BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:
Kristen Bruno
Christopher Champagne
James Garofolo
Kristen Harmeling
Jay Hatfield
Peter Kubik
Beth Nesteriak
Fred Stanek (7:16 pm)
Ed Strumello

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:
Michael Wilson, Superintendent of Schools
Vonda Tencza, Associate Superintendent
Sherry Holmes, Business Manager
Kris Boyle, Director of Special Services
Lee-Ann Dauerty, Board Clerk
Rob Dyer, Systemwide Technology Coordinator
Derrick Martin, Technology
Tim Connors, Director of Operations
Jim Freund, Principal, SHS
Paul Lucke, Assistant Principal, SHS
Ernie DiStasi, Assistant Principal, SHS
Jodie Roden, Principal, SMS
Kathleen Freimuth, Assistant Principal, SMS
Mary Sue Feige, Principal, BS
Lauren Reid, Assistant Principal, BS
David Olechna, Principal, CLS
Rebecca Bennett
Cathy Federowicz

I. CALL TO ORDER
A. Pledge of Allegiance
   Mr. Strumello called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:00 p.m.
   Mr. Hatfield called for a moment of silence for Mr. Peter Klarides, husband of past board member
   Theordora Klarides. Mr. Klarides was a longtime resident of Seymour and a tremendous supporter
   of the Seymour Public Schools.
II. PUBLIC COMMENT

Please note: If you would like to have a public comment read into the minutes, please email your brief (300 words or less) comment along with your full name and address to dmartin@seymourschools.org by no later than 6:45 on Monday, October 19, 2020.

Elizabeth White, 49 Sagamore Drive - As a member of the Reopening Committee, I just wanted to take the opportunity to have my voice heard now. Due to the size of the Committee, it became a one sided conversation where the loudest voice was heard. I would like to set the record straight and inform the Board that not one person on the Committee, or in the public that I have spoken to, have a problem with the teachers in the district. In fact, they have overcome the largest hurdles and learning curve. They have been asked to adopt the most difficult model of instruction; trying to teach, gauge, and provide feedback for both virtual learners and in person learners. They have done a masterful job working morning, noon, and night to accomplish this. Only accolades for the teachers. What many people have a problem with is the lack of transparency by the superintendent. He has the power to make all of these decisions. If he consults his health experts and deems a decision necessary, than he should make the decision. What people are tired of is the perceived notion that he is taking the parents into consideration. What is the point of a Reopening Committee if only some people are heard and the others are forced to silently go along with decisions? What is the point of a survey if the decisions are already made and then we just hear about how great things are going? Students and families are struggling. The majority of parents work full time and cannot be home with their young children to teach them three days a week the other 4-5 hours a day that they are NOT online with their teachers at school. I can speak only for my family when I say that the options for my seven year old are daycare (exposing him to an entire other cohort of germs) or learning with my 75 year old mother who has several predisposed health factors. It is not my choice to work, Mr. Wilson. If I could be home with my kids everyday I would, but I can’t. We are struggling and when we are listening at BOE Meetings to how well things are going, it is infuriating. When I receive progress reports from the teacher that have more than one data point indicating that my son is not close to where he needs to be, it is infuriating to hear you make broad statements about how NWEA is "close" to where it was last year. It is the youngest in our schools, not just the kids on IEP’s or 504’s, that will suffer the consequences of your decisions for years to come. Please hear this loud and clear. We are not okay.

