

Seymour Board of Education



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

May 4, 2026
Seymour Middle School
7:00 pm

Board Members Present: Kristen Bruno, Board Chairperson
Chris Champagne, Board Vice-Chairperson
Kristen Harmeling, Board Secretary
Ed Strumello
Jim Garofolo
Lori Nespoli
Jay Hatfield (7:09 PM)
Stephan Behuniak

Board Members Absent: Pete Kubik

Others Present: Dr. Susan Compton, Superintendent
Shannon Levey, Board Clerk

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Pledge of Allegiance – Ms. Bruno called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM
- B. Introductions – Introductions of those present were made

II. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

- A. Bungay Building Committee Update - Mr. Strumello reported that the RFP and RFQ processes have been initiated. At the next meeting, the architect will review the existing building as part of the assessment and planning process.
 - **Ms. Bruno:** Reported that funding confirmation has been received.
 - **Mr. Miller:** Stated that the project is eligible for a reimbursement rate of 64.58% on the approximately \$60 million Bungay School project.
 - **Mr. Stanek:** Noted that the district may qualify for an additional 15% reimbursement related to the preschool program at Bungay School. While the district is eligible, qualification has not yet been confirmed. Educational specifications have been submitted, and the district remains optimistic about meeting the requirements.
- B. Seymour Champion Recognitions – "Noble"
 - 1. Bungay School
 - a. Sophie Narvaez
 - b. Alexander Sirowich
 - 2. Chatfield-LoPresti School
 - a. Zahara Delisser
 - b. Nathan Heise
 - 3. Seymour Middle School
 - a. Anna Roszkowski
 - b. Caralyn Horowitz
 - 4. Seymour High School
 - a. Jamie Keough
 - b. Sean Douglas
- C. Student Reports
 - 1. SHS Student Representative Report – Jeremy Tomasheski, Daphne Shea

The SHS Student Representatives provided an update on recent student activities and accomplishments. Highlights included ongoing initiatives through the National Honor Society and Student Council, preparations for Senior Field Day, and the painting of the class rock.

Spring athletic programs are actively underway, including baseball, softball, track and field, golf, and girls tennis.

Additional updates included completion of the yearbook spring selections and planning for yearbook distribution. Student involvement continues across numerous clubs and organizations, including Art Club, Spanish Club, Multicultural Dance, Performing Arts, Environmental Club, and Debate Club, which recently held its end-of-year dinner.

The Electrathon Team recently participated in competition, and the Robotics Club remains active. Students involved in FBLA are preparing to attend the National Leadership Conference.

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 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.

- **Harvey Catlin**, 72 Raven Street, Waterbury: spoke regarding the Seymour Middle School softball and debate programs. Mr. Catlin shared that he is approaching his 299th career softball win and expressed how proud he is of the students involved in the program. He acknowledged the challenges surrounding the current budget situation and made a plea for the district to find a way to preserve the middle school softball program. Mr. Catlin explained that every student who tries out is given the opportunity to participate, either on the team or practice squad, allowing students to learn and develop their skills regardless of experience level. He noted that the only alternative for many students would be travel softball, which can be financially out of reach for many families. He emphasized that many participants continue on to the high school softball program and some ultimately receive college scholarships. Mr. Catlin encouraged the district to keep the program going, stating that students gain valuable experiences and opportunities through participation. He concluded his remarks with humor, incorporating softball signs and terminology into his comments.
- **Fred Stanek**, 22 N Benham Rd.: echoed Mr. Catlin's comments and praised the outstanding work he has done with students. Mr. Stanek also spoke in support of continued funding for the school system. He stated that graduation is the most important meeting of the school year because it represents the culmination of the district's investment in its students. He emphasized that the education budget is ultimately about investing in students and their future. Mr. Stanek encouraged community members to vote in support of the education budget and advocated for continued support of ECS funding recently passed by the state. He stated that these funds are critical to maintaining the quality of education provided by the district. Mr. Stanek commented that Seymour's school system is excellent, noting that staff and students work hard and that the community cannot afford to let them down. He urged residents to vote "yes" on the budget referendum in order to help stop the ongoing budget cycle challenges. Mr. Stanek also congratulated Jeremy Tomasheski for a narrative he recently shared on Facebook.
- Public comment called three times, no further comment

