

SEYMOUR BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
Seymour Middle School  
Library Media Center  
December 11, 2023  
7:30 pm

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Stephan Behuniak  
Kristen Bruno  
Christopher Champagne  
James Garofolo  
Kristen Harmeling  
Jay Hatfield  
Shannon Levey  
Lori Nespoli  
Ed Strumello  
Sophia Motyl, Student Representative  
Caitlin Hamilton, Student Representative  
Dr. Susan Compton, Superintendent of Schools  
Salvatore A. Bucci, Business Manager  
Lee-Ann Dauerty, Board Clerk  
Mary Sue Feige, Director of Curriculum and Instruction  
Kris Boyle, Director of Special Services  
Derrick Martin, Technology  
Jim Freund, Principal, SHS  
Paul Lucke, Assistant Principal, SHS  
Keith O'Rourke, Principal SMS  
Kathleen Reynolds, Assistant Principal, SMS  
Lauren Reid, Principal, BES  
David Olechna, Principal, CLS

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

I. CALL TO ORDER

A. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Champagne called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:35 p.m.

II. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A. Seymour Champion Recognitions

1. Bungay School
  - a. Junior Mensah
  - b. Nicholas Moore
2. Chatfield-LoPresti School
  - a. Kaya Perez
  - b. Trenton Sanders
3. Seymour Middle School
  - a. Kourtney Desrosiers
  - b. Andy Fenstermaker
4. Seymour High School
  - a. Casey Elliott

B. Honor Recognition

1. Best High Schools, US News and World Report – Seymour High School

Mr. Freund and Mr. Lucke accepted the banner and plaque commemorating this honor. Dr. Compton congratulated Mr. Lucke as the CT High School Assistant Principal of the Year

2. Retiring Custodian, SMS – Fred Kershaw

Congratulations to Mr. Fred Kershaw upon his retirement. He has made a difference over the years, he is well loved and dedicated. We thank him for his service.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Comment provides the opportunity for the public to make a comment. It is not a dialogue between the Board and the public. Based upon what is heard during Public Comment, the Board may choose to add a topic to the agenda. If questions are posed that the Chairman is able to answer, those questions may be addressed under the Chairman's Comments portion of the agenda. The Board will not discuss personnel matters. Comments should be respectful and no longer than 3 minutes in length so that all who wish to comment may have the opportunity to do so. All the public wanting to comment will need to state their name and address for the record prior to addressing the Board.

