



Seymour Board of Education

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

November 5, 2025
Seymour Middle School
7:00 pm

Board Members Present: Chris Champagne, Board Chair
Kristen Bruno, Board Vice Chair
Ed Strumello
Jim Garofolo
Pete Kubik
Kristen Harmeling
Jay Hatfield

Members Absent: Lori Nespoli
Stephan Behuniak

Others Present: Dr. Susan Compton, Superintendent
Attorney Paul Testa
Shannon Levey, Board Clerk

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Pledge of Allegiance - Mr. Champagne called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM
- B. Moment of Silence – John “Raven” Commune
Mr. Strumello shared heartfelt remarks about Mr. Commune and the lasting impact he had on the Seymour community.
- C. Introductions - Introductions of those in attendance were made.

II. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A. Seymour CHAMPION Recognitions – Hard Working

- 1. Bungay School**
 - a. Clarissa Horowitz
 - b. Mason Williams
- 2. Chatfield-LoPresti School**
 - a. Violet Nazario
 - b. Olivia Francoeur
- 3. Seymour Middle School**
 - a. Leah Guarino
 - b. Kayden Romero
- 4. Seymour High School**
 - a. Anthony Salazar

B. Student Reports

1. SHS Student Representatives Report – Jeremy Tomasheski and Daphne Shea
Jeremy and Daphne provided an update on recent and upcoming activities at Seymour High School:
 - **National Honor Society:** Welcomed a new class of juniors and seniors who are actively assisting around the school and community.

- **Student Council:** Recently held Spirit Week, a pep rally, and the Homecoming Dance. The annual food drive is also underway.
- **HOPE Club:** Participated in downtown trick-or-treating event, organized a sock and coat drive for the homeless shelter, made blankets, and coordinated with Kindergarten classrooms—successfully covering all three classes at Bungay School.
- **Athletics:** Fall sports are wrapping up for the season. Highlights included team and individual achievements, with the football team currently 7–0—only the third team in Seymour history to reach that record.
- **Yearbook and Art Clubs:** Both are active in planning and creative projects for the school year.
- **Spanish Club:** Celebrated *Día de los Muertos* with cultural activities and displays.
- **Environmental Club:** Recent visit to the Maritime Aquarium and will be entering a competition this year. Members also conducted an after-school campus cleanup.
- **Debate Club:** Hosted the debate for the First Selectwoman candidates.
- **School Newspaper:** Released the first issue of the year, with the second issue currently in development.
- **FBLA:** Won the Double Good Popcorn fundraiser competition and attended the Fall Leadership Conference.
- **Line Dancing Club:** Continues to meet on Tuesday mornings and is planning an evening session soon.
- **Best Buddies:** Held a Halloween party with crafts and hosted an assembly focused on inclusivity.

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 Chairperson is able to answer, those questions may be addressed under the Chairperson'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.

- Public comment called three times - no comment

IV. REPORTS

- A. Bungay Building Committee Updates – Fred Stanek, Ed Strumello
 - a. Mr. Kubik provided an update on the project's progress. The district is currently waiting for state funding approval, which is expected to be finalized in June. A preliminary update on the grant is anticipated in December. In the meantime, requests for proposals (RFPs) will be prepared for the second phase of the project. Groundbreaking is anticipated to take place around 2028. Mr. Kubik noted that the timeline remains on track, with the state funding process accounting for the majority of the delay.
- B. Special Education Enrollment Report – Dr. Boyle
 - a. It was noted that the numbers are currently higher than typical for this time of year, but the situation is being closely monitored. Ms. Harmeling requested data from the past five years to serve as a reference for comparison and trend analysis. Dr. Boyle stated that the October report included five years of data on outplaced students.
- C. Enrollment Report
- D. School Improvement Plan – Keith O'Rourke & Ernie DiStasi, Seymour Middle School

Mr. O'Rourke referenced Matt Mervis from EdAdvance and the AI State Grant. He and Mr. DiStasi expressed pride in the ongoing work at Seymour Middle School (SMS), and with the AI grant, and felt it was an ideal topic to begin the School Improvement Plan presentation. A video was presented highlighting the integration of Artificial Intelligence at SMS, showcasing the innovation and collaboration of the school's teachers, staff, and students.