IV. **REPORTS**

- A. Special Education Report – Dr. Boyle
- B. Financial Report – Salvatore Bucci
- C. Enrollment Report
- D. Seymour High School Alumni Association

Representatives from the Seymour High School Alumni Association provided an overview of the organization, its mission, ongoing initiatives, and scholarship efforts.

Fred Stanek, Vice Chair of the Association, opened the presentation by reading directly from the Association bylaws regarding the purpose and mission of the organization. Additional presenters included Aaron Pawluk, Chris Pagliaro, Harvey Catlin, and Wendy Carrafiello.

Mr. Pawluk, a member of the Class of 1997 and current President of the Association, provided a brief history of the organization's formation. He explained that following the COVID-19 pandemic, alumni recognized the need to strengthen alumni connections and support for Seymour High School. What began as informal after-school meetings evolved into a formal association complete with bylaws, a mission statement, and an alumni directory. He also discussed the establishment of the Alumni Hall of Fame and the organization's partnership with the ValleyCommunity Foundation to create a scholarship fund for Seymour High School students.

Mr. Pagliaro, a member of the Class of 1998, spoke about the Seymour High School Alumni Hall of Fame, which was formed shortly after the Alumni Association. He explained that the Hall of Fame honors graduates who demonstrate exceptional character and make a meaningful impact within their communities. He noted that the Hall of Fame differs from the athletic hall of fame in that it recognizes community impact and service rather than athletic or past school accomplishments. Honorees represent a broad range of professions and service at the local, state, and national levels. Eligible nominees must be at least ten years removed from graduation, nominations are open to the public, and nominees may choose whether to continue in the process. This year's inductees include Rebecca Bennett, Theresa Conroy, Monica Mordowanec, and Chief Master Sergeant Gerald

Mr. Stanek, a member of the Class of 1972, discussed alumni traditions that began in 2022, including recognizing anniversary classes. He referenced the Class of 1976 being honored during its 50-year anniversary celebration and noted that the Association hopes to continue sponsoring similar events in the future. He also referenced sponsorship support from Ray Neccio.

Mr. Catlin, also a member of the Class of 1972 and Treasurer of the Association, explained that the organization currently operates with limited funding. He shared that the Association raises funds through initiatives such as selling paw print stencils that residents can paint on their driveways. He stated that proceeds from fundraising efforts are directed into building the scholarship fund so it can eventually become self-sustaining.

Ms. Carrafiello, a member of the Class of 1996, shared that she became involved with the Association in 2004 and comes from a family with multiple Seymour High School graduates. She discussed efforts to increase membership, raise funds through initiatives such as the paw print campaign, and establish a scholarship fund through the Valley Community Foundation for Seymour High School students. She noted that the Association's current goal is to reach \$10,000 in scholarship funding and that they are currently approximately halfway to that goal. The long-term objective is to provide scholarships annually. Ms. Carrafiello also shared plans for future social and alumni events designed to increase participation and support, including encouraging graduates to make symbolic donations tied to their graduation year, such as a Class of 1996 graduate donating \$19.96. She announced that the Association will host a June alumni event and social hour to promote membership and community involvement. Additionally, she stated that the Seymour Pumpkin Festival flower sale fundraiser will benefit the Alumni Association this year.