Tim Sadick, 12 William Lane – works on a sports committee committed to better facilities. Have accomplished many things including new speakers, new bathrooms, and a refurbished tennis court. He spoke of the mismanagement of games that he feels is affecting donations. The actions are not Seymour Football. There is an atmosphere of favoritism. Football teaches young boys to be men. He feels there is a need for a change in leadership after a four-year decline. Paul Sponheimer, 25 Falcon Drive – Said football is a tool to go on to college. It includes discipline, accountability and respect. Teaches kids to accept constructive criticism which will help them long after high school. The public pays to go to our games. Sideline arguing with each other, throwing helmets, throwing water bottles. What is going on in the stands? After four years, we need to have the opportunity to make the best out of the members of the team. Shannon Bullard, 5 Sycamore Drive - spoke about the new legislation about four-year-olds not being able to start kindergarten. Wondered about the process for parents to petition the schools for their child to enter school early, what the testing will entail and how they will handle children with identified needs. Talked about the implementation of play based learning. Steve George, 22 Gilyard Street - called for help for the current coaches who have served this district for six years. Asked that the BOE protect the coaches. Amber Burton, President Wildcat Kickoff Club - she mentioned that she ran what she is going to say by her son to make sure he is ok with it; he is. She said she serves as the president of the Wildcat Kickoff Club who has donated about \$60,000 in equipment to the athletic programs. She said when she was young, she lived in 13 different houses. Seymour became home. She said football became family for them. She said she has gotten to know the coaching staff. Because of COVID, her son missed his freshman year. He played in his sophomore year; he had an attitude. He was emotionally affected because he was called names and not used to his potential. It's 2023 and the world is not safe. She said she was extremely disappointed about the Oxford game. She said they tried to mend fences, but the coach has not apologized. Favoritism and nepotism are embarrassing. Everyone should have a fair shot. We care about our student athletes. Phil Ferranti, Class of 2020 Seymour High School shared his high school experience. The coaching staff saved my game and my life. He spoke of his life with a father who was an addict. The coaches came in and supported me. There was respect. They took extra hours to study the other teams we were to play. This took hours of effort. They cared for us. They gave me more love than any other male in my life. I was a team captain as a senior. They put everything aside to support me. We were so proud to be captains. Jim Coughlin, football player 2018 season, a member of the 2018 team. Wanted to talk about his story and the character of his football coaches. He was injured in a car accident and had trouble walking. His coaches were there to encourage him and when he could not play, they encouraged him to get into coaching. His coaches had his back and would do whatever they could to help. Lori George, 27 Gilyard Street, spoke of the taunting of her son and husband at games. It could be uglier. People in the stands are over involved and are protesting. Kids are acting inappropriately; bullying is happening in social media. She asked what was being done? She asked the Board of Education not to ignore the situation as something needs to be done. Mike Kearns, current head football coach, We have done a good job, we have received citations from the First Selectman's office in the past. We have twelve students at the collegiate level. In 2018 Seymour did not have a football coach. All discipline is addressed. We have had two major discipline situations. We have had ten suspensions, and three expulsions Administration was involved. There is great pride in Seymour football. He thanked the BOE for their support. Joe Carrafiello, teacher and current coach. Said he is 46 years old and is a basketball coach in Seymour. He has taught in Seymour for 21 years. He said he is kind of embarrassed to see this.

He has been a student, a teacher, and a coach. Our current football coach gave up his coaching job in Newtown to come to Seymour. He was encouraged to come. He is all about the kids and he couldn't understand why no one wanted to coach in Seymour during that time. He knows the coaches, educators, and parents. He wants to get over this and get back to the community that Seymour is. Dave Foster, Grant Street. He said he has three kids in football programs. He said coaches supported him always. They know how to reach kids. They need to know their players. These coaches realized what they need, these coaches are those people. They will see us through the next years and will get us where we need to be. Alison Brett, teacher Seymour Public Schools, We have faced a lot of adversity and legal action regarding Wildcat money. Our kids had coaches that helped us through. Under these coaches, we had mentors and friends. Went through COVID as a team. Did a fundraiser specifically for emergency responders. She said not everything is perfect, but we should focus on the good. Tim Lester, 29 Dauria Drive – His son was suspended because rules were broken regarding a Code of Conduct violation. Was told to walk it off and got a one-week suspension. His son asked a question and the adult involved had to be held back. His son has been ignored ever since this incident, so much so that the running back is told to tell my son X, Y, Z. Fred Stanek, 22 North Benham Drive – congratulations on being one of the best high schools in the country. Also congratulations Mr. Lucke on being chosen as the CT High School Assistant Principal of the Year. So proud of Seymour High School. The administrators, students and staff continue to do better.

Public Comment closed at 8:30 pm

#### IV. REPORTS

##### A. HS Student Representative Report- Sophia Motyl, Kaitlyn Hamilton

###### National Honors Society -

- The NHS will be hosting a movie night featuring the movie Elf, on Dec 15th at 6pm in the auditorium. We will have a popcorn machine, a cotton candy machine, hot chocolate and baked goods available for 1\$.
- The NHS is also in the works of planning a Winter Semi-formal "Snowball Dance" for Sat., Jan 20th. This is the perfect time to kick off the second semester. Hopefully the gym will be complete, but if not, the plan is to host it in the cafeteria. We will be reaching out to parents to help turn the space into a winter wonderland.
- The NHS has kicked off "Triple H"- Half Hour Homework. Every Thursday, NHS students are available in Ms. Ciccone's room for homework and study help. We have plans to reach out and expand this out to the middle school soon.
- Lastly, The NHS is sponsoring three children in need for Christmas and will purchase clothing and toys to help brighten their Christmas morning.

