

Colchester School Board
Meeting Agenda and Packet
December 2, 2022

**Colchester School District
Board of Education Meeting Agenda
December 6, 2022 - 7:00 P.M.
Colchester High School Library**

Agenda

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Citizen Participation**
- III. Approval of Contract Agreement with Colchester Education Association (CEA)** Action
- IV. FY'24 Budget Discussion** Information
- V. First Reading of Animal Dissection Policy: G4** Action
- VI. First Reading of Mascots and Branding Policy:** Action
- VII. Information on PCB Testing in Schools** Information
- VIII. Approval of Consent Agenda** Action
- IX. Approval of Meeting Minutes: November 15, 2022** Action
- X. Approval of Special Meeting Minutes: November 18, 2022** Action
- XI. Approval of Special Meeting Minutes: November 29, 2022** Action
- XII. Board/Administration Communication, Correspondence, Committee Reports** Information
- XIII. Future Agenda Items** Information
- XIV. Executive Session to Discuss Negotiations** Action
- XV. Adjournment**

***Meeting Participation and Viewing Options**

Meetings are open to the public unless warned otherwise. Colchester citizens have an opportunity to speak or comment on any items listed on the agenda. For topics not listed on the agenda, public comment can be made during the Citizen's Participation agenda item. Please review the Public Comment Rules listed at www.csdvt.org/schoolboard prior to the meeting. If not attending in person, citizens may also participate in the meeting by emailing a prerecorded message to schoolboard@colchesters.org with "Citizens Participation" listed in the subject line. It must be received by noon on the day of the meeting, include your full name and phone number, and follow the Public Comment Rules. LCATV will provide live stream coverage via: www.lcatv.org/live-stream-3.



**State of Vermont
Department of Taxes
133 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-1401**

Agency of Administration

December 1, 2022

Rep. Krowinski, Speaker of the House
Sen. Balint, President Pro Tempore
Vermont State House
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-0004

Dear Speaker Krowinski and President Pro Tempore Balint:

The Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Taxes, after consultation with the Agency of Education, the Secretary of Administration, and the Joint Fiscal Office, is required by 32 V.S.A. § 5402b to calculate and forecast a property dollar equivalent yield, an income dollar equivalent yield, and a non-homestead tax rate by December 1. This letter is submitted in fulfillment of the statutory obligation. The Department of Taxes, Department of Finance and Management, Agency of Education, and the Joint Fiscal Office prepared consensus forecasts on various components of the Education Fund Operating Statement for Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) so that the required analysis could be performed.

5402b(a)(2) Mandated Forecast

In the statutorily mandated calculation and recommendation under 32 V.S.A. 5402b, the Commissioner must assume the following:

1. The homestead base tax rate is \$1.00 per \$100.00 of equalized education property value;
2. The applicable percentage under 32 V.S.A. 6066(a)(2) is 2.0;
3. The statutory reserves under 16 V.S.A. § 4026 are maintained at five percent; and
4. The percentage change in the average education tax bill applied to homestead property, non-homestead property, and taxpayers who claim a property tax credit is the same.

The values in the FY24 column in the following table satisfy the statutorily mandated parameters of the recommendation. As required by statute, the FY24 column assumes the nearly \$64 million in forecasted unreserved/unallocated funds from FY23 are applied towards lowering FY24 property tax rates. Taxpayers would see an average increase of 3.7% in their education tax liabilities if these yields and non-homestead rate were adopted. If the projected FY23 reserve were not applied to lowering FY24 tax rates, taxpayers would see an average increase of 8.3%.



	FY23 (for comparison)	FY24
Homestead Property Yield	\$13,314	\$15,479
Income Yield	\$15,948	\$17,600
Non-homestead Property	\$1.466	\$1.386

Average Homestead Rates

If the forecasted yields and rate in the table above were adopted, the average 2023-2024 (FY24) education tax rate for resident households would be as indicated in the table below. Equalized property rates are before the adjustment factor for the town level of appraisal.

	FY23 (for comparison)	FY24
Average Homestead Rate (equalized)	\$1.38	\$1.31
Average Income Rate	2.31%	2.31%

Average Actual Property Tax Rates

The average actual 2023-2024 (FY24) education property tax rates would be as indicated in the table below. Actual property rates are what taxpayers see on their bills and reflect both the voted school budget and the adjustment factor for the town level of appraisal.