Mr. Pawluk concluded the presentation by discussing outreach efforts aimed at increasing awareness of the Association. He shared that the organization utilizes social media platforms including Facebook and Instagram and has created QR codes for alumni registration and scholarship donations. Registration is free and simply requires a graduate's name and graduation year. He encouraged creative donation efforts and stated that the Association's long-term goal is to award scholarships to two graduating seniors annually. He noted that this year, one scholarship will be awarded while the organization continues to build its scholarship fund.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes**
 - 1. Regular BOE Meeting – April 6, 2026
 - 2. Special BOE Meeting – April 9, 2026
 - 3. Special BOE Meeting – April 29, 2026
 - 4. Finance Committee Meeting – April 6, 2026
 - 5. Awards Committee Meeting – April 21, 2026
- B. Hiring – Non-Certified**
 - 1. Elmedina Kazaferi
 - a. Food Service Worker
 - b. Chatfield-LoPresti School
 - c. Replacing Kaitlyn Tanner
 - 2. Teuta Kazaferi
 - a. Food Service Worker
 - b. Chatfield-LoPresti School

- c. Replacing Haley Cole
- C. Intra-District Transfer Requests for 2026-2027 school year
 - MOTION: (Kristen Harmeling / Chris Champagne)** move to approve the consent agenda as presented
 - AFFIRMATIVE:** Mr. Behuniak, Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Ms. Nespoli, Mr. Strumello
 - ABSTENTION:** Mr. Hatfield
 - PASSES:** 7-0-1

VI. **ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA**

VII. **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION**

A. FY 2026-2027 Seymour Board of Education's Budget

Dr. Compton: Susan Compton discussed the upcoming budget referendum vote scheduled for the following day and encouraged residents to participate in the voting process. Dr. Compton stated that the district must carefully review the budget while emphasizing the importance of maintaining the float nurse position due to student needs and district liability concerns. She noted that the level of medical assistance required in schools is greater than many people realize and explained that substitute nurses are not always available. She stated that, without adequate nursing coverage, significant responsibility falls on building administrators. Dr. Compton added that while the district is aware that potential state funding remains uncertain, the district must wait to determine exactly what funding Seymour will receive. She also noted that there would be Board of Finance meetings held Tuesday and Wednesday evening depending on the outcome of the referendum.

Ms. Bruno: encouraged residents to vote in support of both the education and town budgets. Ms. Bruno stated that she had reached out to Connecticut Association of Boards of Education while reviewing the recently passed state legislation and noted that any additional state funding would not impact the current referendum.

Ms. Harmeling: commented that while discussions regarding the Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) are important for future planning, they do not impact her personal vote on the current budget. Ms. Harmeling stated that while the district knows a funding figure has been discussed at the state level, there is still uncertainty regarding what the funding specifically means, how it will be distributed, and when it will be received. She added that the district should stay the course because the funding would be received regardless of the referendum outcome.

Dr. Compton: commended the state legislature and governor for approving the legislation and noted her appreciation for the creation of a task force to review how Connecticut operates its educational funding systems.

Ms. Harmeling: stated that 2013 was the last time ECS funding formulas were updated and expressed hope that the newly formed task force would prevent such long gaps between reviews in the future.

Ms. Bruno: commented that the state budget timeline does not align with municipal budget timelines, making it difficult for towns and school districts to develop budgets without a clear understanding of anticipated state funding.

Ms. Harmeling: She stated that the Board has considered various options and continues gathering financial information, but decisions regarding potential reductions cannot be made until the referendum results are known.

Dr. Compton: stated that the district hopes to move forward within the next two weeks to reinstate five positions that had previously received non-renewal notices, though two positions would not be restored due to budget limitations. She referenced the possibility of a special meeting related to staffing decisions and emphasized that the outcome is directly impacted by whether residents approve the budget referendum. Dr. Compton noted that the district is required to maintain a certain number of certified teachers in order to provide required high school credits and explained that the non-renewal notices were issued as a precautionary measure.

Ms. Harmeling: asked for clarification regarding the language contained within the non-renewal notices. Dr. Compton explained that the notices state that the employee would no longer have a position at the end of the school year.

Ms. Bruno: added that recall procedures are outlined within the applicable contractual agreements

B. Naming of the Grayson Luyando Memorial Courts

Dr. Compton: stated that the topic had previously been discussed during the Board's February meeting.

