

Seymour Board of Education REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

July 6, 2020
Zoom
7:30 pm

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Kristen Bruno
Kristen Harmeling
Jay Hatfield
Peter Kubik
Beth Nesteriak
Fred Stanek
Ed Strumello

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Christopher Champagne

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

James Garofolo
Michael Wilson, Superintendent of Schools
Vonda Tencza, Associate Superintendent
Sherry Holmes, Business Manager
Kris Boyle, Director of Special Services
Lee-Ann Dauerty, Board Clerk
Rob Dyer, System Technology Coordinator
Jim Freund, Principal, SHS
Jodie Roden, Principal, SMS
Kathleen Freimuth, Assistant Principal, SMS
Mary Sue Feige, Principal, BS
Lauren Reid, Assistant Principal, BS
David Olechna, Principal, CLS
Stacey Albertson, Assistant Principal, CLS
Rebecca Bennett

I. CALL TO ORDER

A. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Strumello called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:32 p.m.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were submitted by email.

III. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes

1. Special BOE Meeting Minutes – June 15, 2020

2. Special BOE Meeting Minutes – June 22, 2020

MOTION: (Mr. Kubik/sec., Ms. Harmeling) move to approve the consent agenda as presented

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Bruno, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

MOTION PASSES: 6-0

IV. ITEMS REMOVED FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA

None

V. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A. Awards Advisory Committee Recommendations

1. 2020 David A. Brumer Excellence in Education Award

MOTION: (Mr. Stanek/sec., Mr. Kubik) to accept the recommendation of the Awards Advisory Committee to award the 2020 David A. Brumer Excellence in Education Award to Ms. Tara Andrews

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Bruno, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

MOTION PASSES: 7-0

2. 2020 John J. Gallagher Memorial Athletic Award

MOTION: (Mr. Stanek/sec., Mr. Kubik) to accept the recommendation of the Awards Advisory Committee to award the 2020 John J. Gallagher Memorial Athletic Award to Ms. Peggy Carvahlo

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Bruno, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

MOTION PASSES: 7-0

3. 2020 Vincentena Kobasa Excellence in Teaching Award

MOTION: (Mr. Stanek/sec., Mr. Hatfield) to accept the recommendation of the Awards Advisory Committee to award the 2020 Vincentena Kobasa Excellence in Teaching Award to Ms. Nicole Hiscock

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Bruno, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

MOTION PASSES: 7-0

4. 2020 Thomas J. Petruncy Memorial Education and Environmental Award

MOTION: (Mr. Stanek/sec., Mr. Kubik) to accept the recommendation of the Awards Advisory Committee to award the 2020 Thomas J. Petruncy Memorial Education and Environmental Award to Miss Giana Guerrera

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Bruno, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

MOTION PASSES: 7-0

Mr. Stanek reported to the Board that Ms. Marlo Verrastro-Ruggiero was appointed chairperson of the Awards Committee. He also thanked the previous chairperson, Mort Conlan, for his many years of service to this committee. Mr. Strumello agreed with Mr. Stanek and said Mr. Conlan was an outstanding chairperson for many years.

B. Summer 2020 School Community Survey

Ms. Harmeling spoke about the survey that would be sent to all students and parents of students in grades 3 through 12 plus those special education students who continue past their 12th year in school. Ms. Nesteriak asked what the difference is between this survey and the two question survey that was sent. Mr. Wilson explained that the two question survey does not mitigate this survey and this one will be more extensive. The two question survey was to guide the work of the COVID-19 Health and Safety Compliance team (which consists of the Associate Superintendent, Business Manager, Director of Safety and Security, Facilities Director, Head Nurse, and the Superintendent) with respect to the reopening plan. Ms. Nesteriak cautioned that we need to be careful not to flood parents with surveys without giving them enough information. Ms. Harmeling said she felt parents should have accurate information such as knowing that students are required to wear masks at all times except during recess and physical education classes. She is worried that a two question survey will not give us enough information. Ms. Nesteriak expressed her concern about answering the questions on this survey and the two question survey that was sent from Central Office. She is concerned that parents do not have enough information about the plan to return to school. Mr. Wilson said this is an ever changing, fluid situation and as soon as the

reopening plan is finalized it will be shared with the Board, our staff, and the community. There was a discussion on how often the survey should be sent to parents. Ms. Harmeling suggested some of the questions should be sent on a biweekly basis until school opens. Mr. Strumello wondered if this would be overburdening parents as Ms. Nesteriak previously expressed a concern. Ms. Bruno pointed out that on a biweekly basis, it would only be sent three more times. Ms. Harmeling said some changes need to be made to the survey.

MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Kubik) to approve the Summer 2020 School Community Survey

AMENDED MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Ms. Nesteriak) to approve the Summer 2020 School Community Survey as presented with changes

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Bruno, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

MOTION PASSES: 7-0

C. Policy 6141.3294 327

Mr. Wilson explained that these policies are a result of the 1:1 Initiative discussion by the Curriculum Committee and Mr. Strumello approved them to be moved forward to the full Board for approval. Mr. Strumello noted the policy number change after Mr. Wilson consulted with our attorney who advised we change the number to 6141.327

MOTION: (Mr. Stanek/sec., Ms. Harmeling) to approve the recommendation of the Curriculum Committee to approve new policy 6141.327

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Bruno, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

MOTION PASSES: 7-0

D. Policy 6141.321

MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Ms. Bruno) to approve the recommendation to amend policy 6141.321 to better align with new policy 6141.327

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Bruno, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

MOTION PASSES: 7-0

E. Policy 6141.322 Form

Mr. Hatfield asked if this form would need to be completed when we post on our Facebook page. Mr. Wilson said that is covered by the form parents complete in the beginning of the year. This form is for a person who would like to post their work. Ms. Harmeling said for things such as a piece of art, their work, songs, or a program.

MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Ms. Bruno) to approve the recommendation to amend policy 6141.322 Form

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Bruno, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

MOTION PASSES: 7-0

- F. Policy 6141.324 Form
Ms. Bruno asked for clarification on what is different on this form from the previous form. Ms. Tencza explained that since the previous form was approved.
MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Kubik) to approve the recommendation to amend approve policy 6141.324 Form
MOTION AMENDED: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Hatfield) to do away with form 6141.324
SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Bruno, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

MOTION PASSES: 7-0

- G. District One to One Device Protection Plan
Mr. Hatfield inquired about the cost to parents and the cost to the district. Mr. Dyer said the cost is not set in stone but should be somewhere around \$30.
MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Ms. Bruno) to approve the recommendation of the Policy Committee to approve the District One to Done Device Protection Plan
SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Bruno, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

MOTION PASSES: 7-0

- H. Policy 6141.328
Mr. Hatfield asked what would happen if a parent did not want to participate. Ms. Tencza said the district is not going to support the use of other devices; only our Chromebooks would be fully supported. Mr. Hatfield said he was not sure we should take away their ability to use their own device. Mr. Dyer said some studies were done and we found that the Bring Your Own Device was not being widely used, maybe 5 students per school were doing it. To attain a fully immersive experience the students must have a Chromebook. In addition, Seymour has a state of the art cyber security system and introducing other devices might put it at risk. Having this new policy will protect student privacy.
MOTION: to approve the deletion of policy 6141.328 as a result of new policy # 6141.327
SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Bruno, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

OPPOSED: Mr. Hatfield

MOTION PASSES: 6-1

VI. REPORTS and DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

Ms. Harmeling asked if she could add a motion and Mr. Stanek confirmed that she could do this.

MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/no second) to discuss and take possible action on providing the public with a live stream video of the BOE virtual meetings and our regular meetings when we return to them

- A. Student Representative Report –Zachary Braca

None

- B. Reopening of Schools in the Fall

Mr. Wilson rejoined the meeting after dealing with his internet problem at home. Mr. Wilson said the conference calls from the State are ever fluid and ever changing. He asked Head Nurse Becky Bennett who is a member of the COVID-19 Health and Safety Compliance team to discuss the process of returning to school. Ms. Bennett reported that the COVID-19 Health and Safety Compliance team panel was formed in March to work on developing a successful reentry plan for our district. The panel meets frequently and have been keeping up by reading everything that comes from the State. The goal of the panel is to have a successful reopening of the schools while keeping our students and staff safe. Everyone wants to get back to school as we know virtual is good but being in the classroom is much better. We want to develop a strong foundation for this plan. She said it is not black and white and the plan is ever changing. The panel continues to meet and work and are doing their best. Mr. Wilson said he wanted to compliment the team on the work they have done so far. Safety is our number one goal. All decisions are made based on

