

SEYMOUR BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES Revised
February 1, 2021
ZOOM
7:30 pm

COPY RECEIVED
DATE: 2/15/2021
TIME: 10:24 AM
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Kristen Bruno
Christopher Champagne (7:38)
Kristen Harmeling
Jay Hatfield
Peter Kubik
Fred Stanek
Ed Strumello
Zachary Braca, Student Representative
Karyna Weaver, Student Representative

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

James Garofolo
Beth Nesteriak

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michael Wilson, Superintendent of Schools
Vonda Tencza, Associate Superintendent
Sherry Holmes, Business Manager
Kris Boyle, Director of Special Services
Lee-Ann Dauerty, Board Clerk
Derrick Martin, Technology
Jim Freund, Principal, SHS
Paul Lucke, Assistant Principal, SHS
Ernie DiStasi, Assistant 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
Floyd Dugas, Attorney

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.

MOTION: (Mr. Hatfield/sec., Mr. Kubik) to add to the agenda a discussion on the Superintendent's contract in Executive Session

SO VOTED

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

OPPOSED: Ms. Harmeling (opposed to having executive session in the middle of the meeting she feels it should be at the end of the meeting)

MOTION PASSES: 5-1

MOTION: (Mr. Hatfield/sec., Mr. Kubik) to enter into executive session to discuss the superintendent's contract and to invite Mr. Floyd Dugas, Attorney to join the executive session

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

OPPOSED: Ms. Harmeling

MOTION PASSES: 6-1

Entered into Executive Session: 7:38 pm

Entered into Regular Session: 8:02 pm

MOTION: (Mr. Hatfield/sec., Mr. Champagne) we authorize the chairman to sign a contract with the superintendent for the current 2020-2021 school year and accept his letter of resignation, effective June 30, 2021

SO VOTED

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

MOTION PASSES: 8-0

February 1, 2021

Seymour Board of Education

98 Bank Street

Seymour, Ct 06483

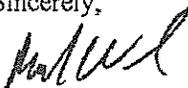
Dear Board Members,

It is with a heavy heart that I ask you to please accept this letter as my official resignation from my position as Superintendent of Schools effective June 30, 2021. After much deep contemplation, I have made the difficult decision to move on in order to pursue future endeavors in the field of education.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here and I am honored to have had the chance to touch the lives of so many children and adults. It has been as much a joy to learn from them, as it has been to work with them. Being a part of such a terrific team has been an honor and a pleasure. Together, we have done so much positive for the students of Seymour and my wish is for all of you to continue to grow. This Board is very fortunate to have such a dedicated team of professionals working for the students of Seymour. They have taught me a great deal and have helped me to grow as a professional. I will deeply miss all of the students and staff who have been a phenomenal team to work with.

I also want to thank you, the Board members, so very much for the opportunity to faithfully serve the Seymour School community as your Educational Leader. I will continue to work hard in my remaining five months of employment to educationally serve all of the children of Seymour and to complete all of the required duties assigned to me. I am happy to assist in making the transition as seamless as I can.

Sincerely,



Michael Wilson

Mr. Hatfield offered his sincere thank you to Mr. Wilson for his time leading our district in the past four years, wished him well on his future endeavors, and said he is looking forward to working with him in the next couple of months. Mr. Strumello said, as Board Chair he wants to thank Mr. Wilson for his service to the Seymour Community. He said he appreciates Mr. Wilson's professionalism during his time in Seymour and he wished him good luck in his future educational career. Mr. Stanek asked if he might comment. He said he too would like to thank Mr. Wilson, first for the past year saying he knows that this has not been easy. There have been times when I'm sure Mr. Wilson has questioned himself as to whether he was making the right decision. He said no one has known exactly how to proceed during this terrible crisis of the COVID19 infection during the past year. Mr. Stanek said he thinks Mr. Wilson has handled the COVID19 situation and the structure of the school district during the situation in an exemplary manner and his team has done a great job. He said he has been disturbed by some of the comments that have been made by the public about the way the school district has handled the situation. There has been no right answer or wrong answer but he thinks we have strived and Mr. Wilson has led the team to strive toward keeping our children, our staff, and our community as safe as possible and healthy as possible during this crisis. He said Mr. Wilson I thank you, not only for that but also for your service. Mr. Kubik said I would also like to thank Michael for his four years of service and echo most of what my colleagues have said. This last year has been a very difficult year. I'm not sure that anyone can make a right or wrong decision as we see by public comments and a variety of meetings in the emails that we receive. There's a significant amount of people that believe the kids should be in school and there's another group that feels the kids should not be in school. It's not an easy call. Mr. Kubik said he is fortunate that his children are not in school. But it would be tough as a parent and I'm sure it's got to be very difficult as a superintendent and his entire administration to sit around the table and try to make those decisions in the best interest of the students, teachers, faculty, parents, taxpayers and everything else. He said thanks for everything you've done in your administration.