Mr. O'Rourke: referenced the February proposal to name the basketball court area in memory of Grayson Luyando.

John and Courtney Luyando, parents of Grayson Luyando, addressed the Board and thanked members for placing the item on the agenda. The family shared that Grayson fought a long and difficult battle with leukemia and described him as a true member of the Seymour school community with a strong passion for basketball. They stated that the basketball court allowed Grayson to simply be a child and that they wish to remember him through the joy and spirit he displayed while playing the game.

The family expressed that the proposed memorial would be a meaningful honor not only for their family, but also for Grayson's friends and the broader community. They discussed the importance of supporting individuals and families experiencing difficult times and described the basketball courts as a place where students build friendships, create memories, and strengthen community connections. They shared their hope to beautify the area over time (at no cost to the Board of Education) so it may continue serving students and families for years to come.

Mr. O'Rourke: addressed the Board regarding a proposal to dedicate the basketball court area as the "Grayson Luyando Memorial Courts" in memory of Grayson Luyando. He shared that he had spoken with the First Selectwoman, who expressed support for the project pending the Board's decision. Mr. O'Rourke stated that the family hopes to move forward while Grayson's classmates are still at the middle school so they may celebrate and honor his memory before the end of the school year. He explained that the short-term plan would include vinyl signage, with long-term goals of installing a permanent wooden or stone sign and continuing to beautify the space over time. Mr. O'Rourke emphasized that no Board of Education or district funds would be used for the project, as all expenses would be covered through donations and community support. He also noted that while the space would primarily honor Grayson's memory, it could also serve as a place to recognize and support other families in the community who have experienced the loss of a child.

Dr. Compton: That says it all, this is a great area.

MOTION: (Chris Champagne / Kristen Harmeling) In alignment with board policy 7551, move to name the outdoor basketball courts at Seymour Middle School in memory of Grayson Luyando.

Mr. Garofolo: expressed condolences to Grayson's family, stating that the loss of a child at such a young age is unimaginable. He noted that the Board was being asked to take action in accordance with Board Policy 7551 regarding naming rights and stated that, while he deeply respected the family and their request, he did not believe the proposal met the threshold outlined in the policy for naming a facility or space. Mr. Garofolo suggested that the Board instead consider alternative forms of recognition, such as a plaque, memorial wall, garden space, or other commemorative activity that would honor Grayson while remaining consistent with the spirit and intent of the policy. He also acknowledged that the district has previously approved naming recognitions, including DeBarber Field and the Ray Neccio Gymnasium, but emphasized the importance of adhering to Board policy and reserving naming rights for special circumstances as outlined therein.

Ms. Harmeling: requested time to review Policy 7551 and commented that special circumstances should be considered individually rather than generally. Ms. Harmeling stated that Grayson's parents and Mr. O'Rourke had articulated clearly why the basketball court area held special significance and why the request was meaningful to the family and community.

Mr. Garofolo: reiterated that the proposal should first be reviewed by the Facilities Committee.

Mr. Hatfield: called the question

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Champagne, Ms. Bruno, Ms. Harmeling, Ms. Nespoli, Mr. Behuniak

ABSTENTION: Mr. Strumello

OPPOSED: Mr. Garofolo

PASSES: 6-1-1

C. School Climate Plans

- a. **MOTION:** (Kristen Harmeling / Ed Strumello) move table the school climate plans until June 15, 2026
AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Champagne, Ms. Bruno, Ms. Harmeling, Ms. Nespoli, Mr. Behuniak, Mr. Strumello, Mr. Garofolo
PASSES: 8-0-0