Christian White: 49 Sagamore Drive - The people in this community need to speak up and have their voices heard. It is unacceptable that the community survey and reopening committee meeting (October 14) did not occur sooner, and now that numbers are on the rise any hope for a full return in the near future is highly unlikely based on what Mr. Wilson has stated. Many of us have emailed the superintendent expressing the desire to reopen our schools, but our words are falling on deaf ears. Many school districts across the state, including the Naugatuck Valley, have implemented a full reopening of schools despite rising Covid numbers and even positive reported cases. Safely reopening our schools is indeed possible despite the Covid pandemic. Because the hybrid model is what we are forced to accept at the present time, I urge everyone in this great community to demand transparency from the superintendent and administration regarding student growth. Understandably, the circumstances of last spring have left us with little to no data regarding our children’s progress. This fall, the elementary and middle schools have collected NWEA data, but this is only one data point and is not enough to gauge whether or not our students are growing academically. Having not been presented with this data, I question how much growth has occurred from last fall until now. What other data points are being used, and more importantly, how is this data guiding instruction and intervention while our kids are learning from home on computers? What is being done to ensure that the curriculum and learning gaps that have been created are being filled? We cannot accept general statements indicating that things are going well and that our kids are learning. This is not enough and we must understand the specifics. Make no mistake, the repercussions of being complacent right now will be disastrous for our children for years to come, if not longer for the students in the primary grades.

Christopher Farrell - There should be a choice full time school for those who are healthy and at home learning for those who are comprised. That’s it! This hybrid model makes no sense. I work in two Connecticut hospitals. I don’t go to work half the time. I go everyday, take precautions and I don’t get COVID and I work hands on with actual COVID patients!!!! Kids need to be in school! Stop making decisions based on fear please your only hurting children in the long term.
Matthew Christiani - To the respected members of the Seymour Board of Education: Thank you very much for your continued dedication to our children, teachers, administrators, and accompanying staff. In order to comply with the 300 or less word limit, I’ve left out content that is relevant to the questions below. A growing number of concerned, yet silent parents and extended family members are expressly having these discussions in private and public circles in backyards, local sporting events, and now social media. The voices are unavoidably looking to you for answers. As taxpayers, I believe that we are entitled to a comprehensive detail of your process of determination in all aspects especially when those decisions are contended. Lately, many feel that the Board’s request for public question and concern appear disingenuous in nature, specifically, when it is felt or known that there is little-to-nothing that will come of it. Perhaps answering some of the following questions in the name of transparency may help to quell rising tensions and concerns within our community. 1. What is the detailed process by which you have arrived at your decision for remaining in and extending the Hybrid Plan? Is there a specific metric, guide or scale of infection rates relative to our surrounding towns that you are using to remain in or justify the hybrid model and can you provide us with the specific data? 2. Have you discussed the possibility to have students with an IEP attend their respective school during the four live learning days? 3. Does the board acknowledge the imbalance between our community and the outlying communities and how this relates to the causation of severe financial, physical, emotional strain, and the impact this plan is having on some families who are forced to work and who either do or do not have help from family whom are elderly and are at increased risk? Thank you very much for your time and continued efforts.

Alex Overkamp, 18 Cherry Street - Why won’t you share the survey results with all parents of Seymour students? Over 60% of parents said they want kids to go to school full time, yet you did not share this with the parents in your letter. Also, over 60% of parents said that if the option was presented to send kids 100% live to school they would send their children. For the second time you convened a committee after already making the decision to stay hybrid. No data? No vote by the Board of Education. No leadership, no transparency.

III. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION
A. Fall Sports
Mr. DiStasi did a brief overview of the fall sports. Volleyball and Boys Soccer are undefeated. Girls Soccer 3-3, Cross Country Boys and Girls are 1-1. He said it has been challenging. He wanted to credit the custodial staff with helping to make the season a success. They do an incredible job cleaning and sanitizing after the games. He also shouted out to the tech team on all they have done to make the live stream of games a success. As we all know, there have been a limited capacity crowd at the games, which is far from ideal but we have done our best and we continue to be successful. He said they invited the Cheer and Dance teams to participate in this season just to keep them in the loop. The athletic department has a structured plan for fans with outdoor sports and parents have been receptive and supportive of those plans. A major obstacle has been the availability of buses to transport our athletes. No buses are available until 4:30 on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. The fan policy excludes fans from the visiting team. We had some trouble at Seymour High School because of this but the police were supportive of us. The Athletic Department is currently looking at the possibility of allowing senior parents to watch the games. We have done all that we can to make this successful. Ms. Federowicz said it has been challenging with the buses being the biggest issue. Many times athletes have to leave early which is the only way to get them to the games. This is definitely not a typical season but we are trying to make the best of it. Mr. DiStasi spoke about the obstacles for 7-7 Football. Currently we are only allowed to participate with other teams in our region which for us is Ansonia, Derby, Emmett O’Brien, Oxford, and Woodland. Derby is comprised of only underclassmen so they are not considered varsity. Many were not offering 7-7 football. He said he hopes to work something out later this year but there is nothing definite. Ms. Harmeling asked why we were bound by region and why we had to listen to the CIAC. She feels we have not been as creative as we could be to solve the issues. Mr. DiStasi said we had conversation regarding our region grouping and he had contacted Holy Cross who had scheduling conflicts and Watertown who were hesitant to go outside of their health bureau boundaries. Ms. Bruno wanted to thank everyone as an involved parent of an athlete. She said she is thinking about the Football players and their parents. She
knows they are really missing out but she appreciates the efforts to make it happen. Ms. Harmeling wondered why, if two teams were the same, say yellow, why the same metrics can’t apply to both teams. She doesn’t understand why it is so difficult. She feels this is a group of students and parents who are on the losing end of the stick. She wishes she would have known about the busing problem because maybe they could have put their heads together and come up with a solution to help. It’s her understanding that there is no formal policy to loan out equipment and at this point she made a motion.

**MOTION:** (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Kubik) make available sports equipment available for use by students who are participating in activities not offered by the Seymour School district.

Mr. Strumello consulted with Mr. Stanek regarding whether this motion can be made since this is a special meeting. Mr. Stanek felt it could be made based on how the agenda was worded. Ms. Harmeling rewrote the motion to:

**REVISED MOTION:** (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Kubik) that Seymour Schools allow the use of available school equipment for activities that are not currently being offered by Seymour Schools and to formalize this intended policy.

She then altered the motion and a discussion ensued.

Mr. Wilson explained why this request was previously rejected. He said after conversations with the administration, the athletic department and the Board attorney who advised it would not be prudent to do this as it would be a liability. Mr. Wilson said as far as he knew and also Mr. DiStasi and Ms. Federowicz knew this has not been done in the past. Mr. Garofolo said he was not clear on the liability issue and would like more information. Mr. Wilson explained that it is not sanctioned or approved by the insurance policy. Ms. Harmeling argued that anything could be liable. She pointed out that the equipment has been used in the past during summer camp. She asked the Board to look to the yes. She feels this is low risk. The equipment will be used in the same way it is used by our athletes. She said she would like to see our district say yes. Mr. Stanek asked if we would be loaning our equipment to an independent league that is not sanctioned by the CIAC. Ms. Harmeling said we are not loaning to the league but to our students. Mr. Stanek said it sounded like we were circumventing the CIAC. Mr. DiStasi said the CIAC does not sanction the independent football league. Ms. Bruno asked exactly what equipment would be borrowed. Mr. DiStasi said it would be pads, helmet, and other player gear. She asked if other districts are doing this. Mr. DiStasi said he had not researched this.

**ALTERED MOTION:** (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Kubik) that Seymour Schools allow the use of available school equipment for activities that are not currently being offered by Seymour Schools.

**SO VOTED**

**AFFIRMATIVE:** Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Ms. Harmeling, Mr. Hatfield, Mr. Kubik, Ms. Nesteriak

**OPPOSED:** Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello

**ABSTAINED:** Mr. Garofolo

**MOTION PASSES:** 6-2-1

Mr. Strumello cautioned the Board regarding the time as there is another meeting to attend at 8:30 pm.

