

Town of Seymour
Board of Finance

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Minutes

Public Hearing on 2011/12 Budget Proposal
Wednesday April 6, 2011 at 7pm
Auditorium, Seymour Middle School

Members Present: Robert Koskelowski, Peter Jeziorny, Bill Sawick, Kristen Harmeling and Michelle Walsh

Others Present: Paul Roy, Doug Thomas, Marianne Mascolo, Richard Belden, Frank Loda, Elizabeth White, Maria Keeler, Mark Krauchick, Cindy Dion, Richard Rossik, Michele Pavlik, Jennifer Magri, Walter Birdsell, Mary Demming, Al Yagovane, Bruce Baker, Jeanne Loda, Kristen Bruno, Mort Conlan, Edward Strumello and Ilene Faustich

Item #1 – Call Meeting to order

The Chairman, Robert Koskelowski, called the meeting to order at 7:10pm.

Item #2 – Pledge of Allegiance

Everyone saluted the Flag and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item #3 – Public Comment

Mark Krauchick, 28 Humphrey Street: (Custodian for Schools) Many of the people attending support the BOE and unfortunately felt like they have been talking to a wall. Wants the opportunity to vote on the BOE budget as presented. Comments regarding the budget are along party lines, wants opportunity without politicking.

Elizabeth White, 41 Patton Ave: Has two small children, her husband and her are teachers and has a difficult time supporting the increase to the BOE. Understands increases in healthcare, oil, and utilities. Does not support staff increases, salaries account for 49% of the budget. Supports full day Kindergarten, but it may not be possible at this time. Why is there a 27% increase in travel, but only a 3% increase for text books? Teachers can attend a free conference on a Saturday for professional development and bring the information back to the school. Use fundraising to obtain the money for technology. This will bring it in slowly and insure the schools and teachers use it. Utilize the PTA's and obtain grants. Why a 7% increase in supplies, color printed newsletters and copies are a luxury. Throwing money at our education will not fix it, parents are the answer and creativity is needed.

Richard Rossik, 34 Robert Street: Sees lots of zeros in lots of departments but the BOE has increases in everything. His kids are struggling and receiving no help from teachers due to statements regarding contracts. Receives constant emails stating the BOE is not properly funded; they have not received the money they asked for. Teachers are not using the school website and posting regularly. Feels the BOE is funded fine and others are afraid of repercussions of speaking out.

Maria Keeler, 5 Fawn Hollow Drive: Supports the full BOE budget.

Cindy Dion, 18 Carriage Drive: Listened to Mr. Robert Koskelowski explain for 5 minutes at the last BOF meeting how he cares about education. Has a petition with 500 signatures supporting the original BOE budget.

Paul Roy, First Selectman: Supports the BOF proposed budget. His goal is to keep taxes down and through bi-partisan efforts has put together an Energy Committee that has saved the town \$41,000. In August of 2010 he directed the finance office to refinance bonds and notes for further savings. He is responsible with the taxpayers' money and supports the entire budget as presented.

Marianne Mascolo, Superintendent of Schools: Her job is to advocate for the children. In the last 7 out of 10 years the BOE has not received their level services. A strategic plan has been followed for the last 5 years. All unions gave zero increases; they have changed the healthcare plans to lower costs. Unemployment is difficult to predict, positions are mandated. For 3 years, new positions have been asked for. Professional development of teachers is best if done in the classroom. Our teachers do use this knowledge and follow through—technology is the world we live in. Nothing is a luxury. Please do not be penny wise and dollar foolish. The cost is greater for unemployed adults due to not being able to read. It is all about leadership, support the BOE and work together.

Michele Pavlik, 5 Emma Street: Has a simple question, what does the \$1.3 million increase represent? \$5 million in debt service, 80% is contractual and fuel costs. The increase is not really advancing the town; it is for benefits, bonuses and comp time. The labor costs are unacceptable and not done in the private sector. The BOE presents plans, do not see this on the town side. It is unfair to ask the taxpayers to pay increases for these employee benefits and she is disappointed in our First Selectman.

Mary Demming, 100 Walnut Street: Has never spoken before. Never in 39 years of teaching has she worked a 35 hour week.

Paul Roy, First Selectman: Addressing some statements regarding employees: He has worked with the union contracts and with 2 contracts has bought out Longevity. He has also made changes in employee healthcare benefits. These savings total about \$70,000.

Walter Birdsell, 42 Jupiter Drive: Seniors and people who have retired have not seen raises in 2 years. You can give the BOE a \$10 million increase each year and it will not make kids any smarter. Did the teachers give back anything? (Ms. Mascolo answered the administrators gave back raises and furlough days.) State taxes, federal taxes are all going up. Where are we going to get the money?

Jennifer Magri, 16 Union Street: In favor of the requested BOE budget. Has a difficult time listening to people who are not experts. She understands the BOE by going to meetings. She works with them and they are doing right by our kids. We need to fund them. Can't see a decline, we need to find the money to help the people in need. We cannot continue to work against each other.

Kristen Bruno, 10 Mac Connie Court: There is a petition containing 500 signatures supporting the proposed BOE budget. This year is different. We cannot take another Zero. Please put forth the BOE budget as originally presented.

Al Yagovane, 27 Washington Ave: This is not about the BOE, Public Works or Police. The BOF listens to all the increases that all the department's request. No one shows to a BOF meeting until their

department is on the agenda. We question overtime and pensions of the police and pay the chief \$100,000 per year plus benefits, we want to see results. The Fire Department wants new trucks. Big towns have 30 year old trucks with over 100,000 miles. We need to question the people buying the trucks. We had half the equipment 30 years ago and fought bigger fires. On the BOE we need to question conflicts of interest to say we need cuts. He has not heard of a teacher that was good getting let go. We gave up our machine shop but trades are needed in Seymour. Need to reduce costs to administrators who receive a contract renewal every 2 years of their 3 year contracts. Need more people at town meetings.

Bruce Baker, 68 Greenwood Circle: (Board of Education) The BOE does layoff teachers for poor performance, it happens every year. If a full day Kindergarten is not provided, we need to remove every BOE member. No matter what the budget outcome, we need to have full day Kindergarten. The BOE and BOF members do not receive a dime for the time they spend. Has heard rumors of people supporting the BOE budget that will not support the town budget. We should not have factious; we need to have people, leaders to direct the town to the future. We are one community. Our kids need to go to college if they are going to survive.

Jeanne Loda, 27 Osprey Drive: (Board of Education) Please put the full proposed BOE budget forward. They have taken a zero for 2 years and can't cut any more. What percent increase is the police budget? The BOE is the largest and it gets the least. Professionals work hard to get what they are paid and do not understand the resentment. The BOE members work hard. No one attends the BOE meetings, if you have questions come and ask. The BOE does not have a contingency fund and must take money for emergencies from budget line items. Please let the people decide if the full budget can pass not just 6 people.

Mort Conlan, 73 Brookfield Road: Very happy with our school system and appreciates the BOE's hard work. The town cannot afford not to spend money on the BOE and on roads. Where will we get the money to spend? Talk to friends and get our budgets passed.

Ed Strumello, 188 Mountain Road: (BOE Chairman) Trust the BOE that the budget is what is needed, trust the BOF that the presented budget is what people can pass. Speak to state and federal officials and work to get more. We need to fight against mandates. Only 35% of people vote, need more people involved. Call people and get them to vote.

Ilene Faustich, 33 Davis Road: Supports full BOE budget. They have had below level services for 8 years.

Item #4 – Adjournment

Meeting adjourned by Chairman, Bob Koskelowski.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:03pm.

Submitted by:

Michelle Walsh
Board of Finance