	FY23 (for comparison)	FY24
Average Homestead Rate	\$1.50	\$1.57
Average Non-homestead Rate	\$1.57	\$1.64

Education Spending Growth

	FY23 (for comparison)	FY24	Rate of Growth
Total Education Spending (\$Millions)	\$1,576.7	\$1,711.0	8.52%
Equalized Pupil Count	85,813	84,890	-1.08%
Average Equalized Per Pupil Spending	\$18,373	\$20,155	9.70%

The forecasted year over year rate of growth in education spending of 8.52% would be substantially higher than the actual rate of growth over the last several fiscal years.

	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Ed. Spending (\$Millions)	1,348.5	1,371.4	1,426.2	1,482.0	1,496.6	1,576.7	1,711.0
Rate of Growth	3.40%	1.70%	4.00%	3.91%	0.99%	5.35%	8.52%

Key Considerations from the Administration's Point of View

This forecast is calculated as prescribed in statute and with the information that is available to date. Because of this, there are always variables or uncertainties that might result in a different outcome than what is forecasted. I extend my appreciation to the teams at the Department of Taxes, Agency of Education, Department of Finance and Management, and Joint Fiscal Office for collaborating on the extensive and complex work to gather and analyze the data that is required to publish this forecast.

This letter forecasts equalized Homestead rates to drop from \$1.38 to \$1.31, which on the surface would appear to be great news. However, this drop in equalized rates does **not** tell the entire story, and the Common Level of Appraisal, Education Fund surplus, and projected growth in education spending (all detailed below) should be considerations for policymakers and voters this coming year. In fact, **despite the projected decline in equalized rates, and the fact that we have a sizable surplus which is statutorily required to reduce rate pressure in this letter, taxpayers should expect that if the yields calculated from the forecast come into effect, they will still pay, on average, close to four percent more in their property tax bills this year. If the surplus were not used to buy down rates at all, taxpayers would see an average increase of over eight percent in this year's property tax bills.**

- **Common Level of Appraisal:** The equalized property tax rate is adjusted by the Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) in each town, which helps ensure uniform property values around the state. When fair market property values increase in a town, it decreases the town's CLA, which causes the town's tax rate on bills to increase. Because of the increases in value in real estate in Vermont over the last couple of years, the CLA has been reduced significantly in many communities across the state, and the actual tax bills taxpayers see in those communities may be higher than what is indicated by the average equalized rate forecasted in this letter. Property value appreciation, on top of higher-than-normal school spending growth, are the main reasons the average property tax bill is projected to increase by 3.7 percent.
- **Surplus:** Statute requires for the forecasted calculation of tax rates, the entirety of any Education Fund surplus is used to “buy down” the forecasted property tax rate, and this year the letter projects a surplus of over \$63 million, which buys down equalized rates approximately six cents. While this projected surplus is significantly lower than the never-before-seen surplus of over \$95 million from last fiscal year, it is still extraordinary considering surpluses were generally in the \$10-15 million range prior to FY22. For this coming year, even after applying the surplus, the average tax bill is likely to still rise by 3.7 percent. And, as we move forward, it would be prudent to recognize that the substantial surpluses of the last two fiscal years are extraordinary, and not likely to reoccur annually in the future. We should be thoughtful in how we invest them and ensure we do not take them for granted as a given each year.

The letter this year also projects an 8.5 percent overall growth rate in school spending, essentially double last year's projected growth rate, and it would be higher than any growth rate in at least the last decade. We also know that continued inflationary pressures, policy initiatives such as changes to the pupil weighting formula, and capital maintenance and remediation costs, will continue to create cost pressures for the Education Fund.

Because of all these pressures - including those on Vermont property taxpayers, who are also facing inflationary pressures in a variety of areas - the Administration is eager to work with the Legislature to apply the current projected surplus to reduce property tax rates in FY24. It is important to note, the projected surplus may increase after the January E-Board meeting. Should that additional surplus materialize, the Administration hopes to work with the Legislature to consider other investments that help reduce tax rate increases in the future.

