

**Town of Seymour
Special Town Meeting
MINUTES
Tuesday, October 15, 2019 at 6:30pm
Norma Drummer Room, Seymour Town Hall**

Members Present: Stephan Behuniak, Kurt Miller, Robert Findley (6:50pm), Rob VanEgghen (6:40pm)

Members Absent: Trisha Danka, Annmarie Drugonis, Al Bruno

Others Present: Patrick Lombardi, Malia McCool, Matthew Ritter, Mike Horbal, Stuart Brannen, John Stelma, Julie Nintzel, Fred Stanek, Mary McNelis

Item #1 – Call Meeting to order

First Selectman Kurt Miller called the meeting to order at 6:35pm.

Item #2 – Pledge of Allegiance

Everyone saluted the Flag and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Patrick Lombardi, Moderator (in the Town Clerk's absence) for tonight's Special Town Meeting summarized the three Resolutions up for discussion tonight:

- First, to appropriate \$5 million for the reconstruction/repair of various Town roads and roadside elements including associated drainage facilities.
- Second, to appropriate \$1.5 million for communications equipment for the Town's emergency services departments including, but not limited to the Town's Fire Department, Police Department, and Emergency Management Department.
- Third, to appropriate \$15 million for a new Community Center

Unfortunately, we do not have a quorum for tonight's meeting, so we will close the Special Town Meeting @ 6:36pm and refer the items to the Board of Selectmen.

Item #3 – Public Comment

First Selectman Kurt Miller opened up the floor to any public comment to the residents in attendance :

Michael H. Horbal – 12 Oakwood Drive – It was mentioned that there were three sites being considered for the Community Center. Not sure where these three sites are, but my concern is that there is enough parking on-site. Our downtown area has never had enough parking. Kurt Miller said that the three sites are: the current Community Center, Gary Park, and two private sites. One of the drawbacks to using the current Community Center is that the parking is already limited, and with a larger building will be more of a problem. The Gary Park site would have plenty of parking as would the two private sites.

Fred Stanek – 22 North Benham Road – I am glad that the Board of Selectmen have addressed replacing the Community Center. The building is ancient and in need of repair. The Board of Education turned the building over to the Town after building the "New" Middle School because the building is not healthy. Many staff members (and students) had illnesses that were attributed to the building. I, myself have experienced stinging eyes after attending a meeting at the building. However, I do not think that we are going about this the right way. I do think that a Building Committee should be appointed and that a definite plan should be developed so

that it can be presented to the people so that they can see exactly what they are buying (and where). I urge the Board of Selectmen to reconsider it's thinking on presenting this matter to the public on this coming election day and consider putting together a firm plan that can be presented to the public in a way that everyone can know what we are doing and how much it will cost. Otherwise I do support a new Community Center.

Kurt Miller said that he agrees with the health issues with the current building. Last week, we discovered that the underground oil tank is starting to leak. Could be a \$200,000 problem. We broke down the repairs needed to bring the building up to snuff: \$750,000 for new heating/cooling system, \$250,000 for new roof, \$200,000 for parking lots and sidewalks, \$125,000 for elevators, and to bring the 3rd floor up to code so we can use it \$2.65 million, and the oil tank repair. Also, this is not including bottom floor sprinklers, and remediation. As far as Maintenance & Upkeep cost is: \$3.33/sqft @ Middle School; \$4.85/sqft @ Chatfield/LoPresti; \$7.60/sqft @ Community Center. Usually, when we put together a Building Committee for a school, they are given a specific amount to work with; mostly, people will get behind the idea of need for a school. With the Community Center, they may not. So, we are doing this backward – to see if the residents are at least interested before we spend money on a “study”. If this passes in November, we will put together a Building Committee at the next Board of Selectmen meeting. Then will bring that information back to the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, and the residents. We sat down with engineer, architect, asked the Community Services Director and her staff all the things they wanted and asked how much, on the high side, would this cost.

Fred Stanek said that we have state-of-the-art schools in this town, we deserve a state-of-the-art Community Center. If it does not pass, we will put the time and effort into the Building Committee and get more information together and try next November. We do need to do something about this building – it needs substantial investment just to keep it going. It is falling apart.

Julie Nintzel – 50 Briarwood Drive – We do need a new Community Center. The current building was in the flood of '55. There is no telling what is below the basement or in the walls of that building. The health problems will only increase. I think that you should have more numbers before going to referendum. Where we will put it, plans. I am concerned about congestion. We only have two river crossings. What kind of traffic is it going to draw? Currently, the school bus rides are 20 minutes across town. The widening of the road in front of Franklin Street was supposed to be done by the spring of 2019. If the building will be downtown, I am concerned about the traffic. Livable communities should have something for ALL ages. Also, would we need to move the Skate Park if the existing building were sold? Kurt Miller said that the State is in charge of the '67 widening – should be done by end of 2020/2021. Traffic congestion will definitely be taken into consideration along with the location; one of the downtown potential sites would be a concern, but we will have the engineers & architects' input. There would be some concerns if we used the current location. Gary Park location would not have any concerns. We looked at the Newtown facility for some ideas. If we did sell the existing building, we may need to relocate the Skate Park. If we sold the building – put it out to bid (would let them know about the health issues) – the third floor has currently been shut down by the Fire Marshal due to remediation issues.

Stephan Behuniak – 36 Birchwood Road – When the Board of Selectmen voted on putting this on the ballot for November, I did vote NO. I think we are way overdue for a Community Center. Some of the things I have heard described as extravagances are things I would support. We should be pushing for something extraordinary in this community center while we have the opportunity. I do disagree with the approach we have taken; it may turn into something more prolonged and expensive. I am afraid it will fail at the referendum for: 1. A full study has not been done so people don't know exactly what they are getting. 2. Pairing it with two other bonding for less money. I will recommend that if it does fail, that we do a special question. At that time hopefully we will have a more precise plan.

John Stelma – 3 Oriole Lane – The Communications amount for the bonding was \$1.4 million. The Town Meeting had the wrong amount. Matt Ritter said that he would do another agenda and we would have another Special Town Meeting (at end of October) to correct the amount. John said that we DO NEED a Community Center, but the lack of information may cause the question to be voted down. He asked if the question for the Community Center fails, will we be able to know whether it failed because of the cost or because of the lack of information. Kurt Miller said no. But if it is voted down, we will get the Building Committee together, put together more information, and find out how people are feeling. We do have some models that are virtually budget-neutral.

Stephan Behuniak – 36 Birchwood Road – if the question does fail, we should really put some serious effort into finding out WHY. Find out what the people did or didn't like – cost, lack of information.....

Close Public Comment @ 7:06pm

Submitted by:

Monica Dimon

Monica Dimon
Recording Secretary

Reviewed by:

W. Kurt Miller

W. Kurt Miller
First Selectman