

SEYMOUR BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

November 2, 2020

Zoom

7:30 pm

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Kristen Bruno
Christopher Champagne
James Garofolo
Kristen Harmeling
Jay Hatfield
Peter Kubik
Beth Nesteriak
Fred Stanek
Ed Strumello
Zachary Braca, Student Representative
Karyna Weaver, Student Representative
Michael Wilson, Superintendent of Schools
Vonda Tencza, Associate Superintendent
Sherry Holmes, Business Manager
Kris Boyle, Director of Special Services
Lee-Ann Dauerty, Board Clerk
Derrick Martin, Technology
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, BES
Lauren Reid, Assistant Principal, BES
David Olechna, Principal, CLS
Stacey Albertson, Assistant Principal, CLS

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

I. CALL TO ORDER

A. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Strumello called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:31 p.m.

II. EXECUTIVE SESSION

*A. Discussion and possible action upon Superintendent's contract and evaluation

Mr. Strumello said the Board members did not receive the Link from Mr. Dorsey for the executive session so this portion of the agenda will need to be postponed at this time.

III. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A. Correspondence

1. Miss Karyna Weaver, BOE Student Representative

IV. 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 **7:15 on Monday, November 2, 2020**.

Rachel Irizarry - To the board, I had written an email to the board last month in reference to the struggles that many parents are having with the hybrid model and the effects of the abundance of screen time our children are enduring daily. Although my comment was read, I was never invited into a conversation about how the school system could better support our students and their struggling parents. There was no conversation about the ability for children who were on iep and 504 plans to have added support/more time with in person instruction. Our family is still struggling and have made tremendous sacrifices to support our children. We are asking that the board consider the children who

are not handling the current system well and to work with struggling parents to make our children's education equitable. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you,

Christian White - In order to support the decisions that are being made with regard to our schools, the members of this community need to understand why these decisions are being made. This cannot happen without genuine honesty and transparency from all stakeholders involved. When Bungay school closed for two weeks, we were told that it was due to several positive cases. I have asked repeatedly what the word 'several' means, but apparently I am not authorized to have such information. My second grader has now been home for over a week and continues to fall behind. Our children have been learning on a hybrid model all school year, but for what purpose? The point to cohorting and using the hybrid model is to help maintain social distancing and enable contact tracing in the event that the virus makes its way into schools. With all of this in place, I will ask again, why was it necessary to close Bungay school? Again, I ask, what does 'several' mean? Other districts are working through this exact situation while keeping their doors open. The students/staff who need to stay home do just that, while the rest of the school population continues learning at school. Why can't Seymour do this? I continue asking, but my questions are being ignored. This pandemic is not going away, so neither will I. It isn't hard to get the support of the community when information is delivered in an honest and transparent way.

Julie Nintzel, 50 Briarwood Dr. -Teachers and school staff are homeowners; they along with the students' parents , and sometimes the kids themselves have to be outside, engaged in snow and ice removal and cleanup, during the storm, and definitely before the noon deadline, to clear snow off sidewalks. These people do not have grounds crew removing snow for them. There is a reason the schools have always been closed on snow days. It isn't merely a case of log-on from a chrome book at home. It isn't merely a day to go sledding. Inclement weather almost always causes extenuating circumstances that should cancel classes to the next day. The effect of storms is not merely whether or not buses can get through. Not to mention half the town is usually without power to run those chromebooks . Snow days / inclement weather days should stay as they are. Period. We definitely definitely should NOT cancel giving students and staff snow days. Rather classes should be canceled on snow days, the way it has always been. Sincerely,