II. REPORTS Part 1

- A. HS Student Representative Report-Zach Braca, Karyna Weaver
Mr. Braca said he was glad to be back in school. He was happy to report the class rock was supported by 88% of those who responded to the survey. They are close to getting the rock displayed in the front of the school. Chocolate roses are being sold for Valentine's Day. The yearbook committee is working on superlatives and quotes. Boys basketball and girls basketball are beginning their practices. Ms. Harmeling asked if there has been any discussion on prom and Mr. Braca said he reached out to advisors on prom and some other graduation activities. He thanked Mr. Wilson for his support during these last four years.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Please note: If you would like to have a public comment read into the first Public Comment section of this meeting, please email your brief (300 words or less) comment along with your full name and address to BOE Secretary Christopher Champagne at champagnec@seymourschools.org by no later than **7:15 on Monday, February 1, 2021**

Erin Perry, 16 Country Club Rd-Good evening. I want to start off by saying I am grateful that my children have been able to return to school in the form of hybrid learning. I do however hope, that in the next couple weeks, a plan is being devised to bring these students back full time. In the return plan previously presented, February 1st was the original date for return to full in person learning. I understand that it was not set in stone, but to push that date back a whole month (as it appears with hybrid scheduled through February), is still discouraging. I plead with you to continue to reevaluate, to get these students back in full time as soon as possible. Thanks for you time,
Alana Zhingri 140 Mountain Road Seymour, CT-The science says kids should be back in school. The science says kids are not super spreaders. The science says keeping kids on distance learning is detrimental to their mental health. I've also heard the CDC says, "there is little evidence of COVID transmission in schools as long as the right safety strategies are enforced." Attached are links to articles that confirm these facts, by scientists. We cannot keep postponing returning our children to a full-time in-school classroom learning for those that believe it is a safe and the best option for their children, while still offering the remote learning option to those that feel that is best for their child. The majority of towns in CT are doing this. There is a safe way to do this. Seymour should be able to learn from the towns all around them how to achieve this safely and creatively. These towns have been offering in-school learning for their students for months, some even from the beginning of the school year. Many of these towns and cities ALSO "follow the Naugatuck Valley Health Department" and ALSO speak with the same Director of Pediatric medicine at Griffin Hospital. I also find it *baffling* that New Haven—the biggest school district in the state, found a way to send their K-5 students back 4 days a week!! Let's make it happen in our little town of Seymour. The parents of Seymour's children deserve transparency immediately - exactly what is needed to get these students back to full-time in-person learning? Is it substitutes? Is it bus drivers? The Covid numbers will continue to rise and fall daily and we cannot continue to damage the mental health of our children by being fearful of returning them to school. We must use the towns around us as guide models of how they have been so successful in their return to school while still remaining cautious. I firmly believe that all children, especially young children, should not be learning from home behind a screen all day for most days. It is vital that these kids return to school full time as soon as possible. They need to be around their peers, socializing the best they can with the social distancing methods at school. They are in such a critical stage of life academically, emotionally and socially. We are taxpayers and some of us firmly believe the risks of having our kids stay at home, learning from a screen most days in a non-academic environment with no socialization with their peers, or by physically being around their peers, far out-weighs the risks of going back to school, where it has been scientifically proven that kids are the least at risk for contracting and spreading this virus, and if contracted, they have an enormously high survival rate. Let us make the choice for our kids. Offer all options. so that parents can choose what is best for their child!!_Here is the aforementioned articles/data: <https://theartofeducation.edu/2020/05/27/how-remote-learning-can-harm-students/> <https://www.colorado.edu/artssciences-advising/2020/05/01/how-remote-learning-has-affected-students-learning-environment-and-motivation-levels> <https://nypost.com/2020/09/16/remote-learning-is-a-disaster-and-terrible-for-children/> [Perspective | Remote school is putting kids under toxic stress](#)