School Improvement Plan (SIP)

Mr. O'Rourke and Mr. DiStasi reviewed the school's three main goals:

1. **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)**
2. **Academic Growth**
3. **Stakeholder Feedback and Community Engagement**

Key Initiatives:

- **RULER Phase I:** The school received a grant to introduce the RULER program at the middle school level. Phase I focuses on staff training and implementation of foundational practices.
- **Instructional Practice:** Deepening the use of *Making Thinking Visible* routines and integrating Artificial Intelligence tools to enhance learning.
- **Vertical Alignment:** Efforts are underway to strengthen transition coherence between grade levels.
- **Redesigned SRBI:** Early, data-driven interventions are being implemented through at-risk meetings focused on academics and attendance.
- **Family Partnership & Attendance:** Strengthening collaboration with families and recognizing students to promote consistency, belonging, and improved attendance.

Mr. O'Rourke noted that the 7th and 8th grades are performing exceptionally well, while 6th grade performance remains an area of concern, indicating a need for stronger vertical alignment between 5th and 6th grade instruction and expectations.

Dr. Compton's Comments

Dr. Compton acknowledged that 6th-grade performance has historically been a challenge, often showing a drop from 5th to 6th grade. Factors contributing to this include personnel, certifications, and academic rigor. She emphasized that progress is possible, noting that the addition of an extra teacher in prior years led to measurable improvements in student outcomes. Dr. Compton also addressed the importance of reducing chronic absenteeism, reminding families of the critical need for consistent student attendance.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes

1. Regular BOE Meeting Minutes – October 6, 2025
2. Special BOE Meeting Minutes – October 14, 2025
3. Finance Committee Meeting Minutes – October 2, 2025
4. Policy Committee Meeting Minutes – October 2, 2025
5. Athletic & Health Committee Minutes – October 27, 2025

B. Hiring - Certified

1. Flor Melgar-Soto
 - a. Spanish Teacher
 - b. Seymour High School
 - c. Replacing Miguel Restrepo

D. Intra-district Transfer Request Forms

E. School Safety Plan

DISCUSSION: Mr. Henry noted that as long as the district's physical footprint remains unchanged, only minimal updates are required. One new item has been added to the existing plan, but all documentation is current and up to date. He received confirmation that the plans have been officially received, ensuring compliance for another year. Mr. Henry added that any further discussion can be held privately to maintain safety and confidentiality regarding sensitive information.

F. Director of Security Contract Revision (Bereavement Days)

MOTION: (Jay Hatfield / Kristen Bruno) move to approve the consent agenda as removing item C5

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

PASSES: 7-0-0

VI. ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA

C. Hiring - Non-Certified

1. ~~Sean Dowling~~
 - a. ~~Instructional Paraprofessional~~
 - b. ~~Bungay School~~
 - c. ~~Replacing Nicole Tavaian~~

VII. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

A. Secretary Union Contract Ratification

Attorney Paul Testa reviewed the terms of the new contract agreement. Dr. Compton expressed her gratitude to the union group and the liaison committee for their significant time and effort throughout the negotiation process.

In her summative remarks, Dr. Compton emphasized her appreciation for the secretaries' hard work and dedication to the district and its students. She noted that the agreement is fair and mutually beneficial, aligning with trends across the state. Key points of the three-year agreement include:

- A 2.95% salary increase
- Participation in the State Partnership Plan
- Increased life insurance coverage
- Updated contract language and other minor additions

Ms. Bruno also thanked Attorney Testa and the secretarial staff for their collaboration. She reiterated the district's commitment to recognizing staff contributions while remaining fiscally responsible in budget planning. The high-deductible plan language was retained in the contract to allow flexibility should the district return to that plan in the future.

MOTION: (Jay Hatfield / Kristen Bruno) to approve the ratification of the Secretary Union Contract with the dates of July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2028

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

PASSES: 7-0-0

B. Pilot an FBLA Incubator Club, Seymour Middle School

A proposal was presented to pilot an FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America) Incubator Club at Seymour Middle School, intended to serve as a strong feeder program to the high school's FBLA chapter. Mr. Hatfield suggested tabling the proposal for further discussion.

