be voted on tonight and recommended that the firefighters bring their suggestions to the Ordinance Committee. Chief Edwards explained that the issue

has been discussed for over a year and that he had raised his concerns with the Board previously, but no action was taken until now.

The Fire Commissioners said they never received a formal letter outlining the proposed changes. Commissioners and committee members discussed prior conversations and differing viewpoints. Phil suggested that the Fire Commissioners and Fire Departments meet to develop a unified plan. Commissioner Calzone noted that those discussions have already occurred, but disagreements remain.

It was agreed that the Fire Departments and Fire Commissioners should work together to develop a plan and present it to the Ordinance Committee in February. Those in attendance also reviewed meeting timelines and the ongoing disagreements. The group also discussed concerns about Seymour Fire Department members who live out of town and how that impacts the department under the current and proposed rules.

Annmarie read both the current ordinance and the proposed changes. John Cronin of 197 Mountain Road explained that captain selections are voted on by Great Hill Hose or Citizen's Engine, citing their bylaws and potential conflicts. Chief Chris Edwards clarified that the issue stems from the fact that Great Hill Hose, Citizen's Engine, and the Fire Department each operate under separate bylaws and procedures, which has created inconsistencies the proposed ordinance is intended to address.

ITEM #5: Public Comment

None.

ITEM #6: Adjournment

Annmarie Drugonis adjourned the meeting at 7:07 PM

Submitted by,



Lianna McMurray
Recording Secretary

Reviewed by,



Annmarie Drugonis
First Selectwoman