

Seymour Board of Education  
**SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES (Revised)**  
July 23, 2020  
Zoom  
7:00 pm

COPY RECEIVED  
DATE: 10/13/2020  
TIME: 9:55 AM  
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE

**BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Kristen Bruno  
Christopher Champagne  
James Garofolo  
Peter Kubik  
Beth Nesteriak  
Fred Stanek  
Ed Strumello  
Zachary Braca, Student Representative

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Kristen Harmeling  
Jay Hatfield

**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  
Rob Dyer, System Technology Coordinator  
Tim Connors, Director of Operations  
Cindy Brooks, Director of Nutrition  
Jim Freund, Principal, SHS  
Ernie DiStasi, Assistant Principal, SHS  
Kathleen Freimuth, Assistant Principal, SMS  
Mary Sue Feige, Principal, BS  
Lauren Reid, Assistant Principal, BS  
David Olechna, Principal, CLS  
Fran Marsala  
Karen Murphy  
Meagan Krushinski  
Rebecca Bennett

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

A. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Strumello called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:05 p.m.

B. Moment of Silence

The Board observed a moment of silence for Robert (Bob) Kelo, a retired math teacher and coach for Seymour High School who passed away over the weekend.

**II. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Robert Dyer read the following emails into Public Comment:

**Christopher Del Sole**

- Members of the Seymour Board of Education, As a parent with a child in the Seymour School District, I would like to know a few things, and make comment on a few others:

- Your body consists of 9 members, yet you continue to meet remotely via Zoom in order to determine whether or not hundreds of children should be clustered together in a building. Does anything about that bother you?

- Governor Lamont has limited indoor gatherings to 25 people, yet you sit here tonight ready to determine whether or not dozens of adults and hundreds of children should be clustered together in a building. Does anything about that bother you?

- Given the ages of many Seymour School faculty, the likelihood of a teacher or staff member falling gravely ill or even dying is not out of the question. Does anything about that bother you? If this most egregious of circumstances comes to pass, will you provide counseling services for the families and students affected?

- What is the liability for our town's taxpayers if lawsuits are filed after an outbreak in the schools? Does the BOE, school system, or town have enough insurance to handle a settlement should someone die? Do any of us want that on our conscience?

In the 1940s, our country put our lives on hold to support the war effort in Europe and the Pacific. We invented atomic weaponry out of nowhere, and Americans endured rationing, planted Victory Gardens, and sent homemakers into the workplace to support the efforts. In the 1960s, we put men on the moon using less computing power than the iPhone in my pocket. I refuse to believe that we can't figure out a solution to the problem that you are faced with today, too. Shut these buildings down, and provide every child with a proper distance learning curriculum.

While my own children will absolutely not be returning to school this fall, my heart breaks for those parents who don't have the luxury of choosing to keep their kids home. No parent should be made to choose between putting food on the table and keeping their children safe.

Furthermore, although children may recover and not be particularly vulnerable, family members exposed to those children may not. If you open these schools this September, whatever happens next, falls on you.

**Diane Azano Craft**, 105 Great Hill Rd, Seymour CT 06483

My comment:

To comply with social distancing guidelines; I am only allowed 8 children per tball team. I am only allowed 1 game at a time; despite having 2 fields at the complex to use. I am NOT allowed to have a 3rd team practice on the other field. I am not allowed to have 24 children and 6 coaches spaced out over 2 fields, approximately 2.5 outdoor acres. But it's ok to send the same 24 students to an indoor classroom.

**Cindy Dion**, 18 Carriage Drive, Seymour CT

I first want to thank all the members of the initial committee and the panel of individuals who worked on this reopening plan. As this board and this administration are fully aware of my concerns as stated in my emails these past two weeks. I would like to take this opportunity to make my concerns public.

I am providing this email to express the frustration I have witnessed with other parents. Am I frustrated too absolutely. I am not sure why Board of Education meetings have been on You Tube and not Zoom as other schools have done. Any type of video would be helpful. I am not sure why we haven't been provided updates. on the reopening plan since the beginning of these committee meetings. Other towns have shared meetings on Facebook and via email. Other towns have also been open to providing who is on the reopening committee not just the Covid Health and Safety Compliance Committee. Communication is key, communication has been very limited, and hasn't come close to the amount of communication received in surrounding towns and in the other areas of the state. As I have stated in my previous emails., I have always been an advocate for the Board of Education and the teachers of this school. It saddens me to see to how our school system has changed with the lack of communication. I look forward to finally seeing the plan and my hopes are that perhaps the surveys will help guide the committee to making changes as needed per the communities input. Thank you.