It has been a challenging few years for students and others involved in our education system. We have more change ahead with the pupil weighting formula adjustment coming in fiscal year 2025, so it is important to be thoughtful this year as we set the landscape for a more affordable future. My thanks go out to all of those who dedicate their lives and careers to the education and wellbeing of Vermont's children.

Sincerely,



Craig Bolio
Commissioner, Department of Taxes

cc: Kristin Clouser, Secretary, Agency of Administration
Daniel French, Secretary, Agency of Education
Adam Greshin, Commissioner, Department of Finance and Management
Rep. Janet Ancel
Sen. Ann Cummings
Rep. Kathryn Webb
Sen. Brian Campion
Catherine Benham, Joint Fiscal Office
Jennifer Carbee, Office of Legislative Counsel

COLCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

POLICY: ANIMAL DISSECTION

DATE ADOPTED: September 6, 2016

POLICY STATEMENT

It is the intent of the Colchester School District to comply with the requirements of Act 154 of 2008 regarding the right of students to be excused from participating in or observing activities involving the dissection or vivisection of animals. Students enrolled in district schools shall have the right to be excused from participating in any lesson, exercise or assessment requiring the student to dissect, vivisect or otherwise harm or destroy an animal or any part of an animal, or to observe any of these activities, as part of a course of instruction.

DEFINITION

As used in this policy, the word “animal” means any organism of the kingdom animalia and includes an animal’s cadaver or the severed parts of an animal’s cadaver.

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION METHOD

A student who is excused under this policy shall be provided with alternative methods through which he or she can learn and be assessed on material required by the course. The alternative methods shall be developed by the teacher of the course, in consultation with the principal if necessary.

DISCRIMINATION

No student shall be discriminated against based on his or her decision to exercise the right to be excused afforded by this policy.

PROCEDURES

The (superintendent/principal) shall develop and implement procedures to ensure compliance with the provisions of Act 154 of 2008. The procedures shall include provisions for the timely notification to each student enrolled in the course and to the student’s parent or guardian of the student’s right to be excused from participating in or observing the lesson and the process by which a student may exercise this right.

Legal Reference(s):

Act 154 of 2007-2008 Adjourned Session
16 V.S.A. §912

Date Warned: August 12, 2016
First Reading: August 16, 2016
Second Reading: September 6, 2016

Model Policy on Nondiscriminatory Mascots and School Branding

Statement of Policy

It is the policy of the *[name of school district or independent school]* to provide welcoming, positive, and inclusive learning environments for all students by prohibiting the use of discriminatory school branding, which undermines the educational experiences of members of all communities and perpetuates negative stereotypes.

Definitions

1. “School” means a public school or an independent school approved under section 166 of Title 16.
2. “School board” or “Board” means the board of directors or other governing body of an educational institution when referring to an independent school.
3. “School branding” means any name, symbol, or image used by a school as a mascot, nickname, logo, letterhead, team name, slogan, motto, or other identifier.

Administrative Responsibilities

The superintendent or designee shall:

1. periodically review and provide recommendations for necessary updates to the nondiscriminatory school branding policy as necessary;
2. assist the school board in its review of the district’s school branding to ensure compliance with the policy following any school branding changes or updates to the policy;
3. assist the school board in ensuring the prohibition of school branding that directly or indirectly references or stereotypes the likeness, features, symbols, traditions, or other characteristics that are specific to either:
 - a. the race, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity of any person or group of persons; or
 - b. any person, group of persons, or organization associated with the repression of others;
4. Develop a procedure for an individual to file a complaint that an element of school branding is in violation of the policy.

Complaints

An individual may request an opportunity to appear before the Board for purposes of presenting the complaint, relevant facts, and further explanations. The board shall hear the complaint in a fair and just manner. The Board shall render a decision within 45 days of the hearing, which must include a summary of facts and basis for the decision.

If the individual is unsatisfied with the Board's decision, the individual may appeal the decision to the Secretary of Education. Appeals shall be filed within 30 days of the school board's decision by sending a written notice of appeal to the Agency of Education.

