I. CALL TO ORDER
   A. Pledge of Allegiance
      Mr. Strumello called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:04 p.m.
      A moment of silence was observed for a former CLS student and a 2019 graduate of Seymour High School.

II. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION
   A. Discussion of Data-Driven Action Plan to present ways and ideas to get as many students back to school as soon as possible.
      Mr. Strumello described how he would like the procedure for asking questions to be. He asked that the Board members ask one question at a time and he would make sure everyone had the opportunity to ask the questions they wanted to ask. He turned it over to Ms. Tencza. She reminded the Board of the motion that was made at a previous meeting that said “direct the superintendent to develop and present, no later than December 18, a data-driven action plan to present ways and ideas to get as many students back to school as soon as possible, including, but not limited to: models that bridge full remote and the established hybrid model and that pays close attention to maximizing in-person learning for students who are struggling.” Mr. Wilson is ill so she has stepped in and worked with others on the plan and it was sent to the Board earlier so they would have the time to review and be prepared to ask questions. She said she was able to answer many questions as they were sent to her by email. She explained that this plan was developed with the help of many of our leadership people in several meetings on many days. She said we have learned and continue to learn many things about our hybrid model and are continually working to improve the education that we provide to our students. Our reopening plan has been in place since August. Many districts have brought in students for in person learning and she has been in contact with them. She has reviewed many addendums from the State. We chose the Harvard model with a threshold of 25. Recently the DOE has stressed that this is not a rule and can be flexible. A lot of pieces in our own district go into making this decision. We added extension phases to our hybrid plan. The January 19 return date was made with input with from the Board chair, vice chair, First Selectwoman, Dept. of Public Health, and Naugatuck Valley Health. Many towns who are doing remote learning are using this same target date for their return. This date was chosen because it provides a safety barrier for any contacts that may take place during the holidays. We are making every effort to return on this date in the hybrid model.
Phase one would be that we open on January 19 and would include the current hybrid students as well as to invite a select group of high needs students who have been identified by Special Education and building administration with a variety of factors being looked at. We have cross analyzed and identified students. We currently have students who are attending four days a week, we are looking to add 120-180 students per building to this group with the support of their parents into the high needs population. She acknowledged that we have work to do with community outreach in order to get support from parents. Phase two is targeted for February 1 and would involve inviting back PreK-5 families. This is all of our elementary students plus all high needs students. Wednesdays would become a half day of learning for all K-12 students and a half day of professional learning for the teachers. The next phase deadline is targeted for after February break. She acknowledged this date is a little more difficult to identify and that all dates are dependent upon any government or health impactful decisions about current coronavirus status at that time. We would want to bring back grades 6-12 from hybrid to full in-school learning. She said cohorting is more difficult at these grade levels. These phases require us to have all of the overlapping mitigating strategies. All of the pieces are required and would require careful vigilance. These layers were identified as feasible from the leadership team. This is dependent upon the Naugatuck Valley Health District providing us with information that the local cases are under control. There are many things to consider, we will have some families who will not be interested in taking us up on the invitation due to health or other reasons. We will reach out to them with conversations to explain the benefits not to persuade but to educate them as to why returning should be considered. Students who are in a hybrid model might embrace Distance Learning with their same teacher and maintain those relationships. We would encourage the connection with the group that they have already formed relationships with. This is important piece to understand. We will post a lot of information and will conduct a lot of outreach with the information. We will support those families who prefer not to send their children back to school. We need to think about many things including furniture, classroom setup, snack breaks which may need to be separated. We are looking at creative ways to approach snack since more students will be together in a classroom. She has done much research with other districts as to how they are handling this. Ms. Bruno appreciates the time and research that went into this plan. Her question was will families have the option for full time in-person or remote learning and will the current hybrid plan model (2 days a week in school) also be an option. Ms. Tencza acknowledged that there will be some families that want to stay in the current model and we will support this and they will stay in their current groups. Mr. Champagne asked about his concern that speaks to the funding source for the Distance Learning Teachers. If we see a vast increase in people going to full distance and we are capping the size of the class room, he wonders if we might have a problem and why we have an issue with this in the second half of the year. Ms. Tencza said current Distance Learning classes are close to max of the contractual language of class size. Many are almost full. Anyone who is new or wants to continue we want to keep those groups together. Ms. Holmes addressed the financial part of Mr. Champagne’s question. She said because the Corona Virus Relief grant is ending on December 30, we are only allowed to take five months of Salaries/Benefits out of the grant (this is the second grant). She is currently in negotiation with All Star transportation to negotiate a discounted rate. This would help us to fund the distance learning teachers through the end of the year. Grant 1 is ending on June 30 2021 and she has asked for a revision to allow her to apply salaries and would apply a portion of distance learning teachers will also then be taken out of this grant. She is waiting for them to finalize this. It is in the works and she will give a complete analysis on this when complete. Mr. Champagne asked if we knew this when we hired these teachers and are we at risk to have classes inflate to the limit of 25. Ms. Tencza said distance learning classes are capped at contractual language of she believed was 30 students for most grade levels. As the children go back to the regular classrooms we might have distance learning teachers who could be childfree. Should this happen, she said they will become part of the resource learning base and will be used in tutoring, breakout groups in classroom, building subs, and a variety ways that they will be used to forward learning. Mr. Garofolo asked about the criteria that was used to identify those students who are struggling and will be invited to come back in the first phase. Ms. Tencza said the plan outlines several considerations and asked Dr. Boyle to speak to this.