**Erin Snow**, 6 Elaine Drive, Seymour, CT

If Seymour decides not to open the schools for in-person learning, then it is imperative that all teachers of all grade levels, as well as special education teachers, conduct live lessons daily, via Google Meet, teaching new concepts as well as review of some previous material.

**Tara Burn**, 11 Amber Drive, Seymour, CT

To the Members of the Board of Education,

At the board meeting on July 6th, Kristen Harmeling suggested that the board consider live video streaming for future meetings. I was disappointed that none of the other board members present chose to second this motion. I am writing to ask the board to reconsider this decision.

Several other local districts have done video streams of board meetings for years. Video streams would help parents to be involved and informed in our children's education.

I am concerned that the reluctance to provide live video streams is symptomatic of a larger problem in our school system. I feel that some board members and school administrators frequently dismiss parent input and reject our concerns. Some recent examples of this include: only allowing one parent on the reopening committee, ignoring a petition with 954 parent signatures regarding the fourth quarter grading policy, and not responding to emails from parents. While the district did send out a parent survey, it was only done last week. This leaves little time for the data from that survey to be considered in developing the reopening plan. As a teacher with 26 years of experience, I am very disappointed that parents are being excluded from important decisions in our children's education. In other local districts, families have received weekly updates and participated in live Zoom meetings. In those districts, families are encouraged to share their questions and concerns, and they receive responses in a timely manner. This should be happening in Seymour, as well. There is a preponderance of evidence which shows that collaboration between parents and schools promotes better student outcomes. As board members, you were elected to ensure that our children would receive the best education possible. For this to happen, the school system needs to be more receptive to parent input and more responsive to our concerns. As a parent, educator, voter and taxpayer, I sincerely hope that you will do everything that you can to make this happen in Seymour.

**Alisha Speanburg**, 1 Hillside Terrace, Seymour, CT

Bungay Elementary Parent

Will there be a hybrid option available for on-site learning as well as use of online learning?

**Alisha Speanburg**, 1 Hillside Terr, Seymour, CT

Bungay Parent

Option to change from onsite to distance learning during year

### III. REPORTS

#### A. Review/Accept Reopening Plan for Fall 2020

Mr. Strumello introduced Mr. Wilson to present the Reopening Plan for Fall 2020. Mr. Garofolo said he could not understand a word that Mr. Strumello was saying and it was though he had to fill in every other word that was said. He said Mr. Strumello's platform is not working correctly. Mr. Dyer said it is a local problem with either Mr. Strumello's computer or his internet. He suggested Mr. Strumello try to sit closer to his router or reboot his computer. Mr. Garofolo said we need to consider on-sight meetings. Mr. Champagne said he agrees.

**MOTION:** (Mr. Champagne/sec., Mr. Garofolo) to adjourn this meeting until we can meet in person by scheduling a meeting within a week at Seymour Middle School.

Mr. Stanek suggested if Mr. Strumello's problem could not be resolved then Mr. Hatfield chair the meeting if he is in attendance. It was also suggested maybe Mr. Strumello can join the meeting by phone. Mr. Dyer reported that Mr. Strumello was rejoining the meeting. Ms. Holmes reminded the Board that this plan is due tomorrow and not submitting it could put funding in jeopardy. Ultimately, Mr. Champagne was asked to

chair the meeting since Mr. Strumello had connectivity issues and Mr. Hatfield was not present. Mr. Champagne asked if we can submit this plan and then submit a revision. Ms. Bruno asked if Board approval is required. Mr. Wilson said the plan is to broaden the group and the direction of the platform and work will continue. He suggested the Board make a motion to submit this plan to the State with the knowledge that revisions will be coming forward. He said he sent a video message to the community this afternoon. This is step 1 of many steps. He said he would be remiss if he didn't thank that the members of this panel for spending tireless hours, their hard work, and efficiency in helping to produce this plan. Mr. Kubik asked what adjustments can be made. Mr. Wilson said there are three approaches and the next steps would be to expand the panel to determine which plan will be best. Mr. Champagne said the Q&A should be a lot more than a couple of people. Mr. Wilson said the group is very representative and he understands that Mr. Champagne is entitled to disagree. He said this will tackle a lot of issues. He reminded the Board we have the survey, the expanded group, and the Q&A sessions. Mr. Champagne said he felt the one teacher on the panel was not representative of classroom teachers and he felt we cannot have a 10-person committee. He said he could not approve a plan that doesn't show him what the day to day will look like.

