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TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE

Town of Seymour ~ Board of Finance
MINUTES
PUBLIC HEARING
Wednesday, March 19, 2026 at 6:30pm
Norma Drummer Room – Seymour Town Hall

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

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Jason Vieira, Monica Dimon, Annmarie Drugonis, Jack & Diane Jurkowski, Laura Wilkins, Esther Vasarelyi, Michael Renkewith, Lori Pratt, Michael Jurkowski, Edward Strumello, Joshua Beaupre, Kevin Murowsky, Lianna McMurray, Dana Flach, Tim Connors, Tom LaPaglia, JoAnn Sardo, Theresa Conroy, Rob Dyer, Mike Fappiano, John Bucherati, Timm Willis

Item #1 – Call Meeting to order

Chairman Richard Demko called the meeting to order at 6:34pm.

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

- Public Comment is limited to two minutes per person
- State your name and address for the record

Annmarie Drugonis said that this is not really Public Comment. People can ask questions of the Board of Finance. We WILL answer any questions. This is a back and forth which is allowed.

Joshua Beaupre – 29 Maple Street #309 – Looking for more transparency – where specifically are certain line items being spent. What are requests being made for? I find that I have trouble figuring these things out. There seems to be a lot of increases but I don't see a lot of work being done.

Laura Wilkins – 5 Cross Creek Lane – I thought today was questions – Dr. Compton did sit with me the other day and answered a lot of questions. Every year they ask for more money. It doesn't look like they can start reducing costs long-term. 102 of 184 of their teachers are at the top of the pay scale. Are we looking at after the 3 years we start hiring lower step teachers? Can we charge fees for sports and extra curricular activities? (BOE said it is unfair to ask parents – it may close this opportunity for a student to this opportunity). Can we maybe get bids from vendors?

Mike Renkewith – 28 Woodside Avenue - \$103k Technology in Public Schools – is this for Computers we got rid of supplies. Mission about students – most of this is about the salaries. Textbooks are taken away. Town Budget I see cuts all over the place. They do a great job. Dr. Compton said that she would like to discuss any discrepancies with you. The \$110,000 is for the chromebooks. Our Board of Education budget centers around the students. A lot of our programs are online, but we do have textbooks also. I would be happy to talk to any of you with any questions you may have.

Kristin Bruno – 10 McConnie Court – Board of Education Chairman – we had several budget workshops – we needed a library media specialist to maintain accreditation and made other cuts to accomplish this – we need textbooks and teachers and building leadership.

Theresa Conroy – 177 Skokorat Street – asked if we have an Open Space Fund? No we don't. Might be something to look into for the future.

Recently the did be 100% better in taxes. The State mandated us to do, Do we know how much revenue we lost in our budget for that. Kevin Murowsky said that 6.7million was part of that permanent total assessment disability for veterans off of the Grand List on the new Mill Rate. Theresa asked what the dollars is. Kevin said \$187,000. Theresa said that she noticed that maybe we could increase the potholes from \$10,000 to \$15,000 because it seems like \$10,000 won't be enough! Also, under Health – Valley Substance Abuse – looks like the funding was cut – Richard Demko said that is now funded with money we receive through the Opioid Grant Revenue. Inspector for the FireMarshal – 12C up – this is because the clerk was funded half thru Fire Department but now is funded through the Fire Marshal completely.

Code Compliance – 103 – Blight Enforcement – is now full time employee position.

Emergency Management Director – stipend increase from 10k to 20k – range from 5k-15k in study by HR director which was paid for. Please reconsider this.

Esther Vasarhevi – 45 Canfield Road – Questions for Board of Education – Chart of Accounts – How do our students rate? – 2/3 of Budget – How many are Special Education? Can we collaborate with other area towns to lower costs? Can residents help to defray costs (seniors or ex-teachers tutor, people donate supplies, paper, etc.)? Increase class size? Kristen Harmeling said that in the BOE budget there is a detail in the back pages. If you have questions, we would be happy to sit down and go through them with you. Dr. Compton listed several of our schools' accolades.

Joshua Beaupre – 29 Maple Street #309 – I can appreciate all the awards the school has received. My school had received many awards as well as had a very high dropout rate and high pregnancy rate. Also, how are the teachers' performance reviews.

Kristin Bruno – said that Special Education State rate is about 20% - Preschool to 13 categories -to age 22. Part of special education is planning and this is done through a team. This is made up of parents and educators that work with the child. They develop a plan. What are the goals the child is working on. What are the services. Part of the Special Education Law is that the child has the right to be educated with their non-disabled peers. As close to the general classroom as is appropriate for them is the goal.

