



Special BOE Meeting – Budget Workshop #1 Minutes

January 6, 2026

Central Office

6:30 pm

COPY RECEIVED
DATE: 1/13/26
TIME: 4:38 PM
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE

Board Members Present:

Kristen Bruno, Chairperson
Kristen Harmeling, Secretary
Ed Strumello
Lori Nespoli
Pete Kubik
Stephan Behuniak
Jim Garofolo

Others Present:

Dr. Susan Compton, Superintendent
Salvatore Bucci, Business Manager
David Olechna
Dr. Boyle
Keith O'Rourke
Stephanie Ciccone
Jake Velleco
Paul Lucke
Lauren Reid
Kurt Miller
Shannon Levey, Board Clerk

I. CALL TO ORDER

A. Pledge of Allegiance

1. Kristen Bruno called the meeting to order at 6:37 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance

II. 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 Chairperson is able to answer, those questions may be addressed under the Chairperson'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 the public wanting to comment will need to state their name and address for the record prior to addressing the Board.

- Public comment called three times, no comment

III.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

A. Seymour Education Budget 2026-2027 Draft

Ms. Harmeling emphasized that the budget document must clearly be labeled "Draft." She noted that confusion occurred last year when documents posted on the website were mistaken for an adopted or proposed budget. She reiterated that this is not a Board of Education budget nor a Superintendent's budget, but a working draft.

Dr. Compton presented a class size document and explained that the district has been creative and thoughtful in managing staffing; however, options for continued reductions are becoming limited. She stated that last year's budget was balanced by eliminating three teaching positions through attrition and enrollment

numbers. She identified the addition of a high school media specialist as a priority due to accreditation requirements, noting uncertainty as to whether the position must be full-time or part-time.

Dr. Compton further reported that the largest budgetary pressure is health insurance costs. The district had anticipated an 8–10% increase; however, a projected 13.5% increase is now being carried, despite expectations that the state partnership plan would help mitigate costs.

Mr. Bucci explained that the district receives a 1.5-point credit as part of the New Haven County group. He noted an increase in the number of employees opting into the insurance plan, citing the strength of the coverage. He reminded the Board that the district was required to transition to the state partnership plan.

Mr. Kubik commented that costs would likely not be lower elsewhere and that remaining aligned with the town is important, as alternative plans would be more expensive.

Ms. Bruno asked whether the elimination of the HSA requirement was reflected in the budget. Mr. Bucci confirmed that the HSA was removed last year. He directed the Board to page 29.

Mr. Bucci reviewed key budget highlights, noting that the budget is a roll-forward from the prior year and does not reflect new staffing, programs, or services. Two teachers have notified the district of their intent to retire. While there is a slight reduction in special education enrollment, costs have increased due to a 5% rise in special education services, particularly from out-of-district placements. Legal fees were reduced by \$45,000 due to only one collective bargaining agreement anticipated next year and careful use of legal counsel. Energy costs are projected to increase by only 5% as a result of a negotiated contract with a separate provider. Technology costs include ongoing contracts for security cameras and Chromebooks. Facilities costs reflect existing maintenance contracts necessary for district infrastructure.

Ms. Bruno paused the discussion to allow for questions and noted that insurance rates are typically finalized in May.

Chromebook costs were discussed, with Mr. Bucci noting the per-unit cost has increased to \$360, accounting for the budget increase. Dr. Compton suggested exploring insurance coverage or a parent responsibility requirement for damaged Chromebooks. She also noted that several services are shared with the town to improve cost efficiency and credited Mr. Dyer for his proactive efforts in identifying savings.

Ms. Bruno requested that shared services with the town be clearly noted in the budget document. Mr. Bucci indicated that these shared services are identified within the document.

Mr. Hatfield questioned the cost of software, specifically Remind (\$13,000) and SchoolMessenger, and asked whether consolidation was possible. Ms. Harmeling clarified that \$33,000 represents camera software licensing, while \$38,000 covers security camera repairs, doors, sensors, and related maintenance.

Mr. Bucci referenced page 5, which provides a snapshot of total staffing broken down by category. Ms. Bruno reiterated the need to remove the word “proposed,” as no budget has been formally proposed.

Mr. Bucci explained that the document includes staff positions, locations, and salaries (with names removed), as well as all appendix positions.

Mr. Hatfield asked whether the GWI applies only to contracted positions. Mr. Bucci stated he was not certain.

Dr. Compton noted that the district achieved approximately \$250,000 in savings through strategic hiring of entry-level staff, emphasizing that these savings were critical to balancing the budget after it was cut.

Dr. Compton stated she would work with Ms. Levey to ensure all contracts are uploaded to the district website.

Mr. Bucci clarified that pages 12 and 13 do not include benefits but do include longevity and all TRB-eligible (pensionable) items.

Mr. Kubik asked about the assistant athletic director salary and noted the athletic director salary was not listed separately. It was clarified that the athletic director position is 092-required and built into the salary; the assistant athletic director is included in the appendix and referenced on page 12.

Mr. Hatfield added that department chair stipends, dual credit, and AP roles are included within salaries. Ms. Harmeling suggested adding a footnote explaining that salaries may include multiple roles or stipends. Mr. Hatfield agreed this clarification would be helpful.

Ms. Harmeling observed that aside from health insurance, there are minimal changes in the budget. She expressed concern about inconsistencies in formatting and presentation throughout the document. Mr. Bucci stated that all sections follow the same format except one page. Ms. Harmeling requested consistent titles, flow, and percentage columns for clarity. Mr. Bucci agreed to revise the formatting of the budget booklet.

Ms. Harmeling raised concerns about the district's ongoing underfunding of building maintenance and repairs.

Dr. Compton responded that the district must continue reviewing subcontractor costs, noting significant needs at SHS and CLS. She emphasized the importance of working collaboratively with the town to find efficiencies and shared solutions. She noted that the First Selectwoman and Mr. Miller have agreed to cover the costs of the district's three shared services staff again this year. Dr. Compton shared that principals provided detailed needs assessments during a recent meeting and emphasized the need to think creatively to meet those needs within financial constraints.

Ms. Harmeling referenced the budget as a "Roll Forward" budget.

Mr. Strumello reported that he would be attending a CABE Area 7 meeting the following day and asked for discussion points to share. Suggestions included free lunch initiatives, rising special education costs, and encouraging greater state support for early childhood programs.

IV.

REPORTS

A. Chairman's Report

1. Ms. Bruno thanked Mr. Miller and Mr. Levey for attending the meeting and noted that it was appreciated to see members of other boards in attendance.

B. Superintendent's Report

1. BH Care Grant: It was noted that the district secured a free grant through BH Care, with appreciation expressed to the First Selectwoman for her encouragement to explore the program. The initiative was described as a true success story for the district.

V.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:22 PM