###### Sports -

- The fall sports finished up on Thanksgiving eve with football facing the valley rival Woodland for their annual "War in the Woods" game. Seymour finished strong with an impressive 34-14 win over the hawks.
- The winter season has begun. Girls basketball kicks off their season on Wednesday 11/13 away at Derby and Boys basketball will be starting Friday 11/15 at Wolcott.
- Our boys competing with the West Haven Ice Hockey co-op opened on Friday 12/8 and will be traveling to Maine during the holiday break to participate in a weekend tournament.
- We have one wrestler who will be competing alongside Derby this season. The first wrestling match will be Thursday 12/14.
- The first competition for both indoor track and boys swim will not be until the start of the new year.

###### Newspaper Club -

- The new Holiday issue of the Pawprint will hit stands on Monday, Dec 18th. Stay tuned and check the school blast for a digital copy.

###### Student Council -

- Had a successful food drive for thanksgiving we held it as a competition and Seniors won collecting the most food.
- Food was donated to the Seymour/Oxford Food bank (11/29)

- Meeting this Thursday to plan out our themes for Spirit week that will take place right before winter break.

HOPE Club -

- Worked with Student Council to make fleece blankets for local shelters.

Yearbook -

- The yearbook club has been working on putting together the fall events and sports pages for their first yearbook deadline.

Art Club -

- The art club students have been working on painting landscapes like Bob Ross. Their works are coming along quite well and we are looking forward to the next art endeavor.

Spanish Club -

- We are planning to make Spanish cookies. Members have to research what cookies are typical from Spanish countries. We will be making them next week.

FBLA -

- Preparing for the conference in the spring - picking events, making study guides, prepping speeches/role plays for certain events.

Chemistry Lab -

- First lab is occurring on 12/13
- Continuing to assist Zepp and Avena is preparing things such as solutions.

DND Club -

- Have had two meetings so far, working on and playing mini campaigns along with preparing characters.

B. School Improvement Plan – Keith O'Rourke, Kathleen Reynolds

SMS School Improvement Plan

<https://www.seymourschools.org/fs/resource-manager/view/6302e129-435e-4e86-b20d-0880ee1af755>

Dr. Compton asked that the Board hold their questions until the end of the presentation. She also apologized to Ms. Reynolds for leaving her name off the agenda. Mr. Hatfield said the links were not working so he felt it was not fair to present to the Board since they have not been able to prepare. Dr. Compton said she did not know the links were not working and sent the information by email. Mr. O'Rourke said he and Ms. Reynolds are ready to present the 17-page school improvement plan. He said the presentation report may be of help to them.

MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Hatfield) table the School Improvement presentation to the January meeting

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Strumello

OPPOSED: Mr. Behuniak, Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Levey, Ms. Nespoli

MOTION FAILS: 3-6-0

Mr. O'Rourke and Ms. Reynolds went ahead with their presentation.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes

1. ~~Regular BOE Meeting Minutes – November 8, 2023~~

B. Nutrition Services Finance Report – December 11, 2023

C. Field Trips

1. ~~Out of State Field Trip~~

~~Approve the request of teacher John McCasland to take grade 10-12 AP US Government & Politics classes to Washington DC with the Close-Up Foundation on April 7-12, 2023.~~

2. Out of Country Field Trip

Approve the request of teachers Darlene Soden, Stephanie Ciccone, Jeff Gilbert, and Dave Willadsen to take Grade 10, 11, and 12 students to Paris, France, Florence, Italy, and Rome, Italy in late June or early July 2025.