CONSENT AGENDA

Board Meeting Date: December 6, 2022

Licensed Employees (Teacher/Administrator)

Contract Type	First Name	Last Name	Category	Position	FTE/Hours	Building	Agenda Information	Person Replacing	Budgeted	Admin Support

Non-Licensed Employees (Support Staff), Board Approval Required

Contract Type	First Name	Last Name	Category	Position	FTE/Hours	Building	Agenda Information	Person Replacing	Budgeted	Admin Support

Non-Licensed Employees (Support Staff), Informational

Contract Type	First Name	Last Name	Category	Position	FTE/Hours	Building	Agenda Information	Person Replacing	Budgeted	Admin Support
Support Staff	Haylee	Patch	New Hire	Paraeducator	32.5	UMS	Notice of Hire	Shauna Rooney	Yes	Yes
Support Staff	Robert	King	Resignation	Special Ed Driver	30	DW	Notice of Resignation			
Support Staff	Jeremy	LaRoche	Transfer	504 - Paraeducator	32.5	CHS	Notice of Transfer	Carolyn Sawin	Yes	Yes
Support Staff	Anne Marie	Lavalette	Resignation	Attendance Secretary	32.5	CHS	Notice of Resignation			
Support Staff	Charlton	Whitney	New Hire	Special Ed Driver	35	DW	Notice of Hire	Robert King	Yes	Yes

COLCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education Meeting
Colchester High School Library

Tuesday, November 15, 2022
7:00 p.m.

MINUTES (General Session)

The Colchester Board of Education held a regular board meeting on Tuesday, November 15, 2022, in the Colchester High School Library. Board members in attendance were Board Chair Lindsey Cox, Board Directors Ben Yousey-Hindes, Felix Anderson, Laurie Kigonya and Student Board Representative Olivia Dallamura. District administrators and employees in attendance included Superintendent Amy Minor, Business and Operations Manager George Trieb, Director of Curriculum Gwendolyn Carmolli, and Director of Student Support Services Carrie Lutz. There were nine members in the audience including two district employees and several representatives from the Town of Colchester.

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Lindsey Cox called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Citizen Participation

None.

III. Colchester Recreation Center Presentation

Information

Town Manager Aaron Frank started by thanking the district for continued support and partnership with the parks department to create and foster youth opportunities. Colchester Parks and Recreation Director Glen Cuttitta provided an overview of a proposed recreation center. Mr. Cuttitta explained the project's history and their work so far including community surveys, purchasing land for the center, and formulating a planning commission to identify the best use of the property. Through public input, it was determined that the top priorities were an indoor pool, exercise rooms, and equipment, as well as community meeting spaces. Mr. Cuttitta then showed several renderings of what the proposed center would look like and how it would be situated on the Hazlett parcel, located directly across from Laker Lane.

The board asked a series of questions about how the center would positively impact students, how it's being funded, and the timeline moving forward. Mr. Cuttitta stated that gym space is at a premium in the town and there are often multiple groups needing space at the same time. Student Board Member Olivia Dallamura echoed this statement and said with the demand for space, many high school sports teams end up practicing late into the evening. She thanked the Town for identifying this as a need and for working toward a solution. Mr. Cuttitta and Mr. Frank stated this recreation center is a top priority for the town and they are working to finalize a cost estimate, funding package, and ballot language for it to be placed on the 2023 Town Meeting Day ballot. Town officials welcomed a letter of support from the School Board should they be inclined to provide one.

IV. FY'24 Budget Timeline and Discussion	Information
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Superintendent Amy Minor gave an overview of the FY'24 budget presentations and discussions planned for the next three months. She shared the communication timeline which encompasses a robust online and print distribution plan. Given the likelihood that there will continue to be a high percentage of early voting, the district is planning to accelerate the communication plan to ensure budget information is available to voters before they cast their ballot.

Business and Operations Manager, George Trieb, gave an overview of the state's education fund and how the tax is calculated. He went over who is responsible for funding, the timeline, key definitions, the process, and the important components on the local level. He also provided the board with the core budget assumptions for FY'24.

V. Second and Final Reading of Student Activity Account Policy: E4	Action
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There were no changes since the first reading.

Director Yousey-Hindes moved to approve the second and final reading of the Student Activity Account Policy: E4. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Third and Final Reading of Video Surveillance Policy: E6	Action
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This policy was updated since the second reading with some minor language changes. Changes were reviewed by the district's attorney and are in alignment with the Vermont School Board Association's model policy.