He said they already had a preliminary idea of which students were struggling due to the ongoing observation of students identified as receiving special education support. He said many factors go into identifying these students. Once they had an idea of the students who needed extra help, the list was sent to the administrators who had further input for these students and possibly others who should be invited back. Mr. Garofolo asked how we will convince the parents that it is best for the child to return to school. Dr. Boyle said we have been in touch throughout the pandemic with these parents. It will be our job to strike a balance with the parents between coming back and staying out. He said he feels parents are well informed and will make informed decisions. He said no students have be excluded from this list regardless of their choices for education. Ms. Tencza said these students have not yet been invited but this will start soon. Ms. Harmeling asked for some clarity regarding the proposal; are there specific metrics to change or is this a go forward plan? Ms. Tencza said this is a go forward plan pending any governmental edict or NVHD data prohibiting it. This is our full commitment to try and open on January 19. Ms. Harmeling said if everything stays status quo we will open or are we waiting for a decline. Ms. Tencza said this is a go forward plan but because we are not in person learning there is a concern that we are not getting all the cases reported in the district so there is some distress about the cases that truly exist. Right now a lot of our information come to us mostly through word of mouth such as a student talking about another student getting Corona and then Ms. Bennett getting on the phone to try and chase down the facts. Should we return to in session and find that something is happening with cases it may slow down the process. She reiterated that at this point, this is a go forward plan. Mr. Strumello asked about a meeting with NVHD on December 22; will this provide us with any information. Ms. Tencza said this might have to do with the shortening of quarantine periods, it will not impact our plan but might impact our quarantine periods. Ms. Bennett talked about the DPH calls for the past couple of months and they go over what is going on in CT. Tomorrow is a discussion on the quarantine periods. Currently there is a 14 day quarantine and there will be 10 day quarantine period with the monitoring of symptoms. There is also a proposed 5 day quarantine with a PCR test. She said there is lots of controversy and they are waiting for further clarity from the State. Mr. Hatfield declined a question at this point and he said he appreciated Ms. Tencza’s FAQ sheet. Mr. Kubik asked to confirm that we will bring back approximately 180 students per school. Ms. Tencza said this is correct but it is in addition to the current hybrid students. Ms. Nesteriak thanked Ms. Tencza and the team for their work on this plan and asked her to talk to some of the improvements that have been made. Ms. Tencza said we always want to do a recalibration when you step away for a time. We need to retrain ourselves on our contact tracking procedures and the importance of our seating plans. It’s important that our bus drivers have seating charts and unloading procedures which is new. It doesn’t just apply to students, staff must understand also because the virus does spread and it much more serious for adults so we need to make sure the same rules apply for the teachers. Maybe rotating snack breaks, masks possibly in P/E, maintaining all of the same procedures that we have had. There is no one solution that is the answer. Mr. Stanek did not have a question but wanted to say thank you to Ms. Tencza and the staff. The plan is well thought out and he understands and realizes that this is the greatest challenge our staff has faced in their educational years. Mr. Strumello passed on a question. Ms. Bruno asked that the families be notified as to whether the plan goes forward or not. She would like us to be open with this. Ms. Tencza said the date is not cut in stone, will share this information after the holidays. We will be sending a communication on the 28th and “share the meat” of the plan. We will do a quick survey of the identified high needs families to see where we are with students returning. There is lots of leg work to be done. All of the administrators are taking the holiday week off but work will begin on January 4. Mr. Champagne asked in regard to the lunch breaks and mask breaks. One thing that took him aback is silent lunch breaks and silent snack breaks. He doesn’t feel kids can take their masks off and remain silent. Ms. Tencza said she believes that this means a story is being read and kids would be listening. In the upper level, it may be a Ted Talk being shown. She feels it means they are talking less. She will check into this. He hopes we will clarify this to parents. Ms. Garofolo had no further questions, Mr. Harmeling had no further questions. Mr. Hatfield said he is ok. Mr. Kubik said no questions. Ms. Nesteriak asked for clarification on communications since she didn’t see where phase 1 was returning back to hybrid. She just wants to make sure parents are clear. That, along with if students want to stay full remote, they will stay with their current teachers
should be reiterated. Ms. Tencza said this is an alteration from the beginning of the year. We have lots of communications to get out there. There will be saturation. Ms. Nesteriak said the simpler the better, small nuggets of information should be sent. Ms. Tencza confirmed that what the Board received from her is way more than what we need. Mr. Stanek had no questions. Mr. Strumello said he felt simpler is always better. Mr. Strumello asked Ms. Holmes about nurse health aides. Where will we find the funding to continue with those? Ms. Holmes said they were hired for a half year and are covered by the Coronavirus grant so their salaries are covered. They know they are only here for half a year. Mr. Strumello asked if they will be extended and will be if possible financially. Mr. Strumello said it says this in the report we need to firm this up. Ms. Tencza said she will work with Ms. Holmes on this. Currently they are working on budget needs, it is a priority for her to talk about that with her. We will talk about health aides soon. Ms. Bruno asked for some clarity on the communications on reporting positive cases. She is not clear on what the flow of information is and this may be something we should address. Do the cases get reported by the health district or do the families report to the health district? Ms. Bennett found out about school cases through our nurses efforts in schools. Now without our students being in schools, we only find out through word of mouth. Ms. Bennett confers with NVHD. They still don’t get their results in 7-10 days which is not helpful. Ms. Bennett also reports to the State. She reaches out to family and asks if they need anything. She doesn’t feel the numbers are not accurate since we have been out of school. It should be that nurses get the information and report to Department of Health. Ms. Bruno asked if contact tracing being done through the Department of Health or Ms. Bennett. Ms. Bennett does all the contract tracing in the district. Mr. Champagne said he is good for now. Mr. Garofolo had no questions. Ms. Harmeling said she stresses personally that money is found to keep the health aides at school. If we are bringing back students we cannot say we are going to have less medical staff. We have to find the money. She is worried at this late date. We need to find something else to give up in order to keep the health aides. Mr. Hatfield suggested we update FAQ sheet and put on website. The more information we get out there the better. Since we will go back to regular bus routes will we be trying to get bus monitors again? Mr. Strumello said he remembered the problem is we could not find any to hire. We can certainly revisit this but Ms. Holmes said there is definitely a shortage. All Star is having difficulty keeping people as they don’t want to work if kids are coming back. Mr. Hatfield do we have a contingency plan for the routes? Ms. Holmes has the original plans in place; we will have to work with it and see what happens. We will try again to find bus monitors. Her colleagues are facing the same problem. Original bus routes to start then as things progress we would try to redo the routes so we don’t have buses that are over capacity. Mr. Hatfield asked again about the contingency plan and Ms. Holmes said she will be working with All Star on a plan. Currently they are ready to come back on the 19th. Mr. Kubik is ok. Ms. Nesteriak ok. Mr. Stanek stressed that the health and safety of our staff is paramount. Mr. Strumello asked if there are any additional questions. There were not. Ms. Tencza said she will submit a final version of the plan and the FAQs that she has and will update when she gets the minutes of this meeting, likely after the holidays. She also appreciates the support of the Board and said it would have been impossible without the work of the leadership team.

