

Town of Seymour ~ Board of Selectmen
MINUTES
Special Meeting
Thursday, October 8, 2020 at 7:00pm
Zoom Teleconference - Call #646-558-8656 – ID# 827 294 9049

Members Present: Robert Findley, Annmarie Drugonis, Kurt Miller, Al Bruno, Robert VanEgghen, and Chris Bowen

Members Absent: Trisha Danka

Others Present: Bryan LeClerc, Rory Burke, Monica Dimon, Nicole Klarides-Ditria, Chris Pelosi, Warren Holcomb, Richard Demko, and John Duke

Item #1 – Call Meeting to order

First Selectman Kurt Miller called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.

Item #2 – Pledge of Allegiance

Everyone saluted the Flag and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item #3 – Public Comment

None

Item #4 – Approve Minutes from September 15, 2020 Regular Meeting

Motion to approve Minutes from September 15, 2020 Regular Meeting

Motion: Annmarie Drugonis

Second: Robert Findley

Vote: 6 – Yes

0 – No

0 – Abstain

Trisha Danka – N/A

Robert Findley – Yes

Annmarie Drugonis – Yes

Kurt Miller – Yes

Al Bruno – Yes

Robert VanEgghen – Yes

Chris Bowen – Yes

Item #5 – First Selectman's Report

1. Apologize for the late notice cancellation of Tuesday's meeting.
2. My last day will be on October 20, 2020 @ 5pm; that will be two hours prior to the next Board of Selectmen Meeting. At that meeting you will choose my replacement and fill the vacancy on the Board of Selectmen. If anyone has any questions, please feel free to reach out to Rich Buturla or Bryan LeClerc through Rory Burke.

Item #6 - Discussion & Take Possible Action Regarding Union Cemetery

- Small older cemetery on Derby Avenue; cemetery feels that they are unable to continue operating.
- Tony Caserta has been working with Rich Buturla and Bryan LeClerc on this.
- Bryan LeClerc said that a request was made by the Union Cemetery Association to take over the cemetery. They have about \$44,000 held in trust which would be turned over to the Town should they accept the deed for ownership of the cemetery. Currently the Town contributes \$1,000 annually for the upkeep of the cemetery. The maintenance budget is about \$7,000 according to the Cemetery Association. The Town is the largest plot holder. In the distant past this was a Potter's Field. The

difficulty is that the members of the Cemetery Association are all elderly now and there is no one to take over the Cemetery. There is a Statute that talks about the Town taking over an “abandoned cemetery”; but Union cemetery is not an “abandoned cemetery” under the State Statute.

- The Town can proceed with the acquisition of the Cemetery from the Association. Kurt Miller asked how this process works – would the Town have the responsibility of maintaining and managing the Cemetery – be responsible for selling the remaining plots? Bryan said YES. The \$44,000 trust – would that need to be held in a special revenue account for the Cemetery or would this be allowed to go to the General Fund? Bryan said we would need to look into this.
- Rob VanEgghen asked if the Town owns any other cemeteries? Any precedent? Not as far as we know.
- Chris Bowen asked if we should acquire the Cemetery, is there a limitation on how quickly could we remove from our ownership or turn it over to someone else? Bryan said this could be a problem. The Association is telling us they have no new members, they can’t maintain it. I believe the Town would have the same difficulties in trying to find someone to sell it to. We could see if Trinity Cemetery would be interested in acquiring the Cemetery from the Association directly.
- Robert Findley asked if we do not acquire it, what would their next steps be – what would they do? Bryan said that someone else could acquire the cemetery or, if it is not maintained for 10 years, or no lots sold in the last 40 years, the Town could take it over. There’s not much else they can do. Do you know if they’ve reached out to any other cemetery associations? Kurt Miller said that he thinks this was always their plan - that the Town would take over. Makes more sense for a cemetery association – who has experience handling this – than the Town to take over.
- Rob VanEgghen asked how many plots are left? Kurt Miller said he wasn’t sure – not a lot.
- Chris Bowen asked if we could authorize you to look at other cemetery associations and not authorize that the Town would take this on? Bryan said he would not recommend acquisition right now. We can reach out to the Union Cemetery Association and ask some questions.
- Al Bruno said that the Trust Fund will run out of money after about seven years. Then the Town would have to pay if we acquired it. Kurt Miller said we will reach out to the Trinity Cemetery Association. Bryan said that he will come up with what our options are and present to us at the next meeting.
- Robert Findley asked what maintenance or upkeep other than just mowing?

