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**Town of Seymour ~ Board of Finance  
MINUTES  
Budget Deliberations  
Deliberation of Board of Education Budget  
Wednesday, March 11, 2026 at 7:00pm  
Norma Drummer Room – Seymour Town Hall**

**Members Present:** Andy North, Quinn Levey, Bettyann Peck, Richard Demko, Kristyn Haniewicz, Mary Kruger; Tracy Rappa, Alice Levey (alternate).

**Members Absent:** Beverly Kennedy; Robin Andrews, Tracy Rappa (alternates)

**Others Present:** Jason Vieira, Monica Dimon, Annmarie Drugonis, Dr. Susan Compton, Kristin Bruno, Kristen Harmeling, Al Bruno, Laura Wilkins

**Item #1 – Call Meeting to order**

Chairman Richard Demko called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.

**Item #2 – Pledge of Allegiance**

Everyone saluted the Flag and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Richard Demko introduced all members (and alternates) of the Board of Finance.

**Item #3 – Public Comment**

Laura Wilkins – 5 Cross Creek Lane

I would like to express my concerns regarding the proposed education budget. While I understand the importance of supporting our schools and providing students with quality education, I do not agree with the current budget proposal as it stands. I believe the current budget reflects spending that is higher than what many residents in our community can reasonably sustain. Families in our town are facing rising costs in housing, utilities, food, gas and taxes. It is important that the school budget reflects the same level of fiscal responsibility that households must practice everyday. Our taxpayers are already facing a \$200 a year tax increase for the Bungay Elementary School project.

As a taxpayer in this community, I believe it is important to recognize that our local taxes are allocated to many different services throughout the town, not solely for education. These services include public safety, infrastructure, public works and other essential programs that our residents rely on every day. Because of this, it is important that education funding is balanced carefully with other needs for our community.

Our community is made up more than just families with children in the school system. It also includes seniors on fixed incomes, working adults without children and residents whose families are grown. Any budget decisions should take into account the financial impact on all members of the community.

Last year at the annual town meeting residents requested the budget to be reduced by \$750,000. After this reduction the students still received an education.

I respectfully urge the Board to take a closer look at areas where costs can be reduced, efficiencies can be found, and spending can be prioritized toward the most essential educational needs. Responsible budgeting is critical not only for maintaining public trust but also for ensuring the long-term financial health for our community.

Supporting students and being careful with taxpayer dollars should go hand in hand. I ask that the Board revisit the proposed budget with the goal of identifying meaningful reductions and ensuring that spending remains reasonable and sustainable.

Thank you for your time and for your service to our schools and community

Kristen Harmeling – 134 Davis Road – There is a lot that I agree with that Ms. Wilkins said. Education is not just for our children. Every citizen has an obligation to support public education. It is a foundation of democracy in America. We feel we do have a very responsible budget. It would thrill us to come in with a 2.4% budget increase or lower. I have been doing this for over 16 years and I have seen it all – I have seen our budget fail with a 0% increase – almost go below the minimum budget requirement (which would mean we would lose State funding). It has been said so many times that – look we cut the budget and the school stayed open. Of course the school stayed open! We don't have a choice! Schools have to be open! But what the residents don't know is that when \$750,000 is cut from our budget, they are not going to see that unless they are in a school. So one of the things that our parents did experience last year is that all back to school supplies were pushed to be purchased by the parents. Paraeducators – we can't keep them – students who need a paraeducator don't have one. Academic interventionist at Middle School – we can't get one. The doors are open, but we don't have what we need.

#### **Item #4 - Deliberation/Discussion of 2026/2027 Budget – Board of Education**

- Jason Vieira shared that the Health Insurance numbers came in at 9.9%
- Richard Demko asked if we have a dollar amount change. Dr. Compton said that they had heard from Chris Pelosi that the Health Insurance was 11.5% - a \$108,000 savings. The final number is now down to 9.9%. We will need to wait for Sal Bucci to be back on Monday to get a final savings number. Also, Dr. Compton said the Bungay project has nothing to do with this budget.
- Richard Demko reminded Board members that we can only suggest bottom line reductions. We cannot tell the Board of Education what line items to cut in their budget.
- Quinn Levey – I understand – looking at this budget 79% contractual no flexibility. What can we improve on? Dr. Compton said anything you take is personnel. We have cut already. Anything you take is a position. Kristen Harmeling said that the reason that we had to fill the Library Media position is that we have been told for over a decade to fill that position. We are in danger of losing accreditation if that position isn't filled. We are already overbudget in infrastructure. We have already cut our legal fees and energy bills. We can't touch the contracts. People would have to be let go.
- Andy North – we are in a very unfortunate situation. This is a tight budget. We can't get rid of teachers. We are lower per student cost than neighboring towns. Dr. Compton said we cannot cut Paraeducators or Administrators. Andy asked about the Adult Education line. It's a requirement from the State and is a shared amount.
- Bettyann Peck – the gift with the insurance – the step is a double edge sword – good teachers have been around a long time – the reduction of the insurance will help considerably. Sal will give us what the numbers tomorrow. Tell us what we can do – we only recommend numbers.
- Richard Demko – line 745 Equipment & Technology shows a 59.1% increase over last year. What is that for? Dr. Compton said it is just the cost of software going up. Chromebooks going up. Certain software going up. We did cut some. Is this replacing or repairing? Similar to replacing x amount every year. Page 50 of 52.
- Kristyn Haniewicz said that the presentation was very transparent. A lot of this is contractual. Not much to cut.
- Mary Kruger said this was a great presentation. Very professional. I realize the importance of a good educational system that people will want to live in our town. I was just wondering about the transportation costs. I live a few blocks from Bungay. I have seen folks getting the bus to stop at their houses. Is this

something that can perhaps save us money. Dr. Compton said that we have been very lucky with our Transportation Contract. It is up in 2028. We have increased costs. Athletic increases costs. We have Special Ed increases. We don't stop at every house, we can't. If there is a need, the police go out and verify the need. Also, it's not a good look to keep cutting without adding. Kristen Harmeling said that there is a state mandate that they have to provide a seat on the bus for every student even if the parent would provide a waiver stating that they will drive the student to school for the entire school year.