the health and safety of our students and staff. We did the quick survey to give parents a voice. He said Ms. Bennett has been a big help with all of the medical information. He also thanked Ms. Tencza, Ms. Holmes, Mr. Kearns, and Mr. Connors for their work on this panel. Ms. Tencza said there is a lot to be thinking about and we are trying to figure it all out as best as we can to get everyone back. Ms. Bennett said they will continue their work and she is thankful for this panel. Again saying the goal is the safe return to school for students and staff. Ms. Bruno asked about the purchase of equipment and supplies that might be needed. Mr. Wilson said Ms. Holmes has been working on this and is purchasing as much as we can through bulk purchases with other valley districts. Mr. Hatfield asked if the BOE has to approve the plan before it is moved to the State. Mr. Wilson said the BOE will be apprised of the plan but it should be submitted to the State by the superintendent. Ms. Harmeling said she watched some podcasts from CAFE and portions of the plan would also include education which should be approved by the BOE. The plan is not just a health and safety plan. She said she would like to know what the BOE can expect. Mr. Wilson said currently the panel is comprised of Ms. Tencza, Ms. Holmes, Ms. Bennett, Mr. Connors, and myself. As we go along the panel will be expanded to include others including a Board member, a parent representative, a teacher representative, an administrator representative, a Pupil Services representative, a food service representative, a paraprofessional representative, a technology representative, and an administrative assistant representative). Ms. Harmeling said she thought the plan should be based on 100% participation. We don't know how many kids will be participating in six weeks and wondered why the survey was one of the first steps. Mr. Wilson said this was to assess budgetary impacts. We might be in a situation where we need to hire more teachers since we will need them in the classrooms and in distance learning situations. He said community needs drive the programs. Ms. Harmeling reiterated that we need to put together a plan for 100% coming back to school. Mr. Stanek asked about the gaps in education and how are they going to be addressed. Mr. Wilson said teachers will consult with previous teachers in order to assess where each student is. Mr. Stanek thought this sounded very general and thought there should be some kind of plan in place for this and asked that more specifics be presented at the next meeting. Ms. Nesteriak asked if the Board would vote on the plan. Mr. Wilson said the plan would be shared with the Board. Mr. Hatfield said the majority of the Board wants to put their stamp of approval on the plan. Mr. Strumello questioned how that would work if Mr. Wilson presents the plan are we going to vote and possibly ask for another plan? Mr. Strumello said he felt this was out of the realm of the Board's responsibility. Ms. Harmeling suggested we vote based on our endorsement of the plan. We should weigh in, share our views, talk about it and then endorse but not have a vote to send to the State. Ms. Nesteriak asked if a parent said they were not going to send their child to school, would they lose their spot. Mr. Wilson explained that all students are entitled to a free public education. They will always have a spot in the district and the district would just need to have time for student placement. Mrs. Bruno said she was in favor of a special meeting for transparency reasons. Ms. Harmeling said some districts are having all of their discussions in public.

C. Substitute Concerns

Ms. Tencza said a few years ago the Board approved a pay raise for our substitutes and that did help with building our substitute pool. Substitutes are paid \$105 a day with a Bachelor's degree and \$115 per day if they have an active teaching certification. We still have a higher pay scale than most of the surrounding districts. She said we advertise and contact area colleges to ask that they post our ad on their boards and we advertise in the school newsletters. We currently have 25 substitutes in our pool. Our highest number was 39 but many have left to take full time teaching positions. Ms. Tencza interviews routinely for new substitutes. Mr. Strumello said losing our subs indicates we have chosen good ones if they are leaving to take full time positions. Mr. Hatfield said the Board should petition the State to change the requirements for substitutes so 2nd year students can substitute. Mr. Strumello suggested the Board members contact their State representatives regarding this. Ms. Harmeling asked Ms. Tencza what concerns she has regarding substitutes and she said probably mostly that our substitutes will choose not to come back if we reopen. Ms. Bruno said we should look into recent college grads and recently retired teachers. Mr. Wilson said he has done some outreach with local colleges. Ms. Tencza said we

sometimes have luck with recently retired teachers but not that often. Ms. Harmeling talked about her mom being a building substitute in Long Island. She was always in the building should there be a need. Mr. Wilson said he and Ms. Tencza just had a conversation about permanent subs and thought we may be able to use CARES money or other funds to cover this. We are looking into it. Mr. Hatfield recalled that parents were complaining about classes being combined. Ms. Tencza said we do have days where we have 22-25 subs to pull from but not all subs accept every assignment that is given to them. Mr. Strumello said the reality is there are going to be days where we don't have enough subs and we have to do what we can to continue the education of our students.

D. Board of Education Report

1. Chairperson Comments

Mr. Strumello thanked Ms. Harmeling for the professional survey at no cost. He thanked her for leading the ad hoc committee on this, saying we are fortunate to have her on our Board.

2. Board Member Comments

Mr. Hatfield asked that the Board should have a financial picture of where we are with COVID-19 expenses and savings. Mr. Strumello agreed. Ms. Harmeling also agreed and said we did not have a Finance Committee meeting this month (or in the past in July) because the numbers are not yet available. Ms. Harmeling said when we are able to get back together, community members may feel more cut off. She would like to suggest we upgrade our Zoom license to enable the agenda as a visual. It can be done through Zoom. She said we need to continue to strive for transparency.

E. Superintendent Report – Mr. Wilson

Mr. Wilson said graduation week is underway with graduation taking place on Friday. He said Board members are welcome to participate and should give him a call. The final meeting of the Graduation Committee is today. On a personal note, Mr. Wilson said graduation is the highlight of his year and wished the Class of 2020 all the best. Mr. Strumello said he saw the materials are still in the way at the high school and wanted to make sure they will be moved. Mr. Wilson said Mr. Connors will take care of this. He also reminded the Board that there will be banners from various alumni classes wishing the Class of 2020 good luck. This is something that has never been done before and there are currently about 44 banners to be displayed.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: (Mr. Hatfield/sec., Mr. Kubik) to adjourn

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Bruno, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

MOTION PASSES: 7-0

The meeting adjourned at 9:33 pm

Submitted by:
Lee-Ann Dauerty
Board Clerk

Please note: If you would like to have a public comment read into the minutes, please email your brief comment along with your full name and address to ldauerty@seymourschools.org by no later than **noon on Monday, July 6, 2020**.

The Public is invited to participate in a listen only mode using the link below:

<https://youtu.be/x7O3B13DJeU>