Mr. O'Rourke shared that he is prepared to begin the program immediately, with a teacher willing to advise the club for the incubator stipend rate.

Dr. Compton recommended allowing the club to proceed as an incubator pilot and evaluate its success before making long-term commitments, noting that stipend structures will need to be reviewed and updated at a later time.

Mr. Lucke provided background information on the incubator club stipend, explaining that a \$2,000 allotment was originally established to fund up to four incubator clubs at \$500 each.

MOTION: (Jay Hatfield / Kristen Harmeling) to pilot FBLA Club as an incubator club at Seymour Middle School

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

PASSES: 7-0-0

C. Student Council Advisor position – proposal to split/share responsibilities and stipend

- a. Dr. Compton explained that union leadership has approved a request to split a stipend position. The individual originally awarded the position was the only applicant; however, after realizing the workload was greater than anticipated, another staff member offered to share the responsibilities. The union agreed to the arrangement, and the stipend will be split evenly (50/50) between the two employees.

Mr. Champagne expressed no objection to the arrangement.

Mr. Hatfield raised concerns, noting that other staff members may have been interested in the position had it been posted as a split role. He emphasized the need to establish a consistent process for future situations, as the position was not originally advertised as such. Some Board members shared similar concerns regarding procedure.

Ms. Harmeling stated that, while procedural consistency is important, flexibility should also be valued—particularly when colleagues are working collaboratively to meet student needs.

Dr. Compton referenced a memo from the union president confirming support for the split.

Ms. Bruno agreed that flexibility is sometimes necessary, as participation levels can fluctuate and staffing needs may vary. She expressed comfort with the arrangement since all parties involved, including the union, are in agreement.

Mr. Hatfield reiterated that while the intent is understood, the situation highlights the need for a clear and consistent process moving forward.

MOTION:(Kristen Bruno / Kristen Harmeling) to approve the Student Council Advisor position with the splitting of the stipend in half equally

AFFIRMATIVE:Mr. Champagne, Ms. Bruno, Mr. Garofolo, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Harmeling

OPPOSED: Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Strumello

PASSES: 5-2-0

D. CAFE Policies

- a. Mandated Policies 1312.3, 6161.12, 1312.4, 6161.13, 1312.5, and 6161.14

MOTION: (Ed Strumello / Jim Garofolo) to approve the CAFE Mandated Policies 1312.3, 6161.12, 1312.4, 6161.13, 1312.5, and 6161.14

AMENDED MOTION: (Ed Strumello / Jim Garofolo) to accept and adopt CAFE Mandated Policies 1312.3, 6161.12, 1312.4, 6161.13, 1312.5, and 6161.14

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

PASSES: 6-0-0

- b. Mandated Policy 5114

MOTION: (Ed Strumello / Jay Hatfield) to accept and adopt CAFE Mandated Policy 5114

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

PASSES: 6-0-0

- c. Mandated Policy 6171

MOTION: (Kristen Harmeling / Jim Garofolo) to accept and adopt CAFE Mandated Policy 6171

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

PASSES: 6-0-0

- d. Mandated Policy 6159

MOTION: (Kristen Harmeling / Jim Garofolo) to accept and adopt CAFE Mandated Policy 6159

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

PASSES: 6-0-0

- e. Mandated Policy 5118.2

MOTION: (Kristen Harmeling / Jim Garofolo) to accept and adopt CAFE Mandated Policy 5118.2

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

PASSES: 6-0-0

E. Interim Principal - Chatfield-LoPresti School, Mr. Jim Freund

MOTION: (Jay Hatfield / Kristen Harmeling) to appoint Mr. Jim Freund as the Interim Principal of Chatfield-LoPresti School

DISCUSSION: Mr. Strumello asked whether communication had been made to staff and families regarding administrative coverage. Mr. Strumello mentioned that there have been rumors circulating about coverage when Mr. Freund is not in the building, stating that staff are concerned. He reiterated that the staff needs to hear from Dr. Compton that the building will be covered. Mr. Freund thanked the Board and shared that he will be working closely with Mr. Olechna to support the school community. He explained that he will begin working three days per week, increasing to four days per week after the holiday break. A plan is already in place to ensure coverage on the remaining days. Mr. Freund noted that, under state guidelines, he is permitted to work only 45% of the school year; starting part-time allows him to remain in the role for a longer duration. Administrative rotation will be used as needed to ensure continuous building coverage. Dr. Compton assured the Board that the building will be fully covered and that this information will be communicated directly to staff by her.