**MOTION WITHDRAWN:** (Mr. Champagne/sec., Mr. Garofolo)

Ms. Bruno said she would like to hear the presentation and Mr. Strumello agreed. Mr. Wilson began the presentation by introducing the members of the panel and explaining the goal of the group is to safely reopen the schools for our students and our staff. He would like people to be patient and understanding. We cannot anticipate every situation. He said we are fortunate to have a great working relationship with Naugatuck Valley Health District and the Office of Emergency management from the Town of Seymour. Mr. Strumello who sat on this panel, talked about the collaborative effort of the panel. He said the State has reduced the number of days from 180 to 177. The plan is to have professional development for staff on August 24 to 31. September 1 to 4 will be transitional days for students identified as needing some extra support and distance learning days for all other students and on September 8 (the day after Labor Day) our schools will reopen. Mr. Champagne said the Board already approved the 20-21 school calendar and noted that it cannot be changed without Board approval. Mr. Strumello said the change would be addressed at the next BOE meeting agenda. He said we don't have community input on the calendar. Mr. Champagne asked if my child was assigned to a specific teacher and then had to go to Distance Learning for a time, when my child comes back to the classroom will they still be assigned to the same teacher. Mr. Wilson said there are concerns about the schedule. We need to plan accordingly if there is a need for Distance Learning. We need to know which students will be distance learning so we can address scheduling. Something can change at any time. Mr. Champagne asked how distance learning teachers will be chosen and Mr. Wilson said they are not sure of this yet as there may be a possibility that the State will take over Distance Learning. Ms. Bruno asked what the process is for a memorandum of understanding and if the Liaison Committee is involved. Mr. Wilson said a memorandum of understanding is worked out between the Superintendent and the Union President then it is taken to the Board Chair for signature. Mr. Champagne expressed a concern about kids being bounced around and said we should not be doing this. Ms. Nesteriak asked about the fee for the Device Protection plan. Mr. Dyer said it has not been set in stone but after surveying other local districts he feels it will be somewhere around \$30 with the understanding that we can make accommodations for those in need. Mr. Stanek asked where we are with the purchase of Chromebooks. Mr. Dyer said we had to purchase new Chromebooks already

because ours had reached the end of their life so we are ahead of a lot of districts already. He said there is an extremely long lead time for Chromebooks around the world. At this point he is confident that we are in a good place. When asked about leasing, Mr. Dyer said he was a proponent, however we had to purchase outright and there is a line item in the budget for this. Mr. Kubik said would we consider leasing in the future and Mr. Dyer said yes. Mr. Garofolo asked if other competitors would restrict us to five years of use and Mr. Dyer said yes different manufacturers have the same usable life. Ms. Holmes spoke about transportation. Ms. Bruno asked if buses and monitors can be added if needed. Ms. Holmes said we can and All Star is aware of this. We will be drafting an agreement with them. Ms. Bruno said if a child rides the bus then they must wear a mask. Ms. Holmes confirmed this is the case. Ms. Nesteriak asked Ms. Holmes how we are going to plan for the first day of school. Ms. Holmes said they will use the data from the survey in order to make plans and it will be updated and revised until the very last minute. Mr. Connors reported on the maintenance of the buildings saying we have an enhanced cleaning schedule and different schedules throughout the day. The custodial staff started making changes since the very beginning of COVID-19. Orders for supplies are already in as they were placed in March. The custodians have a different way of cleaning our schools. He said everyone will need to pitch in. We are already stocked up on supplies because we are identified as an emergency service. Mr. Champagne asked about the hand dryers in the bathrooms. Mr. Connors confirmed they have been disconnected and paper towels are now in the bathrooms. Water fountains are also disabled and bottle fillers will be installed instead. Mr. Kubik wanted to know if our custodians are protected. Mr. Connors said our custodians wear masks and gloves, face shields and have jumpsuits if they are needed. They do not wear them all the time so as not to scare the children. Mr. Kubik asked if the custodians were trained on how to do a complete sanitization. Mr. Connors said they have attended classes. Ms. Nesteriak asked about the budgetary impact. All costs so far are in last year's budget and he said we are good for at least 3-4 months. Prices of supplies are going up but he is confident they will go back down again when supplies go back to normal. He said it is hard to predict how many supplies will be needed in each classroom. He said his staff is working on a staggered shift and it will be tough from a budgetary standpoint. He said if anyone has any questions or concerns they can always get a hold of him. Mr. Olechna said the committee was very united and developed a solid plan. He reminded everyone that buses are a continuation of school and guidelines will be followed. The committee supports the wearing of masks. He said the elementary schools reach out for the authorized pick up lists from parents and this will help in the planning of bus use. Masks are required everywhere except when eating, outside recess, and physical education. There will be no congregating, no locker use. Lunch time will be social distanced as much as possible and they are looking into outside dining. The playscapes will be sanitized. There will be no desk clusters and all children will face in the same direction. Mr. Kubik asked if there is any kind of log kept to ensure sanitization has been done. Mr. Olechna said it will be done after each wave and records will be kept. Mr. Connors said the sanitation will be done with sanitization sprayers and it takes about 10 minutes to dry. Mr. Olechna said we are looking at having lunch in the classroom so cohorts are kept together. Outside dining may happen at the secondary level. All lunches will observe social distancing. Ms. Brooks voiced some concern with the plan for children to eat in the classroom and asked that further discussions happen with her involvement. Ms. Nesteriak asked what a cohorts would look like. Mr. Olechna said CLS is looking to keeping grade level cohorts together and stay apart from other classes. They would enter the building by the classrooms. There will be no cohorts on the bus. At recess the classroom teacher and classes stay together. Classes will stay together and not cross

