BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Kristen Bruno
Christopher Champagne
James Garofolo
Jay Hatfield 7:40 pm
Shannon Levey
Ed Strumello
Tyler Lang, Student Representative
Karyna Weaver, Student Representative

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:
Stephan Behuniak
Christine Bruno
Kristen Harmeling
Beth Nesteriak

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:
Dr. Susan Compton, Superintendent of Schools
Vonda Tencza, Associate Superintendent
Salvatore A. Bucci, Business Manager
Lee-Ann Dauerty, Board Clerk
Kris Boyle, Director of Special Services
Derrick Martin, Technology
Cindy Brooks, Director of Nutrition
Jim Freund, 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
Stacey Albertson, Assistant Principal, CLS
Elizabeth White
Diane Cortello
Marlo Ruggiero
Lori and Joe Moore

I. CALL TO ORDER
A. Pledge of Allegiance
Mr. Champagne called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:30 p.m.
II. RECOGNITIONS
A. Virtual Debate Team Tournament – November 13, 2021
Senior Mikayla Zedek did not have a partner from Seymour that was able to attend then event, so she went “maverick”. This means she was randomly paired with another “solo” debater from another school. Mikayla and her teammate earned a third-place trophy in the Varsity Alpha Division. Additionally, Mikayla earned a First Place trophy as the best overall individual speaker in the varsity Alpha Division. By winning a third place team award and first place speaker award, Mikayla double qualified for the CDA State Tournament in the spring. Congratulations Mikayla on this accomplishment. Dr. Compton and Mr. Champagne presented a certificate of recognition to Mikayla Zedek.

B. Middle School Debate
Thank you to the Middle School Debate team, Jacob Castelo, Arion Johnson, Anuhya Shah, Alyssa Vergati, Ariel Zedek, and Mr. Harvey Catlin. This group did an amazing debate at the December 6, 2022 Board of Education meeting.

C. Peace Poster Contest
The Lions Club is sponsored their yearly Peace Poster Contest with the theme “WE ARE ALL CONNECTED”. Congratulations to our students: Grand Prize: Peyton Tilki, 1st Place: Elena Farmer, 2nd Place: Kiera Gliford, 3rd Place: Isabella Quintero. At the Lions Club meeting on February 9, Peyton Tilki’s poster was chosen as the grand prize winner. Her poster was number one from all the entries in 55 school across the state.

III. STUDENT REPORTS
A. HS Student Representative Report- Karyna Weaver, Tyler Lang
Karyna Weaver and Tyler Lang presented to the Board. They reported that the student council is constructing blankets as part of a statewide student council project. These blankets will be donated to a local hospital to benefit the children being treated. Student Council is selling carnations during lunch waves for Valentine’s Day. The Drama club performance this year is OZ. It will be performed this Friday at 7pm and this Saturday at 7pm. On the sports front, it was reported that the Boys’ Basketball team’s current record is 3-10, the next game Friday vs. Ansonia (Home). The Girls’ Basketball team’s current record 13-3, next game Friday at Ansonia. Boys’ Swimming has a meet next meet Friday at Torrington, their home meet next Wednesday vs. Nonnewaug. Boys and girls Indoor Track placed 5th in the NVL championship, Jason Oulette won pole vault, Katie Bruno won several events and is competing in New Balance Nationals in March. The boys’ 4x400 meter relay placed 3rd in the meet. Dance Team is in their competition season, have a competition this Saturday in Fairfield. They placed first at a previous competition. Katie Tomasheshki and Ella Opotzner continue to compete with Oxford in Gymnastics. AJ Deicicchi and Britain Calvert continue to compete with Stratford in Wrestling. Cheer Team will be performing at Friday night’s home basketball game.

IV. 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.
Mr. Champagne said he assumed most people were there to speak on masks as that blew up in the past few days. He reminded everyone that because we rescheduled the regular meeting to tonight, it changes to a special meeting, thus unable to have items added to the agenda. Mr. Champagne gave a brief overview of the information the Board Attorney sent us. The mask mandate was in effect at a minimum until February 15, then most likely would go to February 28 but any change to the executive orders would require legislative action, which is assumed will happen. Legally, the Board did not have to take any action on March 1 and that we could simply direct the Superintendent to send a letter out to families and staff. Mr. Champagne said he was in favor of the optional masks, but then noted the CDC order about masks on public transportation, which included school buses. Mr. Champagne asked if anyone wanted to make a comment during Public Comment.

