I. CALL TO ORDER
   A. Pledge of Allegiance
      Mr. Champagne called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:03 p.m.

II. 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 Chairman is able to answer, those questions may be addressed under the Chairman'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 public wanting to comment will need to state their name and address for the record prior to addressing the Board.
    Jamie Bailey, 15 Oriole Lane – Asked that more money be moved into Special Education and spoke about her difficulty getting the services she feels her child needs.
    Marlo Verrastro-Ruggiero – Spoke about the difficult time she is having with Middle School staff. She said we should consider math and reading consultants like those that we have had in the past so teachers can have that resource.

III. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION
    A. Seymour Education Budget 2022-2023
       Mr. Champagne said he would write down any questions that the Board might have so that it can be shared with all. Dr. Compton talked about the history of this budget. She talked about how we have arrived at what we have in the budget today. She said we have to continue to be one of the premier school districts in the state of Connecticut. She said look at this history of the Seymour Public School System. A legacy of excellence since the start of Seymour High School in 1884. The Seymour School District has achieved academic accomplishments on all levels, starting with elementary, on to middle school, and secondary as well. She said to think about all of the State Championships, in which Seymour has a place in history of being an athletic and academic powerhouse, with several state athletic championships.
One of the most important priorities for a town is the quality of a school system. Remember, that our children are our number one priority, and truly, they deserve a world-class education. In addition, Dr. Compton wants you to know that special education is also dear to her heart, and she values each and every child. When you look at a school district, the most precious assets are our students, staff and administration. Dr. Compton always says that from the boardroom to the classroom, the students are always the Board of Education’s top priority and to the town as well. We know that our First Selectwoman, Annmarie Drugonis always values the Seymour Public Schools System as one of her top priorities. In a summative statement, we must have the appropriate budget to meet the needs of our students to continue to provide the best education that we can provide to each and every one of them. Dr. Compton shared publicly that we have a deficit situation, in which there were miscalculations of fringe benefits/Anthem Insurance and with MERF as well from last year’s budget, in an estimated amount of $800,000. This was done by a former business manager who did the last year’s budget for this current year of 2021-2022. Please, understand that this was uncovered by our new business manager, in doing an internal audit of all accounts and budgets. Therefore, we must address this cost and this loss, as well as bringing forth the new budget. As someone explained, there are truly two buckets regarding these financial issues, and the first one has to be addressed, because it carries over into the second bucket, which is the new recommended budget. Therefore, just looking at employee benefits, this represents 2.2% of the 3.6% increase for FY23. The remaining increase is the result of a projected increase of 12% in health insurance premiums for FY23. The FY23 budget increase alone would have been 4.5%. This is all addressed on the first page of the budget analysis that is called the Budget Changes, Historical Data and Management Notes. She said we need to look at, first and foremost, that salaries increase and you must have the supporting tax increase to accommodate these increases. When you look at the history of Seymour, only back in 2004-2005 was there a 5.2% increase. As you know, contract obligations are there, and we must pay our staff, the appropriate salaries to be recruit and be competitive as well as to keep our ongoing staff as well. Business Manager Mr. Salvatore Bucci went into detail about the situation with this budget noting there is a $400,000 increase in benefits just to be current with our premium payments. Our budget includes many experienced teachers who are on the top step. He said we have little discretionary spending. He spoke of the upcoming transportation contract that needs to be negotiated. He included as a comparison the budgets 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22 that show a steady increase. Teachers get more money each year due to the negotiated contracts. The cost of benefits is projected to increase 12%. Special Education is statutory but is being held. We will do what we can through the grants that we have. He spoke of the increase in electricity of 3% based on the presentation of Johnson Controls. The budget for maintenance and repairs included some unfortunate situations such as the bad boiler. Administrators have a wish list but we continue to hold the line on non-emergency expenditures. He said we are trying not to carry this forward. Dr. Compton said our administrators have a dream list and she has had a heart-to-heart conversation with them. They have joined hands to get through this. Their wish list is a good one and it is unfortunate we cannot fulfill these wishes. One thing we have to go through with is the hiring of a manufacturing teacher. Mr. Tuttle is trying to secure a grant to help with this. Another area that has to be considered is the Capstone Coordinator. She said the principals are willing to stay status quo. We have purchased $200,000 in computers using ESSER funds. Some of the people we hired for one-year positions will have to