Item #7 - Discussion & Take Possible Action Regarding Non-Union Employee Pay Plan

We have several non-union employees; Chris Pelosi put together a Pay Study, took some of the feedback from previous meetings and has put together a Pay Plan. Structure for contracts as to how they might look going forward – for the next set of senior staff that we hire we would have a uniform approach to that, a uniform contract and evaluation process. Please note that NO ACTIONS will be taken tonight.

Chris Pelosi’s Plan was included with tonight’s packet.

- Chris Pelosi said that the Original Pay Plan from back in April was included. The goal was:
 - To provide the Board with an alternate compensation strategy for its professional staff that links pay and performance
 - Put together to address the Town’s Strategic Plan Initiative to develop, implement & document standardized recruitment practices that will enable us to recruit & retain qualified skilled professionals.
- The Plan would cover non-union appointed and elected officials and would aim to accomplish the objectives that you see in Section B of the introduction: internal equity, competitive within municipal market, link pay and performance. Should be easy to administer and provide continuity and flexibility.
- We put together a salary study using CCM data, compared job descriptions, population comparison. Took a mean salary and used a 30% spread to establish a minimum and maximum.

- Letter from Keith Rosenfeld (Town Planner) sent to DOT for road work – we are trying to include sidewalks in that.
- Letter from Keith Rosenfeld regarding the 8-24 request for Holbrook Road.
- Letter from Town Counsel regarding the Governor’s Executive Order 9B – which amends previously-issued self-quarantine orders and implements penalties for violation of gathering size limits and face covering requirements.
- Kurt Miller read into the record a resignation letter from Town Treasurer John Fedor:
October 19, 2020

First Selectman Kurt Miller & Board of Selectmen for the Town of Seymour:

After many enjoyable years as the Seymour town treasurer, I must regretfully submit my resignation. I have recently moved out of town, and according to the town lawyers’ interpretation of the Seymour Town Charter, I am no longer eligible to serve in this position.

It has truly been an honor to serve the town of Seymour for all of these years.

I want to thank the many First Selectmen of the town that have appointed me treasurer over the years. It has been a pleasure to work alongside all of the wonderful people at the town hall, particularly those in the finance department.

Item #15 – Public Comment

Public comment from Richard Demko- elected member of the Seymour board of finance
20 Greenwood Circle

I would like to take a moment to extend my sincerest gratitude to Kurt Miller for his years of impeccable service to the town. It has been a pleasure serving on the board of finance under his administration, and he will be greatly missed. Throughout Kurt’s tenure, he did a phenomenal job stabilizing our towns finances and developing plans to continue moving our town positively forward into the future. I wish him the very best on all his endeavors, and I am very confident in saying that whoever Kurt is working for is very lucky to have the services of someone who has shown the highest regard to the people to whom he works with. With that said, I would also like to say that I am very confident that whoever is appointed by the board of selectmen to serve as Kurt’s replacement will continue the great work that Kurt did, as each one of our selectmen are part of a team of people who contributed to making our town a better place to live, work and educate our children. Once again Kurt, congratulations, and good luck in all you do.

Public comment on behalf of the Seymour Republican Town Committee

On behalf of the Seymour Republican Town Committee, we would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to Kurt Miller for serving the people of our town with the utmost dignity and respect. Throughout the years you have been an example of what true, strong leadership is all about. Your contributions to our town, and your legacy will carry on well into the future. Our town will continue to thrive thanks to the hard work you put forth in stabilizing our towns finances and the work you and your administration did making Seymour the great little town we are. We are proud of everything you have done, and it's been an honor & privilege to have you as our Party's candidate and elected leader. We would also like to thank the entire Miller family for their support throughout Kurt's tenure. We understand that the long hours, the stress, and all that comes with the job may have been difficult at times, and we sincerely appreciate your understanding and unwillingness to share Kurt with the people of the town. Kurt, we know that you will do great things for whoever you work with, and we wish you the best of luck in all that you do.

Public comment from Paula Chapla

Kurt -

Many thanks for your leadership over the years as First Selectman. Keeping the town on a good financial path can be attributed to your financial acumen and has been beneficial for the residents. I wish you luck in your new position - congratulations and best wishes to you and yours.

