



SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

January 4, 2016
Seymour Middle School
Library Media Center
7:30 pm

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Yashu Putorti, Chairman
James Garofolo
Kristen Harmeling
Jay Hatfield
Jennifer Magri
Allison Sobieski (7:36 pm)
Fred Stanek
Ed Strumello
Cassandra Quintiliano, Student Representative

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Theodora Klarides

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Christine Syriac, Superintendent of Schools
Vonda Tencza, Associate Superintendent
Rick Belden, Assistant Superintendent - Finance & Operations
Lee-Ann Dauerty, Board Clerk
Rob Dyer, System Technology Coordinator
Ginny Tagliatela, Director of Special Services
Jim Freund, Principal, SHS
Paul Lucke, Assistant Principal, SHS
Tara Yusko, Assistant Principal, SHS
Bernadette Hamad, Principal, SMS
Mary Sue Feige, Principal, BS
Kristopher Boyle, Assistant Principal, BS
David Olechna, Principal, CLS
Roxanne Melaragno, Assistant Principal, CLS
Ehlayna Napolitano

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Putorti called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance and introductions at 7:30 p.m.

II. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A. Correspondence

1. Letter dated December 11, 2015 to First Selectman Kurt Miller from Christine Syriac on behalf of the Board of Education inviting him to attend the budget workshops on January 7 and January 13
2. Letter dated December 11, 2015 to Bill Sawicki from Christine Syriac on behalf of the Board of Education inviting him to attend the budget workshops on January 7 and January 13
3. Letter dated December 17, 2015 to Representative Theresa Conroy from Yashu Putorti on behalf of the Board of Education thanking her for her assistance in obtaining the state grant to upgrade the softball field at Seymour High School

B. Recognitions

1. Mr. Stanek asked for a moment of silence for Mr. Harry Zuella, former superintendent of the Oxford Public Schools who recently passed away. He was an advocate and strong supporter of a positive relationship between the towns of Seymour and Oxford

III. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

IV. **CONSENT AGENDA**

A. **Approval of Minutes**

1. Regular BOE Minutes – December 7, 2015
2. Special BOE Minutes – December 7, 2015
3. Special BOE Minutes – December 21, 2015 (removed by Mr. Stanek)

B. **Nutrition Services Financial Report – November, 2015**

C. **Staff Hiring – Certified**

1. Aldrich, Jr., Allen
 - Special Education Teacher
 - High School
 - Replacing Catherine Katrenya

D. **Staff Hiring – Non Certified**

1. Carlson, Peter
 - Monitor Paraprofessional
 - Bungay School
 - Replacing Kelly Baker
2. Souza, Deanna
 - Instructional Paraprofessional
 - Middle School

MOTION: (Ms. Magri/sec., Mr. Strumello) move to approve the consent agenda with item A3 Special BOE Minutes – December 21, 2015 removed

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Magri, Mr. Putorti, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

V. **ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA**

A3. Special BOE Minutes – December 21, 2015

Mr. Stanek questioned the wording on page 2, item 3D. He said he agreed to relinquish his seat on the Curriculum Committee because Mr. Garofolo wanted to serve on that committee. He asked that the minutes be changed to reflect this information.

MOTION: (Mr. Strumello/sec., Mr. Garofolo) to approve the minutes of the Special BOE meeting on December 21, 2015 with the correction noted above.

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Magri, Mr. Putorti, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

VI. **REPORTS**

A. **Board of Education Report**

1. Chairman's Comments
None
2. Board Member Comments
None

B. **Student Representatives Report – Cassandra Quintiliano**

Miss Cassie Quintiliano reported on the following events at Seymour High School: Guidance hosted a Financial Aid night, Ms. Yusko held her athletes meeting for winter sports, and winter sports have officially begun. Mid-year exams and assessments will happen in January.

VII. **INFORMATION**

A. **Staff Retirements – Certified**

1. Kaszeta, Christine
 - Social Studies Teacher
 - Seymour Middle School
 - Effective close of 2015-16 school year
 - Part of ERIP

2. Labacz, Sandy
 - School Counselor
 - Seymour High School
 - Effective close of 2015-16 school year
 - Part of ERIP
3. Pagliaro, Louellen
 - Art Teacher
 - Seymour Middle School
 - Effective close of 2015-16 school year
 - Part of ERIP
4. Thornton, RoseAnne
 - Library Media Specialist
 - Seymour Middle School/Seymour High School
 - Effective close of 2015-16 school year
 - Part of ERIP
5. Staab, Nancy
 - School Counselor
 - Bungay Elementary School
 - Effective close of 2015-16 school year
 - Part of ERIP

Mr. Strumello commented that he appreciates it when people make comments about their careers in their retirement letters.