Jamie Bailey, 15 Oriole Lane – spoke in support of removing the mask mandate in schools saying it is damaging our kids. She said allow our kids to just be kids. Scott Jarzombek, 13 Maple Street, spoke in support of continuing the masking in schools. Wants his sons to be comfortable and wants their teachers to be comfortable. He said his kids are new to the schools; they have made friends and have settled very quickly all while wearing masks. He is looking for leadership with this issue. Liz Vicidomino, 7 Fawn Hallow Road – advocating for the removal of the mask mandate. She feels we need to learn to live with this disease. Preventatives and medications are available that were not available during the early times of this pandemic. Social emotional catchup needs to happen; there is lots of damage to undo. She has ELL students and hearing-impaired students in her class that she cannot effectively communicate with because of the masks. The little ones are not socializing like they should be. We have kids hiding behind their masks not because they are afraid of Covid but just because they are uncomfortable not wearing them. Now is the time for normalcy back in schools. Our kids are safe without masks. Those who want to wear masks should be able to do so. Please lift the mask mandate so our kids can have a normal school experience again.

V. REPORTS
Dr. Compton shared the video featuring Chatfield-LoPresti School. She reminded everyone that the videos for all schools could be viewed on our website.

A. School Improvement Plan Mid-Year Update
All School Improvement midyear updates are available on our website:
School Improvement Plans - Seymour Public School District (seymourschools.org)

1. Seymour High School
   Mr. Jim Freund, principal did a brief overview of the Seymour High School Improvement plan midyear update. Dr. Compton noted that the math gap has gotten wider but that is the case across the country. Despite this, Mr. Freund said students were progressing quite nicely in math. He said he hopes for improvement in World Language spoken content and hopes for improvement in Business. He reported the graduation rate is at 91.5% and that our graduation rates have been 90% or above consistently.

2. Seymour Middle School
   Mrs. Roden and Ms. Reynolds presented the Seymour Middle School midyear update. Mrs. Roden noted there was an error to note in the behavioral data collected during September and October. The correct data states there was an average of 13% of students who received one or more behavioral referrals (during September and October). Based on this correction and reviewing our monthly data including November and December, we look to decrease the percentage of students receiving referrals to 11%. Strategies have revolved around PBIS Committee meetings to support students’ positive choices, as well as assemblies, and random incentives for students.
This is also the case for supporting our staff. A better utilization of Suite 360 is under discussion regarding student input for future lessons. Increased parent communication for individual teams has been essential to decrease certain behaviors noted in school. Positive reinforcements for attendance are shared quarterly. A group of student leaders has emerged from one grade level to improve overall behavior among both teams. Upstander Phone Calls remain a positive contact for our students and parents.

1. The percentage of students meeting their RIT for reading in 6th grade is currently at 54%. Strategies will include analysis of MAP data for students who did not meet RIT, as well as discuss an alternate resource to support instruction.

2. The percentage of students meeting their RIT for reading in 7th grade is currently at 59%. Strategies will include significant changes in rosters for Response classes based on student needs and content teachers. Conversations among teachers to model and discuss what strategies were successful from the past semester with students.

3. The percentage of students meeting their RIT for reading in 8th grade is currently at 60%. Strategies focus on maintaining the growth students have already shown such as implementing pop up assessments on strands to gauge continued student understanding. Also the continuation of silent reading to increase overall stamina.

4. The percentage of students meeting RIT for math in 6th grade is currently 49%. Strategies will include the hands on and technological resources, as well as GLDT discussions. The team is also analyzing the data for the students whose current RIT gap is smaller due to higher achieving percentiles.

5. The percentage of students meeting RIT for math in 7th grade is currently 51%. Strategies to be implemented for the upcoming semester will focus on consistency in implementation of instruction as well as analysis of behavioral strategies. Continuous exposure to content vocabulary.

6. The percentage of students meeting RIT for math in 8th grade is currently 66%. Strategies will focus on goal setting as students showed significant interest in individual growth.