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Champagne, Ms. Bruno, Mr. Strumello, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling

PASSES: 5-0-0

MOTION: (Ed Strumello / Kristen Bruno) add to the agenda new business (new items F, G, H, I)

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Champagne, Ms. Bruno, Mr. Strumello, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling

PASSES: 5-0-0

F. Paraeducator Position

Dr. Compton explained that the Board must vote on the addition of a paraeducator position, as it increases the overall para count and impacts the budget. The need for this position arises from a new Individualized Education Program (IEP) requirement. After review, it was determined that reallocation of existing staff is not possible.

Ms. Harmeling inquired about how the new paraeducator will be trained given that the student has high needs and the school year is already underway. Dr. Compton responded that the position will be posted, and if possible, a seasoned paraeducator will be assigned. Paraeducators work under the direct supervision of the special education teacher, with support from district resources such as Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) and other specialists to provide guidance, training, and oversight.

Mr. Salvatore confirmed that funding could be reallocated from another budget area to support the position if necessary.

MOTION: (Ed Strumello / Kristen Bruno) to create a paraeducator position for Seymour Middle School

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Champagne, Ms. Bruno, Mr. Strumello, Mr. Garofolo, Mr. Hatfield

ABSTENTION: Ms. Harmeling

PASSES: 5-0-1

G. Hiring - Certified

Sydney Reardon

Long Term Substitute, Social Studies

Seymour Middle School

Replacing Danielle Sekas

MOTION: (Jay Hatfield / Kristen Harmeling) to approve the long term Social Studies teacher Sydney Reardon

DISCUSSION: Dr. Compton explained that the district posted for the full time position but did not receive any qualified applicants. The discussion focused on what the designation of "long-term substitute teacher" actually entails in this situation.

Mr. Hatfield and Ms. Harmeling expressed concern about potential implications and emphasized the importance of understanding the parameters of such an appointment.

Ms. Bruno clarified that a long-term substitute is not a union teacher position and that the Board should avoid micromanaging administrative staffing decisions. She noted that if the position had not been added for discussion, there likely would have been no issue, as long-term substitutes are standard practice when

certified teachers are unavailable.

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Champagne, Ms. Bruno, Mr. Strumello, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling

OPPOSED: Mr. Hatfield

PASSES: 5-1-0

H. Appendix D Athletics Contract Positions

- a. No Action Needed

I. Co-Head Outdoor Track Coaching Positions

~~**MOTION:** (Ed Strumello / Kristen Harmeling) to create a co-head outdoor track coaching position which combines the former assistant coach and the former head coach positions and stipends split equally.~~

WITHDRAW MOTION

MOTION: (Ed Strumello / Kristen Harmeling) to eliminate the head outdoor track coach position and create a two co-head track positions

DISCUSSION: Dr. Compton noted that the proposed change has already been reviewed and approved by both the Athletic Committee and the union. Mr. Strumello referenced the letter from the union, which states that the Board retains the authority to create or eliminate the position, provided that the salary associated with the position does not change. Mr. Hatfield voiced a strong opinion about the verbiage of eliminating and creating positions.