VIII. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. **2016-17 Education Budget** – Christine Syriac

Mrs. Syriac began her presentation saying she has provided the Board with many documents and others will follow. She said she has done a lot of reading this year on ways to manage budgets and the budget she is presenting today is a reflection of that research. Mrs. Syriac said she felt her budgets are in the best interest of children. She spoke of the work to further train our instructional paraprofessionals, our progress in STEM and World Language classes at the middle school, the increased number of after school activities, positive parent contact. She talked about how Mr. Belden and Mr. Natzel strive to save money. Mr. Dyer and how his working with the town has benefited both departments. She reported that Mr. Kearns has investigated several residency issues and which has resulted in 18 nonresident students no longer attending our schools. We have increased security for our students and staff. She talked about the loss of the Curriculum Director and how it has impacted the district and the implementation of new curriculum. We have reduced the custodial staff over the years. We now sometimes wait until year end to decide on repairs. She said her charge is to use budget dollars wisely and to do her part to keep taxes from rising. In her opinion, our students can learn more than they are currently learning and it is our responsibility to see that they have the opportunity. She reviewed the statistics of our continuing decline in enrollment and how that will affect the classes that are offered in the future. She asked for guidance from the Board on guidelines regarding class sizes at the high school level and at what point it will no longer be feasible to offer courses; this will be needed information for future budget processes. She noted that we have seen a 10% decline in enrollment (which does not include the Oxford exit) at the high school and enrollment at the middle school is also declining. She will be recommending staffing changes at the middle school with a future move away from the team model and move to the department model must be considered. Special Education continues to grow and she is recommending staff changes this year. She is looking at restructuring the administrative team. The mindset will be to step back from past practice and have a fresh perspective to view staff. She will recommend a reduction of staff this year. She reminded the Board that lesser numbers of students do not equal lesser costs in such areas as custodial services, utilities, etc. Over the years, there have been rising costs in health insurance despite having less employees, salaries continue to rise even though we have fewer employees, transportation costs have gone up. We are not able to keep up with the costs. We have tried to reallocate costs when teachers retire. We do our best to maximize the budget. Mrs. Syriac is recommending changing a clerical paraprofessional position to a secretarial position at the middle school for improved efficiency. This is being done because of the union restrictions on what work a clerical paraprofessional can do. As a result of the ERIP, we had five teachers retire and one of those positions will not be replaced. Mrs. Syriac's proposed budget is below the level services budget.

She noted that this has been a difficult process. The savings we have experienced in the health benefit line item will not happen in future years. There are savings in the special education line item because four students will be graduating this year. She said we do what we can to make it work. Based on the decline enrollment at the elementary level, two elementary teaching positions will be eliminated, we will move from eight sections to six sections in grade one. We will still have the staffing necessary for kindergarten even if the enrollment numbers exceeds the projection of 150 students. Sixth grade teams will be restructured, with each team having four teachers instead of the current five. This will have minimal impact on class size, 21-22 students in a class is acceptable. There will be five teacher reductions and unfortunately three people will lose their employment. Mrs. Syriac will meet with the union and determining which teachers will be affected will be determined by seniority and certification. She noted that past cuts were made after failed referendums and without looking to the future and we spent several years trying to reconstruct due to those cuts. At that time the cuts could be absorbed but the students that were coming in the door were not taken into consideration. Mrs. Syriac said she will not come back to the Board asking to reinstate teachers that are cut, however would ask to add teachers for new programs in the future. Mr. Putorti reminded the Board that we will be meeting on Thursday to discuss the budget but asked if anyone had questions at this time. Ms. Harmeling asked what OHI meant; Mrs. Syriac said it stood for "Other Health Impaired" and Ms. Harmeling asked for a copy of the job description for clerical paraprofessional and secretary.

IX. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A. Out of State Field Trip

1. Seymour Middle School, Glee Club, New York, NY

Mr. Dobas talked about this new field trip to see a performance of Wicked which is a cultural phenomenon and has been on Broadway for 10 years. Students who attend will have the opportunity to attend a vocal class workshop with members of the program and will be able to sing with them. Mr. Garofolo asked if the students can perform for the Board of Education and Mr. Dobas said the students would love to. Mr. Hatfield asked if the nurse signs the field trip forms. Ms. Hamad said she signs other forms that are part of the field trip process.

MOTION: (Ms. Magri/sec., Ms. Harmeling) to approve the request of Nate Dobas to take the MS Glee Club to New York City, NY to attend a master class with the cast of Wicked and attend a performance on March 19, 2016.

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Magri, Mr. Putorti, Ms. Sobieski, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

B. Intra District Waiver Request

1. Ms. Christy Noble is requesting her daughter, Emma Cushing, transfer to Bungay School for the remainder of the 2015-16 school year

Mrs. Syriac explained that this student attended Bungay Elementary school under an intra district waiver for several years but her mother decided that she should go to Chatfield-LoPresti this year. Ms. Noble would like her daughter to return to Bungay School for the remainder of the 2015-16 school year.

MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Garofolo) to approve the intra district transfer request of Ms Christy Noble to have her daughter, Emma Cushing, attend Bungay School for the remainder of the 2015-16 School year

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Magri, Mr. Putorti, Ms. Sobieski, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

*** C. Salary Reopeners**

MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Strumello) move that the Board enter Executive Session to discuss and take action on the salaries of the Superintendent of Schools, the Associate Superintendent, and the Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations. Only those invited by the Board may be present in the Executive Session. The Board invites the following individuals into the Executive Session: Mrs. Christine Syriac, Mrs. Vonda Tencza, and Mr. Rick Belden

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Magri, Mr. Putorti, Ms. Sobieski, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

*** It is anticipated that the asterisked items will be discussed in Executive Session from which the public will be excluded**

Entered Executive Session at 8:41 pm

Out of Executive Session at 9:43 pm

MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Ms. Magri) to increase the salaries of the Superintendent of Schools, the Associate Superintendent, and the Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations by 1.5% for the 2016-17 school year

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Magri, Mr. Putorti, Ms. Sobieski, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

X. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

XI. ADJOURNMENT

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

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Magri, Mr. Putorti, Ms. Sobieski, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

The meeting adjourned at 9:44 pm

Submitted by:
Lee-Ann Dauerty
Board Clerk