Jodi Gerstenhaber, 8 Emma Street - Mr Wilson and the Board of Education - I am writing to express my frustration with the continued issue of poor communication amongst other things. At the reopening committee meeting there was several committee members who had suggestions and ideas and we were ignored. Mr Wilson has said "Email me. I want to hear suggestions, concerns, problems parents are experiencing." I sent an email on 10/16 with several suggestions, concerns over the lack of communication, etc and now 3 weeks later the only response I have received is a copy/pasted response that was sent to several of us reopening committee members who expressed concerns. Mr Wilson says what he thinks the community wants to hear but he does not follow through. Several of us expressed desire to take the data from the last survey and work to improve the hybrid learning for the parents, students and teachers if possible and we were told that is not the responsibility of the community and that the administration team has it covered. However since there is no minutes to those meetings, no agendas, no transparency we have to just trust that is truly the case and I current don't have much trust in the superintendent to actually bring forth our suggestions and concerns given the fact that he repeatedly tells the public how great everything is going and does NOT acknowledge the many, many people who think otherwise. Why not take assistance from those who want to help, those who might have a different perspective than that of an administrator or superintendent? When we do receive communication from the schools/superintendent office it is so poorly written or formatted that it is often hard to understand. For example we received an email today with a "reminder" that the Bungay schools kitchen will be closed Thursday and Friday and that there is no school tomorrow so parents should plan to pickup lunch Wednesday. The problem with this email is that A - this is brand new info, not a reminder. B- school is NOT closed tomorrow, it is an abbreviated remote day. A better way to say this would have been to say that the schools are closed to in person students tomorrow but that it is a abbreviated remote learning day. C- telling us this after lunch today means that there may be students who now will not have any lunch for tomorrow if the parents had planned on picking up lunch. Also the email came from blackboard which you can not reply to and there was no contact info shared in the

email should you need further clarification. This is just one example of the unclear communication we receive.

II. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- *A. Discussion and possible action upon Superintendent's contract and evaluation
**It is anticipated that much of the discussion on this matter will take place in executive session*
At 8:00 pm, the Board was notified that the link for executive session was available for their use and they could now vote to enter the executive session:
MOTION: (Mr. Hatfield/sec., Mr. Garofolo) move to enter executive session for the discussion of matters concerning the Superintendent's contract and evaluation requiring attorney/client protected legal analysis from Board counsel and to invite Attorney Fred Dorsey to attend.

SO VOTED

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

OPPOSED: Ms. Harmeling

MOTION PASSES: 8-1

Into Executive Session: 8:00 pm

Into Regular Session: 9:46 pm

V. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes
1. Regular BOE Meeting Minutes – October 5, 2020
 2. Special BOE Meeting #1 Minutes – October 19, 2020
 3. Special BOE Meeting #2 Minutes – October 19, 2020
- B. Financial Management Summary – ending October 2020
- C. Nutrition Services Financial Report – July to September 2020
- D. Staff Hiring – Certified
1. Hibson, Robert
 - Integration Technology Instructor
 - Seymour Middle School
 - Replacing Daniel Sorge
- E. Staff Hiring – Non Certified
1. Vescovi, Gayle
 - Monitor Paraprofessional
 - Seymour Middle School
 - One Year Position
 - Replacing Sandra Parks-Betts
 2. Cappellieri, Ronald
 - Permanent Building Substitute
 - Chatfield-LoPresti School
 - New Position

MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Garofolo) move to approve the consent agenda as presented

SO VOTED

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

MOTION PASSES: 8-0

VI. ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA

None

VII. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- A. Policy #5141.8 4118.237/4218.237 Face Masks/Coverings
MOTION: (Mr. Hatfield/sec., Mr. Garofolo) to adopt policy ##5141.8 4118.237/4218.237 Face Masks/Coverings that was approved by the Board of Education at the regularly scheduled meeting October 5, 2020

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

B. 2021-2022 BOE Meeting Schedule

MOTION: (Mr. Hatfield/sec., Ms. Bruno) to table Item VII B 2021-2022 BOE Meeting Schedule and Item VII C 2021-2022 School Calendar to the next regularly scheduled meeting

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

C. 2021-2022 School Calendar

Choose Option 1 or Option 2

See Motion Above

D. Increased Professional Development for Teachers

Ms. Harmeling asked if this would affect morning advisory or if it would be in the afternoon instead. Mr. Wilson was unable to log back into the meeting so Ms. Tencza told the Board that she knew they were discussing this but did not know what the outcome of the discussion was.