- Quinn Levey asked if we purchased buses recently. Dr. Compton said yes. We purchased three. At \$5,000 each. This will help with athletics and the community center. The Town purchased.
- Richard Demko 520, 521, 529 Liability, Student, Property Insurances – are these actual % increases or estimated – Dr. Compton said these are pretty close. What was the year to date from last year? Pretty close. We don't know what we are going to see for the Town Budget. Trying to come up with things we can shave. It is a valid question. Kristen said we can get you actual #'s. Andy asked if there is anything that you are worried about. Dr. Compton said there are lots of things. Many things require a referendum. We are doing the best we can. Our most precious assets are our children. Our school system is most important. People come to the Town because of the schools. Mary Kruger asked what the impact of the retiring of the science teacher from last year was. Dr. Compton said that it was ok. They were able to shift around due to enrollment and put the person into the Library Media Specialist position.
- Richard Demko – asked Transportation 510,512,516,519 – are these contractual from year to year. Yes. Page 32.
- Tracy Rappa asked if there was a savings from removing this science teacher – we will be hiring a math teacher. Outsourcing – we pay \$1.9 million for custodians – have we looked into outsourcing this? It is under a contract. It's recently a new contract another additional 4-year contract. So, it can't happen until this contract is up. Annmarie Drugonis said that you can actually combine shared services with the Board of Education Custodians and save on overtime, sick days, part time workers, can combine with the unions. This was talked about with the unions – this was talked about with the unions previously. At that time one of the people did not want to do it. That person is no longer there. What would that head count look like – 16 custodians – part-time people as well.
- Annmarie Drugonis said that there is currently 16 full-time day - 2 day and 2 night per school plus \$100k in overtime – but remember – if there's basketball games they have to stay, if there's robotics club, they have to stay, if people are using the facility, they need to stay. There are also shift differentials.
- Quinn Levey said if the Board of Education had to take some of the shared services back, would this impact the Board of Education significantly? Dr. Compton said YES! It would definitely impact us significantly. This is why two years ago this was implemented. We don't have the money.
- Bettyann Peck said that we make recommendations. What will happen if voted down. What would you do?
- Mary Kruger asked what the financial impact of each referendum is. Annmarie Drugonis said it costs \$5,500 per referendum. I don't budget for these because I believe these to be conservative budget. We don't have \$20,000 to blow on a referendum. Mary Kruger asked if multiple referendums affect our bonding rate. Annmarie said no. The only thing that would affect our bonding rate is taking money from our Fund Balance. We have 14 days of Early Voting. We have Absentee Ballot Voting.
- Richard Demko asked about line 119 Permanent Building Subs – did have cost savings – needed – protected teachers from burnout – attached to each building – daily rate varies.
- Dr. Compton said that Sal Bucci and herself have spent countless hours with the Board of Education reviewing this budget trying to find ways to reduce the numbers.
- Tracy Rappa asked if there are a lot of people come to the Board of Education meetings. Dr. Compton and Kristen Harmeling said that parents come but not a lot of citizens.
- Richard Demko said on 03/18 we will Finalize the budget #'s for BOE, Revenues, and Town. Please have Sal Bucci present if possible.
- Quinn Levey said that he went to Seymour High School and it is so different now. So diverse and offers so many programs.

**Item #5 – Public Comment**

Kristen Harmeling – 134 Davis Road – I just wanted to say that we have 310 employees in the Board of Education which is about three times the number of people employed by the Town. So it is understandable that we have more salary expense. Something else is that the mini-buses are used to help the athletic teams. We used to have a whole group of 13 clerical paraprofessionals who used to help with things like making copies that were **eliminated** and this is still felt across the district. We did **reallocate** the budget in September after all the numbers were in – the State numbers were in – student population numbers were in. People accused us of scare tactics.

Alfred Bruno – 10 MacConnie Court – I just wanted to say that we do have a serious shortage of science and math teachers in Connecticut. You want to hold on to the good ones. I have experienced that being an HR Director in the area. You can't let the vocal minority influence your decisions. I think you have really dug into these budgets and I am proud as a fellow elected official to see the hard work you have put into this. I ask that you examine the data and you do right by the students and Board of Education because coupled with town services and our economic development this is what drives our property values and our community forward. Please put the 4.7% forward and let the voters decide. I agree that it is a horrible thing to keep cutting. It is a bad look to keep cutting at our Town Meeting. That was reprehensible. It's time to move in a positive direction. I think that's with education. We did that with our rebuild. We came out with our rebuild at 88% YES.

Kristin Bruno – 10 MacConnie Court – I just wanted to thank you all for being here night after night. I know it's not easy. I know there is a history with referendums in the past. I know that Bungay was a game changer. We want to move the Town and School forward.

**Item #6 – Correspondence**

None

**Item #7 – New Business**

03/16/26 Presentation of First Selectwoman Budget  
(LONG Presentation – bring snacks and comfortable clothing!)  
03/18/26 Veterans Presentation  
Deliberation on First Selectwoman budget  
03/19/26 Public Hearing @ 6:30pm  
**03/23/26 Final Deliberations**  
**04/07/26 Town Meeting @7pm @ Seymour Middle School**

**Item #8 – Adjournment**

Richard Demko adjourned the meeting at 8:32pm

Respectfully Submitted by:

**Monica Dimon**  
**Recording Secretary**