leave. She said the HVAC project that was discussed would probably not happen. Mr. Garofolo shared his thoughts on the four hurdles to overcome. 1. The Board must approve this budget. 2. The Board of Finance will get it and whittle away at it. 3. The Board of Selectman must look at the budget and approve it. 4. Finally, the voters must vote to approve which we have found is the most difficult step. He said given our current circumstance, the process would be difficult. Dr. Compton agreed that we are in for tough times. There was a discussion on what would be done if we cannot get the 6.9% increase and a discussion on making sure the grants are being properly utilized. Mr. Bucci also talked about an increase in MERF and the fact that we have no control over what the State does. It is critical to look at the total compensation cost when hiring staff. Dr. Compton talked about how we can remedy the situation. We must look at the federal funds and grants. We need to consider attrition. We have three teachers and one secretary retiring. We need to look at tutors and long-term substitutes. We need to look at positions that will not hurt children. She said we should be getting some money back from the transportation company due to those runs that did not happen this year. We will have to re-route buses. Ms. Tencza said we may want to look at the start times for the middle school and high school so we can condense some bus runs. There was talk about presenting proposal 1, 2 or 3 and the consensus what we need to present proposal 1 because that is the number that we need to continue to move forward. Mr. Bucci said he would be happy to answer any questions that was not done in the past. We are trying to support the Town’s interests and align them with our needs. We need to educate the Board of Education and the Town of Seymour. We can all agree that parents want what is best for their children. Our goal is to continue to provide a quality education for all the children of Seymour. There was a discussion on the solar payments to the town and how to approach the town on this difficult topic. Ms. Harmeling said she felt now is the time to do it. Mr. Bucci said it is complicated because those individuals who originally worked on the agreement are no longer in our employ. It was agreed some of us should sit down with the town to have a conversation on this topic. Mr. Strumello wondered who should sit down with the Board of Finance. He felt it should be leadership on both sides. He felt the number of participants should be kept to a minimum. Mr. Bucci indicated the need to define the problem, explain that we are in this together and figure out how to move forward. Ms. Bruno talked about our declining enrollment. Ms. Nesteriak said we must keep the lights on. There is a greater need for services. We need to define our success and work together to improve. We also have infrastructure issues. We need to keep the ship afloat and there is a whole lot of work to do. She said she believes in Dr. Compton’s goals and we need Dr. Compton to work on student achievement instead of working on keeping the lights on. Ms. Nesteriak thanked the entire team. Ms. Harmeling suggested we put out the Administrators’ wish list and where they would like to be in five years. She said it would be wonderful to share what our kids really need. Mr. Garofolo said we do not have regular newspapers to share what is going on in the schools, which creates a greater challenge to convince our voters. He said we could not move forward without community support. Mr. Champagne said we would have to use digital media. Mr. Champagne said this budget presentation had a lot of meat to it and was something that he has not seen in the past. Ms. Bruno reminded the Board that our students would need a lot of social emotional support as we move forward. After a short discussion, it was decided to meet on Monday, January 31 to do a motion to move the budget forward. This was so our two missing Board members would have an opportunity to participate.
IV. REPORTS
A. Chairman’s Report
   None
B. Superintendent’s Report
   None

V. 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 Chairman is able to answer, those questions may be addressed under the Chairman’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 public wanting to comment will need to state their name and address for the record prior to addressing the Board.

Jamie Bailey – encourage the Superintendent to look into the Special Education department.
Marlo Verrastro-Ruggiero – encouraged the Board to look into instruction and how instructional is implemented. Possibly firm up things that do not cost that may encourage parental support of a quality education.

VI. ADJOURNMENT
MOTION: (Mr. Strumello/sec., Ms. Nesteriak to adjourn

SO VOTED

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

MOTION PASSES: 7-0

The meeting adjourned at 7:47 pm

Submitted by:
Lee-Ann Dauerty
Board Clerk

YouTube Link:
https://youtu.be/d4X4iZwQ-BU