



Seymour Public Schools

Seymour Board of Education

SPECIAL BOE MEETING: BUDGET WORKSHOP MINUTES

April 29, 2026

Seymour Middle School

7:00 pm

COPY RECEIVED
DATE: 5/1/26
TIME: 3:32pm
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE

Board Members Present: Kristen Bruno, Board Chairperson
Chris Champagne, Vice-Chairperson
Kristen Harmeling, Secretary
Jim Garofolo
Ed Strumello
Jay Hatfield (7:28 PM)

Members Absent: Stephan Behuniak
Jay Hatfield
Lori Nespoli

Others Present: Dr. Susan Compton, Superintendent
Salvatore Bucci, Business Manager
Attorney Floyd Dugas
Shannon Levey, Board Clerk

I. CALL TO ORDER

A. Pledge of Allegiance – Ms. Bruno called the meeting to order at 7:18 PM

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 public comment

III. DISCUSSION

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

Ms. Bruno presented four slides outlining the budget process, including roll forward, reallocation, and reductions. The proposed budget reflected a 4.3% increase and was presented at the Town Meeting. The subsequent referendum vote failed for both the Town and Board of Education budgets. The Board of Finance reduced the Board of Education budget by \$375,000. Ms. Bruno also referenced updates from Hartford regarding excess cost and additional funding, noting that final determinations will not be made until after the referendum. She clarified that ECS funding is accounted for as town revenue, with allocations determined by the Board of Finance. The purpose of the meeting is to identify potential reductions to align with the revised budget target..

B. Review Budget Reductions

Dr. Compton: Referenced a worksheet provided to Board members outlining proposed reductions. Emphasized efforts to make cuts while minimizing harm to students, noting that classroom impact remains her top priority. Discussed the possibility of implementing a Pay-to-Participate (P2P) model for athletics, noting that approximately 25% of districts in Connecticut utilize this approach. Seymour has approximately 450 athletic participation instances across three seasons. Neighboring districts charge around \$150 per athlete, with a family cap of approximately \$650. Outlined potential instructional reductions, including staffing cuts. Referenced the state statute requiring notification to non-tenured staff by May 1 and shared that all seven first-year, non-tenured teachers were informed. Two certified positions are being recommended for reduction, with the hope of reinstating additional staff if funding improves. Consultation with legal counsel (Attorney Dugas) was conducted, and seniority considerations were reviewed in coordination with union leadership. Dr. Compton expressed concern that further budget reductions would significantly impact the district.

Non-Instructional Reductions

Mr. Bucci:

- Introduced a shared services component resulting in an increase of \$196,988
- Negotiated a new electricity contract, reducing costs by approximately \$50,000–\$60,000 annually
- Projected an additional \$50,000 reduction in public benefit costs (total estimated savings: ~\$110,000)
- Secured a new propane contract for transportation to reduce fuel costs
- Renegotiated ADP services, eliminating outsourced services that can be handled internally

In collaboration with Tim Connors:

- Reduced part-time custodial staff to one position and cut overtime by half (approximately \$51,000 savings)
- Reduced building contract services by eliminating three HVAC contracts
- Reduced custodial supply budget to \$25,000 through bulk purchasing

Mr. Bucci: Noted that despite these efforts, building maintenance remains unpredictable and costly, often exceeding budget due to emergent issues.

Overall, the district identified reductions sufficient to meet the \$375,000 cut from the Board of Finance.

Operational Considerations

Dr. Compton: Highlighted the critical role custodians play beyond cleaning, including building maintenance. Noted that in the event of major facility failures, costs may need to be addressed by the First Selectwoman and the town contingency fund.

Staffing Reduction Proposals

- Eliminate one IT technician position (reducing from 3 to 2)
- Eliminate floating nurse position (noted as a significant concern due to student mental health and medical needs; and liability)
- Eliminate one music position (reassigning staff across buildings)
- Eliminate one classroom teaching position through section reduction
- Reallocate science staffing to support a Library Media position

- Maintain media specialist position at CLS

Dr. Compton emphasized that these decisions were made to minimize student impact but acknowledged the difficulty of all reductions. If any additional money comes from the government, it needs to be put into the educational system.

Health Insurance Discussion

Mr. Bucci:

- Discussed uncertainty in health insurance costs due to enrollment variability
- Estimated costs: ~\$16,000 (individual), ~\$32,000 (two-person), ~\$35,000 (family)
- Transitioned to the state plan to avoid a projected 25–30% increase
- Noted employee contribution average is 14.1%
- Buyouts are limited to certain legacy contracts and would be costly to expand
- Insurance remains one of the largest budget drivers

Board Member Discussion

Ms. Harmeling:

- Asked about staffing reductions and potential retirements (none anticipated immediately)
- Inquired about the impact of eliminating a fourth grade teacher and music teacher: class size increases (24–25 students per Grade 4 class), staff reassigned in the district (SMS teacher would teach more than one area)
- Supported reducing Chromebook usage, particularly in lower grades

Mr. Strumello:

- Expressed strong concern about eliminating the floating nurse position based on prior administrative experience

Mr. Champagne:

- Echoed concerns regarding the nurse position and administrative burden
- Raised questions about transportation costs and athletics expenses (~\$160,000 annually) regarding Pay to Play.
- Suggested reviewing transportation costs before personnel cuts
- Questioned Chromebook replacement cycle (\$175,000 annually), suggested students in lower grade levels don't get 1:1 chromebooks
- Questioned freezing union pay