Sincerely,

Paula F. Chapla

Nicole Klarides-Ditria – 23 Osprey Drive – Kurt, you have accomplished so many things in these short 9 years; you have increased the Fund Balance, improving our roads & infrastructure, decreased debt, increased our bond rating, and having 6 consecutive budget surpluses. None of this could have been accomplished without your amazing team by your side. I can count on one hand the number of times this Board has voted on anything less than unanimously. They all think alike – fiscally responsible, doing the right thing for our Town – sound common sense leadership. I'm sure that the woman who replaces you will continue with the same sound practices that you and your team have done throughout your years in Seymour. I wish you the best of luck in your next endeavors. I will miss you and hopefully you will start to return some texts now!

Themis Klarides – State Representative – thank you for letting me say a few words. It’s interesting to me and such a sense of pride to have somebody in the Town I grew up in and my family still lives in and is so proud of take a position for so many years and have done so much to make us proud to be from Seymour, to make Seymour better than it was when he took it over, to make it an affordable place, a place that we can be proud of. As an elected official I know that many people get elected, sometimes not for the right reasons. But you have done this – because you have it in your heart – you have this passion and love for this Town and this State. And every day that you have been there – you have put Seymour first. Even though we have been very thankful to your family – to your wife, to your children, and your mom and your dad – we know that Seymour is your second family. If it wasn’t you couldn’t have done the job you’ve done. So, thank you so much! I’m proud of you as your friend, I’m proud of you as somebody from Seymour. I look forward to all the amazing things you’ll do in the future. Thank you.

Item #16 – Selectmen’s Public Comment

- **Bob Findley** –
 - Seymour Pink Road Race – October 1 to October 4 - was done virtually; a tremendous way to get through COVID and still have an event for this group. Everyone did a great job fundraising. I’m very proud of the Seymour Pink organization.
- **Chris Bowen** –
 - Thank you for the Virtual Seymour Pink!
 - Kurt, I am beyond grateful for everything that you’ve done for this Town, everything you’ve done for this Board, and for everything you’ve done for me personally. I reached out to all the members of the Board of Selectmen when I was first elected, and you spent hours talking to me at the diner. It was a lot of good advice and a lot of good wisdom, and you’ve continued to do that this whole time. You’ve earned the right to go out on your terms. I fully thank you for everything you’ve done for this Town. I’m grateful to your family for their patience. It can’t have been easy. Thank you sincerely for bringing this Town beyond partisanship and making this a professionally run Town. Best of luck in your future endeavors.
- **Rob VanEgghen** –
 - I want to keep the positive theme because I know everyone here appreciates everything you’ve done. I do want to respond, as Chris and I are members of the DTC, I want to respond to what got posted. I hope that everyone keeps an open mind to the end, understanding that I do support Kurt Miller. Regarding the resignation and specifically the DTC’s letter as such. I am viewing this through a few different lenses: as a citizen of Seymour in a very general, not specific to this case manner I don’t approve of an elected official, especially the First Selectman, leaving mid-term for a job opportunity. We all want to do what is best for our families but even after a few discussions about the business executive position model, I am concerned that we could set a precedent for the First Selectman to leave for a “better job”. Regarding this particular situation, Kurt has worked so diligently over his past terms to build the Board and the Town positions so that this Town is running as an efficient machine. As such the future of Seymour’s success or failure does not rest on Kurt Miller. He has set it up so that he can leave mid-term and things will continue on. Someone else will steer the boat, but he has built a massive ship and no matter what everyone needs to acknowledge and thank him for that. As a member of the DTC I recognize that a response to Kurt’s leaving needed to be made. The letter was a collaborative effort and I am sure that many members don’t agree with all parts of it, including myself. But it is a response to an opposing party member leaving mid-term. I am sure if the opposite had happened with a Democrat there would have been a response from the Republicans. While the Charter does spell out how to handle a vacancy, that was meant in the

case of an emergency or loss, and the nominated Republican who fills is not elected by the people for that position. As mentioned, I don't agree with Kurt leaving mid-term, but I also don't agree that the First Selectman should hold no other job. A restriction like that would limit our pool, and the salary he gets for running a \$50+ million organization would be considerably more for any other company. Finally, as a friend, I wish Kurt the absolute best. And to mirror what Chris Bowen said, you have put in so much of yourself and your family's time into this place, you have left it in great hands. But I don't want to see you go – for so many reasons – but I wish you the best where you do go. Luckily you will be close by. I'm sure our paths will cross in the future. You have made this a completely non-partisan board and it's been just people looking for what's best for Seymour. I have never felt stifled, never felt anything but accepted and I thank you very much for everything.