D. Awards Advisory Committee – 2026 Award Recipients

1. 2026 David A. Brumer Excellence in Education Community Award
 Recommendation from the Awards Advisory Committee to bestow the 2026 David A. Brumer Excellence in Education Community Award to _____
2. 2026 John J. Gallagher Memorial Athletic Award
 Recommendation from the Awards Advisory Committee to bestow the 2026 John J. Gallagher Memorial Athletic Award to _____
3. 2026 Vincentena Kobasa Excellence in Teaching Award
 Recommendation from the Awards Advisory Committee to bestow the 2026 Vincentena Kobasa Excellence in Teaching Award to _____
4. 2026 Thomas J. Petruny Memorial Education and Environmental Award
 Recommendation from the Awards Advisory Committee to bestow the 2026 Thomas J. Petruny Memorial Education and Environmental Award to _____
5. 2026 Karen R. Stanek "Once a Wildcat Always a Wildcat" Award
 Recommendation from the Awards Advisory Committee to bestow the 2026 Karen R. Stanek "Once a Wildcat Always a Wildcat" Award to _____

MOTION: (Chris Champagne / Kristen Harmeling) to accept the Awards Advisory Committee's recommendations for the 2026 Awards Recipients.

MOTION WITHDRAWN (Chris Champagne / Kristen Harmeling)

MOTION: (Kristen Harmeling / Chris Champagne) to accept the recommendations of the Awards Advisory Committees for the Board of Education's 2026 Awards Recipients for: 2026 David A. Brumer Excellence in Education Community Award, 2026 Vincentena Kobasa Excellence in Teaching Award, 2026 Thomas J. Petruny Memorial Education and Environmental Award, and 2026 Karen R. Stanek "Once a Wildcat Always a Wildcat" Award.

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Champagne, Ms. Bruno, Ms. Harmeling, Ms. Nespoli, Mr. Behuniak, Mr. Strumello, Mr. Garofolo

PASSES: 8-0-0

MOTION: (Kristen Harmeling / Stephan Behuniak) to accept the recommendations of the Awards Advisory Committees for the Board of Education's 2026 Awards Recipients for: 2026 John J. Gallagher Memorial Athletic Award

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Champagne, Ms. Bruno, Ms. Harmeling, Ms. Nespoli, Mr. Behuniak, Mr. Garofolo

RECUSED: Mr. Strumello

PASSES: 7-0-1

E. Principal Hiring – Chatfield-LoPresti School (may be discussed in Executive Session)

1. **Dr. Compton:** Extensive process, 50+ applicants, she commend the hiring committee. The process worked, the candidate presented the 90 entry plan; it was very obvious. Recommendation for David Willadsen as principal of Chatfield-LoPresti School. Mr. Willadsen provided copies of his 90 entry plan to the board members.

MOTION: (Ed Strumello / Jim Garofolo) to enter into executive session to discuss the hiring of Chatfield-LoPresti School principal, and invite Dr. Susan Compton and candidate

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Bruno, Ms. Nespoli, Mr. Strumello, Mr. Garofolo

OPPOSED: Mr. Harmeling, Mr. Behuniak, Mr. Champagne

PASSES: 5-3-0

Entered executive session 8:29 PM

VIII. INFORMATION

- A. Hiring - Non-Certified**
1. Amber Desiderato

- a. Substitute Teaching Pool
 - b. District-wide
- B.** Resignations
 - 1. Haley Cole
 - a. Food Service Worker
 - b. Chatfield-LoPresti School
 - c. Effective 4/19/26
 - 2. Katelyn Tanner
 - a. Food Service Worker
 - b. Chatfield-LoPresti School
 - c. Effective 3/4/26
 - 3. Rachel Ferrugia
 - a. Special Education Teacher
 - b. Bungay Elementary School
 - c. Effective end of 25-26 school year
- C.** School Events
 - 1. Chatfield-LoPresti School
 - 2. Bungay Elementary School
 - 3. Seymour Middle School
 - 4. Seymour High School

IX. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS & SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

- A.** Board of Education Comments
 - 1. Chairman's Comments
 - 2. Board Member Comments
- B.** Superintendent Report

X. ADJOURNMENT

YouTube Link (5/4/2026): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPGa6dTA9Qw>

Note: The next Regular Board of Education meeting will be held on Monday, June 15, 2026, at 7:00 pm at Seymour Middle School.

Prepared by Shannon Levey, Board Clerk