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes
 - 1. Regular BOE Meeting Minutes – January 11, 2021
 - 2. Special BOE Meeting Minutes – January 13, 2021
 - 3. Special BOE Meeting Minutes – January 21, 2021
 - 4. Special BOE Meeting Minutes – January 25, 2021
- B. Financial Management Summary – ending January 31, 2021
- ~~C. Nutrition Services Report – December 2020 Removed by Ms. Bruno~~
- D. Staff Hiring – Non Certified

1. Royal, Alyse
 - Secretary/Bookkeeper
 - Central Office
 - Replacing Cathy Guerra
- E. Staff Hiring – Appendix E
 1. Arisian, Michael
 - Head Coach, Boys Swimming
 - Seymour High School
 - Replacing Patrick DiCaprio

MOTION: (Mr. Hatfield/sec. Ms. Harmeling) move to approve the consent agenda as presented with item C removed

SO VOTED

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

MOTION PASSES: 7-0

V. ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA

Kristen Bruno – Remove Nutrition Services Report because she questioned the first page. She wondered if the participation was off due to the middle school being the pickup site for food distribution. Ms. Holmes said she would check with Ms. Brooks and get back to her.

VI. REPORTS Part 2 and DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

- A. Committee Reports
 1. Finance Committee Meeting Minutes– January 11, 2021
- B. Board of Education Report
 1. Chairman’s Comments

Mr. Strumello said he was happy that everyone was safe in such a big snowstorm. He also said he was happy that basketball, both boys and girls, is back.
 2. Board Member Comments

Ms. Harmeling reminded the Board that the budget will be presented to the Board of Finance on February 8, 2021 and she would appreciate any support. Ms. Bruno said she was excited for basketball but wondered where we stand with other sports. She said she would like an update on how the hybrid program is going. Mr. DiStasi said they are in discussions on getting the conditioning/weight room open and how to get indoor track started. He said we hired a head coach for boys swimming on tonight’s agenda and will be able to get him up and running soon. Ms. Bruno asked if all the coaching positions are filled and Mr. DiStasi said all but one is filled. Ms. Harmeling asked why the weight room cannot be utilized and Mr. DiStasi said they are waiting on guidance from NVHD. Mr. Wilson said it is an issue of cleanliness and disinfection and how to mitigate the germs. He said we meet weekly with NVHD and when we can safely open the weight room we will. This is an issue across the valley. Mr. Champagne asked about quarantine numbers and information about a situation where a cohort didn’t have any instruction due to no substitute being available. Mr. Wilson said the tracker is up to date and live. He said our quarantine numbers are going up and we are watching them. He said our nurses have been phenomenal with contact tracing. He acknowledged the hard work of the administrators saying there have been times where they stepped in to cover a class when there have been shortages. He said everyone is working very hard. Ms. Bruno asked for clarification on the tracker. Ms. Harmeling asked if the reopening plan is moving forward and what the status of the original plan is recognizing it was pushed back a week. Mr. Wilson said there was a potential for a return but the health district was not in agreement for a full return. He said we need to continue to monitor, as we are not at the point where we can safely bring back full capacity. Our buildings simply do not provide the square footage needed to social distance at full capacity. Ms. Bruno asked if this was social distancing at 6 feet or 3 feet. Mr. Wilson said 6 feet is not possible and 3 feet is not possible in the high school or in some elementary classrooms. He asked Mr. Freund to explain further. Mr. Freund has been physically measuring rooms and has

found 88 classrooms cannot accommodate 3 foot social distance and some would have to be 2 feet. Ms. Harmeling asked if we have a time line on a full return. Mr. Wilson responded that we are continually monitoring and will continue to communicate. He said we are all happy to be back. Ms. Bruno asked if there is a plan to survey families to see how many would return if we went to full capacity Mr Wilson said he felt this was a good suggestion and would do this when we are closer to a full return. Ms. Bruno said she would like to have a discussion on remote learning vs. snow days saying when this decision was made it was when students were in full remote.

MOTION: (Ms. Bruno/sec., Ms. Harmeling) to add to the agenda a discussion on snow days and remote learning days