B. Winter Sports (Brief Overview No Details Available)

Mr. DiStasi said there was not much to report and said a link was provided with the agenda that includes a list of dates for the winter season. The winter season starts on November 21 and ends on February 21 and includes state tournaments. Ms. Federowicz said it would be a 16 game schedule and would be bound to the region. The CIAC did not say anything about cheer or dance or indoor track. Mr. Strumello asked if wrestling would be allowed. Mr. DiStasi explained that we have one wrestler that participates with Derby as a team of one however this year they are not entertaining teams of one. Boys swimming will be held just as girls swimming was with some meets being held and some will be virtual. He said indoor track is a wildcard. There are only certain venues that can host these events. Mr. Hatfield asked about the bus issues and Ms. Holmes said they are working with All Star Transportation to try and resolve the problems. Mr. Hatfield was concerned that they were not made aware of the problem. Ms. Holmes said the problem is there is a shortage of drivers right now she said talks with them will continue. Mr.
Hatfield said he would like to see the contract which Ms. Holmes said she would share with the Board. Mr. DiStasi pointed out that the bus problem is not unique to Seymour; all districts are having difficulties. Ms. Holmes reiterated that she will continue to work with All Star.

C. Reopening Committee

Mr. Strumello cautioned the Board that it is almost 8:00 and we need to keep the meeting moving. Mr. Wilson said the Reopening committee heard from five medical professionals (Head Nurse, Director of Emergency Management, District Doctor, Director of Pediatrics at Griffin, and Director of Naugatuck Valley Health District) who gave their expert opinions. Mr. Wilson asked Ms. Bennett to speak and share her comments. She said the metrics are on the rise and there are 32 cases in the Valley. She said it is important for us to stay the course, social distance and wear masks. She said today’s metrics support this. Mr. Wilson thanked Ms. Bennett and everyone who is working so hard. He said the Administrators meet weekly and we continue to learn and grow. We are staying the course and staying in the hybrid model at this time. Dr. Boyle said we have not shied away from looking at the needs of our special education students. If there is a need we will bring the students in. He said building administrators are doing a nice job. There are many factors to decide to bring the students in four days a week. We are all in agreement that five days would be beneficial. Ms. Bennett said the CDC website now has a map that you can hover over to see what the metrics are. She is concerned that we will soon be going to orange. We are working hard and connecting with our students. Mr. Strumello asked if there were any questions but cautioned due to time constraints comments should not be made. Ms. Bruno said she heard frustration from parents regarding the structure of the committee. Mr. Wilson said at the end of the meeting I welcomed their input. If there is work to be done, it will be with the Administrative team. They heard from the five professionals. Yes, their input is welcomed and will be taken into consideration by the administrative team. We are continually working on getting better. Our teachers are giving 100%. We need to be careful and we can always improve. We will listen to input and work to make things better. If you have feedback, please email us before the next survey is formulated. Ms. Harmeling asked for insight into the process since many were under the impression that the decision would be made by the committee based on input from the professionals and the metrics. Please announce what the process will be. Everyone is desiring to know what the process will be. The question is can Mr. Wilson articulate what the process is. The process is to take into consideration the metrics and to bring us back. The numbers would have to be in the decline and stay in the decline. The process is when there is a decline and it stays there for at least two weeks and the opinion of the professionals confirm it, we will revisit the hybrid model. Ms. Nesteriak said there have been discussions on how do we improve the hybrid learning. She asked if we can hear what topics are discussed by the Administration at their weekly meetings. She feels this would very helpful. She would like to see the actions and discussions of the Administration’s weekly meetings. Mr. Wilson said they can provide some type of report on our website COVID19 page. Mr. Strumello asked if there have been discussions about backpacks and the heaviness of them. Mr. Wilson said the conversation has not come up but the teachers have done a good job explaining what the students should bring to school to try to minimize the weight of the backpack. This has not come up as a concern. At the high school having four classes helps. If it comes up we can certainly address it. Ms. Harmeling asked if we have to have metrics on the decline, can there be a more formalized document that articulates what the signal will be that we can increase the number of students in school.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

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

SO VOTED

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

MOTION PASSES: 9-0

The meeting adjourned at 8:19 pm

Submitted by:
Lee-Ann Dauerty
Board Clerk