- Al Bruno – I'd like to start off by voicing my displeasure and disappointment with the DTC Press Release. I thought it was unnecessary and uncalled for. Shame on whomever drafted it and penned it because Kurt's leadership has always been inclusive and transparent, and I applaud him for allowing everyone a voice in our democratic process no matter what party you are affiliated with. To the point people have made here tonight, we have acted in unison quite a bit so when the Press Release was brought to my attention, I felt betrayal for Kurt and a cheap shot as he's going out the door. He deserves better. Kudos to Kurt for everything that he's done for us as a Community. He's always kept it classy and professional, never stooped to name calling or dirty politics. I wanted to thank you Kurt and respond to the Press Release.
- Annmarie Drujonis – Keep it light-hearted – it's Kurt's last meeting.
 - Public Works – leaf blowing leaves and grass clippings (as well as snow) into the street is not allowed. There is actually an Ordinance on this. I want to thank Public Works for helping put up the banners and the pink striping. Public Works will be doing a leaf pickup starting at the end of November. The leaves need to be in brown paper bags. Bulk pickup will be the last week in October and will resume in April. Each resident is allowed to receive one bulk pickup per year. If more are needed, you can call Tony DePrimo and schedule with him. I also want to thank Public Works for putting in 300 ft of drainpipe on High Street near the Colonial Manor Apartments. That will stop the flooding and icing that happens there.
 - Alex Danka would like everyone to know that the Land Trust is looking to do more fireworks with the Holiday Singing and hope that the Board of Selectmen will approve some invoices put forward and that they are working on a parade for Christmas.
 - In regard to the letter from the DTC, I have some comments on that. I would expect a little bit more professionalism. We have all worked with Kurt; he has been our leader since 2011. We have always worked as a team. A couple of things I have issue with that letter. I know that the DTC has many attorneys. They have worked on Town Committees and as Town Attorneys, and I know for a fact that they did not approve of this letter. I know for a fact that they advised against the way the letter was written. I know that they advised and said that this was per the Charter, you have very smart attorneys on the DTC, and they did what the elders should do. However, Kurt is leaving us in the middle of his term. Do we like it? No. Rob, to correct you, John O'Toole left in 1999 in the middle of his term. He left the Town in a \$3.3 million deficit and with a \$500,000 sewer assessment fee that went missing – it wasn't given to the Sewer Authorities. So, a Democrat did do it, and Frank Conroy did take over. And not one Republican voiced an opposition, not one Republican sat there and said it's not right, not one Republican said that's not fair. He went to work for Northeast Utilities. The voters did speak – in 2017, in 2019. They did speak when they voted us on this Board. When the voters speak as to who they want to be their leaders, they vote on the Board of Selectmen. We as the Board of Selectmen

are their votes. We speak for them. So, we as a Board, on the 20th need to vote in the next person to be the First Selectman. As far as the Charter, as the DTC attorneys said, he is doing this correctly by the Charter, Section 3.4. Section 3.4a says the First Selectman is a full-time position. When First Selectman Behuniak and Selectwoman Stanek were on the Board, they had asked questions about the First Selectman's hours, office hours. The Council had come back and stated that as the CEO of a company, there is no time clock for him to punch, there are no set office hours. He needs to be available to the taxpayers, he needs to be available to the employees of the Town. And Kurt has always been available. And I am sure that the next person will be. There is nothing in the Charter that the First Selectman couldn't do a side job. As we know that position is \$85,000/year. So, if someone does something on the side, that's on them. The Charter clearly says that. For these conditions to be put in was outrageous. Because the DTC knows that. The citizens voted in the First Selectman. Whomever is handed this responsibility, it's not a gift. I can understand not wanting to answer to another boss, but the First Selectman has 16,000 bosses. The taxpayers are the First Selectman's boss. We are voted into office by the constituents. For the community to be successful, its driven by a team. Kurt has led this team – not just the Board of Selectmen team, but also the Board of Finance – he has never once ever said "I" – it has always been "the Team" has gotten us to where we are. "The Team" being us. I didn't grow up here, I moved here. But when I moved here, I felt like this was my home. Kurt has made it not "them against us". This isn't like the Board of Selectmen from the 90's, 80's, or the 70's. Or even when I was on the Board of Selectmen in 2007 – 2009. It was the Democrats against the Republicans. But since Kurt took office, its not a D against an R. It's not right. Again, with amount of knowledge that the DTC has, with all the attorneys – and I know they spoke against this letter – I know personally, I heard personally, I spoke to them personally. This letter wasn't based on fact, but blinded opinions. Because they were upset that Kurt is leaving. Kurt has taken this Town to where it's never been before – under ANYONE's leadership. I found the letter attacking Kurt very offensive and I was offended myself because they basically slammed the entire Board of Selectmen. You said it was back-door dealing. There was no back-door dealing by me or anyone on this Board. We AS A TEAM pick the next leader to continue Kurt's legacy to continue to move this Town forward, to continue to strive to make it better and better. And either we're going to do it together as a team, or we are all going to fail. If one is successful, we are all successful. I will miss you, Kurt, and I wish you the best of luck.