MOTION: (Mr. Hatfield/sec., Ms. Harmeling) to grant additional early release Wednesdays for teachers to have additional time to review student work and plan next steps in instruction, prepare learning materials and technological resources for lessons, and review content standards and curriculum. The dates of these are December 2 and 16; January 6, 13, 20, and 27; February 3, 10, 17, and 24; March 31; and April 14, and 28

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

E. Snow Days as Remote Learning Days

Mr. Garofolo said he would like to entertain some discussion regarding any emails that may come forward on this topic and to decide whether this is the best way to handle snow days. Ms. Harmeling said she was concerned about the timing since we have already had snow. She explained that this proposal is not about taking away snow days but rather to give the Superintendent the choice of doing Remote Learning or having a traditional snow day.

MOTION: (Mr. Garofolo/sec., Ms. Bruno) to table Item VII E Snow Days as Remote Learning Days to the next regularly scheduled meeting.

SO VOTED

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

OPPOSED: Ms. Harmeling

MOTION PASSES: 8-1

F. **MOTION:** (Mr. Garofolo/sec., Mr. Hatfield) to add to the agenda under section VII F

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

Mr. Garofolo asked who would be reading the public comments during the meeting and Ms. Harmeling said the BOE Secretary would be reading them. Mr. Champagne explained that he is making this motion because tonight he has received two screen shots of emails received during the correct time period for this meeting but were not read possibly due to a technical glitch with Gmail. He asked the IT department to look into this. Mr. Garofolo offered an alternative, which would be to have emails sent prior to the meeting and include them in the Board packet. Mr. Champagne said it was his hope that the emails would be received and read into the minutes of the meeting.

MOTION (Mr. Champagne/Ms. Harmeling) that any public comments sent via email be sent to the current Board of Education Secretary's email to be read by the Board Secretary during the meeting

SO VOTED

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

OPPOSED: Mr. Garofolo

MOTION PASSES: 8-1

VIII. REPORTS and DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

- A. HS Student Representative Report – Zach Braca, Karyna Weaver
- B. Committee Reports
 - 1. Finance Committee Meeting Minutes – October 5, 2020
- C. School Improvement Plans
 - 1. Bungay School – Mary Sue Feige, Lauren Reid
 - 2. Chatfield-LoPresti School – David Olechna, Stacey Albertson
 - 3. Seymour Middle School – Jodie Roden, Kathleen Freimuth
 - 4. Seymour High School – Jim Freund, Ernie DiStasi, Paul Lucke
- D. ELL – Vonda Tencza
- E. Social Emotional Learning – Kris Boyle
- F. Board of Education Report
 - 1. Chairman's Comments
 - 2. Board Member Comments
- G. Superintendent Report
 - 1. Pandemic Actions taken by Superintendent

MOTION: (Mr. Hatfield/sec., Mr. Garofolo) to table VIII Reports and Discussion/Possible Action Items A through G to the next regularly scheduled meeting

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

IX. INFORMATION

- A. Activities and Recognitions
 - 1. Seymour Middle School
 - 2. Bungay Elementary School
 - 3. Chatfield-LoPresti Elementary School
- B. Revised BOE Minutes – September 14, 2020
- C. Special Education Monthly Enrollment Update – Dr. Kris Boyle
- D. Staff Hiring – Appendix E
 - 1. FitzGerald, John
 - Advisor, Chorale
 - Seymour High School
 - Replacing Brandt Schneider
 - 2. Avena, Michael
 - After School Instructional Support
 - Seymour High School
 - New Position
 - 3. DeMarco, Eric
 - After School Instructional Support
 - Seymour High School
 - New Position
 - 4. Fearon, Nichole
 - After School Instructional Support
 - Seymour High School
 - New Position