- D. Staff Appointment
1. Volunteer
    - a. Barton, Meredith
      - Sports Volunteer
      - Basketball
      - Seymour High School and Seymour Middle School
    - b. Michaud, Alison
      - Sports Volunteer
      - Cheerleading
      - Seymour High School

- E. Staff Hiring
1. Certified
    - a. Lippold, Danielle
      - Long Term Substitute Teacher
      - Bungay School
      - Replacing Katelyn Tyler
  2. Appendix E
    - b. Barton, Christopher
      - Coach, Boys Basketball
      - Seymour Middle School
      - Replacing Zachary Goldstein

MOTION: (Mr. Strumello/sec., Ms. Bruno) to approve the consent agenda with items A1 Regular BOE Meeting Minutes November 8, 2023 and item C1 Out of State Field Trip

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Behuniak, Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Levey, Ms. Nespoli, Mr. Strumello

MOTION PASSES: 9-0-0

## VI. ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA

Item A1 Regular BOE Meeting Minutes. Mr. Hatfield questioned the blank line that was included in the minutes. Ms. Harmeling said there was no second of the motion and Ms. Harmeling withdrew the motion. She indicated the minutes are correct.

MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Ms. Bruno) to approve the November 8, 2023 Board of Education minutes as presented

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Behuniak, Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Levey, Ms. Nespoli, Mr. Strumello

MOTION PASSES: 9-0-0

Item C1 Out of state field trip. Mr. Strumello asked why the form was not signed by the principal and the Superintendent and questioned if they supported this trip. Dr. Compton said the trip is supported.

MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Behuniak) to approve the request of teacher John McCasland to take grade 10-12 AP US Government & Politics classes to Washington DC with the Close-Up Foundation on April 7-12, 2023.

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Behuniak, Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Levey, Ms. Nespoli, Mr. Strumello

MOTION PASSES: 9-0-0

VII. DISCUSSION and POSSIBLE ACTION

A. School Calendar 2024-2025

Dr. Compton said the calendar has been cleaned up. It includes everything from last year. Spring break was changed as the Valley Superintendents agreed that everyone should be on the same page and have spring break at the same time. Mr. Strumello and Mr. Hatfield mentioned that they have been appointed to a CABE Legislative Committee.

MOTION: (Mr. Behuniak/sec., Ms. Levey) to approve the 2024-25 school calendar as presented

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Behuniak, Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Levey, Ms. Nespoli, Mr. Strumello

MOTION PASSES: 9-0-0

B. Substitute Teacher Rate of Pay

MOTION: (Mr. Hatfield/sec., Mr. Garofolo) to table the discussion and possible action of Substitute Teacher Rate of Pay to the January 8, 2024 BOE meeting

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Behuniak, Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Levey, Ms. Nespoli, Mr. Strumello

OPPOSED: Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Strumello

MOTION PASSES: 7-2-0

C. Joe Perrucci – Shortage Area Hiring

Dr. Compton would like to request the Board of Education to approve this hiring for the period of February 1, 2024 to June 1, 2024. This is a critical shortage area. TRB has approved this, and the Board of Certification has approved. We posted this as an internal position so he could fill the position. Ms. Harmeling said she was confused as to why he would retire in January rather than wait until the end of the year.

The Board determined no motion was required.

D. Donation

1. Burt Process Equipment

- a. Mr. Steve Burt of Burt Process Equipment would like to donate \$1000 to help cover expenses related to tools, materials, equipment, educational field trips or any other needs that the Seymour High School Car Club may have and asks that the BOE direct the Superintendent to determine the placement of this donation.

MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Hatfield) to accept the donation of \$1000 from Burt Process equipment and to direct the Superintendent to determine the placement of this donation.

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Behuniak, Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Levey, Ms. Nespoli, Mr. Strumello

MOTION PASSES: 9-0-0

VIII. INFORMATION

A. Committee Reports

1. Finance Committee Meeting Minutes – November 8, 2023

B. Special Education Enrollment Report – Kristopher Boyle

C. School Activities and Recognitions

1. Bungay School
2. Chatfield-LoPresti School
3. Seymour Middle School
4. Seymour High School

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HA-0k0X1\\_AbIUvoPmmSHVN0s6TjyAK0wd6mf-OP8YAc/edit?usp=drive\\_link](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HA-0k0X1_AbIUvoPmmSHVN0s6TjyAK0wd6mf-OP8YAc/edit?usp=drive_link)