- Kurt Miller – I believe this is 276 meetings. The events over the last few days – it's been disappointing to me in that we have always worked so well together, had open lines of communication, make sure that everybody had a say – whether we agreed with the opinion or not. I was personally offended by it. It felt like a cheap shot at me just to score some political points. Maybe I overreacted in certain places. If I did, I probably apologized. After 9 years of this being a team, it was just a little insulting to me that something like that would be put out there. But I don't want that to dominate tonight. Not many people are fortunate enough to live out a dream. I always wanted to be First Selectman. The guys who mentored me as I was coming up – they instilled in me that no one person can do this by themselves – you need to have a strong team of people around you. I have been blessed from Day 1 to have had the people I have around me to be able to accomplish all that we have. I would not been able to accomplish what we have without the team – the Board, professional staff, friends, family. Many of you have made mention of my family and what they have given up – that brings me to part of why I'm making the decision I'm making. I have given 20+ years to this Town in politics, starting back on the Parks Board. I've missed a lot my son's stuff because I was at events & things. Now my daughter is in 8th grade. I don't want to miss her high school years. I want to be able to go up and see my son's fencing

tournaments. Maybe it's a little selfish of me to step down at this point, but it's what I needed to do for my family and what I needed to do for myself. And the only reason I am able to do that is because of the team of people that I'm leaving behind. This Town is not going to miss a beat. On Wednesday morning at 8am, this Town is going to keep on moving forward. It's because of the people that are here. They have worked so hard to change the system – it's not about one person, but it's about the Town of Seymour. That is what makes me the proudest. That we did this together. Very infrequently was the vote on the Board of Selectmen not 7-0. And that's the way it should be because it's not about politics, it's about the Town of Seymour. I have been here 45 out of my 50 years here. I'm proud to say that I'm from the Valley, and that this is my hometown and to have the ability to have a positive effect on the Town is something that I'll never forget. I've made a lot of great friends along the way, some from when I was a kid. Themis and Nicole, it's great to have childhood friends like you take the time to come out tonight. It means more than you'll ever know. The opportunity that this Town has blessed me with is just more than I can ever explain. More than I can ever give back. I will continue to be involved in the future. To all the members of Board of Selectmen over the 9 years, thank you for all the time and effort you have put in. I feel comfortable leaving the Town in your hands because I know that you will continue the good work and continue to move the Town forward. It has been an honor and privilege to serve you.

Item #17 – Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 9:12pm

Motion: Annmarie Drugonis

Second: Al Bruno

Vote: 6 – Yes

0 – No

0 – Abstain

Trisha Danko – N/A

Robert Findley – Yes

Annmarie Drugonis – Yes

Kurt Miller - Yes

Al Bruno – Yes

Robert VanEgghen – Yes

Chris Bowen – Yes

Submitted by:

Reviewed by:

Monica Dimon
Recording Secretary

W.Kurt Miller
First Selectman

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Trisha Danka – N/A
Al Bruno – Yes

Robert Findley – Yes
Robert VanEgghen – Yes

Annmarie Drugonis – Yes
Chris Bowen – Yes

Kurt Miller - Yes

Submitted by:

Monica Dimon
Monica Dimon
Recording Secretary

Reviewed by:

W. Kurt Miller
W. Kurt Miller
First Selectman