Mr. Garofolo:

- Supported Pay-to-Participate as a means to preserve staffing

Ms. Harmeling:

- Supported participation fees for athletics and potentially clubs (Pay to Participate)

Mr. Hatfield:

- Urged caution and further analysis before implementing fees for extracurricular activities
- Raised concerns about freezing union pay, the Liaison Committee has worked diligently to negotiate fair contracts.
- Urges citizens to vote

Ms. Bruno:

- Expressed concern about eliminating the floating nurse position

- Opposed Pay-to-Participate due to the district's high need population
- Suggested reducing middle school athletics if necessary
- Supported revisiting the Chromebook rotation model

Instructional Staff (Mr. Olechna & Ms. Reid):

- Indicated that reducing 1:1 Chromebook access in early grades is feasible
- Suggested shared classroom sets rather than individual devices

Additional Considerations

- Potential scholarship support for students unable to afford participation fees
- Possibility of booster club assistance for athletics costs
- Consideration of reducing instructional supplies to preserve critical positions

Closing Discussion

Dr. Compton: Requested the board to take action on the non-renewals of non-tenured teachers

Ms. Harmeling: Asked whether the Board wanted a detailed list of specific cuts.

Ms. Bruno: Stated the intent of the meeting was transparency; however, uncertainty surrounding state funding (ECS and excess cost) requires additional clarity before final decisions. Confirmed that the current proposed budget will proceed to referendum.
C. Non-Renewal of Non-Tenured School Teachers

MOTION: (Jay Hatfield / Jim Garofolo) to accept the recommendation of the Superintendent to non-renew non-tenured teachers at the end of the 2025-2026 school year in accordance with the provisions of the Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-151. I further move that the Superintendent be directed to communicate this action of the Board in writing to the non-renewed teachers and that the Superintendent of Schools be authorized to respond on behalf of the Board to any request, if required by law, or for other data which may be forthcoming from the teacher and/or his/her representative pursuant to applicable provisions of Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-151

DISCUSSION: going to 7 first year nontenured teachers, only applies to certified staff.

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

PASSES: 6-0-0

MOTION: (Chris Champagne / Ed Strumello) to table any budget decisions until the budget passes the referendum.

DISCUSSION: Ms. Harmeling: not sure why we would put ourselves in that position and lock ourselves in. Mr. Champagne: We can still meet to discuss.

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Champagne, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Strumello

OPPOSED: Ms. Bruno, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling

TIES: 3-3

Attorney Dugas: No motion is needed at this time. The item was discussed, and once additional information is available, it can be brought back for further discussion and a vote.

Kristen Harmeling: noted that the number of middle school sports is known and should be clearly documented. She suggested presenting the numbers in two ways: one excluding free and reduced lunch participants and one including them. She also clarified that the "floating secretary" position should be identified as a part-time secretary and questioned why this role is not being considered as a potential reduction. Additionally, she raised concerns about controlling paraprofessional costs, acknowledging that while students require increased support services, she is not fully convinced that paraprofessionals are always the appropriate means of providing those supports.

Dr. Compton: We will provide the board with a list of all paraprofessionals.

Jim Garofolo: questioned next steps if the budget does not pass, suggesting that before tasking the superintendent and business manager with identifying additional cuts, the board should meet to collaboratively generate ideas. Examples discussed included not replacing broken Chromebooks, limiting take-home devices, and using mobile carts to share technology between classrooms. He expressed support for reducing tools and equipment where possible rather than eliminating personnel who provide valuable services, such as paraprofessionals.

Kristen Bruno: requested that a specific figure be developed to reflect potential reductions in technology equipment. It was also agreed to add continued budget discussion to the May 4th regular meeting agenda.

Dr. Compton: expressed appreciation to the Board of Finance, the First Selectwoman, and Mr. Miller for attending and taking the time to understand the district's efforts.

IV. REPORTS

A. Board of Education

1. Chairman Comments - **Ms. Bruno** emphasized the importance of recognizing that the Board of Education and the Town function as one community. While both benefit from this relationship, they also share a responsibility to contribute to it. She expressed hope that voters take this into consideration, particularly the needs of children and families, as well as the broader impact schools have in enriching the entire community. She highlighted the strong connection between the schools and the town, including their role in community service, and encouraged greater voter turnout at the next referendum on May 5th.

2. Board Member Comments

Ed Strumello: echoed Ms. Bruno's remarks, emphasizing the importance of the right to vote and reminding the community that every vote counts.

Kristen Harmeling: expressed frustration, noting she feels at a loss for additional words. She shared that it is particularly discouraging when the same questions are asked repeatedly despite consistent answers being provided. She acknowledged that some may view the budget as too high, but emphasized that it has been presented with context in multiple ways. She also addressed the perception that the budget should be more "balanced" with the Town, explaining that this is not a direct comparison, as the cost of education is inherently higher. She pointed out that the district employs approximately 400 staff members compared to roughly 100 employees on the Town side.

B. Superintendent's Report - Dr. Compton expressed hope that the governor will release ECS funding, emphasizing the need for stronger state support for education. They urged greater awareness of how other states fund and prioritize education, suggesting that Connecticut's current approach is outdated and in need of reform.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM

YouTube Link (4/29/2026): https://youtube.com/live/UUaDbm_e5u4?feature=share