SO VOTED

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

MOTION PASSES: 7-0

Ms. Bruno said we have now had three snow days. She said we approved traditional snow days last time due to the kids being at home. Mr. Champagne said we did make a quick decision last time but he is not sure if remote learning days are the answer. He says he worries about those kids who go to a secondary support adult during snow days. Those adults may not be capable of supporting the kids learning online. Mr. Hatfield said he thought remote learning days on snow days should be half days pointing out that kids may have to help with snow removal. Ms. Harmeling said cohort A has lost two days. Last time we were being responsive to parent's requests for traditional snow days. She feels the Superintendent should have the discretion to make a call based on the conditions, whether that be remote learning or a traditional snow day. Mr. Stanek said remote learning has been looked at for some time in other districts. He feels serious consideration should be given to remote learning. Mr. Wilson said when the decision was made by the Board to go to traditional snow days, he made a proposal to have two traditional snow days then have the remaining snow days be remote learning. He looks at all factors when making the call. We need to be respectful of adding to the calendar in June when classrooms can be hot and uncomfortable. Mr. Champagne asked how remote learning would be communicated and Mr. Wilson responded it is a code on the television stations and would be communicated how we always communicate snow days. Ms. Bruno asked if there is the consideration of power outages and Mr. Wilson said Tom Eighmie is on top of this and lets him know when there is an outage. Consideration would be made for those students who would be affected.

MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Stanek) give the Superintendent discretion to call a remote learning day or a traditional snow day

SO VOTED

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

MOTION PASSES: 7-0

Mr. Hatfield asked if it will be possible to have remote learning days be half days and Mr. Wilson explained he was reluctant to lessen the learning time that has already been scheduled.

MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Champagne) I make a motion that the Seymour Board of Education appoint itself as a search committee for purposes of filling the position of superintendent of schools, beginning with the 2021-2022 school year

SO VOTED

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

Mr. Stanek said he would vote yes for the motion but declined to serve on the committee.

- C. Superintendent Report
1. Thank you to the Board members and Zach for their nice sentiments.
 2. Mr. Wilson is happy to return to the hybrid model and wanted to thank the administrators and teachers who came together to welcome the students back.
 3. He pointed out the 3-2 split was supposed to begin this week but was disrupted by Mother Nature.
 4. Mr. Wilson and Ms. Tencza visited several classes and found that the students did not skip a beat. He was happy to see this and it was nice to see the students and staff in each of our buildings/
 5. Mr. Wilson thanked Tony DiPrimo and the public works crew for their constant communication since Sunday. The crews are working hard to clear roads but it looks like the roads will not be ready for tomorrow. Tim Connors and his crew are ready to clear the schools and we are hoping for a return to school on Wednesday.
 6. There were a couple of hiccups with bus runs but all students arrived to school and home safely.
 7. Mr. Wilson is also excited that the winter sports season is getting underway. He reminded Board members that there would be video links of the game that they can watch.

V. **INFORMATION**

- A. Activities and Recognitions
1. Seymour Middle School
 2. Bungay Elementary School
 3. Chatfield-LoPresti Elementary School
- B. Special Education Monthly Enrollment Update – Dr. Kris Boyle
- C. Staff Resignations – Certified
1. Cardona, Anita
 - Retirement
 - School Counselor
 - Seymour High School
 - Effective June 16, 2021
 2. Sardo, Jennifer
 - Retirement
 - Teacher, Business
 - Seymour High School
 - Effective June 16, 2021
- D. Staff Resignations – Non Certified
1. Giarratano, Kathryn
 - Instructional Paraprofessional
 - Chatfield-LoPresti School
 - Effective January 21, 2021
 2. Hernandez, Ramonita
 - Retirement
 - Instructional Paraprofessional
 - Bungay School
 - Effective January 11, 2021
- E. Staff Resignations – Appendix E
1. Ames, Jenny
 - Assistant Coach, Outdoor Track
 - Seymour High School
 - Effective January 21, 2021
 2. Blade, Nicholas
 - Assistant Coach, Boys Swimming
 - Seymour High School
 - Effective January 28, 2021

3. Esteves Pinho, Michelle
 - Drama Club Advisor
 - Seymour High School
 - Effective June 15, 2021
 - Link Crew Advisor
 - Seymour High School
 - Effective February 1, 2021
 - Student Council Advisor
 - Seymour High School
 - Effective June 15, 2021
 - Assistant Coach, Cross Country
 - Seymour High School
 - Effective June 15, 2021

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

Please note: If you would like to have a public comment read into the minutes at the end of the meeting, please email your brief (300 words or less) to Mr. Champagne (champagnec@seymourschools.org). It must be received prior to the **Superintendent's Report** on the meeting agenda.

None

VII. ADJOURNMENT

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

SO VOTED

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

MOTION PASSES: 7-0

The meeting adjourned at 9:09 pm

Submitted by:
Lee-Ann Dauerty
Board Clerk

NOTE: The next scheduled Regular Board of Education meeting is on Monday, March 1, 2021 at 7:30 pm.

YouTube Link

<https://youtu.be/KgFOFs-SoUI>