Director Kigonya moved to approve the third and final reading of the Video Surveillance Policy: E6. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Approval of Consent Agenda	Action
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The following Consent Agenda was reviewed by the board.

CONSENT AGENDA
Board Meeting Date: November 15, 2022

Licensed Employees (Teacher/Administrator)

Contract Type	First Name	Last Name	Category	Position	FTE/Hours	Building	Agenda Information	Person Replacing	Budgeted	Admin Support
Teacher	Hannah	Mavin	New Hire	Speech Language Pathologist	1.0	UMS, PPS, MBS	Request to Hire	Open Position	Yes	Yes

Non-Licensed Employees (Support Staff), Board Approval Required

Contract Type	First Name	Last Name	Category	Position	FTE/Hours	Building	Agenda Information	Person Replacing	Budgeted	Admin Support
Support Staff	Michelle	DeVarney	Leave of Absence	Speech Paraeducator	32.5	CMS	Request for Leave of Absence (03/08/23-03/17/23)		Yes	Yes

Non-Licensed Employees (Support Staff), Informational

Contract Type	First Name	Last Name	Category	Position	FTE/Hours	Building	Agenda Information	Person Replacing	Budgeted	Admin Support
Support Staff	Teresa	Clark	New Hire	Special Ed Paraeducator	32.5	PPS	Notice of Hire	Gail Stone	Yes	Yes
Support Staff	Shauna	Rooney	Termination	Paraeducator	32.5	UMS	Notice of Termination			

DRAFT

Director Anderson moved to approve the Consent Agenda as provided. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Approval of Meeting Minutes: November 1, 2022 Action

Director Yousey-Hindes moved to approve the minutes from the meeting held on November 1, 2022. The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Board/Administration Communication, Correspondence, Committee Reports Information

- The board will have a retreat to discuss facilities on November 29 at 5:30 pm.

X. Future Agenda Items Information

- FY24 budget discussion
- Presentation on early release days
- Presentation on PCB testing
- Continuation of policy review

XI. Executive Session to Discuss Negotiations Action

Director Anderson moved to enter executive session at 7:45 p.m. to discuss negotiations. The motion passed unanimously.

XII. Adjournment

Director Anderson moved to exit executive session and adjourn at 8:44 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Recorder:

Meghan Baule
Recording Secretary

Board Clerk:

Ben Yousey-Hindes
Board Clerk

COLCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education Meeting, Special Meeting
Central Office, Conference Room
59 Rathe Rd, Colchester, VT

Friday, November 18, 2022
7:15 a.m.

MINUTES

The Colchester Board of Education held a Special Board Meeting on Friday, November 18, 2022. Those in attendance were Board Directors Ben Yousey-Hindes, Laurie Kigonya, and Felix Anderson, Superintendent Amy Minor, Colchester High School Principal Andrew Conforti, and the student and their family.

I. Call to Order

Board Director Felix Anderson called the meeting to order at 7:16 a.m.

II. Executive Session: Student Hearing

Action

Director Anderson moved to enter executive session at 7:16 a.m. to conduct a student hearing. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Adjournment

Director Anderson moved to exit executive session and adjourn at 7:47 a.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Recorder:

Meghan Baule
Recording Secretary

Board Clerk:

Ben Yousey-Hindes
Board Clerk

COLCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education Meeting, Special Meeting
Colchester Middle School

Tuesday, November 29, 2022
5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

The Colchester Board of Education held a Special Board Meeting on Tuesday, November 29, 2022. Those in attendance were Board Chair Lindsey Cox, Board Directors Nic Longo, Ben Yousey-Hindes, Laurie Kigonya, Felix Anderson. District administrators and employees in attendance included Superintendent Amy Minor, Business and Operations Manager George Trieb. John Hemmelgarn from Black River Design was in attendance.

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Lindsey Cox called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

II. Work Session: Facilities

Informational

The board met to continue assessing and planning for work pertaining to the district's facilities.

III. Adjournment

Director Longo moved to adjourn at 8:36 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Recorder:

Meghan Baule
Recording Secretary

Board Clerk:

Ben Yousey-Hindes
Board Clerk