5. Scozzafava, Erin
 - After School Instructional Support
 - Seymour High School
 - New Position

6. Guided Support Instructors - SMS

Mr. Wilson explained that these hires are for the Guided Student Support program at the middle school and wanted them added so we could start the program this week. Therefore, if the Board is ok with moving forward, we would like it added. Mr. Hatfield asked if these are new positions or are they part of the pandemic response. Mr. Wilson said they are being funded as part of the pandemic response. Mr. Wilson said he wanted to add to the agenda for informational purposes so the Board would know who took positions to help our students.

MOTION: (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Hatfield) move to add to this meeting's minutes to reflect the email that was received at 6:24 informing the Board of the additional hiring of Kelley Garofalo, Cheryl Collins, and Nick Frosolone as Guided Support Instructors at Seymour Middle School and ask that it be added to IX. Information Section Part D

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

- E. Staff Resignations – Certified
 1. Tema, June
 - Retirement
 - Kindergarten Teacher
 - Bungay School
 - Effective June 30, 2021
- F. Staff Resignation – Non Certified
 1. Tkacz, Robert
 - Retirement
 - Custodian
 - Seymour High School
 - Effective November 16, 2020
 2. Zowadney, Christina
 - Monitor Paraprofessional
 - Bungay School
 - Effective September 10, 2020
- G. Staff Resignations – Appendix E
 1. Monaco, Jennifer
 - Advisor, Debate Team
 - Seymour High School
 - Effective November 3, 2020

Mr. Hatfield and Ms. Harmeling explained that IX. INFORMATION Items A-G are provided as information only and as such do not need to be tabled to the next meeting.

X. PUBLIC COMMENT

Please note: If you would like to have a public comment read into the minutes at the end of the November 2, 2020 BOE meeting, please email your brief (300 words or less) to Mr. Martin (dmartin@seymourschools.org). It must be received **prior to the Superintendent's Report** on the meeting agenda.

Jodi Gerstenhaber, 8 Emma Street - It is completely unacceptable that 8 months and 25 meetings later that the Seymour BOE can not figure out a way to host a virtual board meeting without significant difficulty. My kids are doing fairly well with hybrid learning and their teacher is amazing with communicating with parents. She's doing a great job assuring that students can transition learning from home to school and back. However there are things that we struggle with at home that are could be improved. These are things on the school level - not the classroom level. Other families are also

struggling. Our teacher sends out the live meet times for the week on Sunday evening. This allows us to set reminders and plan. Another family I know has 3 elementary children and they do not receive their meet times until shortly before school begins each morning. The parent then has less than 30 minutes to set up a timeline that accounts for 12 to 15 meets each day. Why is it not required that these be sent out for all grades prior to the start of the school week? We need to strive for synchronous learning for all of our hybrid students. If we were synchronously learning it would no longer be require the parent to interpret an assignment, the child would get help from their teacher directly. This would be a huge step toward providing equitable education for all students since it is not dependent on the caregiver's abilities. Please listen to the parents concerns. Acknowledge us. Follow up with us. Give your teachers and staff a voice. Send them a survey to be filled out anonymously. Give them a place to give suggestions. To discuss concerns without fear of retribution. I bet you will hear some amazing ideas.

Mr. Hatfield reminded Mr. Strumello of the motions that were sent in email to be added to the agenda. (See IX Information, Section D6)

XI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: (Mr. Champagne/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

The meeting adjourned at 10:24pm

Submitted by:
Lee-Ann Dauerty
Board Clerk

NOTE: The next scheduled Regular Board of Education meeting is on Monday, December 7, 2020 at 7:30 pm.

The Public is invited to participate in a listen only mode using the link below:

YouTube Link

<https://youtu.be/Xt6EQ3l1tYs>