7. The percentage of students meeting RIT for science in 6th grade is currently 59%. Strategies will include analysis of the cohort of students who are approaching RIT and share higher level questions/assignments to provide exposure to a variety of topics.

8. The percentage of students meeting RIT for science in 7th grade is currently 48.5%. Strategies will focus on exposure through different resources for higher-level learners.

9. The percentage of students meeting RIT for math in 8th grade is currently 55%. Strategies will include addressing gaps from previous years to supplement current grade level standards. Correlation of work in intervention to daily instruction.

3. Chatfield-LoPresti Elementary School

Mr. Olechna and Ms. Albertson presented their midyear update for Chatfield-LoPresti School. Ms. Albertson spoke about social emotional learning saying they are focusing on working with students and their families regarding their sense of belonging. She reviewed the Caring School curriculum that has one teacher for each grade.
This is going really well and they reported the kids really look forward to it. Each grade level has school wide goals, with the goal to be for all to come together. Staff will also come together. They are trying to regulate emotions. Students are emotionally intelligent; the school is helping them take the next steps. They will bring back Town Halls. There were 420 responses to the parent survey. The goal for academics is Individual Student Growth. The success story is students made 90% of growth. Many kids missed the goal by only 1 or 2 points. Mr. Olechna reviewed the assessments in reading and math. He noted the math scores are very encouraging. He spoke about the Envision Program saying the lessons often run long due to the dialogue that occurs. He said SRBI would be adding another tutor. He reported seeing significant growth. He noted several students were overheard saying they thought they did well and there is more communication between the students. Mr. Olechna feels very positive about the data. He is excited. Chatfield-LoPresti will push for greater growth. In closing, he said it is going well and students are doing really well.

4. Bungay Elementary School

Mrs. Feige and Mrs. Reid presented the Bungay School midyear update to the Board. They said their first goal is to demonstrate a caring and connected school community to ensure the emotional well-being of all students and staff through the implementation of social emotional learning strategies. Our student indicator is that 80% of our students in kindergarten through grade five will know at least two adults in the building with whom they feel connected to and trust. Using the spring 2021 Student Connection survey data they identified students who had limited connections within our school. The school-based team created an action plan to intervene for each student to create positive connections and relationships. These students are being included in special connection activities, lunch groups, and check-ins with our school counselor and school psychologist. This information has been shared with classroom teachers, the unified arts team and support staff to encourage positive connections with each individual child. Bungay School is proud of their parent communication at Bungay School. They connect with parents through our Friday Flash newsletter, the use of the Remind app, and positive phone calls home. Through these communications, information is shared about the instructional program. They provide families with strategies and information regarding students’ academic progress and social-emotional development. They also love to share the wonderful work of the students and staff, as was showcased in our Bungay School is a Great Place to Bee video. The second goal at Bungay School is to improve our reading and mathematics performance as measured by the NWEA MAP assessment. This goal is aligned with Seymour’s core value that all students can be successful learners. Mrs. Feige and Ms. Reynolds believe that Bungay is on target for reaching the end of the year goals. Some of the key activities and strategies that have been implemented to improve the overall math and reading performance were shared. Each grade level and team in our building has created grade level action plans. The grade level action plans were created to target specific grade level and student needs. Teachers reviewed current MAP reports and formative student assessment data, as well as historical data, to determine trends in student performance and target specific areas of need or deficit skills. Teachers use this data to drive instruction and differentiate their lessons. In collaboration with CLS, the SRBI teams updated the tier one entrance form and criteria for intervention.
Bungay also restructured our PMT meetings for early identification and entrance into intervention. BES SRBI teams collaborate with teachers and tutors to create goals, intervention plans, measure individual student progress and communicate with families. Bungay teachers, SRBI team, and the data team are closely looking at the data and interventions for students who may have scored 40% or lower in reading and/or mathematics. Based on the NWEA MAP, they have also identified students who are in the 41%-55% percentile bands and identified specific areas needed for growth and set goals with the teachers for additional Tier One interventions. This year BES has also implemented the use of the SBAC interim assessments in grades three through five. These assessments can be used throughout the year to provide educators and students the ability to check student performance and understanding of student learning. Teachers can determine the next instructional steps for helping students based on their performance on the assessment. The interim assessments are aligned to the same targets and claims as the Smarter Balanced summative assessments. One area where they focus their work is small group instruction and differentiation. There is collaboration with the teachers regularly. Ms. Feige and Ms. Reid are excited to see continued success as they work toward improving our social emotional learning, academic growth, and our family and community engagement.