into other classrooms. Breakfast will be in the classroom. Unified Arts will be in the classrooms. Ms. Feige said her plan is very similar. She is looking into recess in the field, playscapes will be sanitized and breakfast will be in the classroom. Paraprofessionals will assist with breakfast. Physical education will be outside. Art and music will be in the classroom. She said they are working with Mr. Kearns regarding the traffic flows. Ms. Bruno wondered about those students who have food allergies. Ms. Feige said they are working with Ms. Bennett on this. Mr. Olechna said there will be more meetings and they will involve Ms. Brooks. Please understand many things need to be worked through. Ms. Bennett, Head Nurse spoke about her work with the SPS COVID-19 Health and Safety Compliance Team. She said she has been heavily involved since March and has put in at least 40 hours just on research. She plans on doing a lot of education on coughing, washing hands, etc. She plans to do training on hygiene. She said this is a very trying time. There will be posters and signs posted throughout the school as friendly reminders. She spoke of the wonderful relationship the Seymour Public Schools has with the Naugatuck Valley Health District and that relationship will continue. If someone tests positive they will be quarantined, contact tracing will be done guided by the NVHD. HIPAA is in effect so no names will be used or shared. If necessary, the school will be shut down. She said cloth masks should be washed daily. Parents should check temperatures before school and if 100.4 or greater, the child should be kept home. If a child has a cough, they should be kept home. We all need to be cautious. Nurses will be looking for symptoms. Unnecessary items should not be brought to school. There will be no food sharing, for example no cupcakes for birthdays. All Star will evaluate kids before boarding the bus. Staff will send kids who look sick to the Nurse. We will be limiting kids going to the nurse for things that can be taken care of in the classroom (i.e., Band-Aids). Isolation rooms will be established. She said staff does a good job. Mr. Garofolo said he wished the slides were numbered so he could go back in the presentation easily. He said if a student shows up and is sick should we consider if their temperature is greater than 100.4 the child will not be admitted. Ms. Bennett said a temperature of 100 is not permitted in school, it's a policy. Mr. Garofolo said unfortunately not every parent is diligent in caring for their children. He said forget the niceties and say the child will not be permitted into school, we need to show that Seymour is serious about this. Ms. Bruno expressed some concern about treatment in the classroom and how to protect the dignity of the children. Ms. Bennett said medication will be given in the health area and toileting accidents will be treated in confidential areas. Mr. Champagne asked about routine temperature checks and Ms. Bennett said she was concerned about the accuracy of routine temperature checks. We would need additional staff to perform temperature checks and children might be sent home. Mr. Champagne said the town worries about retail customers but we are not concerned enough to measure the temperature of our children? We want to make sure kids are safe and he said he is not feeling this at this point. Ms. Bennett said nothing is more important than keeping our kids safe. We are following the CDC guidelines. Cloth masks will be provided but Ms. Bruno asked if they can wear their own masks. Ms. Bennett said they are going to provide the masks for security reasons and so kids feel the same. She said we will have backup masks if necessary. She said she hopes people will respect this and start wearing masks at home. Parents need to be responsible for themselves and their children. Mr. Stanek asked about the isolation area; what they will look like and who will supervise them? Ms. Bennett said nurses are creating the isolation rooms that will have a half wall and glass to the ceiling. Nurses will be able to monitor isolated children and they will not be left alone. When the child is picked up, they will not leave the school by going through the general population. Mr. Stanek asked if they needed extra staff. Ms. Bennett said we will see what happens, we will reach out to the