D. Staff Hiring (Teachers)

1. Certified
  - a. Frisbie, Trevor
    - Special Education Teacher, Elementary
    - Chatfield-LoPresti School
    - Pending Certification
    - Replacing Julia Roshkind
2. Appendix E
  - b. Weaver, Jeannine
    - Coach, Girls Basketball
    - Seymour Middle School
    - Replacing Craig Prasauckas
  - c. Widlar, Jennifer
    - Assistant Coach, Boys Swim
    - Seymour High School
    - Replacing Zachary Goldstein

E. Staff Transfers

1. Non - Certified
  - a. Torres, Karen
    - From Monitor Paraeducator to Instructional Paraeducator
    - Chatfield-LoPresti School
    - Replacing Debbie Bergstrom

F. Staff Resignations

1. Non-Certified
  - a. Frosceno, Glen (Retirement)
    - Head Custodian
    - Chatfield-LoPresti Elementary School
    - Effective April 19, 2024
  - b. Halchak, Cheryl
    - Literacy Numeracy Tutor
    - Bungay Elementary School
    - Effective December 15, 2023
  - c. Kershaw, Fred (Retirement)
    - Custodian
    - Seymour Middle School
    - Effective December 15, 2023
2. Appendix E
  - a. Weaver, Jeannine
    - Assistant Coach, Freshman Girls Basketball
    - Seymour High School
    - Effective November 20, 2023

IX. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS/SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

A. Board of Education Comments

1. Chairman's Comments

Mr. Champagne welcomed Ms. Nespoli to the Board. He thanked Dr. Compton for her participation in the organizational meeting. He noted the number of people who came out for public comment. He congratulated Mr. Lucke on his appointment as the Connecticut High School Assistant Principal of the Year. He reminded the Board members to submit their top three choices of committees they want to serve on, and this will be addressed at the January 8 meeting. He said Dr. Compton will present more on the kindergarten registration and the assessment for students whose parents request early registration.

2. Board Member Comments

Mr. Behuniak thanked the Board for his support on being elected as Board Secretary. Mr. Hatfield said he was disappointed with Public Comment, and he was concerned that names were used and he fears this will open public comment for future negative comments. A short discussion regarding public comment ensued. Ms. Nespoli thanked the Board for being so welcoming. She talked about nonprofits which is something she is passionate about.

B. Superintendent Report

Dr. Compton welcomed Ms. Nespoli to the Board. She reported that she and Ms. Bruno attended the CABA Conference and thought it was a good day. She attended the State Teacher of the Year where our Ms. Nicole Fearon was honored. Ms. Feige was also in attendance, as was Mr. Freund. She said it was a good celebration. She said more information will be coming regarding kindergarten registration. She said she will be hosting a Holiday Gathering for Central Office Staff, Administration, and Board of Education members on Tuesday, December 19. Listening Forums will be happening in the near future. She has been working with Administration on their Needs Assessments. Budget working sessions will be scheduled. Policy changes have to be made so Policy Committee meetings will be scheduled. She thanked the Board for their support. She reminded everyone that the chain of command is in place with the Director of Athletics and to let the process work regarding the football issue. Mr. Strumello said he would like to have the CABA Committee meet in our facilities. Mr. Garofolo asked for clarification on how to submit the information on what committees Board members wish to serve on. Mr. Champagne said email is fine. Ms. Harmeling cautioned the Board to watch the number of volunteers we approve of and make sure there is a need. She said she thought we were close to a line regarding public comment. We need to remember where the lines are. Dr. Compton welcomed Ms. Nespoli again and congratulated Mr. Lucke. She thanked Mr. O'Rourke and Ms. Reynolds for the hard work and fine presentation they did tonight on the Seymour Middle School Improvement Plan.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

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

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Behuniak, Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Levey, Ms. Nesteriak, Mr. Strumello

MOTION PASSES: 9-0-0

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 pm

Submitted by:  
Lee-Ann Dauerty  
Board Clerk

YouTube Link: (12/11/23) <https://youtube.com/live/vWRkMkEnk7Q?feature=share>