B. Committee Meeting Update
   1. Finance Committee – February 10, 2022
      The Finance Committee meeting was cancelled due to no quorum. Mr. Bucci gave a brief overview on where we are with the budget. Many discussions have occurred. We are looking closely at expenditures. He said we have identified $200,000, which is a start. We are looking closely at grants. There is a lot more work to do.

C. Committee Meeting Minutes
   1. Finance Committee Minutes - January 10, 2022
   2. Policy Committee Minutes – January 10, 2022
   3. Ad Hoc RFP Minutes Committee – January 19, 2022
      The bids will be opened on Monday, February 14, 2022. Interviews will be arranged and the committee hopes to make a recommendation to the Board at the March 7 BOE meeting.
   4. Finance Committee Minutes - January 19, 2022

D. Special Education Department
   1. Enrollment Report – Dr. Kris Boyle
      Dr. Boyle said the trend is continuing to increase in numbers. He said he is proud of his staff who continue to provide the needed services. Ms. Bruno asked if there are kids moving out of district and Dr. Boyle confirmed they are but it is at a lower rate. For every three students in, one leaves.

   2. Assistant Director of Pupil Services Monthly Update – Dr. Meghan Pogonelski

VI. CONSENT AGENDA
A. Approval of Minutes
   1. Regular BOE Meeting Minutes – January 10, 2022
   2. Special BOE Meeting Minutes – January 24, 2022

C. Financial Management Reports – February 7, 2021
D. Staff Hiring – Non-Certified
1. Gilormino, Genienne
   • Instructional Paraprofessional
   • Bungay Elementary School
   • Replacing Lisa Blum

E. Staff Hiring – Certified
1. Queen, Taylor
   • Building Substitute (through end of 2021-2022 school year only)
   • Bungay Elementary School
   • Replacing Margaret Bruce

F. Staff Hiring – Appendix E
1. Sylvester, David
   • Assistant Coach, Softball
   • Seymour High School
   • Replacing Nicole Fearon

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

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Levey, Mr. Strumello

MOTION PASSES: 6-0

VII. ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA

VIII. DISCUSSION and POSSIBLE ACTION

A. Face Masks
   Mr. Champagne spoke about where we are with Face Mask mandates in the public comment section of this agenda.

B. 2022-2023 Seymour Public Schools Budget
   Dr. Compton said the budget is continually being looked at and revised. We continue to keep the Board updated. We are working to reduce the budget and are looking for input from the Board. She said we have no choice but to make reductions in personnel costs. Staff was added and now we must look at how we can continue programs with less staff. We are working with the town. She noted that the reconciliation problems with the town has been resolved. She also noted that other towns are asking for larger percentages. She confirmed that there is not an updated budget at this time.

C. Donation
   1. Seymour Culture and Arts Commission
      The Seymour Culture and Arts Commission made a monetary donation in the amount of $75.00 in appreciation of the High School Chorus participation in the downtown Christmas event.
      
      MOTION: (Mr. Hatfield/sec., Mr. Strumello) to accept the recommendation of the Superintendent to approve the donation from the Seymour Culture and Arts Commission (cash value $75) and direct that the Superintendent determine the placement of this donation

      SO VOTED

      AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Mr. Hatfield, Ms. Levey, Mr. Strumello
      
      MOTION PASSES: 6-0
D. Nutrition Services Pay Rate Increase
Ms. Brooks said this was an unusual request and she has never done this midyear. She said her group has faced challenges such as staff shortages, product shortages and supply chain issues. Her staff has done a wonderful job. All children receive free meals. She noted we have fed 420 students, which is remarkable. She said her employees are at a low rate of pay and she would like the Board to approve a slight adjustment in pay. She would like to move the rate of pay to $15 for those who work under 15 hours and move those who work more than 15 hours to $17 an hour. Managers are paid salary and she would like to increase them by $500. She would like to increase her administrative assistant’s pay as she has stepped into the kitchen many times and has done above and beyond. She reminded the Board that her budget does not affect the Board of Education budget. She said she is very proud of her staff and the work that they do. Mr. Hatfield applauded Mrs. Brooks’ effort. During these difficult times, she is willing to recognize the hard work of her staff. He said he wholeheartedly supports this. Ms. Bruno asked if this would cause an increase in costs to the students. Ms. Brooks said this is being discussed. She has written a letter to the USDA asking that the waiver be continued through the 22-23 school year. Costs will be high, parents need to be sure and complete and return their Free and Reduced Lunch forms saying they can be beneficial not only to parents but to the district. She said supplies continue to be a struggle.