**MOTION:** (Ms. Harmeling) to accept the extension of the reopening plan as discussed at this meeting

There was discussion by Mr. Stanek, Mr. Strumello and Mr. Dugas regarding the need for a motion. It was decided that while not necessary, the motion can be done if so desired and would not hurt.

**MOTION:** (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Ms. Bruno) to accept the extension phase of the Seymour Public Schools reopening plan as discussed at the December 21, 2020 meeting

**SO VOTED**

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

**OPPOSED:** Mr. Champagne, Mr. Hatfield

**ABSTAIN/RECURSE:** Mr. Garofolo

**MOTION PASSES/FAILS:** 6-2-1
B. Discussion on Request from Associate Superintendent
   Mr. Strumello asked for a motion to postpone this agenda item.
   Ms. Bruno asked why this was being postponed and Mr. Strumello said he had received a request to have this discussed in executive session.
   **MOTION:** (Mr. Champagne/sec., Mr. Hatfield) to postpone the discussion on request from Associate Superintendent to the January 11, 2021 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.* Discussion and Possible Action on Opinion Letter from Berchem and Moses, PC
   **MOTION:** (Mr. Hatfield/sec., Mr. Champagne) Move to enter executive session for discussion of matters requiring attorney/client protected legal analysis from Board Counsel and to invite Attorney Floyd Dugas to attend.
   **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
   *It is anticipated that much of the discussion on this matter will take place in executive session.*
   Into Executive Session: 8:21 pm
   Into Regular Session: 9:43 m

III. **ADJOURNMENT**
   **MOTION:** (Ms. Harmeling/sec., Mr. Kubik) 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 Public is invited to participate in a listen only mode using the link below:
YouTube Link
https://youtu.be/Z3py-HNuVGc

Submitted by:
Lee-Ann Dauert
Board Clerk