

Town of Seymour ~ Board of Finance
REVISED MINUTES
Budget Deliberations
Wednesday, May 06, 2026 at 7:00pm
Norma Drummer Room – Seymour Town Hall

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

Members Absent: Mary Kruger, Andy North

Others Present: Jason Vieira, Monica Dimon, Annmarie Drugonis, Kurt Miller, Kristin Bruno, Dr. Susan Compton, Joshua Beaupre, Jack Jurkowski, Michael Jurkowski, Robert Koskelowski, David Bitso, Lori Pratt, Jennifer Magri, James Garofalo, Kristine Bourret, Peter Kubik, Carol Mordowanec, Joann Sardo, Theresa Conroy, Roger A. Dilliber, Mike Marganski, Scott Andrews, Jean Falbo-Sosnovich, Fred Stanek

Item #1 – Call Meeting to order

Chairman Richard Demko called the meeting to order at 7:03pm.

Item #2 – Pledge of Allegiance

Everyone saluted the Flag and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item #3 – Seating of Alternates

Motion to seat Alice Levey as Alternate for Andy North

Motion: Bettyann Peck Second: Kristyn Haniewicz
Vote: Yes: 5 No: 0 Abstain: 0

Motion to seat Tracy Rappa as Alternate for Mary Kruger

Motion: Kristyn Haniewicz Second: Quinn Levey
Vote: Yes: 6 No: 0 Abstain: 0

Item #4 – Public Comment

James Garofalo – 163 Bungay Road – Many of you have children/grandchildren in our school system. As you know, members of the Board of Finance & Board of Education are VOLUNTEERS – receive no payment for their time and efforts. Before you vote – remember that our children have no say in what resources they may receive from the Community Vote and how this will affect the quality of education that those resources will provide. One thing is certain, the less the children receive, the more inevitable the damage to the educational needs will occur. So too, will the services on the Town side suffer. Are there residents who really believe that “Less is More”? That we can provide equal or better services, results, or education for less. Do people really believe that the “beatings” should continue? Or that we can make a “silk purse from a sow’s ear”? The naysayers’ budgets act like a hammer and each cut and subsequent budget reduction does not make the Town better, the quality of education better, the attractiveness of the Town to businesses better, or the future better. Your resolve should be clear – your intentions unmistakable. I encourage all of you to reflect carefully, choose wisely, and consider that the silent majority of the townspeople have yet to be heard. They too live here and want a vibrant, healthy, and well-educated community. Please choose wisely for Seymour.

Kristin Bruno – 10 MacConnie Court – What a confusing couple of days! You have worked very hard through this process as has Town Hall and the Board of Education. The Legislature and the Governor have come up with

some funds. It's still very fuzzy on who they are for. But I understand there are two funds. One is for Educational Funding, and one is to offset the mill rate. We know that our school system needs more than the current budget. The Board of Education per Dr. Compton's recommendation had cut \$90,000 from the Budget before we even brought it to you. Since then, the resolution for the shared services added another \$196,000 to the expenses to the School Budget. Then there was your cut of \$375,000. So, the number that went to the last referendum was reduced \$571,988. The Board of Education has informed six first-year teachers that they may not have jobs next year. So, when we receive money from the State – if you are planning on reducing us by that much or more – I am not sure that this is achieving the goals of the Bill or what we need as a community. I would ask for a more balanced approach. Please consider next year. Because if you are planning on reducing us by this much – this is where we are STARTING next year. So we look at contractual obligations & health insurance for next year – that's not fair to the taxpayers. Find that balance between tax relief and what we really need to fund our Town.

Josh Beaupre – 29 Maple Street – Another failed budget is not good for anyone. Not good for the schools, not good for the Town or anyone. As I have said before, people don't feel comfortable with the numbers. And I do support strong schools. When it comes to long-term strategies, it's not quite clear what they are. If we are going to make cuts it should be done strategically. We shouldn't just make cuts based on whether "it will go through the second time" There shouldn't be animosity or rude comments. We should base on multi-year forecasting. The "Affordable Housing Plan" was voted "no" by our State Representative. We need to make things more apparent to voters. Inflation is not going to slow down. A lot of Towns are struggling. We should be an example. I appreciate those who reached out to me after last comments.