Jack Jurkowski – 9 Amber Drive – What is the Minimum Budget Requirement? Where do we stand in relation to this? Kristen Harmeling said that this is actually a number that is a State law that says a town cannot fund education to a number that is lower than the prior year unless there has been a decrease in enrollment to a significant degree. There have been times when we have had a zero percent budget increase and yet our budget failed at referendum. That is when the discussion about minimum budget requirement really became relevant. If we go below the minimum budget requirement, the state starts docking what they give us in the ECS Grant. I think the context they were talking the other night was about the per student cost spending. The Town side of the budget is great. The Board of Education at 4.7%, we have 2,000 kids. We have a responsibility to the residents – the average citizen. They have it tough with taxes for some more than double due to the revaluation. I was hopeful with the addition of 3 new Board of Finance members this year that we might put out a budget that just might pass. Usually we have to go through multiple iterations before the budget passes. In a few years, we will be paying off the new school. Why does this Board feel that it's ok to come out with a budget offering a tax increase double the rate of inflation? Explain why the Board of Education 4.7% increase should be granted when the rate of inflation is 2.8%? Richard Demko said that he does understand your concerns. This is a collective effort. When we go through the budgets, we go line by line. We look at what the needs of the Town are and the needs of the Board of Education. What it comes down to at the end of the day is we all give our input as to what we believe

is the best for what is needed to move the Town forward and continue to educate our students on a high level. Unfortunately we had to make some adjustments.

Andy North – love the schools – the increases are contractual – will be the same next year – we don't have a spending problem, we have a revenue problem. We will have the same problem every year. Other towns in the area are having the same problem.

Kristen Harmeling said that more than 15% of the people benefit from the schools even though only 15% of the population are in schools. To address the issue of charging fees for sports: first, it doesn't raise as much as you would think. Also, if we start charging, it would be closing a door for a child who cannot afford it or would be embarrassed to ask for help. Also, it is true that our increase is higher than the rate of inflation – but the things that we have to pay for are higher than the rate of inflation. 79% of our budget goes to salaries – we have 310 employees and insurance rates go up 9.9% there is no way that we can come in with a request that is at or below inflation rate.

Quinn Levey said that we talked about layoffs.

Laura Wilkins – Your Board said that look toward progressing the Town forward and don't want to cut teachers. But we're cutting essentials for our town. I thought they mentioned we need a fire truck and we need a generator. All of that runs our town too. So yes, you may need to get rid of a teacher, but you need to take care of our infrastructure. Education is not the only thing in our town.

Mike Renkewith – Fuel prices are going up – Insurance – I am here for the kids – what are the options to select here – high deductibles? – Kurt Miller said that the Town and BOE are now on the State Insurance Plan – High Deductible Plan – we use a broker – we have a terrible loss history – we were at 110% - we were getting renewal rates of 30% - collaborative of several communities – 3 year windows – original quote was 13% then was down to 10% - actively shopped to reduce the rate every year.

Jack Jurkowski – Affordability – Needs are at 5% - Offer is 3%

Kristen Harmeling – We are not a business – we use business principles – we do try to get the best prices – we pay the best prices. The people get to decide what they can afford. There are people out there who are willing to pay more so they can get the best for their kids.

Bettyann Peck – we spend hours and hours and going through the budgets and encourage all our residents to come and listen to the departments present their needs. Only two people came to listen. We worked collaboratively. We are here to make a recommendation. We all pay taxes. We need an educational system to draw out people. We need more revenue. We need to get the word out. Go to the Board of Education Board meetings. Don't wait until the last minute to these meetings and wonder what's happening.

Andy North – We have to get the Grand List up – need to have development in this Town.

Bettyann Peck – thank you to all the Department heads for being here!

Kristin Bruno – Our Board of Education meetings are held the first Monday of each month at the Middle School Library we will be deliberating on the budget if we need to make any changes. We do not think of it as the Board of Ed's money. We are not paid. We are volunteers. It is the Town's money. It is the taxpayers' money. We are acutely aware of that. There are citizens in this town that are struggling. We have a group that makes sure that kids have snacks. And food bags that kids can take home on the weekends. And healthcare through the school nurse. And mental healthcare. And a warm meal. School is the only place they can grow and feel cared for and feel hope. Please join us.

Theresa Conroy – The online budget is located in two places – Town budget in one place and Board of Education in another. Maybe we could merge into one area to make it easier to find.
Mary McNelis does a great job with putting her list of grants online.

Diane Jurkowski – we are fully supportive of education – healthcare was shopped around – this was very important – the salaries are also important – you can't have the salaries too low – can't have them too high

Mary Kruger – appreciate all coming out – I see all the challenges facing – we need to have a good school system – it looks bad to keep cutting – I am concerned that we cut out the French program – lost Science teacher – we need to increase revenue. I appreciate all of you again for coming out.

Lori Pratt – 7 Peach Drive – I appreciated the comment that this is the taxpayers' money. I did not appreciate the comment that this is not a business. That's the problem with government. It's not your money – you don't have to live within a budget. I need more. I'm not saying that your needs aren't necessary. We all struggle. What I'm worried about is my elderly neighbor who can't afford basic food. She is going to lose her home. With a 7% budget, how is that affecting these people. I am also not sure if the tenured teachers are always the best. They should be judged on their results/performances. The taxes are up 3%.

Item #5 – Adjournment

Richard Demko adjourned the meeting at 8:10pm

Submitted by:

Monica Dimon
,Recording Secretary