administration and she is confident they will help. Ms. Nesteriak asked her to describe what would happen if a child tests positive. Ms. Bennett said the child would be isolated and the staff would begin the items on the checklist; notify NVHD, do contact tracing, get in touch with the parent(s), try to determine when/where it was contracted, quarantine for 14 days, collaborate with Administration. If it is deemed necessary schools could possibly be shut down. Ms. Nesteriak asked if it would be all or nothing quarantine. Ms. Bennett said that were hopeful that we will only have a few positive cases but if it is necessary we may need to switch to distance learning. Mr. Garofolo asked Mr. Wilson what he thought the weakness of the plan is. Mr. Wilson said he feels the weakness is the uncertainty of the pandemic. Mr. Garofolo asked what the plan is if staff/teachers are sickened. Mr. Wilson said we may have to go to distance learning. Mr. Garofolo said it is important to have a Plan B. He said we need more than this plan, more needs to be considered. Speaking truthfully, this plan does not fill all the holes.

**MOTION:** (Mr. Garofolo/sec, Mr. Champagne) submit the plan as presented to the State to avoid loss of funding with the caveat that we can make changes as warranted.

**MOTION WITHDRAWN:** (Mr. Garofolo/sec., Mr. Champagne)

**MOTION:** (Mr. Champagne) to adopt the plan as presented but not officially approved by the Seymour Board of Education

**MOTION WITHDRAWN:** (Mr. Champagne)

Mr. Stanek noted the lateness of the hour and suggested any further presentations be limited to five minutes each. He noted we can continue discussions at our next meeting. Dr. Boyle quickly reviewed the plan for a new Social Emotional Learning program and the pilot program set to run in the fall at the elementary level and at the secondary level. After the pilot, the committee will review the programs along with considering the social emotional needs of our students after the closure. Staff will help to identify students with social emotional needs and develop intervention plans to support them. They will evaluate and measure student growth and provide additional supports to students and families who are experiencing difficulty with reopening or ongoing transitions. Ms. Tencza thanked the Board for all of their questions saying they will help to shape our work on this committee. Ms. Tencza said she has spent a lot of time studying the state information and said the goal is to keep our staff and students safe so they can teach and learn. We will not be starting the school year the same way we did last year. We will use our tools and figure out where the kids are and help them move forward. We have been doing a lot of planning this summer and are trying to line up what training is needed. Work is happening now and will continue through August. Mr. Wilson wrapped up the presentation by reviewing the next steps. The Covid-19 panel will be extended to include two additional teachers and two additional parent representatives from each of our four respective buildings, and all Administrators to help make a decision on which model best meets our communities' needs. This panel will continue to meet throughout the year. Question and Answer sessions will be scheduled and will provide the community with the opportunity to submit questions to a variety of staff experts. All of the work has been done to figure out the best way to move forward safely. Ms. Bruno asked about the next steps and the point of expanding the panel. What is the purpose? Mr. Wilson said they want to expand the panel so more teachers and parents have a voice as we work through which model we want to go with. She asked if the teacher/parents will have a voice in choosing the plan. Mr. Wilson said Administration will make choices after the panel makes their recommendation.

**MOTION:** (Mr. Stanek/sec., Ms. Bruno) move to adopt the Seymour Schools Reopening Plan as presented with the understanding that the Board of Education is desirous of the

development of a more detailed and specific plan with additional staff and Community/parental input.

**SO VOTED**

**AFFIRMATIVE:** Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

**MOTION PASSES:** 7-0

**IV. ADJOURNMENT**

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

**SO VOTED**

**AFFIRMATIVE:** Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

**MOTION PASSES:** 7-0

The meeting adjourned at 10:21 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](mailto:ldauerty@seymourschools.org) by no later than **noon on Thursday July 23, 2020.**

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

YouTube link

<https://youtu.be/neG2OH8tcVc>