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Champagne, Ms. Bruno, Mr. Strumello, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling

OPPOSED: Mr. Hatfield

PASSES: 5-1-0

MOTION: (Ed Strumello / Chris Champagne) to eliminate two assistant soccer coach positions

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

PASSES: 6-0-0

MOTION: (Ed Strumello / Kristen Harmeling) to add 1 assistant indoor track coach position

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

PASSES: 6-0-0

MOTION: (Ed Strumello / Jim Garofolo) to eliminate the assistant golf coach position

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

PASSES: 6-0-0

MOTION: (Kristen Harmeling / Ed Strumello) to add 1 assistant tennis coach position

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

PASSES: 6-0-0

VIII. INFORMATION

- A. World Kindness Day - November 13, 2025
- B. Chatfield-LoPresti School and Bungay School – 2024-2025 Schools of Distinction (Celebration December 8, 2025)
- C. Staff Hiring – Non-Certified
 1. Tonya Johnson
 - a. Part Time Secretary
 - b. Seymour High School
 - c. Replacing Laura Botelho
 2. Deborah Ricard
 - a. Long Term Special Education Substitute

- b. Seymour High School
 - c. Subbing for Emily Spear
 - 3. JoAnn Roberts
 - a. Secretary
 - b. Chatfield-LoPresti School
 - c. Replacing Darlene Sebes
- D. Retirement
 - 1. Cindy Brooks
 - a. Director of Nutritional Services
 - b. District-Wide
- E. Staff Resignations – Certified
 - 1. Danielle Sekas
 - a. Social Studies Teacher
 - b. Seymour Middle School
 - c. Effective 11/14/2025
- F. Staff Resignations - Non-Certified
 - 1. Janet Horton
 - a. Tutor
 - b. Seymour High School
 - c. Effective 10/25/2025
 - 2. Elisabeth Thompson
 - a. Secretary
 - b. Central Office
 - c. Effective 10/30/2025

IX. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS & SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

A. Board of Education Comments

1. Chairman's Comments - congratulated all individuals who were recently elected.
2. Board Member Comments

- **Ms. Bruno:** Was unable to attend the Sports Hall of Fame Banquet but noted that it was a great event; her husband attended. She also commended the marching band and the students for their performance and recognized Mr. Wolley for his excellent work.
- **Mr. Hatfield:** Expressed deep regret regarding Mrs. Brooks' retirement. He highlighted her significant contributions as Director of Nutritional Services, praising her leadership and the model program she established. He emphasized the importance of developing a succession plan, noting that her departure represents a major change for the district.
- **Mr. Strumello:** Noted that Mrs. Brooks may have held a national vice president position.
- **Ms. Harmeling:** Commented that it will feel unusual not to have Mrs. Brooks in the district. She suggested combining the Finance and Facilities Committees and requested a thoughtful plan for addressing committee assignments, recommending consideration in January rather than rushing the process.
- **Mr. Champagne:** Expressed support for maintaining the current committee structure through January.

December Agenda Item:

- Discussion regarding committee structure.

Additional Comments:

- Mr. Strumello echoed Ms. Bruno's remarks regarding the Sports Hall of Fame, noting that the event went smoothly and congratulating all involved.

3. Superintendent Report

Dr. Compton echoed comments regarding Mrs. Brooks' retirement, noting her 36 years of exemplary service. She highlighted Mrs. Brooks' leadership and contributions at both the state and national levels, emphasizing that she will be hard to replace. Dr. Compton expressed appreciation for the early notice given by Mrs. Brooks, allowing the district to plan for succession, and commended her remarkable record and strong reputation. She added that when people think of Nutrition Services, they think of Cindy Brooks.

Dr. Compton also highlighted recent events and accomplishments:

- Attendance at the Athletics Hall of Fame, the downtown parade, Trunk or Treat, and the Wellness Fair at Seymour Middle School.
- Recognition of Bungay and Chatfield-Lopresti Schools as Schools of Distinction—CLS for three consecutive years in Mathematics and Bungay for Language Arts.
- Acknowledgment of Seymour High School being named a top high school in the state.
- Noted the middle school's growth in math and recognition as a state pilot school for Artificial Intelligence initiatives.
- Upcoming Fall Conference, with plans to attend as many sessions as possible.

Regarding agenda items, Dr. Compton noted the need to address outstanding issues, specifically that Appendix D positions had been disorganized for years and require review. She stated that no additional items will be added to current agendas and that unresolved matters will be tabled until the next month.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned 9:30 PM

YouTube Link (11/5/2025): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jy75Jsx8xw8>

Note: The next Regular Board of Education meeting will be held on Monday, December 8, 2025 at 7:00 pm in Seymour Middle School.

Prepared by: Shannon Levey,
Board Clerk