MOTION: (Mr. Hatfield/sec., Ms. Bruno) to approve the recommendation of the Director of Nutrition Services to increase the wages of the Nutrition Services team as presented

SO VOTED

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

MOTION PASSES: 5-0

E. Appendix E Positions Addition
1. Capstone Coordinator
   Mr. Freund proposed using the appendix e funds originally targeted for pep band and repurpose them to create the position of Capstone Coordinator. It is impossible for counselors to do the Capstone Coordinator duties as was discussed in the past. Mr. Strumello asked for a job description and Mr. Freund said he would follow up at the March 7 meeting.

MOTION: (Mr. Strumello/sec, Mr. Garofolo) to approve the addition of an appendix e position for Capstone Coordinator

SO VOTED

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

MOTION PASSES: 5-0

IX. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS/SUPERINTENDENT REPORTS
A. Board of Education Comments
1. Chairman’s Comments
   Mr. Champagne reviewed that the Board talked about the budget and the RFP process and reminded the Board that the retreat will be next Tuesday at Seymour Middle School. He asked Board members to be flexible with their time if a decision will need to be made regarding masks in schools that will mean a special BOE Meeting.

2. Board Member Comments
   Mr. Strumello asked that Doodle surveys be used again when scheduling meetings.
B. Superintendent Report
1. On March 7, we will bring a job description for the Capstone Coordinator and there will be some discussion regarding special education students and the Capstone Program.
2. She reminded the Board that the BOE retreat is on February 15. Dinner will be served at 5:30 with the retreat starting at 6:00. She noted the dinner is being donated with no cost to the Board of Education. An agenda will be sent.
3. Dr. Compton said she was honored to attend the Lions Club meeting and was very proud to see our student win the top honor in the Peace Poster contest.
4. She met with the Seymour Public Schools Sports Hall of Fame committee members and said it was so interesting to meet the members involved with this project. Their banquet will be held on April 30 with dinner at 5:00 pm. Invitations will be sent.
5. The next District Communication committee meeting will be held on February 24.
6. Dr. Compton talked about resurrecting our mentoring programs and asked Mr. Strumello for his assistance with this.
7. Dr. Compton talked about her desire to do more student recognitions at Board meetings. She wants to recognize honor roll students with pins that she will buy and donate to the district. Other ways to honor students are being discussed.

Dr. Compton thanked the Board of Education for their support.

X. INFORMATION
A. School Activities and Recognitions
   1. Seymour High School
   2. Seymour Middle School
   3. Bungay School
   4. Chatfield-LoPresti School
B. Contract Review
   1. CompuClaim
   2. PowerSchool
B. Resignations
   1. Non Certified Staff
      a. Goduto, Jenny
         • Floating Nurse
         • Chatfield-LoPresti
         • Effective February 28, 2022
      b. Rubio, Lisa
         • School Secretary
         • Seymour High School
         • Effective August 5, 2022
      c. Stec, Laura
         • School Secretary Floater
         • Seymour Middle School/Special Education
         • Effective September 2, 2022
XI. PUBLIC COMMENT
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None

XII. ADJOURNMENT
MOTION: (Mr. Strumello/sec., Ms. Bruno) to adjourn

SO VOTED
AFFIRMATIVE: Ms. Bruno, Mr. Champagne, Mr. Garofolo, Ms. Levey, Mr. Strumello
MOTION PASSES: 5-0
The meeting adjourned at 9:53 pm

NOTE: The next scheduled Regular Board of Education meeting is on Monday, March 7, 2022 at 7:30 pm at Seymour Middle School.

YouTube Link
https://youtu.be/gP1NaoznKMg