Item #5 - Discussion and Possible Action on the 2026/2027 Budget

- First Selectwoman Annmarie Drugonis had the following comments:
I want to acknowledge that we understand everyone is hurting right now — taxpayers, families, staff, and our schools. None of these decisions are easy, and we recognize the impact they have across the community.

As part of this budget process, we are also making difficult reductions on the municipal side, including the elimination of the Assistant Assessor position. We are trying to approach this budget fairly and responsibly across all departments.

This grant has created a great deal of confusion statewide. The Senate, House representatives, and even the Governor's office have all interpreted the funding differently, which has made it extremely challenging for municipalities to determine the correct approach.

We were presented with two permissible options:

Option 1:

The Board of Finance reduces the Board of Education budget by \$476,454. This reduction would immediately help lower the mill rate, and when the grant funding is received in October, the full amount would then be transferred directly to the Board of Education.

Option 2:

The Board of Education budget remains as currently approved, and the \$476,454 is recognized as additional revenue. While this would also help lower the mill rate, it could still leave the Board of Education subject to additional reductions by the Board of Finance.

After extensive discussions with our attorneys, CCM, and several other municipalities regarding how they are handling similar situations, I believe Option 1 is the strongest and most responsible path forward.

While both approaches are allowable, Option 1 provides the clearest and most transparent process. It creates a straightforward accounting method for the grant funds, is easier for residents and boards to follow, and most importantly, gives the Board of Education the best opportunity to preserve its approved budget without the risk of further reductions.

At the end of the day, this recommendation is about stability, transparency, and doing our best to protect educational funding while also recognizing the financial pressures facing the entire community.

- This is a Senate Bill. Everyone is interpreting this Bill differently. The Senate one way, the House another way and the Governor his way. We spoke to other municipalities today.
- We know that \$476,454 is going to the Board of Education. But there are several caveats. If the municipality you zeroed out flat funding, their Board of Education's budget gets the whole amount. But if you gave them \$300,000, you only need to give them \$176,454. You only have to fund up to that amount (\$476,454). How is that helping your mill rate? You could take it in as Revenue. This would lower the mill rate.
- Today, they gave the above two options.
- Richard Demko asked about the elimination of the Assistant Tax Assessor position – does this include all taxes, benefits, etc. Annmarie said yes. Originally, the amount was split between June 2026 and October. Now is just in October. We had to make a decision today because we need to print up ballots and get ready for the referendum.

DISCUSSION:

- Quinn asked if this is guaranteed money. Annmarie said yes. Hopefully, next year they will be able to fund more money to the ECS Grant (for next budget). Quinn asked what our numbers would be with these changes. Jason Vieira confirmed that these changes are: reducing the Board of Education by \$476,454 now and giving them back the money when it comes in in October. And removing the remainder of the Assistant Assessor position (\$60,281). Also, there is additional revenue of \$114,457 for the Pequot Fund (on the Town side). The new mill rate would be 28.64. (Old one was 28.99).
- Annmarie Drugonis said that in the future, the State Budget should be set FIRST and then the municipal budgets follow. Not the way it is now.
- Kristin Bruno said she doesn't think that this Board needs to reduce the BOE by the FULL amount. The Town Budget was not reduced by the amount of their revenue from the Bill. Help me to understand why this is. Remember what this will do to next year's budget (where we will be starting from). Richard Demko asked for clarification on Option 1. Annmarie said that if there was a zero percent but, all of this goes to the Board of Education. If we funded them up to the full amount, they would not get more.
- Dr. Compton is just verifying that we are definitely going to get this money. If anything happens facility-wise, we will be coming here for help!
- Quinn Levey said if we cut this \$476,454, they will get this back. Kurt Miller said that the money will be paid by October 31, 2026.

services line. Seymour High School's Graduation is the most important meeting of the year. We come together as a Community; and it is when we celebrate our students. Who we have invested in educationally, mentally, socially, and financially for many years. We are proud of them. We cannot continue to decrease funding. It is a tough environment for educators.

Kristin Bruno – 10 MacConnie Court – I am extremely disappointed & frustrated with your decision tonight. We came to you with a 4.7% increase – which was below what it costs us just to maintain what we have and now we have been cut to 2.2%. We have to find these cuts. It feels like this decision – your minds were made up before the meeting and there was not meaningful conversation or engagement with the BOE.

Lisa Cinquino – 29 Moss Avenue – can that \$476,454 be put into an interest bearing account when they get that until it's used? Jason Vieira said we are going to transfer that money as soon as we receive it to the BOE. No. It will be needed. Lisa said that she agrees that this is a public relations nightmare. We have single people, working people, retired people, senior citizens. You have the benefit of conversing and understanding the language, but most people will not. The perception is hard to understand. I don't see why the Town side of budget is not being defended as well as the BOE. Can we do a Facebook survey to find out what would motivate people to participate? We understand your passion but need to temper our comments and aggravation (body language). Thank you all for coming.

Robert Koskelowski – Pearl Street – thank you to the Board of Finance and Board of Education for all their efforts. We all care about the kids, regular people and the senior citizens. This comes up every year – why do we only have 1,600 people voting? We used to have only 50 people making the decision. We changed that to a referendum to have more people voting. I want to thank the administration for advertising. The Town side should have been cut more. I gave the Board of Finance a list of two pages where they could cut items and none of them were addressed. Thank you for all your hard work.

Josh Beaupre – 29 Maple Street – thank you to all our dedicated volunteers. The First Selectwoman does a great job and a lot of work. Also, the Board of Education & Board of Finance. The Board of Education deserves a lot more allies. This will just put us in the hole for next year. We are going to pay for this next year. We need to find another way to do things. The level of understanding is not there with the residents. This is (again) kicking the can down the road. Maybe next year we could have a representative from the State answer some of these questions.

Robert Koskelowski – Pearl Street – Quinn Levey had wanted to rescind the motion that was made, but he would not be able to because he abstained during the vote (he would have needed to vote yes)..

Kristin Bruno – 10 MacConnie Court – It didn't feel like this was a very transparent process. The Legislature has earmarked this money to go to our Education, but we are not getting any benefit from it. Also, what happens if this budget fails at the next referendum.

Quinn Levey said that it is disheartening that we only get 10% of our people out to vote. We are trying to do the best we can. The BOF and BOE work very hard.

Tracy Rappa said that if we put the \$476,454 all in Revenue, the mill rate remains at 28.66. Kurt Miller said that cutting the BOE was what the Town Counsel recommended. We can do this either way. Richard Demko asked – if we did it the other way, the \$42,742,765 would remain as their budget. We would create a revenue line – Educational Grant Money – and they would receive it in October. The mill rate would not change. It would remain at 28.66. The issue is that the BOE would be starting MUCH lower next year.

Kristin Bruno said that you don't have to cut the BOE by the full amount. We can cut only a portion of the \$467,454.

Richard Demko said that we have two options. Cut the BOE by \$1 and apply the money to revenue, the mill rate is the same. This will make it easier next year. The BOE will get that money anyway – the only difference is that cutting the whole amount is going to start us at a low amount. What happens if the budget fails? The Board of Finance members discussed whether to change the motion that was made and voted upon and the consensus was that we should leave things the way they were voted upon.

Tracy Rappa would like to rescind her motion to cut the BOE by \$476,454 and put the amount in Revenue. Beverly Kennedy did not want to rescind her second. Motion Fails.

Item #6 – Adjournment

Richard Demko adjourned the meeting at 9:00pm

Respectfully Submitted by:

Monica Dimon
Recording Secretary